

OUR SHARED ADIRONDACK LEGACY

We find ourselves at an intersectional moment as we collectively fight for racial justice, equity and inclusion; fight the causes and impacts of climate change; and fight to create work and educational opportunities for the next generation of New Yorkers. The Adirondack region was a cradle of civil rights advocacy in our country, long before the deep south in the 1960's. Unfortunately, our history books have failed to teach us this deeper narrative demonstrating a rich connection between communities of color and the Adirondack landscape.

The Adirondack region was central to the Black suffrage movement in the mid-1800's. At the time, the right to vote was seen by Black abolitionists and suffragists as critical to bringing about real change. Wisdom held that electing the right public officials would bring about the basic rights of freedom and equal protection under the law. As one digs deeper into the rich history of this region, it becomes clear that Black abolitionists built a movement that leveraged the philanthropy of their white partners towards a brighter future.

EIGHT BLACK SUFFRAGE SETTLEMENTS

3,000 free Black men - yearning to vote for public officials that would fight for abolition, Black suffrage, and equal protection - partnered with philanthropist Gerrit Smith in 1846 to acquire deeds to 40 acres of land for each person. By owning the equivalent of \$250 in property, these men secured the right to vote under the New York State constitution. This requirement represented one of the earliest examples of voter suppression. As a result of these efforts, eight Black suffrage settlements were established in the Northern Adirondacks.

Why the Adirondacks? Suffragists chose this region for its proximity to a major corridor on the Underground Railroad, its safe distance from the south and its proximity to the urban centers like New York City where many of these men currently lived. While some did move north to settle the land and start farming, most owned the land purely for strategic purposes.

Records indicate that these Black suffrage settlements were called: **Timbucto, Blacksville, Bloomingdale (Vermontville), Ray Brook, Freeman's Home, Township 9, St. Armand, and Negrow Brook/Negro Hill.**

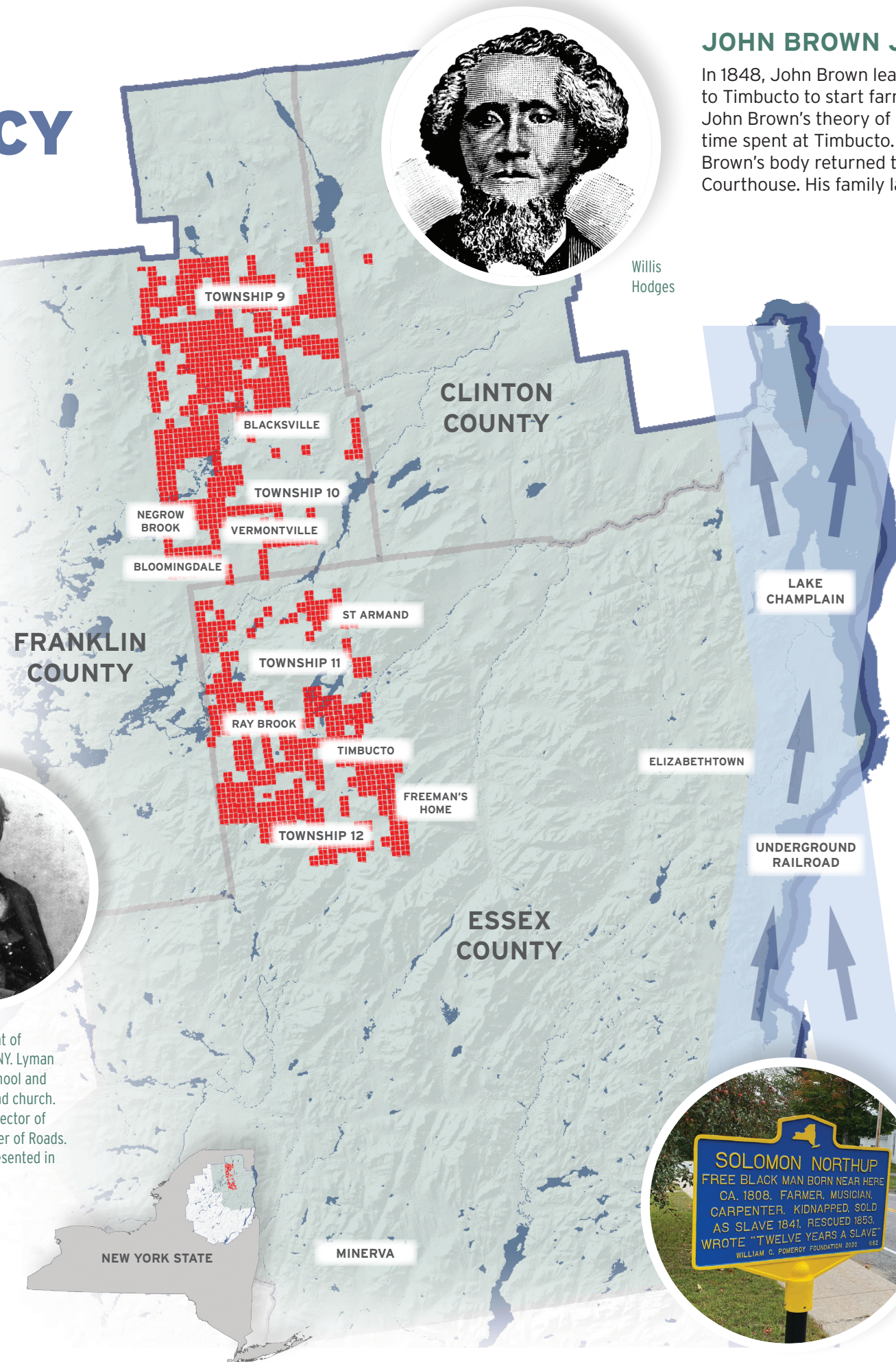
In 1846, the NYS Constitutional Convention proposed an amendment to repeal the \$250 property requirement. Sadly, New Yorkers voted this amendment down.



Lyman Eppes, resident of Timbucto from Troy, NY. Lyman formed a Sabbath school and choir, town library, and church. Eppes was made Inspector of Elections and Overseer of Roads. The Eppes were represented in North Elba until 1942.



Willis Hodges



JOHN BROWN JOINS THE MOVEMENT

In 1848, John Brown learned of the Black suffrage settlements in the Adirondacks, and moved to Timbucto to start farming and assist the Black suffragists who lacked farming experience. John Brown's theory of creating free lands controlled by people of color was born in his time spent at Timbucto. After his death sentence for the famous raid in Harper's Ferry, John Brown's body returned to the North Country where he laid in state at the Elizabethtown Courthouse. His family laid his body to rest on his farm, which is now a state historic site.



John Brown

"Do not let anyone forget the vast importance of sustaining the very best character for honesty, truth, industry, and faithfulness. I hope everyone will be determined not to merely conduct as well as the whites, but to set them an example in all things."

John Brown to Willis Hodges (January 1849) - Founder of Blacksville from Brooklyn, NY

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

New York was an important link in the Underground Railroad, particularly due to its connections to Canada via waterway. The **Lake Champlain Corridor** provided safe and speedy transport towards emancipation. The Champlain Corridor represented the final leg of a long journey to freedom for many enslaved people seeking freedom, and the eight Black suffrage settlements represented one of many possible safe havens for a new beginning.

SOLOMON NORTHUP

Born and raised in Minerva, NY, American Abolitionist Solomon Northup is famous for writing the novel **"Twelve Years a Slave."** As the son of a formerly enslaved man and a free woman of color, Northup was a businessman, owning a horse team and employing two laborers to bring timber from the Adirondack region south to Troy, by way of Lake Champlain and the canal. He was also very talented as a musician. While touring in Washington, D.C. as a musician in the mid-1830's, Northup was kidnapped and sold into slavery. He was shipped to New Orleans under the label of "fugitive slave." Over the course of twelve years, he managed to get word of his kidnapping back to New York, where state law provided aid to free New York citizens who had been kidnapped and sold into slavery.

Northrup's experience underscored the need for these Black suffrage settlements. His writings and speaking tours following his kidnapping were profoundly influential to the abolitionist movement in the mid-to-late 1800's.

