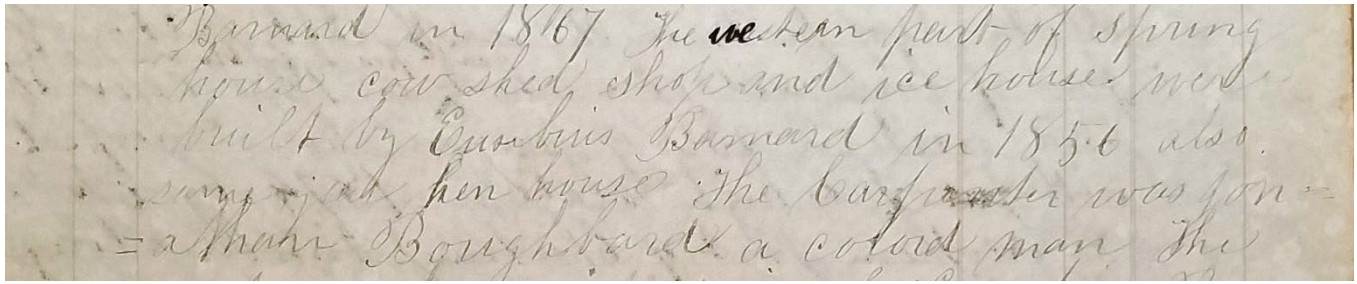


The Amazing Story of Jonathan Bovard, a 'Free Colored Man' and Carpenter



Eusebius R Barnard kept a farm ledger listing various things related to maintaining the farm. The image above shows a notation on page 55 which reads “The western part of the spring house, cow shed, shop and ice house were built by Eusebius Barnard in 1856 also same year hen house. The carpenter was Jonathan Boughbard a colored man.” After researching and finding no historical records for Jonathan Boughbard, it was determined Eusebius meant Jonathan Bovard, which was suggested by the Chester County Archivist. Immediately records became available describing the amazing story of a ‘free colored man’ from Chester County.

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Poorhouse Admissions 1800-1858

Last Name	First Name	Age	Race	Place of Residence	Action Taken by Directors	Date	Notes	Birth
Beebe	Jessie	32			Let with permission	1822		1779
Beebe	Jessie	23			Let with permission	1824		1826
Beebe	Sarah Ann	7			Supported in the poor house	1821		1782
Beebe	Sarah Ann	2			Supported in the poor house	1822		1779
Beebe	Sarah Ann	3			Discharged or discharged	1823		1787
Beebe	Sarah Ann	4			Discharged or discharged	1824		1826
Beebe	Sarah Ann	8			Discharged or discharged	1826		1823
Beebe	Sarah Ann				Discharged or discharged	1827		1823
Bone	Thomas	28		Chester County Poor House	Let with permission	02/17/1822	mother Jesse	1784
Bost	John			Wood Creeper	Grandfather	02/17/1817		4789
Bost	John			Wood Creeper	As a labor to bring in	12/06/1817		4789
Bost	John			Wood Creeper	Discharged or discharged	12/06/1817		4789
Bost	Ann			Wood Creeper	Discharged or discharged	02/22/1823		4225
Brack				Chester County Poor House	Discharged or discharged	06/20/1819		1718
Brack	Ann	33		East Fairmount	Let with permission	06/20/1819	taken by mother Ann	1787
BREWER	JAMES	22		PHILADELPHIA	Let with permission	12/14/1816		1842
BREWER	JAMES	22		PHILADELPHIA	Discharged or discharged	1811		1844
Brick	John	3			Supported in the poor house	1826		1825
Brick	Mary	2			Supported in the poor house	1826		1825
Brick	Sarah	34			Supported in the poor house	1826		1825
Bridges	Samuel	80	Black		Supported in the poor house	1821		1821
Bridges	Samuel				Shot in poor house or deceased	1824		1825
Bridges	Deborah	25			Shot in poor house or deceased	1824		1825
Bridges	Mary				Adopted or separated out of the poor house	1826		1825
Bridges	Mary				Adopted or separated out of the poor house	1824		1825
Brown	Jessie	61			Supported in the poor house	1841		1825
Brown	Jonathan			Chester County Poor House	Supported in the poor house	06/06/1818	mother Polly	1776
Brown	Jonathan	1			Supported in the poor house	1818		1789
Brown	Jonathan	2			Supported in the poor house	1820		1782
Brown	Jonathan	3	Colored		Supported in the poor house	1821		1787
Brown	Jonathan	4	White		Supported in the poor house	1822	a yellow negro	1786
Brown	Mary			New Garden	Discharged or discharged	04/13/1818	pregnant	1776

Chester County Archives and Record Services, West Chester, PA

Poorhouse Admissions 1800-1858

Jonathan Bovard was born on June 8, 1818 at the Chester County Poor House to 16-year-old Mary, who was admitted two months prior. Mary left the poor house in 1821 and was listed as “gone without permission.” Jonathan was discharged in 1822 with the note “a yellow negro” next to his name. During those days the term meant light skinned. Jonathan’s name reappears in the 1840 census as residing in West Chester along with his young family.

He was one of the founding trustees of the Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in East Marlborough Township in 1839 (Photo 03). While living in West Chester, Bovard advertised a Wire Screen Business with ads that ran weekly from 1844 through 1845. The 1850 Census lists Jonathan Bovard residing in East Marlborough with his wife Ann and their four daughters (Photo 05).

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Jonathan Hoppe

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Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church, East Marlborough Township

[Ebenezer A.M.E. Cemetery on Find A Grave.](#)

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church was established ca. 1839, when Martin and Antonia Basinger deeded in trust a 1/4-acre parcel of land in trust to Samuel C. and Caesar Glasgow, William Taylor, and Jonathan Bovard, “trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church called Ebenezer.” In 1840, the same trustees deeded all but 1/4 acre to Benjamin H. Cook. At some point, the congregation reacquired the land and a brick church was built (which gave rise to a local nickname of the “Unionville Brick Meetinghouse”).

The church was popular and thriving; one person remembered, half a century later, that Bayard Taylor had spoken at the church, and other lectures were held there as well. Services were being held there well into the 1910s. The church stood until the 1960s when it was torn down.

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During the 1850s, Jonathan worked as a laborer, concentrating on carpentry as noted in the farm ledger for 1856 and subsequent documents. He most likely was aware of Eusebius Barnard’s activity with the Underground Railroad and could have worked beside freedom seeking slaves as they passed through the area. Due to the number of free black men living in Pocopson Township and Chester County at the time, it was

common to hide freedom seekers 'in plain sight'. Of all the Eusebius Barnard structures he worked on in 1856, only the workshop remains today. It is the stone structure at the left end of the Ell.



Most people are familiar with the Freemasons, George Washington was a prominent member, but did you know that it was common for black men to be Masons? Black Freemasons, known as Prince Hall Freemasonry, was a parallel group who practiced the same core values as the mainstream Freemasons. Jonathan Bovard, a Black Freemason, was elected to be the representative for the Chester chapter during the December 1855 Pennsylvania Grand Lodge meeting in Philadelphia.

B 32 U.S.C.T.

Jonathan Bovard
 Co. I, 32 Reg't U. S. Col'd Inf.

Appears on
Company Descriptive Book
 of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.
 Age *42* years; height *5* feet *6 1/2* inches.
 Complexion *Black*
 Eyes *Black*; hair *Black*,
 Where born *Chester Pa.*,
 Occupation *Carpenter*

ENLISTMENT.
 When *Feb. 29*, 1864.
 Where *Philad.*
 By whom *Capt. Hatch*; term *3* y'rs.
 Remarks *Married to Joseph
 April 20/64,
 In the Skirmish
 James Island S.C.
 Feb. 10, 1865.*

C. M. Rows
 (8887) Copyist.

Bovard joined the 32nd Regiment of the US Colored Troops (USCT) on Feb 29, 1864. His military record lists his occupation as carpenter and notes his promotion to Sergeant April 20, 1864. He fought at James Island, South Carolina on Feb 10, 1865.

Jonathan resided in Philadelphia after his discharge from the USCT and passed away on February 13, 1869. Whoever raised Jonathan Bovard is unknown, but clearly they did a good job.

Jonathan Bovard

in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates Index, 1803-1915

Detail	Source
Name	Jonathon Bovard
Birth Date	abt 1819
Birth Place	West Chester
Death Date	13 Feb 1869
Death Place	Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Age at Death	50
Burial Date	15 Feb 1869
Gender	Male
Race	Black
Occupation	Carpenter
Cemetery	Lebanon Ground
Marital Status	Married
FHL Film Number	1003696

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