



71.1998.1 Huggart Settlement  
St. Joseph County  
Marker Text Review Report  
03/17/2014

## Marker Text

First land purchased by Huggart brothers in 1834; area settled and farmed by their families and several other African-American households circa 1850-1890s. Settlement families attended nearby schools and churches and worked with neighbors in surrounding areas. Many residents were buried in nearby Porter-Rea Cemetery now in Potato Creek State Park.

## Report

The text of this marker is accurate. The following review will provide more information on the Huggart settlement, a stretch of land in St. Joseph County settled and farmed by several African American or mixed-race families in the middle of the nineteenth century. It will also provide context for black migration from the American South to the North in the decades before the American Civil War and for free black settlements in Indiana during the nineteenth century.

Compiling historical information on individual African Americans prior to the twentieth century is often extremely difficult. This review will broadly outline the lives of the residents of the Huggart settlement with the limited resources available, using secondary sources to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately, buildings owned or inhabited by African Americans during this period are rarely still standing. One cabin associated with the Huggart Settlement, the Hardy Manuel cabin, still stands today; however, an archaeological dig in 1996 yielded no artifacts from the mid-nineteenth century, leading experts to conclude that the cabin had been moved from its original location elsewhere on the property.<sup>1</sup> This lack of material evidence, coupled with a general lack of institutional attention paid to free blacks and with the rural nature of the Huggart settlement, largely reduces our understanding of how the Huggarts lived and worked to the realm of educated guesswork based on a more general knowledge of the lives of African Americans in similar settlements in Indiana and the Midwest.

In the period from 1820 to 1860, African Americans migrated in considerable numbers from Southern slave-holding states to the North, particularly Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. According to Emma Lou Thornbrough, historian and author of *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, census records indicate an 800 percent increase in the number of blacks living in Indiana during this period, from 1,420 in 1820 to 11,428 in 1860; the majority of these migrant blacks were from North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> The African Americans of the Huggart settlement exemplified this pattern. The Huggart brothers were born in Virginia, and most of the other families associated with the settlement came to Indiana from North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> They may not have left voluntarily—several southern states, Virginia among them, encouraged or required free blacks to migrate north or risk enslavement.<sup>4</sup> By 1840, within a decade of the Huggarts' arrival in the state, there were 7,165 free blacks in the state's census by historian Gregory Rose's count, despite the fact that in many counties free blacks were required to register and post a bond of \$500.<sup>5</sup>

The [Fugitive Slave Act](#), passed in 1850, contributed to shifting migration patterns and made even non-slaveholding states more hostile to influxes of free and escaping enslaved African Americans. The [Fugitive Slave Act](#) gave federal commissioners in every county the power to issue warrants for the arrest of escaped slaves and see them returned to slavery, ensuring that escaped slaves in the United States could never be safe and that the status of free blacks could be called into question.<sup>6</sup> According to



historian Dean J. Kotlowski, Indiana whites were unsympathetic to the plight of escaped slaves who found themselves arrested, but generally rejected attempts to kidnap blacks who were known to be free.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, [Indiana's state constitution of 1851](#) forbade blacks from settling in the state; according to Thornbrough, this was mostly unenforceable but did serve as a deterrent and a warning to African Americans.<sup>8</sup> In this environment, the Huggart settlers probably did not feel entirely welcome in the state, but as established free black landowners who settled in the state in advance of the 1851 constitutional change, they were legally permitted to remain.

Indiana was home to several black settlements, most considerably further south than the Huggart settlement, largely owing to the fact that the north of the state was still inhabited by Native Americans until the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>9</sup> Before the American Civil War, Indianapolis (Marion County), Vincennes (Knox County), and Terre Haute (Vigo County) were home to large African American populations.<sup>10</sup> A significant number of free blacks also settled in the southernmost part of the state in counties along the Ohio River, particularly Harrison, Floyd, Clark, and Jefferson counties.<sup>11</sup> Historian Stephen A. Vincent has described the Beech and Roberts settlements, two rural farming settlements in central Indiana whose settlers were of mixed Native American, African, and European ancestry and who arrived from North Carolina and Virginia about the same time as the Huggarts did.<sup>12</sup> Just across the Indiana-Michigan border in Cass County, Michigan, several large black settlements became quite robust in the years immediately following the Civil War.<sup>13</sup>

In this context it is easier to get a sense of the Huggart settlement. Census records indicate that the Huggarts were among the first black residents of St. Joseph County, Indiana.<sup>14</sup> In 1834, Samuel Huggart purchased eighty acres of land in Union Township in St. Joseph County which would become the Huggart settlement.<sup>15</sup> Land ownership was crucial; according to Vincent, "farmland . . . provided the economic basis for a strategy of self-help and mutual aid."<sup>16</sup> According to a copy of the land deed in the Historical Bureau's marker file, Huggart paid \$100, or \$1.25 an acre.<sup>17</sup> At the time of the purchase, Huggart lived in Miami County, Ohio, having moved from Virginia to Ohio some years earlier.<sup>18</sup> More research is required to determine when exactly Huggart left Virginia, and under what circumstances.

Between 1835 and 1850, Samuel Huggart moved from Ohio to his land in St. Joseph County, Indiana. His brother Andrew's obituary places Samuel in the region as early as 1835, but no Huggart appears in the census records for St. Joseph County until 1850.<sup>19</sup> Samuel's brother Andrew, Andrew's wife Jane, and their children followed a similar path, from Virginia to Piqua, Ohio in 1836 and from Ohio to his brother's land in St. Joseph County between 1848 and 1850.<sup>20</sup> According to Andrew's obituary in the *St. Joseph Weekly Register*, Andrew and Jane had six children, five of whom lived to adulthood and four of whom outlived him.<sup>21</sup> Samuel was unmarried and lived as a bachelor with his brother's family, according to U.S. Census records from 1850, 1860, and 1870.<sup>22</sup> In 1850, the first year the Huggarts appeared on the census, the household contained seven people, including Andrew Huggart; Jane Huggart; the couple's four children, Wesley, Mary, James, and Sarah (two more children were born later); and Samuel Huggart. According to historian Crandall A. Shifflett, who examined the composition of rural black families in Virginia, such an extended nuclear family living arrangement was not uncommon among farming families who needed to share the economic burden.<sup>23</sup> Census records and Andrew's obituary also confirm that the Huggarts were black or mixed-race; they are all recorded in censuses with an "M" for "mulatto," and Andrew's obituary refers to him as "a colored man."<sup>24</sup>



On U.S. Census records from 1850 and 1880, both Huggart brothers listed their occupation as “farmer,” by far the most common source of income for African Americans in this period in Indiana, according to Thornbrough.<sup>25</sup> In 1863, the Huggart brothers jointly purchased an additional eighty acres of land to expand their homestead, an indication that they were financially successful.<sup>26</sup> Three years later, the Huggarts sold some of their jointly-owned land to Andrew’s oldest son Wesley, aged about twenty-four.<sup>27</sup> The 1870 census confirms that Wesley had purchased land from his father and uncle in order to start his own farm; he is listed as the head of a household of four, along with his wife and their two children, aged two and six months.<sup>28</sup> This process was repeated with Andrew’s younger son, James, in 1874.<sup>29</sup> By intermarrying with other black or mixed-race families in the area, the Huggart settlement established itself as a small rural community of free blacks related by blood or marriage.

More research is necessary in order to be more specific about all the individuals who lived on the land 1850-1890 and their relationships to one another. Such communities were often fluid; individuals or families might have lived at the settlement for years between censuses and never been recorded before moving on to South Bend, Indiana or to black settlements in nearby southwest Michigan. Deed records show that a free black man named Benjamin Bass purchased 120 acres of land adjacent to the Huggarts’ in 1860.<sup>30</sup> In 1876, Bass sold forty acres of his land to two men named Crocker and Simpson; Crocker and Simpson in turn sold the land again just a few months later, half each (twenty acres) to Bass’s sons-in-law Noah Boone and Hardy Manuel, also free black men.<sup>31</sup> These four names—Huggart, Bass, Boone, and Manuel—represent the four main surnames associated with the black settlement.<sup>32</sup> According to Karst, the settlement probably contained about thirty people at its most populous, in about 1880.<sup>33</sup>

The free blacks associated with the Huggart settlement lived, worked, worshipped, and were buried alongside whites in St. Joseph County. While by no means free from prejudice, Thornbrough speculates that “men who made a livelihood from the land were usually the most prosperous and contented part of the colored population,” arguing that rural blacks were somewhat freer to live and work unaccosted than urban blacks.<sup>34</sup> Karst suggests that the settlement’s small size “posed no economic threat to whites and thus allowed residents to be judged as individuals rather than by stereotypes.”<sup>35</sup> While no primary source documentation could be found to definitively prove this claim, the available evidence does suggest an integrated Union Township community in which the Huggarts were well-respected. Andrew Huggart’s obituary in the *South Bend Tribune* calls him “one of the most industrious and conscientious men we ever met,” and states that “he was, we believe, the first colored man to run for office in this county.”<sup>36</sup> More research is required to determine the nature of this office, as none of the other available sources mention it. According to Huggart’s other obituary, in the *St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, he was “beloved and respected by all his neighbors, and had many friends in this city.”<sup>37</sup>

According to interviews conducted by Frederick Karst in the 1970s, the Huggarts mingled socially with white families, and their children attended school at Olive Branch alongside white children.<sup>38</sup> Historian Anna-Lisa Cox’s examination of the black settlement in nearby Covert, Michigan, tells a similar story of rural integrated education, as does Mary Ann Brown’s look at four such communities in west-central Ohio.<sup>39</sup> According to a St. Joseph County history published in 1880, Samuel Huggart served on a committee to oversee the construction of the Sumption Prairie Baptist Church in 1852, and Andrew Huggart served as superintendent of a Sunday school at Olive Branch.<sup>40</sup> Nearby Porter Rea Cemetery, located in Potato Creek State Park about two miles away from the Huggart Settlement, contains the



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integrated graves of blacks and whites, including members of the Huggart, Boone, Bass, and Manuel families.<sup>41</sup>

Samuel Huggart died in 1872, his brother Andrew in 1881.<sup>42</sup> Soon after, the settlement showed signs of winding down as younger family members left for South Bend or Michigan. The dispersing of the Huggart settlement can be best understood by its position at the beginning of a massive shift in African American migration patterns. By 1910, the [Great Migration](#) was under way as African Americans moved from the South to the North in record numbers, also abandoning rural life for urban centers.<sup>43</sup> Such was the case for the Huggarts; Andrew's three sons Wesley, James, and Samuel lived in South Bend by 1900, where Wesley was working as a toolmaker at the [Birdsell Manufacturing Company](#), James was a laborer, and Samuel was a teamster.<sup>44</sup> The Bass family, who arrived at the settlement circa 1860, also moved to South Bend at around this time.<sup>45</sup>

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Articles from the *Indiana Magazine of History* accessed [online](#). U.S. Census and marriage records accessed via Ancestry.com unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>1</sup> Mark R. Schurr, "The 1996 Archaeological Investigations at the Hardy Manual Cabin Site (12 SJ337): an Historic African-American Cabin Site in St. Joseph County, Indiana," Department of Anthropology, University of Notre Dame, *Reports of Investigations* 97-1, pt. 2, February 21, 1997. Copy in IHB file.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957) 31-32; Stephen A. Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) xii.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Third Census, Population schedules for Rockford, Virginia; *History of St. Joseph County*; Frederick Karst, "[A Rural Black Settlement in St. Joseph County, Indiana, Before 1900](#)," *Indiana Magazine of History* 74 (September 1978): 261.

<sup>4</sup> Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) 146-147; Vincent, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory S. Rose, "[The Distribution of Indiana's Ethnic and Racial Minorities in 1850](#)," *Indiana Magazine of History* 87 (September 1991): 245-268; Vincent, 63; Coy D. Robbins, *Indiana Negro Registers 1852-1865* (Bloomington: Heritage Books, 1994). Robbins reprints the surviving registers from fifteen counties in Indiana and refers to thirteen more counties whose inventories indicate there were registers that either did not survive or have not been located. However, there is no indication that St. Joseph County had such a register or that the Huggarts ever signed a register or paid a fee.

<sup>6</sup> James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 252-254; Vincent, 97-98; Thornbrough, 53-54.

<sup>7</sup> Dean J. Kotlowski, "The Jordan is a Hard Road to Travel: Hoosier Responses to Fugitive Slave Cases, 1850-1860," *International Social Science Review* 78 (2003): 71-88, accessed via JSTOR.

<sup>8</sup> Indiana State Constitution, [Article 13 Section 1](#); Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana*, 53.



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<sup>9</sup> Barbara J. Steinson, "[Rural Life in Indiana, 1800-1950](#)," *Indiana Magazine of History* 90 (September 1994): 208; Vincent, xiii; Thornbrough, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Xenia E. Cord, "Black Rural Settlements in Indiana Before 1860," In *Indiana's African American Heritage*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs, 1993, 99-100; Anna-Lisa Cox, "A Pocket of Freedom: Blacks in Covert, Michigan in the Nineteenth Century," *Michigan Historical Review* 21 (1995): 1-18, accessed via JSTOR; James O. Wheeler and Stanley D. Brunn, "An Agricultural Ghetto : Negroes in Cass County, Michigan, 1845-1968," *Geographical Review* 59 (1969): 317-328, accessed via JSTOR. In fact, three of the four families associated with the Huggart settlement—the Basses, Boones, and Manuels—appear to have come to St. Joseph County from the Terre Haute area.

<sup>11</sup> Collection of Indiana Free Black Census Data by County, 1820-1860 in IHB resource center.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent, xiv, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Cox, 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Karst, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Land Deed, "U.S. Patent to Samuel Huggart," March 20, 1837, Recorded February 13, 1856, Deed Record Book V, 621-22, St. Joseph County Recorder's Office, County-City Building, South Bend, Indiana, copy held by IHB; La Porte Cash Certificate Number 2986, Records of La Porte Cash Entries, Record Group 49; Karst, 225. The family name was alternately spelled Huggart, Huggard, Huggert, and Hughart. Huggart is the name that appears on the family's gravestones at Porter Rea Cemetery and is the most common variant.

<sup>16</sup> Vincent, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Land Deed, "U.S. Patent to Samuel Huggart," March 20, 1837, Recorded February 13, 1856, Deed Record Book V, 621-22, St. Joseph County Recorder's Office, County-City Building, South Bend, Indiana, copy in IHB file; Karst, 225.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Ann Brown, "Vanished Black Rural Communities in Western Ohio," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 1 (1982): 107, accessed via JSTOR. According to Brown, Piqua, Ohio was a popular destination for free blacks in this period due to a land grant office established there in 1819. Census records indicate that several Huggarts migrated from Virginia to Miami County, Ohio and remained there.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Seventh Census, 1850, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana (National Archives Microfilm Publication Number 432, roll 171), 144, copy in IHB file; "The [L]ate Andrew Huggard," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881.

<sup>20</sup> "The [L]ate Andrew Huggard," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881; "Death of Andrew J. Huggard," *South Bend Tribune*, October 1, 1881; "Andrew Huggard," in *History of St. Joseph County Indiana* (Chicago: Chas. C. Chapman & Co, 1880), 957. The *St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register* dated Andrew Huggard's arrival in Indiana to "the fall of 1848." The *South Bend Tribune* says only that he was "a resident of Union Township for 32 years." Huggart died on September 30, 1881, which according to the *Tribune's* math would put his arrival in Indiana at 1849. The *History of St. Joseph County*, published in 1880, gave the year 1850.

<sup>21</sup> "The [L]ate Andrew Huggard," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881; *History of St. Joseph County*.

<sup>22</sup> U.S., Seventh Census, 1850, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana (National Archives Microfilm Publication Number 593, roll 360) 31-32; copies of all in IHB file.



<sup>23</sup> Crandall A. Shifflett, "The Household Composition of Rural Black Families: Louisa County, Virginia, 1880," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6 (1975): 235-260.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Seventh Census, 1850, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S. Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S. Ninth Census, 1870, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S. Tenth Census, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana (National Archives Microfilm Publication Number T-9, roll 309) vol XXX, 8-9, 14; "The late Andrew Huggart," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881. Interestingly, Andrew Huggart's paragraph-long biography in the *History of St. Joseph County* makes no mention of the fact that he was a free black man.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Seventh Census, 1850, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; U.S. Eighth Census, 1860, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana; Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> Land deed, "John R. Copeland to Samuel and Andrew Huggart," April 8, 1863, recorded June 3, 1863, Deed Record Book A6, 188, St. Joseph County Recorder, copy in IHB file; Karst, 257; Wheeler and Brunn, 320. According to Wheeler and Brunn, "Negros began to purchase land in areas where social and economic conditions were conducive to good Negro-white relations. . . The Negro's economic gains in agriculture [in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio] were generally much higher than they would have been within the agricultural system in the South."

<sup>27</sup> Land deed, "Samuel Huggart to Wesley C. Huggart," April 13, 1866, recorded April 13, 1866, Deed Record Book 34, 303, St. Joseph County Recorder, copy in IHB file. Wesley Huggart was 8 years old in the U.S. Census of 1850, making him 24.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; U.S., Ninth Census, 1870, population schedules for St. Joseph County, Indiana.

<sup>29</sup> Land deed, "Andrew Huggart to James Huggart," April 11, 1874, recorded April 25, 1874, Deed Record Book 52, 214, St. Joseph County Recorder, copy in IHB file.

<sup>30</sup> Land deed, "Daniel M. Shively to Benjamin Bass w. Deed", October 23, 1860, recorded October 23, 1860, Deed record Book AB, 190, St. Joseph County Recorder's Office, copy in IHB file.

<sup>31</sup> Land deed, "Benjamin Bass Deed to Crocker & Simpson," June 3, 1876, recorded June 7, 1876, Deed Record Book 56, 344, St. Joseph County Recorder, copy in IHB file; Land deed, "Ezra Crocker & [illegible initials] Simpson d. to Noah Boone," August 11, 1876, recorded August 16, 1876, Deed Record Book 56, 517, St. Joseph County Recorder; Land deed, "Ezra Crocker & [initials illegible] Simpson wty d. [warranty deed] Hardy A. Manuel," August 11, 1876, recorded August 16, 1876, Deed Record Book 56, 518, St. Joseph County Recorder; Vigo County, Indiana, *Index to Marriage Records*, Book 2, page 12; Vigo County, Indiana, *Index to Marriage Records 1840-1920*, Book 2, page 68; St. Joseph County, Indiana, *Index to Marriage Records, South Bend*, Book 5; page 387; St. Joseph County, Indiana, *Index to Marriage Records, South Bend*, Book 6, page 490. Noah Boone married Benjamin Bass's youngest daughter Amanda Bass on June 17, 1858 in Vigo County, Indiana. Hardy Manuel married Benjamin Bass's eldest daughter Eliza on January 8, 1858, in Vigo County, Indiana. After Eliza's death just a few years later, Manuel married Bass's middle daughter, Janetta (also spelled Janette, Jannetie, and Jennette in various records) on May 27, 1866 in St. Joseph County. Andrew Huggart's daughter Sarah married Efferson K. Mannuel on September 1, 1872, in St. Joseph County.

<sup>32</sup> Manuel was also recorded in documents as Manual, Maniel, Mannel, and Mankel. Boone was also recorded as Boon. In both cases, as with the surname Huggart, IHB has elected to use the spelling that appears on the family's gravestones.

<sup>33</sup> Karst, 254. Unfortunately the census records for 1890 were destroyed in a fire at the Commerce Department in Washington, D.C. on January 10, 1921, so it is not possible to directly compare the size of the settlement in 1880 to



its demographics ten years later. However, the older generation of settlers had died by 1890 and many of their descendents appear in South Bend directories beginning around 1880, so Karst's conclusion that the settlement peaked in size at some point between 1880 and 1890 is a logical one.

<sup>34</sup> Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana*, 141.

<sup>35</sup> Karst, 266.

<sup>36</sup> "Death of Andrew J. Huggard," *South Bend Tribune*, October 1, 1881.

<sup>37</sup> "The late Andrew Huggard," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881.

<sup>38</sup> Karst, 257; interviews between Karst and Lydia Mae Easterday, November 1975, and Charles Bowers, November 1975; *History of St. Joseph County*, 698.

<sup>39</sup> Cox, 7; Brown, 97-116.

<sup>40</sup> *History of St. Joseph County*, 698; "The late Andrew Huggard," *The St. Joseph Valley Weekly Register*, October 12, 1881. It should be noted that county histories such as this one are not always accurate.

<sup>41</sup> *St. Joseph County, Indiana Cemetery Inscriptions, Volume 1: Greene, Liberty, Lincoln Townships* (South Bend: South Bend Area Genealogical Society, 1992), 162-167, copy in IHB file.

<sup>42</sup> Karst, 256, 263.

<sup>43</sup> Nelson Ouellet, "[The Great Migration in Gary, Indiana \(1906-1920\): A Note](#)," *Indiana Magazine of History* 96 (March 2000): 72-83; Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "[Black Migration to Muncie, 1860-1930](#)," *Indiana Magazine of History* 92 (December 1996): 297-320; Homer C. Hawkins, "Trends in Black Migration from 1863 to 1960," *Phylon* 34 (1973): 140-152, accessed via JSTOR.

<sup>44</sup> T.G. Turner, *Turner's Directory of the Inhabitants, Institutions, and Manufactories of the City of South Bend, Indiana* (South Bend: Register Printing Company, 1880), 90; South Bend, Indiana, *City Directory*, 1901, accessed via Ancestry.com Library Edition. The city directories for South Bend also provide listings for numerous other Huggarts and Huggards, probably grandchildren of Andrew.

<sup>45</sup> T.G. Turner, *Turner's Directory of the Inhabitants, Institutions, and Manufactories of the City of South Bend, Indiana*, 39; "Will of Benjamin Bass," Will book 6, Box 20, 439-443, St. Joseph County Archives, copy in IHB file.