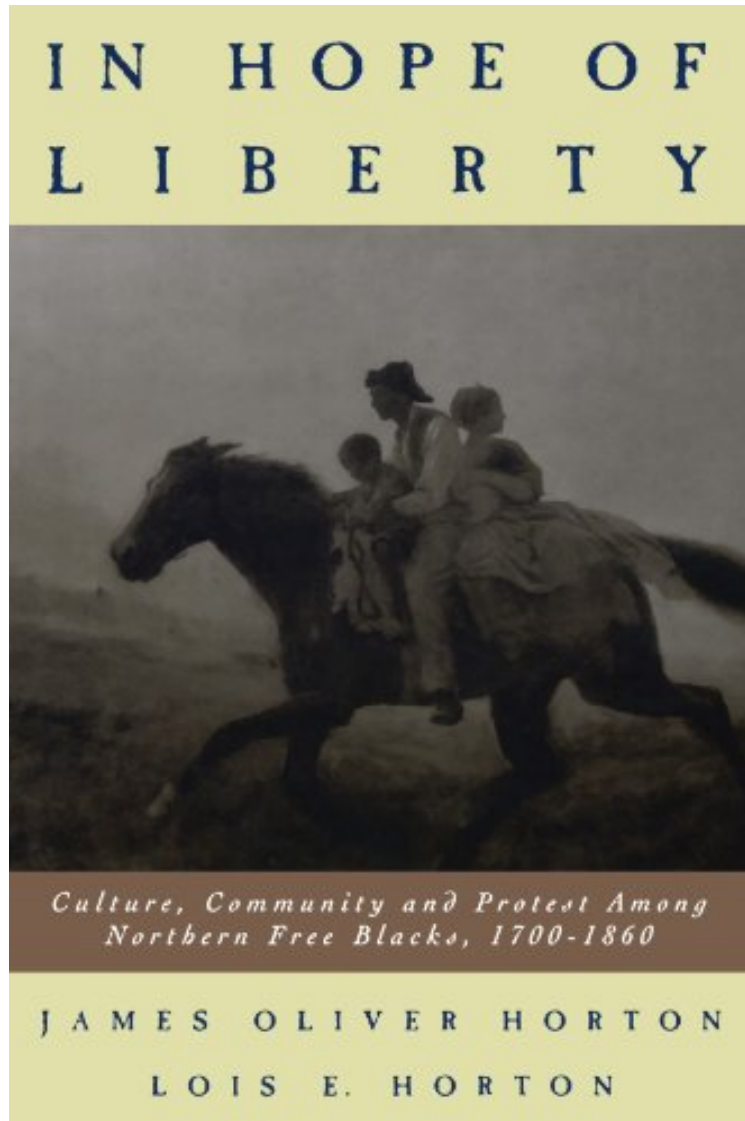


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In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860

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James Oliver Horton, Lois E. Horton : In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Exceptional AccountBy Blue SkyThis was an exceptionally detailed view of northern slavery. It was well written. This is a difficult subject to tackle and cover in one book. I enjoyed it and will use it in footnotes of my own work.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An Important Statement on the Role of African Americans in the Antebellum NorthBy Roger D. LauniusOne of the most important developments in the historiography of the antebellum abolitionist crusade is the emphasis on the role of free blacks in the North as shapers of the national agenda. We have long known of Frederick Douglass's role in this regard, of course, but in the 1960s historians began to appreciate in much greater depth the role of northern African Americans in the antislavery struggle. Leon F. Litwack's "North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860" (University of Chicago Press, 1961) and Benjamin Quarles's "The Negro in the American Revolution" (University of North Carolina Press, 1961) were both undeniably significant benchmarks in this historiography. Historians James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton now provide a much richer perspective and make clear the effort was much broader than most have appreciated. The Hortons integrate a broad body of secondary literature on free blacks in the antebellum North with their own research into an elegantly crafted narrative. The Hortons take as their thesis that northern African Americans not in bondage embraced the ideals of the American Revolution and the early republic for "liberty" and "freedom." As disinherited sons and daughters of the Revolution their constant critique served to remind and press the status quo of white America throughout the antebellum period. As the Hortons write, "American ideals were not bounded by color, and the desire for liberty and equality was strongest to those whom they were denied" (p. xii). Taking a generally chronological approach they trace the cause of freedom and liberty among free northern African Americans from the Revolution to the 4 civil War. Along the way they tell the story of Crispis Attucks, an African American killed in the Boston Massacre, those who fought in the Revolution, and those who embrace the antislavery crusade and sought both legal and extralegal means to end its hold over human beings in the United States. Much of this is now familiar terrain, but the Hortons bring a depth to the story not present elsewhere and that, coupled with an elegance of style makes this an excellent reading experience. More significant is the authors' portrait of the lives of north free blacks. To a degree not seen previously, the Hortons explore the themes of the new social history--especially issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender--in relation to the lives of this community. To a very real extent they depict the world the free African Americans made in a nation increasingly hostile to their objectives of freedom and liberty in the first half of the nineteenth century. Issues of family lifestyles, kinship, work relations, political power both in the larger society and within the black community, religion, social organizations, the question of re-colonization of Africa, and the abolitionist cause are the meat of this book. As a unit this is an exceptionally valuable work. I recommend it as a highly successful discussion of one significant aspect of the reform movements of antebellum American society.

Prince Hall, a black veteran of the American Revolution, was insulted and disappointed but probably not surprised when white officials refused his offer of help. He had volunteered a troop of 700 Boston area blacks to help quell a rebellion of western Massachusetts farmers led by Daniel Shays during the economic turmoil in the uncertain period following independence. Many African Americans had fought for America's liberty and their own in the Revolution, but their place in the new nation was unresolved. As slavery was abolished in the North, free blacks gained greater opportunities, but still faced a long struggle against limits to their freedom, against discrimination, and against southern slavery. The lives of these men and women are vividly described in *In Hope of Liberty*, spanning the 200 years and eight generations from the colonial slave trade to the Civil War. In this marvelously peopled history, James and Lois Horton introduce us to a rich cast of characters. There are familiar historical figures such as Crispus Attucks, a leader of the Boston Massacre and one of the first casualties of the American Revolution; Sojourner Truth, former slave and eloquent antislavery and women's rights activist whose own family had been broken by slavery when her son became a wedding present for her owner's daughter; and Prince Whipple, George Washington's aide, easily recognizable in the portrait of Washington crossing the Delaware River. And there are the countless men and women who struggled to lead their daily lives with courage and dignity: Zilpha Elaw, a visionary revivalist who preached before crowds of thousands; David James Peck, the first black to graduate from an American medical school in 1848; Paul Cuffe, a successful seafaring merchant who became an ardent supporter of the black African colonization movement; and Nancy Prince, at eighteen the effective head of a scattered household of four siblings, each boarded in different homes, who at twenty-five was formally presented to the Russian court. In a seamless narrative weaving together all these stories and more, the Hortons describe the complex networks, both formal and informal, that made up free black society, from the black churches, which provided a sense of community and served as a training ground for black leaders and political action, to the countless newspapers which spoke eloquently of their aspirations for blacks and played an active role in the antislavery movement, to the informal networks which allowed far-flung families to maintain contact, and which provided support and aid to needy members of the free black community and to fugitives from the South. Finally, they describe the vital role of the black family, the cornerstone of this variegated and tightly knit community. *In Hope of Liberty* brilliantly illuminates the free black communities of the antebellum North as they struggled to reconcile conflicting cultural identities and to work for social change in an atmosphere of racial injustice. As the black community today still struggles with many of the same problems, this insightful history

reminds us how far we have come, and how far we have yet to go.

"James and Lois Horton have used superb scholarship to pierce the mists shrouding the first generations of blacks on these shores and have delivered a sharp portrait of some of the earliest and strongest Americans. This is a profound work of the utmost importance to anyone who wants to understand the United States and her people."--Roger Wilkins, George Mason University
About the Author James Oliver Horton is the Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies and History at the George Washington University. He also directs the African-American Communities Project at the Smithsonian Institution and is the author of *Free People of Color: Inside the African-American Community*. Lois E. Horton is Professor of Sociology and American Studies at George Mason University and the co-author of *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggles in the Antebellum North*.