

# The Webbs

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A Tompkins County Family

In honor of our county's bicentennial The History Center is celebrating one long-established family from Caroline, the Webbs and their descendants, who exemplify the strength, character, and dedication to family and community that highlight the best of Tompkins County.



## **Buying Freedom: Peter Webb and His Descendants**

The first enslaved people in Tompkins County were brought here by families moving to new farmlands in central New York. A number of families from England had settled in the James River and Roanoke River country of Virginia and nearby colonies. When lands in central New York became available after the American Revolution, groups from those parts “prospected” this area for possible settlement. Dr. Joseph Speed and others of his family were interested. John James Speed purchased 1,875 acres from Samuel W. Johnson in the town of Caroline, which was then part of Tioga County, in 1804. The Speed family moved here in 1805, bringing with them four enslaved people, registered by the Tioga County Clerk’s office as Ezekiel, 19, Fanny, 15, Peter, 13 and Maria, 12. John J. Speed had been a merchant, buying and selling slaves in Virginia.

## Peter and Phyllis Webb

Peter and Phyllis Webb were both born into slavery sometime in the 1790s and brought to New York as children. Phyllis (her last name is unknown) was born in North Carolina. Peter Webb, who was born around 1792 in Virginia, was brought here when he was about 13 by slave merchant John James Speed, who settled in Caroline on Level Green Road. When he came of age, Peter made an arrangement with Speed to enable him to earn money to purchase his freedom for the price of \$350.00 plus \$34.00 in interest. Webb did lumbering work in Harford Mills and then worked as a hostler in Ithaca. In 1818, nine years before slavery ended in New York State, Peter Webb paid Speed the full \$384.00 and became a free man. Phyllis would be freed in 1827, when the law abolishing slavery in New York State went into effect. Peter and Phyllis married in 1819 and had 11 children, only a few of whom survived to adulthood.



Peter Webb Manumission 39  
Speedville N.Y. 1 Dec<sup>r</sup> 1818  
This is to certify that I have this day  
agreed to discharge my Man Peter, known  
by the name of Peter Webb, from all fur-  
ther servitude as a slave, that he is free  
to act for himself, as a free man from  
this time forward - witness my hand  
the above date -  
Witness - Jno. Jas. Speed  
I certify the above to be a true copy  
of the original in all respects -  
March 20<sup>th</sup> 1822 Moses Cass - T. Clk.

This copy of a page from the **Book of Record for the Town of Caroline** contains official information from 1811 to ca. 1831, including town meeting minutes and records of cattle marks for local farmers. There are also property transactions, and one page describes the “Peter Webb Manumission” [sic] recorded in Speedville, [sic] NY on 1 December, 1818. 2-5-7.3

**“Peter Webb Manumission  
Speedville, NY 1 Dec, 1818-**

This is to certify that I have this day agreed to discharge my Man Peter, known by the name of Peter Webb, from all further servitude as a slave, that he is free to act for himself as a free man from this time forward - witness my hand the above date -

Jno. Jas. Speed

Witness -

I certify the above to be a true copy of the original in all respects -

Moses Cass, T. Clk [Town Clerk]

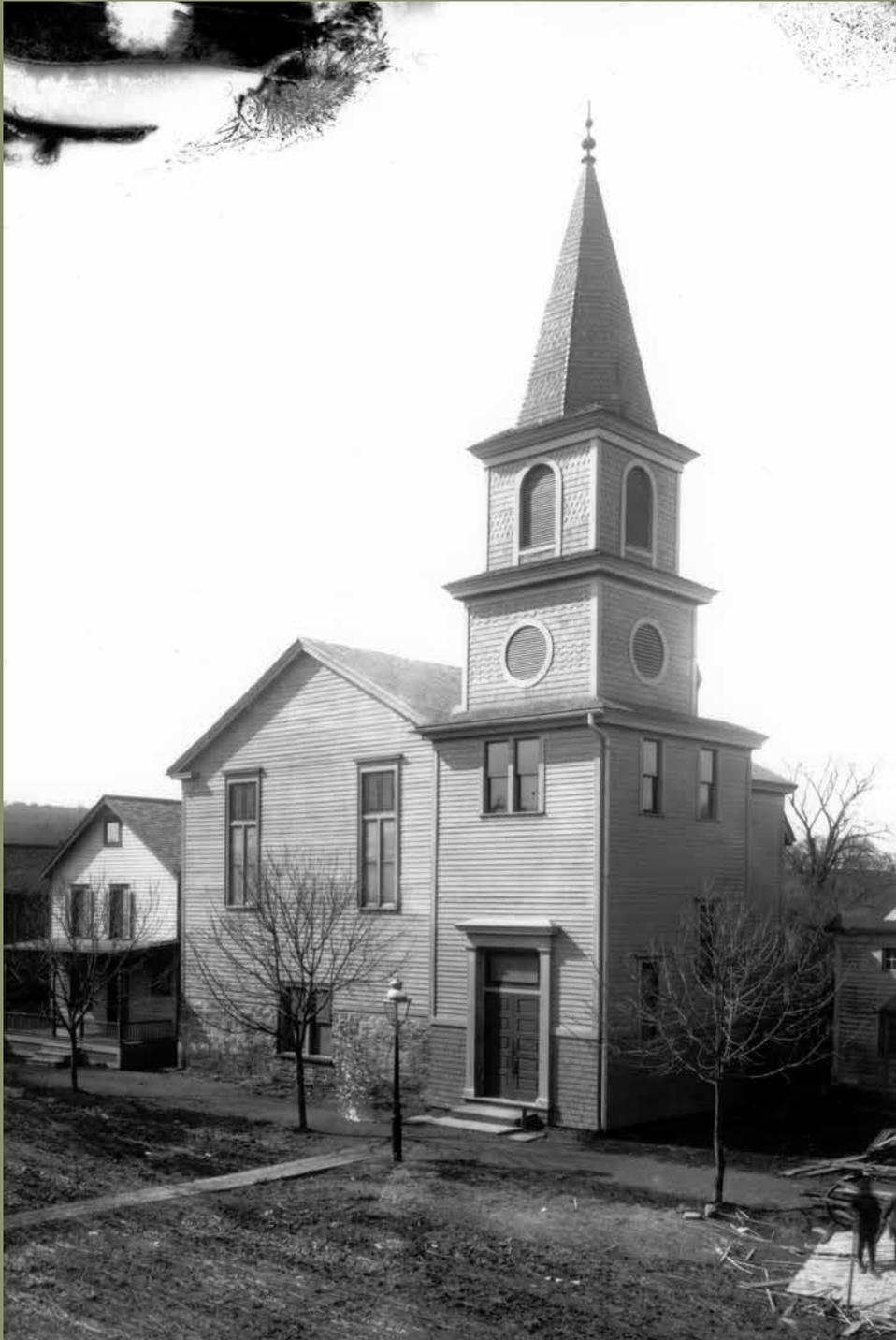
March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1822”



## **Frederick Webb and Lucina Barton Webb**

In 1852, Frederick M. Webb, the second child of Peter and Phyllis, married Lucina Barton. They lived on a forty-acre farm in Caroline, but in 1870 they purchased 75 acres of the original thousand-acre Speed property, including the old homestead where Peter had lived and worked as a slave years before.

n.d./GPF D5.34



Peter Webb was a member of the Baptist Church but he supported the local African American community in the organization of the **St. James AME Zion Church** in Ithaca in 1833.

F1.127



**The Old Speed Mansion**, now known as the Bailor Homestead, was built in 1805. Known by the early slaves as the Big House, the Speed family residence was bought in 1870 by Frederick Webb and Lucina Barton Webb, the son and daughter-in-law of Peter Webb, who had worked there as a slave many years before. This ironic twist of fate caused an early historian of the county to say, “Verily, the times have changed.” This land still belongs to descendants of the Webb-Bailor family.



**Mabel Webb Van Dyke** was the youngest child of Frederick and Lucina Barton Webb. She is shown here as a young woman in the parlor of her home. She studied voice at the Ithaca Conservatory of Music and later became a music teacher, mother of two, foster mother of 21, Sunday School superintendent, quilter, and more. Her cemetery marker attests to her long and illustrious life, much of which was spent living in the home in which she was born.  
n.d./GPF D5.13



**Mabel Webb Van Dyke is shown here on her 92nd birthday, May 19, 1962. She is examining quilt blocks that she is piecing.**

1962/D5.12



**Mabel Webb Van Dykes memorial stone erected by The Caroline Bicentennial Committee in year 2000.**



**Frederica and Lucina Van Dyke** were the daughters of Mabel Webb Van Dyke and her husband, Lemuel Van Dyke. The marriage of Frederica Van Dyke and Bradford Dixon Bailor united the Webb and Bailor families. Frederica and Bradford are the grandparents of Charles Bradford Bailor Jr.

n.d./GPF D5.14



### **Charles Bradford Bailor Jr. and Chauquita Jefferson Bailor**

Charles Bradford Bailor Jr., the grandson of Frederica and Bradford Bailor, now lives with his wife Chauquita Jefferson Bailor in the mansion that was built for the Speed family. The Bailors avidly researched the history of their family, and they honor their ancestor in saying, “Although Peter Webb began life as a slave, he managed through his hard labor to have this land, and to us he is royalty.”

Ca. 2013/Photo courtesy Chauquita Bailor