

Re-Remembering the New York City Draft Riots of 1863: Contested Spaces of Black Community and Local Neighborhood
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“In 1849 **Mr. Lyons** became the proprietor of the Seaman’s Home for colored sailors. In connection with this he kept a sailor’s outfitting store until the time of the draft riots in 1863. Being a prominent man and always fighting the oppression of his race, the mob threatened to hang him. Three times he alone repulsed dastardly attempts to wreck his home, but was compelled to flee to a police station to save his life, being pursued through the streets by a howling mob.” Albro Lyons obituary, New York Age, January 9, 1896

“**Mr. White** carried on the business of druggist and chemist at Frankfort and Gold Streets for nearly forty-seven years. . . . Those whom he helped had a chance to show their gratitude during the draft riots of 1863. When the riot was at its height a crowd of men gathered at White’s store to defend it from attack. Mr. White was warned by some of the business men that he would be wise if he hid himself. He said: ‘What have I to fear? Even if these men here could not protect me, there are as many men among the rioters who would fight for me as there are those who would injure me.’ Not the slightest attempt was made to harm him or his property.” Philip A. White obituary, New York Times, February 19, 1891

St. Philip’s “It . . . was our pleasure and duty to be permitted to assemble ourselves in our sanctuary on the Sunday of July 12th for our usual devotions and humble praise and thanksgiving. But on the succeeding day July 13th 1863 anarchy and confusion took the place of law and order and for several days pillage, arson, murder reigned supreme in our midst. Men, women, and children having seemingly, suddenly

become transformed into the vilest and savagest of fiends. During the reign of this state of affairs, at a late hour Tuesday night July 14th 1863 the police authorities took possession of our parish to quarter military who had been summoned hither to bring order over chaos, restore law and maintain the peace of the city. Thus our parish has been in their possession since the above mentioned date until Friday noon July 31st 1863. In consequence of such occupation our church has been greatly defaced and damaged and left in an untenable condition requiring thorough renovation.” VM, August 4 1863

This is a story about antebellum New York and the Draft Riots of July. It centers on two African-American men—Albro Lyons (1814-1896) and Philip Augustus White (1824-91)—who lived through those tumultuous days, on what happened to them and their homes as well as to their places of work and worship. I did not pick these two men out of the archives at random: Philip Augustus White was my paternal great-grandfather and his wife was a niece of Albro Lyons. They lie at the heart of a larger project I am currently working on: a history of the everyday social, cultural, and work life of nineteenth-century black New Yorkers captured through the lens of family history.

This paper suggests that a new historical approach—one which I term “spatial history”—can lead to new interpretations of the Draft Riots. It argues that White’s and Lyons’s fates during the Draft Riots were shaped by their differing conduct as both private and public figures inhabiting spaces in both the black community and the local city neighborhood. Historians have not as yet been able to construct such narratives due to what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called the four silences of history: silence of the sources; of the archives; of the historical narrative; of history itself. THIS SECTION WILL BE EXPANDED.

From its beginnings, New York was a hostile environment for blacks. Slavery did not end in the state until 1827, but even after its abolition antagonism against African Americans from both below—especially the Irish—and above—especially from a significant segment of the city’s ruling commercial and political elite, particularly the Peace Democrats. Hostilities among these groups eventually came to a boil and erupted during the Draft Riots of July 1863.

The impetus for the **Draft Riots** was the federal government’s decision to draft soldiers into the Union army during the Civil War. In March of 1863 Congress passed a National Conscription Act that decreed that all male citizens between the ages of twenty and thirty-five were to be enrolled in the military, and then a lottery conducted to determine who would actually serve. But the Act also made it possible for drafted men to be exempted from service by offering an acceptable substitute or by paying 300 dollars; the terms of this exemption thus insured that it would be the poor rather than the rich who would go to war. New York’s white working class population—native born, Irish, and German—initially supported the war, seeing it as a source of employment and also as an act of good citizenship. But a variety of factors gradually led them to withdraw their support. They were disillusioned by the mounting number of war deaths; frustrated by rising prices and falling wages; resentful of the government’s power; fearful of economic competition from blacks and especially of the specter of ex-slave labor flooding the North after a Union victory; and, finally, angry that they were being asked to risk their lives in an armed conflict in which neither those whom they held responsible for the war—the political elites—nor those who they believed to be the cause of the war—blacks—were participants. On July 13th, they took to the streets and rioted.

Historians have extensively documented the ways in which the Draft Riots took shape and evolved over a five-day period. From the present perspective, the riots may be seen as a contestation over city spaces which manifested itself in the mob's attempts to seize control of the city's infrastructure, to invade or police neighborhoods and work places so as to rid them of a black presence, and finally to destroy black property, both individual and communal. On the first day the rioters were a composite crowd of native born, Irish, and Germans, Protestant and Catholics, who came from different parts of the city. They were mostly journeymen in the older artisan trades and seemed mainly intent on destroying government property—municipal and federal buildings, telegraphs lines, railroads and streetcar tracks, ferries and bridges—in a daring attempt to contest and perhaps even take over the entire space of the city (Bernstein 23, 20, 5). By the second day, however, the riot took a new turn as artisans and Germans retreated, and workers in the new industrial occupations and common laborers—mostly Irish Catholic—took over, venting their anger against the wealthy and the ruling elites in a wholesale destruction of private property (Bernstein 24, 21, 26).

But from the first day and through to the end of the week, rioters reserved their special animus for New York's black population, targeting black institutions, property, and individuals. As early as Monday evening, the mob destroyed the building of one of the most important benevolent institutions for African Americans, the Colored Orphan Asylum; established by a group of white women in a building located at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street, its Board of Managers appointed the African-American James McCune Smith as the orphanage's doctor in 1843 entrusting him with the medical care of its 230 children, aged four to twelve. According to contemporaneous accounts, about 400 rioters

entered the house, threw furniture out of the window and set the house on fire (“Report” 24-25). Attacks were also made on black homes. Similar scenes could be found on the East Side. Several seamen’s boardinghouses located near Albro Lyons’s in the fourth ward also were looted and burned; owners and boarders alike were stripped of their clothes and forced to run naked through the streets to safety (Cook 78-80).

Indeed, black people—men, women, and children—were targeted as well. Part of the animosity was economic. White longshoremen living around the piers began patrolling the dock area as early as Monday; they issued a statement proclaiming that work on the docks was reserved for white laborers alone and attacked black men caught in the vicinity (Bernstein 27). Yet work antagonisms alone cannot explain all the assaults against black individuals. As often as not, neighbor turned against neighbor. In one particularly horrifying incident, an Irish laborer living on West 27th Street broke into a house on the corner on 27th and Seventh Avenue inhabited by Abraham Franklin, a crippled black coachman, and his sister. He and his fellow rioters dragged them from the house, beat and kicked them, and then hanged Franklin from a lamppost. The mob scattered when soldiers appeared, cut Franklin’s body down, and rescued the sister. But no sooner had they left than the body was hoisted up again, only to be taken down later and dragged through the streets by its genitals (Cook 143).

Philip White was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1824. Throughout the 1830s, he attended the African Free School # 2 on Laurens Street, one of the few schools established by the Public School Society for black children. In 1840, White became an apprentice in the drugstore of James McCune Smith, African-American doctor and

reformer, and close friend of Frederick Douglass. He then went on to attend the College of Pharmacy of the City of New York from which he graduated in 1844, the first African-American student to do so. That same year White became a communicant at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, one of New York's earliest African-American churches, and a few years later opened a drugstore on Frankfort Street in the city's fourth ward. By 1858, he had moved his store to the corner of Frankfort and Gold Streets, where it would become such a contested space during the Draft Riots, and was living on nearby Vandewater Street. At this time, White appears to have devoted all of his energies to his business, to his social activist causes such as his secretaryship of the New York Society of the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children, and to St. Philip's. It is only in 1867 that he would marry Elizabeth Guignon, a niece of his friend and neighbor, Albro Lyons.

White and Lyons most probably met at **St. Philip's Episcopal Church** some time in the mid 1840s where they were communicants and eventually members of the vestry. St. Philip's was one of New York City's earliest African-American churches. Born in New York in 1814, **Lyons** attended the African Free Schools when they were still under the sponsorship of the Manumission Society. In the 1830s, when White was still a boy, Lyons was already an active participant in community affairs. He was a member of the African Society for Mutual Relief, the Philomathean Literary Society, and the Hamilton Lodge, and had several times been elected delegate to represent New York City at the national conventions of colored people. After trying a variety of trades, Lyons finally opened a Seamen's Home for colored sailors on Pearl Street. In the mid-1850s he moved it into his own house on Vandewater Street which was also reputed to be a station on the Underground Railroad. The close proximity of White's and Lyons's homes to one

another as well as their collaborative work in the Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children undoubtedly cemented the friendship between the two men.

The choices that Albro Lyons and Philip White made in their personal and public lives as well as the institutional dilemmas their place of worship—St. Philip’s Episcopal Church—shed particular light on the ways in which African Americans in antebellum New York sought to claim spaces for themselves and endow them with special meanings, and how in turn these spaces were fiercely contested by others during the Draft Riots. Space in this instance is not merely physical or geographical, but is marked by human relationships; it is social and political. It represents African Americans’ efforts to carve out places of their own “in a world bewitched by the invisible [or not so invisible] powers of the Other,” in other words to master the spaces they inhabited (de Certeau). The claiming of space is always a process, and space itself remains unstable and unfixed, in constant jeopardy and need of being negotiated. The Draft Riots thus represent a pivotal moment in the history of the entire city. The violence that erupted during that week reshaped the urban landscape, realigning boundaries and reforming spaces increasingly demarcated by race and class.

Albro Lyons and Philip White inhabited at least two kinds of spaces. One was the **black community in which African Americans in New York City came together and established institutions of their own—churches, mutual aid societies, literary and educational organizations. Its members delimited spaces carved out of the surrounding hostile environment and designed to give them a greater degree of control over their lives. On a material level, their will and power is embodied in property ownership and**

the maintenance of institutions. On the level of consciousness, will and power develop out of these institutions to form what Raymond Williams has called a “knowable community” centered around a “grammar of morality” (166). Here, this grammar consists of a sense of common identity born of shared racial origins and history, a belief in a commonality of interests leading to collective action, and the preservation of a common historical memory. Ideally, the black community enables the mastery of place over the vagaries of history.

New York’s antebellum black community had its limitations, however. For one, its members were not a **monolithic group but constituted a heterogeneous population divided by class, color, place of origin, religion, gender**, etc; inevitably, they had different understandings of what it meant to be “African” or “colored,” and pursued different tactics to achieve their goals. Second, **New York’s black community was not spatially bounded**; rather, its inhabitants as well as its institutions were scattered throughout the city’s lower wards. Such geographical diversity necessarily resulted in additional interests and affiliations outside of the black community. Third, black institutions were most often **not fully autonomous but remained dependent on the white benevolence and patronage of white religious and abolitionist groups**. Thus, even under ordinary circumstances, the black community was never fully stable and its will and power never fully secure. During the Draft Riots, the threats to it were even more devastating.

If black New Yorkers inhabited community spaces, they also lived in neighborhoods as well—specific, bounded locales that can be geographically mapped but are also defined by a set of social relations. In the early antebellum

period, New York neighborhoods were highly heterogeneous in terms of class, race, and ethnicity. People tended to live in close proximity to their work place so that neighborhoods brought together employers and employees, the well-to-do and the poor, the native born, African Americans, Irish, and Germans. Thus, black New Yorkers lived in neighborhoods that were neither identical to the black community nor racialized. They gave rise to a different kind of knowable community, one that was largely based on face-to-face contact. As such, the neighborhood can lead to relations of both physical and social intimacy. It can allow individuals to master place through the close observation of neighbors, streets, and building just as it can forge emotional bonds among neighbors. But neighborhood communities can also lead to hostility as evidenced by the mob attacks on black neighbors and property during the Draft Riots. Moreover, the boundaries of neighborhood are never fixed and absolute; rather, they are porous and vulnerable to intrusion by strangers. The lives of Albro Lyons and Philip White suggest how both men sought to delimit places of their own in their fourth ward neighborhood. They point to the ways in which intimacy and hostility existed side by side, giving rise to complex contestations of and negotiations over African-American place.

The Black Community: St. Philip's Episcopal Church

From the early decades of the nineteenth century on, black New Yorkers worked to establish and maintain community institutions. Among them were churches; literary societies like the Philomathean Society; newspaper offices like those of Freedom's Journal or The Colored American; the African Society for Mutual Relief; the New York Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children which was housed at

one point in the same building as White's drugstore on Frankfort Street; many Seamen's Home for colored sailors, like Albro Lyons's, near the docks on the Lower East Side; and James McCune Smith's pharmacy on West Broadway, an important meeting place of black leaders and activists. If this black community had originally been localized, under urban pressures it gradually became aspatial or "unbounded," to use a term employed by historian Kenneth Scherzer, and spread out over several wards and neighborhoods.

The fate suffered by St. Philip's Episcopal Church during the Draft Riots offers a compelling example of the fragility of black community institutions. This church originated out of the desire of Trinity Church's black parishioners to delimit a space of their own. As early as 1795, they appealed to the church vestry for help "to purchase a piece of ground as a burial place to bury black persons of every denomination and description whatever in this city whether bond or free" (Minutes, April 13, 1795). In 1807 they requested that provision be made for them to receive religious instruction geared specifically to their own needs. The church's first building was erected in 1819 on a plot of land on Collect Street (later Center) on the edge of ward six's notorious Five Points district. Like other black churches, St. Philip's was a site of social activism. Beginning in 1848, the New York Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children repeatedly rented rooms in the church's basement to house a primary school for black children; in addition, collections were taken periodically for the Colored Orphan Asylum.

Several factors converged, however, to undermine St. Philip's as an autonomous community institution. **For one, many white New Yorkers strongly contested its self-assertive claims as a delimited place.** The most egregious event was the assault on the

church during the anti-abolitionist riot of 1834. To racist New Yorkers, abolition evoked basic fears, most especially the specter of economic competition and racial amalgamation, and it took little to set them off. The rioters entered St. Philip's where they pulled the altar down; ripped apart the table; shredded the chancel carpet, altar hangings, and vestments; and broke the flower vases (Hewitt 41-47).

Second, St. Philip's continued dependence on Trinity also undermined its parishioners' ability to master place. St. Philip's did not own the land on Collect Street; rather, it was obtained through a sixty-year lease from George Lorillard, one of Trinity's wealthiest members. Moreover, throughout the years St. Philip's received substantial annual stipends from Trinity itself. Finally, explicitly excluded from the New York state diocesan convention the church waged a bitter ten-year battle to become a member. Year after year, a delegation was sent to the convention only to be denied admission. It was only in 1853 that St. Philip's three delegates—Philip White among them—would be seated. Thus, although a central institution of the black community, St. Philip's enmeshed in a broader framework of white religious institutions.

St. Philip's did not simply represent black social space, however; it was above all **sacred space**. As such, it endowed the concept of a delimited place with new meaning, offering its parishioners an experience of place and time dramatically different from that which characterized their secular world. Religious scholars have argued that within the sacred world the material realities of place function as a means of apprehending the divine, of interpreting the higher order of things. Sacred space thus encompasses a sense both of place and placelessness, of particularity and universality. It opens up ultimately

onto a transcendent sense of timelessness; it becomes the embodiment of eternal time (Sheldrake 30, 56, 153).

The physical space of the church is thus a manifestation of divinity; it is always important to congregants. This was no less true for the parishioners of St. Philip's. In insisting on having an edifice of their own, they sought to mark its interior and express their reverence of God through repeated improvements. The reports of the damage done during the 1834 riot suggest that considerable efforts were subsequently expended to beautify it. In the mid-1850s, the vestry decided to move uptown as the geographic redistribution of the church's membership had rendered the downtown location increasingly inconvenient; the move further contributed to the delocalization of the black community. In 1857 the church purchased a Methodist church building on Mulberry Street in the Fourteenth Ward, and once again, parishioners set about improving their church's interior.

For St. Philip's parishioners, moreover, the sacred space of their church embodied specifically **Episcopalian traditions**. We need then to reconsider the church's strategy from yet another perspective as a bold attempt on the part of a black institution to delimit a place of its own within a white institutional space. St. Philip's congregants expressed their denominational belonging most explicitly through their insistence on admission to the diocesan convention which was itself a reflection of church unity; not to be a part of the convention meant not to be a part of the denomination. But their identity as Episcopalians was also reaffirmed more immediately through architecture and ritual. At this time, Episcopal churches in New York were heavily influenced by Bishop Hobart's promotion of High Church ideology; he and other bishops revived ideas of tradition,

order, and ritual that they believed had been lost under liberalizing tendencies within Anglicanism. From the perspective of doctrine, High Church belief asserted that Episcopal bishops could trace their lineage in an unbroken chain of succession back to earlier Christian bishops and hence to the apostles themselves (Townsend 22). From the perspective of worship, High Church practice insisted that Anglican tradition should be carried out through a return to more formalistic ritual and a renewed interest in Gothic architecture. In embracing High Church ideals, St. Philip's lay claim to being an integral part of ancient Anglican tradition, and adapted sacred space and ritual accordingly.

History, however, invaded St. Philip's in the form of the Draft Riots of 1863.

The church was not overrun by the Irish mob, although parishioners might well have feared that it would meet the same fate it did in 1834 or that the African Methodist Church on 35th Street actually faced when rioters tried to burn it down on July 15. St. Philip's location on Mulberry Street across from the New York Police Department headquarters protected it from attack. Yet, ironically, it opened the church to another form of violence—occupation by military troops brought in to help restore order. As the vestry minutes of August 4 attest, the congregation's sense of the desecration of their sacred space was no less intense. They immediately set about restoring the sanctuary and appealed to city and federal authorities for aid. But it was only after months of protracted negotiations that St. Philip's was reimbursed approximately \$1,500 of the \$2,500 that the repairs had cost (De Costa 39-40). No extant records exist to tell us how city and federal agencies viewed the matter. Perhaps their reaction was similar to the contempt heaped upon members of the African Methodist Church, which had also been used as army barracks. An 1887 account of the riots written by William Stoddard, a former volunteer

special, indicates the extent to which the municipal authorities operated according to a grammar of morality different from that of St. Philip's congregants. They grudgingly agreed to pay the Methodist church for new carpets as well as new books for the Sunday-school library "on the ground that the unrighteous police, soldiery, and 'specials' had read up forever all there was left of the old," but drew the line "with a good deal of quiet fun" at reimbursement for the Sunday collections missed when the church was undergoing repairs. Stoddard cynically concluded: "That church and the Orphan Asylum both made money by the mob, but in somewhat different ways" (120-22).

For the parishioners of the African Methodist Church and St. Philip's, the psychic violation must have been twofold. They must have been dismayed on the one hand by the lack of emotional (not to mention financial) protection offered them by those responsible for protecting them, and on the other by the defilement of a sacred space that more than any other had conferred stability on the "uncertainties" of their daily lives. Thus, the St. Philip's vestry ended its August 4 minutes by fervently anticipating the day when "we and our fellow parishioners may once again through God's providence be permitted to draw near and assemble in our old, accustomed, beloved, and familiar spots in united prayer, to mingle our voices in praise and thanksgiving to `God our refuge.'"

The Neighborhood of the "Swamp": Albro Lyons and Philip White

Albro Lyons and Philip White were not among those parishioners who were responsible for St. Philip's move uptown. They both resided on Vandewater Street, Lyons at number 20 and White at number 40. The street was located in the city's Fourth Ward in an area south of the Five Points district and extending to the East River

commonly called the Swamp because it had once been marshland. At the time of the Draft Riots, Lyons's Seamen's Home was in his residence and the Seaman's General Outfitting Store he owned was close by on Roosevelt Street (Brooklyn Eagle, June 10, 1951), while White's drugstore was a couple of blocks away on the corner of Frankfort and Gold Streets. In addition to Lyons's and White's participation in the affairs of the black community, we need then to consider their place in the neighborhood of the Swamp as well.

As we have seen, by the mid-nineteenth century New York's black community had become aspatial and delocalized. To a certain extent, it fits Benedict Anderson's concept of an "imagined community" in which members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). **In contrast, the city neighborhood is localized, bounded, and defined by particular landmarks and objects; it is a delimited geographical space. Within its boundaries, however, it also functions as a social space created by daily interaction among neighbors** (Scherzer, 141). In Benedict Anderson's terms, it more closely approximates "the primordial village of face-to-face contact" characterized by the "particularistic ties of kinship and clientship" (6).

Neighborhood interactions revolve then around family and kin networks but also entail practices of work, trade, property rental or ownership. These face-to face interactions readily facilitate a mastery that comes from visual familiarity with one's environment or even more ideally from possession of one's own delimited place.

The neighborhood space is also marked, however, by other contacts that have a potentially destabilizing effect. For one, even though the neighborhood may be bounded,

its boundaries are porous and subject to invasion by strangers, by outside forces.

For another, if neighborliness connotes intimacy, it can also lead to hostility. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud noted that in personal relationships the neighbor “has more claim to my hostility and even my hatred”; he is “someone who tempts [me] to satisfy [my] aggressiveness on him.” He termed such hatreds among territorial adjacent communities “the narcissism of minor differences” and defined them as the aggressive feelings of one community toward a related neighboring one in order to solidify group cohesion (67, 69, 72). We can thus readily see how at moments of historical crisis forces in the surrounding environment can threaten and destabilize a delimited place.

According to Burrows and Wallace, in 1861 the Fourth Ward was the most densely populated place on earth containing 290,000 people per square mile (page). Although less notorious than Five Points, it was just as much of a slum: in appallingly overcrowded conditions, its inhabitants suffered from poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, and disease. They were subjected to the yellow fever epidemic of 1822, outbreaks of cholera in 1832 and 1849, and tuberculosis and venereal disease remained chronic problems. Like all other neighborhoods in Lower Manhattan at this time, the Swamp was defined primarily by the kinds of industries that were located there and the people who worked in them. Shipbuilding industries dominated the waterfront area along with associated trades such as boarding houses and outfitting stores for sailors like those Lyons owned as well as grog shops and brothels that catered to sailors’ more pleasurable needs (Scherzer 31, 66). Adjacent to the waterfront was the area of the Swamp proper where Philip White’s drugstore was located. This area specialized in the tanning and other leather related industries. Many of New York’s old merchant class had

made their fortune tanning leather and storing hides in warehouses around Frankfort Street until the ill effects of the leather-making process led the city to close the yards down (Scoville I: 251-85; Bittenwieser 25-26).

In early antebellum New York, work place and residence were often in close proximity to one another in neighborhoods like the Swamp; manufacturers and workers alike often lived in the same neighborhood, as did workers of different ethnic and racial backgrounds; class and racial/ethnic differentiation occurred within buildings and blocks rather than from neighborhood to neighborhood (Scherzer 51). In this sense, the Swamp was no different from other city neighborhoods, bringing together well-to-do manufacturers and merchants, skilled tradesmen and artisans, and unskilled laborers, native-born populations, whites, blacks and immigrants. By the early 1860s, however, the area was becoming increasingly working-class and Irish. Blacks were now increasingly concentrated in wards to the North and West; and although merchants still maintained their businesses in the Swamp, they had begun to move their households to residential enclaves in a gradual process that was completed in the 1870 (Scherzer 95).

Albro Lyons and Philip White lived within the double context of the black community and the local neighborhood of the Swamp. Both men were dedicated to their own personal socioeconomic advancement just as they were both committed to serving their community. It was their different methods of regulating their private and public affairs within the neighborhood that accounts for their vastly disparate experiences during the Draft Riots. **Lyons's** place on Vandewater Street brought together both private and public functions: it was at once domestic space (family home), economic

space (Seamen's Home), and black community space (a station on the Underground Railroad). In an unpublished autobiographical sketch, one of Lyons's daughters, Maritcha, described how the multiple functions of her home made it especially suitable as a stopping point for runaway slaves: "Father's connection with the underground railroad brought many strange faces to our house, for it was semi-public and persons could go in and out without attracting special attention" (HAW papers). By the mid-1850s, Lyons had accumulated a sizeable estate and was not hesitant about displaying his wealth; property assessment records indicate that in 1862 the house was valued at \$5,500.

In her same autobiographical sketch, Maritcha Lyons gave a vivid account of how the "rabble" launched three attacks on the home before finally gutting it; in the first, window panes were broken, shutters smashed, and the front door partially demolished; in the second, her father fired a pistol to disperse the crowd; in the third, the mob successfully penetrated the house. After its destruction, Lyons submitted claims for compensation to the Merchants Relief Committee, a group composed of some of the city's most prominent citizens seeking to help victims of the riots. They itemize the value of his possessions in exquisite detail. The fact that he was able to recover from this private association approximately the same amount that the city and federal governments had reimbursed St. Philip's (\$1,500) confirms Lyons substantial wealth (HAW papers).

A convergence of factors helps to explain the assault on Lyons's house. To Lyons himself, his home represented a haven for his family and members of the wider black community as well as a well-deserved reward for successful entrepreneurship. To the Irish mob, however, it was a harsh reminder of their own lack of will and power, of their inability to delimit places of their own. Their attack had manifold meanings. First,

it struck at the very heart of the black domestic household. Second, it was directed against black property and wealth, the manifestations of which could only seem ostentatious and illegitimate to the rioters. Third, it was designed to destroy a black workplace and threaten black sailors inclined to seek “white” work on the docks. And finally, it sought to eliminate a black community institution dedicated to antislavery work. Maritcha Lyons does not say whether the mob was composed of neighbors or strangers or both. What is particularly significant, however, is that Lyons’s neighbors found no compelling reason to come to his aid. In both his establishment of a colored Seamen’s Home and his social activism, Lyons had chosen to cater exclusively to the black community rather than to his neighborhood community; thus he had been unable—or unwilling—to translate his daily face-to-face contacts within the neighborhood into particularistic ties that might have motivated those around him to come to his defense.

On the day of the final assault on the home, John W. Rode, a sergeant from the fourth precinct, sent Lyons a note in which he wrote: “I cannot say today what will occur tomorrow. I will be at said drugstore at 3 o’clock this day with horse and wagon” (HAW papers). I can only surmise that the named drugstore was **Philip White’s** and that Sergeant Rode believed it to be a safe haven from which he could effect the rescue of the Lyons family. White’s very different construction of a social space for himself within the neighborhood of the Swamp accounts for both his personal safety and the preservation of his property during the riots. To a lesser degree than Lyons, and perhaps not quite as visibly, White was an active member of the black community. He was several times elected to the St. Philip’s vestry and was secretary of the New York Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children from 1851 until at least 1865; for a

period of time this organization's offices were housed in the same building as his drugstore. It was this drugstore and his position as local druggist that enabled White to delimit his own place of will and power within the Swamp.

White's trade—and his success at it—may be seen as a form of power. In antebellum America, pharmacy occupied a fluid status as a field midway between a trade and a profession. At this time, no special training was required to become a druggist and no restrictive legislation existed to regulate the compounding and selling of drugs. Rather, pharmacy was regarded as an entrepreneurial field in which any ambitious young man, even of the lower classes, could readily make a name for himself. Philip White undoubtedly turned to pharmacy to advance his own socioeconomic agenda as well as to act upon a more altruistic desire to help the sick and suffering poor around him. And he undoubtedly chose to attend the College of Pharmacy of the City of New York both to hone his skills as a druggist and to become part of a professional network of businessmen whose acquaintance might stand him in good stead in later years.

White's drugstore occupied an important space within both the black community and the local neighborhood. For their part, African Americans were highly appreciative of the success of their businessmen. In the February 11, 1848 issue of The North Star William C. Nell noted that he had "visited the Apothecary's Hall of Dr. James McCune Smith in West Broadway, as also the establishment of Mr. Philip White in Frankfort Street, both of whom are practical men and conduct their business, preparing medicines, etc.etc. with as much readiness and skill as any other disciple of Galen and Hippocrates. . . [They] are proving their capacity, as I believe, to their pecuniary benefit, and at the same time thus elevating the character of those with whom they are identified by

complexion.” To Nell, these two drugstores were sterling examples of modern black professionalism, entrepreneurship, and adherence to the Protestant work ethic.

But White’s drugstore was also a part of the local neighborhood of the Swamp. Both the physical space of the store and his actual practice as druggist enabled White to master his environment. The antebellum drugstore sold toilets articles and perfumery as well as items now found mostly in hardware stores. But the drugstore’s main business was of course the selling of drugs that were compounded right there on the premises.

In the beginning at least, Philip White would have performed such tasks himself. Thus, to a much greater extent than Lyons, his labor would have been highly visible as his neighbors could see him day after day working behind his prescription counter and could appreciate his dedication to his work. As a druggist, moreover, White was a provider in the city’s service industry. From his own perspective, he was a small business owner, self-employed, and independent. He also possessed a certain degree of social prestige, and had open before him the possibility of upward mobility, which might eventually culminate in property ownership. From the point of view of his neighbors in the Swamp, he was a healer in a community ravaged by chronic illness and disease. Consequently, White sought, in ways that Lyons either could not or would not, to serve his immediate neighborhood by building up particularistic ties of clientship. His obituary in the New York Times gives us a good sense of how he achieved these ends; it reported that White “was never unmindful of the poor, and the services and material of his store were willingly given without pay to any one who needed them. . . . His acts of kindness and charity were numerous, and scores of poor families were befriended and helped by

him not only with medicines, but with food and money. Those whom he helped had a chance to show their gratitude during the draft riots of 1863.”

The New York Times obituary attributed to White the comment that he felt certain of protection not only by those standing guard at his drugstore but also by “many men among the rioters.” This statement suggests that the mob was at least in part composed of neighbors prepared to destroy black property—perhaps Albro Lyons’s home—but determined to “fight” for his. White’s strategy throughout the 1850s had consisted then of delimiting a place in which he could bring together potentially antagonistic groups in his neighborhood and provide useful service to each of them. In his drugstore, White successfully forged a relationship of mutual interdependence between himself and his neighbors in which benevolence and self-interest were inextricably intertwined for the benefit of all concerned. If White took care of his customers, giving away medicines for free, he was through this act of benevolence maintaining the stability of the neighborhood in which he both lived and worked, and protecting his own position with it. In turn, if his poor Irish neighbors accepted his benevolence, they were ultimately able to repay him by protecting him during the riots; in so doing, they were also ensuring that the drugstore on which they depended so heavily would survive the riots and continue to serve them. Here the particularistic ties of clientship made possible the formation of neighborhood bonds that transcended divisions of race, class, and ethnicity.

Yet White’s relationship to his neighborhood community was far more complex than his poor Irish neighbors ever imagined. Unbeknownst to them, he had gained the confidence of the businessmen of the Swamp whose support eventually allowed him to

engage in a wholesale drug business. White's work, then, extended beyond his visible role as a local service provider to the more invisible, aspatial, and impersonal (but far more lucrative) business of wholesale dealer. And yet, as the obituary notes, White's ability to advance in his trade was enabled by the particularistic ties he had forged with businessmen in the Swamp and also, quite possibly, by contacts he had made and nurtured over the years through the College of Pharmacy.

White may be seen, then, as a transitional figure between local shopkeeper and emergent capitalizing manufacturer. In this position he was able to improve his socioeconomic status but allow it to remain hidden from those who might have resented his rapid upward mobility. White's experiences within the space of the neighborhood were defined then not so much by his race and class as by his neighbors' perceptions of them. To his poor Irish customers, he was above all a hardworking shopkeeper whose generosity compelled their loyalty. To the businessmen of the Swamp, he was an entrepreneurial young man whose business prospects they wanted to help improve. To both groups, his drugstore and his practice as druggist contributed to the welfare of their neighborhood that they did not want to see undermined.

The Draft Riots and their aftermath underscore the degree to which claims to space by members of a subordinated group are so often subject to contestation and negotiation, and its occupation so often—but not always—fluid and unstable. Lyons's fate during the riots tells a fairly typical story: the success of white mob violence in attacking and destroying black property on the one hand, the inability of African Americans to delimit their own places of will and power on the other. In contrast,

White's experiences must be seen as quite atypical. The survival of his drugstore points to the extraordinary success of his manipulation of space as strategy in the midst of a hostile environment; so far, the archives have not uncovered similar events that might have happened to other African Americans during the riots. And although White's story is that of one single individual and occurred within the context of personal rather than systemic relationships, it might well provide us with a countermodel of racism and allow us to imagine possible new cross-racial alliances and interactions within this country's tangled web of race relations.

Lyons's and White's postbellum lives further indicate how black New Yorkers both continued to delimit places of their own but also experienced space as unfixed and unstable. Shaken by the harrowing events of the Draft Riots, Lyons left New York and moved his family to Rhode Island; it would be many years before he would return and settle in Brooklyn. White continued to live in the Swamp until the building of the Brooklyn Bridge destroyed Vandewater Street, forcing him to move to Brooklyn in 1870 but allowing him to maintain his drugstore on the corner of Frankfort and Gold until his death in 1891. Lyons's and White's move to Brooklyn was in fact part of a broader exodus of black New Yorkers to Brooklyn that resulted in the creation of a black middle-class neighborhood in the Williamsburg area. Although a sign of the residential segregation that has so plagued the nation's race relations, this bounded neighborhood must also be seen as a protective response to the racial violence suffered by black New Yorkers during the Draft Riots and as part of their renewed efforts to carve out spaces of will and power of their own.

One result of this migration to Brooklyn, however, was the further spatial separation of blacks from their community institution. White continued his work on behalf of St. Philip's Church, focusing in particular on its financial health; he effectively took the business skills he had learned and the money he had earned in his neighborhood drugstore and reinvested them in a black community institution. Neither neighborhood nor church was to remain spatially fixed, however. In 1886, St. Philip's moved further uptown to West 25th Street before following yet another new intra-urban migration of black New Yorkers to Harlem in the early decades of the twentieth century. It is this far more recent spatial formation that has come to function for so many of us as a metonym for black neighborhood and community. But in so doing, we risk forgetting the far richer and more complex history of black New Yorkers' claims to space.

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