

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

## **“We Called Her Anna”:**

### **Nathaniel Rochester and Slavery in the Genesee Country**

*By Marilyn S. Nolte, Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, and Christine L. Ridarsky*



*A commemorative edition in honor of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rochester's city charter*

Vol. 71

Spring 2009

No. 1



A Publication of the Central Library  
of Rochester and Monroe County



*Kodak Tower is one of many sites along the Rochester skyline visible from city founder Col. Nathaniel Rochester's final resting place in Mount Hope Cemetery.  
Photograph by Ira Srole. From the collection of the Rochester City Hall Photo Lab.*

---

*Front cover: This simple gravestone in the Rochester family plot at Mount Hope Cemetery marks the final resting place of Anna, long believed to be a beloved servant to Nathaniel Rochester. Photograph by Frank Gillespie.*

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

---

## STAFF

EDITOR: Christine L. Ridarsky

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Cheri Crist

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Larry Naukam

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Anita Hartwig

LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Inge Munnings

GRAPHIC COORDINATOR: Joyce Tiskovich

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Jennifer Gkourlias  
*Rochester City School District*

Michelle Inclema  
*Democrat & Chronicle*

Meredith Keller  
*Rochester Historical Society*

Leatrice M. Kemp  
*Rochester Museum and Science Center*

Jeff Lurie  
*Jewish Community Federation  
of Greater Rochester*

Larry Naukam  
*Rochester Public Library*

Christine L. Ridarsky  
*Rochester City Historian*

Victoria Schmitt  
*Corn Hill Navigation*

Carolyn Vacca  
*St. John Fisher College/  
Monroe County Historian*

---

Dear *Rochester History* Reader,

The Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County is pleased to present this commemorative edition of *Rochester History* to mark the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rochester's city charter. In keeping with *Rochester History*'s longstanding tradition of encouraging in-depth analysis of issues important to our city's past, the authors of this issue provide a glimpse into some previously untapped primary sources that shed new light on one of Rochester's founders, as well as on the life experience of slaves in our region. We are blessed as a community to have access to such rich sources of information about our city's past. As these authors demonstrate, even 175 years after the city's charter, there is still much to be learned.

Patricia Uttaro, *Library Director*

## About *Rochester History*

*Rochester History* is a scholarly journal that provides informative and entertaining articles about the history and culture of Rochester, Monroe County, and the Genesee Valley.

In January 1939, Assistant City Historian Blake McKelvey published the first quarterly edition of *Rochester History*. Subjects researched and written by him and other scholars were edited, published, and distributed by McKelvey with the goal of expanding the knowledge of local history. Studying local history as a microcosm of U.S. history has brought insight and understanding to scholars and researchers around the globe.

Today *Rochester History* is published biannually (spring and fall) by the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County, with the exception of 2009 and 2010, when three issues will be published in order to make up issues not published earlier. The journal is funded in part by the Frances Kenyon Publication Fund, established in memory of Ms. Kenyon's sister, Florence Taber Kenyon, and her friend Thelma Jeffries.

*Rochester History* invites submissions of manuscripts of 5,000-6,000 words that further its mission of increasing knowledge of and interest in local history and culture and of placing local issues into a national or global context. To receive a copy of the journal's complete submission guidelines, send a request to [HistoryJournal@libraryweb.org](mailto:HistoryJournal@libraryweb.org) or call (585) 428-8095.

Annual subscriptions to *Rochester History* are available for \$8.00. Send a letter and a check, payable to the "Rochester Public Library," to:

Rundel Library Foundation  
Rochester Public Library  
115 South Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14604

If you have a comment, a correction, or more you would like to add to this story, please e-mail the editors at [HistoryJournal@libraryweb.org](mailto:HistoryJournal@libraryweb.org).

© Rochester Public Library

# “We Called Her Anna”:

## Nathaniel Rochester and Slavery in the Genesee Country

By Marilyn S. Nolte, Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, and Christine L. Ridarsky

*The founder of our city, Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, brought his slaves with him when he moved here from Maryland. Although he freed them, some stayed as his domestic employees. The headstone of one of these freed slaves carries a simple, poignant message – “We called her Anna” – a woman whose complete identity consisted of a first name.<sup>1</sup>*

For years, visitors to Rochester’s Mount Hope Cemetery have hiked up the side of Rochester Hill to view the final resting place of the city’s founder, Col. Nathaniel Rochester (1752-1831), and his wife Sophia (1768-1845). Those who seek out the site discover the pair’s original headstones, moved from their first burial spot on Buffalo Street (now Main Street) in 1851, alongside an only slightly more elaborate family monument, erected in later years. The monument is inscribed, “Si monumentum requiris circumpicie,” Latin for “If you would seek his monument, look about you.”<sup>2</sup> The inscription is apt. The Rochester family plot sits on a quiet, naturally wooded hilltop that overlooks the Genesee River and the University of Rochester’s River Campus and, when the trees lose their leaves, provides a view of the downtown Rochester skyline that might not exist if it weren’t for the efforts of Nathaniel Rochester and his partners.



*The graves of Nathaniel and Sophia Rochester, moved to Rochester Hill in 1851. Photograph by Frank Gillespie.*

In keeping with Col. Rochester’s reputation as “a representative pioneer of the Genesee country; a true gentleman; unostentatiously identifying himself with the laboring class; a true Southerner and a true patriot,” Rochester family gravestones are unassuming and simple.<sup>3</sup> They stand in contrast to the many magnificent and showy mausoleums, works of art, monuments, and gardens that grace the main roads and paths of Mount Hope Cemetery, the nation’s first municipal cemetery. Surrounding Nathaniel and Sophia Rochester are simple gravestones marking the final resting places of seven of their children, including their eldest daughter Sophia E. Rochester Child (1793-1850), the wife of Rochester’s first mayor,



# Mount Hope: America's First Municipal Victorian Cemetery

*By Richard O. Reisem*

*When a cholera epidemic hit the Village of Rochesterville in 1832, burying the 119 victims put a severe strain on available burial sites. Village officials decided that planning for cemetery space was necessary. One-and-a-half miles from downtown was a most unusual landscape filled with deep glacial kettles and high ridges that had been created when a giant glacier receded 14,000 years ago. No place could be more romantically associated with the purposes of a Victorian cemetery. The land was purchased by the city in December 1836, and the cemetery was dedicated on October 3, 1838. Over the years, additional land was acquired until Mount Hope reached its current size of 196 acres, with 14½ miles of roads winding through the picturesque burial ground.*

*On the hilltops and in the valleys are rare specimens of trees and myriad symbols of Victorian funerary art. The picturesque setting is backdrop to 82 mausoleums that resemble miniature Greek temples, soaring Egyptian obelisks, winged angels of mercy, Gothic towers, granite figures in flowing robes, a Florentine cast-iron fountain, two stone chapels in gothic Revival style, a Moorish gazebo, and infinitely varied tombstones.*

*Mount Hope Cemetery is a remarkable resource for the student of local history, funerary art, spectacular ancient trees, or the geological grandeur of the Genesee Valley. Still municipally owned and in daily use, the cemetery has more than 350,000 "permanent residents," including the celebrated Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, and Rochester's founder, Colonel Nathaniel Rochester.*

## ***The Friends Of Mount Hope Cemetery***

*Formed in 1980, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and public use of this unique and significant cultural resource. Friends volunteers conduct cemetery tours, plant and maintain gardens, execute special restoration projects, carry out research projects, and publish a quarterly newsletter. For more information, visit <http://www.fomh.org>.*

Jonathan Child (1785-1860), many of their sons- and daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and a handful of more recent descendants.

This large family comprised an extensive network of professionals, merchants, community leaders, and entrepreneurs who together helped create the fastest growing urban community in 1820s America. Yet despite the achievements of this great family, the grave that has most intrigued visitors to Rochester Hill in recent years is not that of any of these prominent Rochester family members. Rather, tourists are drawn to a simple grave marker inscribed only with the words “We called her Anna.”



*The graves of Jonathan and Sophia Child.  
Photograph by Frank Gillespie.*

Mount Hope Cemetery tour guides for many years have explained to visitors that Anna was a beloved servant to the Rochester family, one of many slaves that Nathaniel Rochester brought with him when he moved to western New York from Maryland and then freed. In this context, Anna’s marker provides a tangible connection to the slaves who came to the Genesee Country with the Rochester family, as well as to their benevolent patriarch, Nathaniel Rochester, who freed them. Visitors can only imagine the details of Anna’s life and the dramatic changes she must have experienced throughout it. She was born into slavery, moved with a prominent family to a northern state, where she took her freedom but chose to stay and care and work for her former owners as they built a new community out of a wilderness, and then joined them in their final resting place.

It is not clear where or when this story about Anna originated. Very little documentation exists within Mount Hope Cemetery’s files to corroborate it. And yet its poignancy continued to intrigue cemetery staff and members of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. The celebration throughout 2009 of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rochester’s city charter and the availability of previously untapped sources provided new impetus and opportunity to examine Anna’s life more closely and to consider what her story could add to our understanding of the city’s esteemed founder.<sup>4</sup> This required careful analysis of a variety of primary source documents, many of which were not available to earlier chroniclers of Nathaniel Rochester’s life. Within the past 20 years, the University of Rochester’s Department of Rare Books and Special Collections has acquired or added to five separate collections of Rochester family papers. However, few researchers have actually made use of these materials.

## A Note on the Rochester Family Papers Held by the University of Rochester

By Nancy M. Martin  
John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist  
and Rochester Collections Librarian

*The Rush Rhees Library's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections contains five separate manuscript collections regarding the Rochester family:*

1. *The Nathaniel Rochester Family Papers, 1777-1888. This collection of two boxes was acquired by gift from Mrs. Joseph Roby in 1956 and added to in 1980.*
2. *The Rochester Family Papers, 1780-1994. This collection consists of eight boxes. Boxes 1-4 were purchased from Mrs. Howard Osgood (1933) and donated by Emory M. Osgood (1990); boxes 5-8 were purchased in 2003.*
3. *Diaries of Nathaniel Thrift Rochester, eighth child of Nathaniel Rochester.*
4. *William Beatty Rochester Papers (1811-1907), eldest son of Nathaniel Rochester. These two boxes of material were purchased in 1991 and 1992.*
5. *Henry Elie Rochester Papers, the youngest son of Nathaniel Rochester. This collection of two boxes was a gift of Ross Roby in 1988.*

*In addition, letters written by various members of the Rochester family are located in other manuscript collections, as well as in the Archives of the University. The university's holdings of the large and prolific Rochester family continue to grow, and every acquisition reveals more about them, while raising new questions.*

*The university welcomes researchers from the community to visit the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in the Rush Rhees Library. In addition to the Rochester papers, the department holds hundreds of manuscript collections relating to the city and its history. To view the holdings in greater detail, visit <http://www.library.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=169>.*



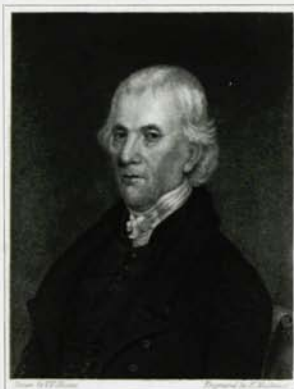
The information contained therein, combined with details gleaned from collections at the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County, various published sources, and public records, paint a much more complex portrait of Nathaniel Rochester and his relationship to the issue of slavery than previous accounts have provided.

## Col. Nathaniel Rochester: Southern Entrepreneur, Slave Owner, and Slave Trader

Nathaniel Rochester was born on February 21, 1752, on a plantation in Cople Parish, Westmoreland County, Virginia, to John Rochester and Hester Thrift Rochester. His father died when he was two years old. Five years later, his mother remarried, and the family moved to Granville County, North Carolina. Rochester had very little formal education, but at the age of 16 he went to work with merchant James Monroe and quickly developed the entrepreneurial skills that enabled him to become a partner in the business in only five years.<sup>5</sup> After serving with distinction in the American Revolution,<sup>6</sup> Rochester returned to Hillsborough, North Carolina, was elected to the state assembly, and went into business with Col. Thomas Hart, future father-in-law of American statesman Henry Clay. The two continued their business relationship after moving to Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1780, where they established flour, nail, and rope mills.

In 1788, 36-year-old Nathaniel Rochester married Sophia Beatty, 16 years his junior. A year later, the first of their 12 children, son William Beatty Rochester, was born. After that, the family grew rapidly. Ten of the Rochester children survived to adulthood. Sophia outlived her husband by 14 years, passing away in 1845.

Residents of Hagerstown regarded Col. Rochester as one of their leading citizens. In addition to conducting business as a merchant and manufacturer, Rochester served a term on the Maryland Legislature, was twice appointed postmaster, was elected a Washington County judge—a position from which he shortly resigned, citing his lack of legal training—and ultimately became sheriff. He was also the first president of the Hagerstown Bank and in 1808 served as a presidential elector, helping to elect President James Madison.<sup>7</sup> Nearly every major commercial and agricultural venture in Maryland during Nathaniel Rochester's years there

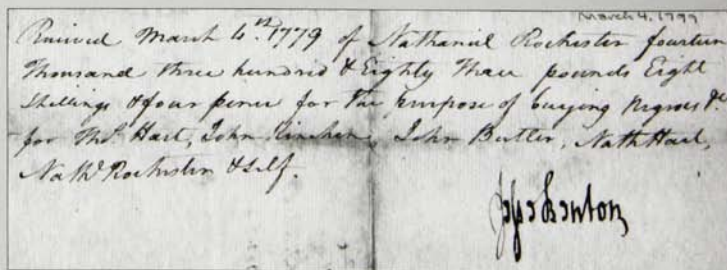


*Portrait of Nathaniel Rochester. From the collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division.*

involved the labor, skills, and ingenuity of African Americans, and Rochester's ownership of slaves during this period of his life is well-documented and undisputed. According to the 1790 Federal Census for Washington County, Maryland, Rochester's household consisted of one free white male head of household, two free white males under age 16, two free white females, and 11 slaves. Rochester's neighbor and business partner Thomas Hart owned 18 slaves. Like other prominent southern gentlemen of means, Rochester and Hart undoubtedly relied on the labor of their slaves to build and operate their commercial mills, develop their personal property, and nurse, sew, cook, and clean for their families.

However, further evidence indicates that Rochester's relationship to slavery extended well beyond the simple ownership of slaves. During his time in North Carolina and Maryland, Rochester was an active participant in the slave trade with a sophisticated financial role that complemented his ventures in commerce, milling, and land speculation. Having evidently amassed considerable wealth by the end of the American Revolution, Rochester began investing in slaves shortly thereafter. In March 1779, he and Hart, along with several others, pooled their collective resources of 14,384 pounds, 8 shillings and 4 pence to buy "Negroes &c."<sup>8</sup>

Historian Stanley Engerman estimates that, accounting for inflation, the price of a slave was equivalent to \$30,000 today.<sup>9</sup> Rochester also considered the rental value of slaves he purchased for himself and occasionally supplemented his own income by hiring his own slaves out to others. For example, when Rochester purchased 30-year-old Nedd from Thomas Critcher in 1783, the slave was already on contract to work for another man, Thomas Satterwhite.<sup>10</sup>



March 4, 1779  
Paid March 4<sup>th</sup> 1779 of Nathaniel Rochester fourteen  
Thousand three hundred & Eighty three pounds Eight  
Shillings & four pence for the purpose of buying Negroes &c.  
for Mr. Hart, John Linch, John Butler, Nathl Hart,  
Nathl Rochester & self.  
J. Benton

Receipt in Nathaniel Rochester's handwriting and signed by Mr. Benton for the purchase of negroes. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.



Nathaniel Rochester continued to make financial investments in purchasing and selling wholesale groups of slaves in the years that followed. Rochester's attitude toward the effects such transactions might have on the lives of the African Americans seems to have been somewhat ambiguous. He merrily described a 1790 slave buying and selling expedition as an "Adventure to the Eastern Shore,"<sup>11</sup> but in a memorandum likely written by Rochester in the same year, he took care to provide detailed personal information about 12 slaves being offered for sale in Frederick, Maryland. The memorandum, presumably written to provide background information to the person taking the slaves to the sale, lists the slaves'

Aug. 28, 1783

I know all men by these presents that I Thomas Critcher of the County of Granville & State of North Carolina for and in consideration of the sum of Ninety five pounds Virginia Currency (Specie) to me in hand paid before the sealing & delivery of these presents by Nathaniel Rochester of the State of Maryland, the receipt whereof I the said Thomas Critcher do hereby acknowledge, hath bargained & sold, & by these presents do bargain, sell & deliver unto him the said Nathaniel his heirs & assigns a certain Negroe Man Slave named Nedd, about thirty years of Age, now in possession of, & hired to, Col<sup>o</sup> Thomas Satterthwaite till the Twenty fifth day of December next, To Have & To Hold the said Slave unto the said Nathaniel Rochester his heirs & assigns forever, and I the said Thomas Critcher for myself & my heirs do hereby Warrant and defend the said Slave unto the said — Nathaniel Rochester his heirs & assigns forever against the right title or claim of any person or persons whatever, In Witness whereof I the said Thomas Critcher have hereunto set my hand & affixed my seal this 28<sup>th</sup> day of August 1783

signed sealed & del.<sup>d</sup> }  
in presence of }

Elyah Mettel

Receipt for the sale of negro slave Nedd to Nathaniel Rochester for 95 pounds,  
signed by Thomas Critcher, August 28, 1783.  
From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

names, family relationships, ages, approximate values, and, in some cases, their disposition and attributes. For example, 29-year-old George is described as a carpenter and a "Terrible good fellow" valued at 52 pounds, 11 schillings. The memorandum also encouraged buyers to keep husbands and wives in the same neighborhood.<sup>12</sup>

N. d.

Memo. for who ever goes to Fredk.

|                           |                   |               |  |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--|
| George                    | 29 y <sup>r</sup> | Cost £52.11.0 | a carp <sup>r</sup> . Terrible good fellow |
| Nelly his wife            | 20                |               | Love her & get 7 better every Day          |
| Mammy her Daughter        | 9                 |               |  |
| Fanny                     | 10                |               |  |
| Matt <sup>r</sup> his Son | 4                 |               |  |
| Liddy has no Relations    | 12                |               |  |
| Charles                   | 10                | 7             | 15.0.0                                     |
| Rachy                     | 10                | 10            | 22.10.0                                    |
| Tom                       | 22                |               | 50.0.0                                     |
| Mary his wife             | 21                |               | 35.0.0                                     |
| Boys Hope his Son         | 4                 |               |  |
| Juday                     | 18                |               | 17.10.0                                    |

N. B. neither George nor Tom was bot. from Persons that their wives were - if they could get on Fanny's height. they w<sup>d</sup> be as well situated as on E. I.

Memo listing the names, ages, disposition, and prices of slaves for sale by Nathaniel Rochester. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

## Opportunity to the West

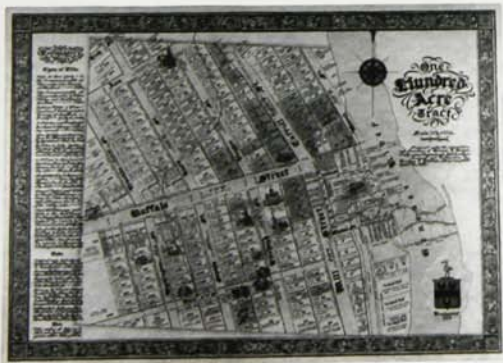
As the new republic of the United States took hold and the nineteenth century dawned, Col. Rochester continued to diversify his business interests. From Hagerstown, he actively investigated economic opportunities in newly opened lands on the American frontier. He



corresponded with family and friends who had interests in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Missouri, and made several land purchases. In 1800, Rochester and two fellow wealthy Maryland landowners, Col. William Fitzhugh and Major Charles Carroll, traveled to the Genesee Country in western New York to explore lands for sale. These prominent Southern gentlemen were no doubt persuaded to visit the region by Charles Williamson, land agent for the English-based Pulteney Associates, who had many contacts in the southern United States.<sup>13</sup>

During this first trip, Col. Rochester purchased land near Dansville, New York, with water rights to Canaseraga Creek, a tributary of the Genesee River. He and his partners returned in 1801 and 1803, and during the third trip purchased a 100-acre tract at the falls of the Genesee River, at the center of what is today downtown Rochester. At the time, the prospects for the land must have seemed limited. Early grist and saw mills established by Ebenezer "Indian" Allan in 1789 sat in ruins, long abandoned for a lack of customers. But the three partners saw potential in the power of the Genesee's waterfalls and the rich soil of surrounding lands and agreed to pay \$1,750 for the tract. It would be another eight years before Nathaniel Rochester would return to survey the riverfront property and begin selling lots in 1811. First, Rochester would have to relocate.

In 1809, a year after the United States abolished the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Rochester decided to move his family from Maryland to his 120-acre property in Dansville, New York. In a July 1809 letter to his partner Charles Carroll, Rochester attributed his decision to relocate to financial necessity, stating that "the expense of my family in this place is more than my income." He told Carroll that he anticipated the prospect of increasing his own



*The 100-acre tract that grew into the City of Rochester.  
From the collection of the Rochester Public Library Local History Division*



property through “milling, distilling and raising stock” in the Genesee Country, as well as securing lucrative professional opportunities for his sons.<sup>14</sup> His eldest, William, was 20 years old and studying to become a lawyer, and his second son, John Cornelius, was approaching his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is not clear whether the federal government’s recent ban on the importation of new slaves into the United States had affected Rochester’s financial outlook. Available records give little indication of the source—foreign or domestic—of the humans he traded. He did have to recognize, however, that future speculation in the domestic slave trade would be hampered by his move to New York, which had banned slave trading since 1788 and had passed an act providing for the gradual emancipation of slaves in 1799.<sup>15</sup>

## Slavery in New York and the Genesee Country

Rochester’s descendents and a number of his chroniclers have long believed that the issue of slavery was one of the driving factors in the colonel’s decision to relocate when and where he did. According to their accounts, Rochester had begun by the early nineteenth century to recognize the evils of slavery and chose to move north to escape the debasing influence of the institution. Fannie Rochester Rogers recounted in 1924 that her grandfather “came north to rid himself and his family from the curse of keeping slaves, and he gave their freedom to all he owned. His eldest son, William B. Rochester, shared his father’s view in regard to slavery and wrote a remarkable letter to him urging him to take the family away from the debasing influence.”<sup>16</sup> This story has been passed down through the generations, oft repeated. The letter to which Rogers refers has not surfaced, although the argument for father and son’s abolitionist sentiments is seemingly supported by evidence that Rochester in 1811 manumitted—or released from slavery—two young slaves, “Benjamin, about 16 years old, and another Casandra, about 14 years old.”<sup>17</sup> It turns out, however, that the documents that allegedly support the claim fail to tell the whole story. New evidence from the University of Rochester’s collections provide incontrovertible evidence that Nathaniel Rochester not only brought enslaved people to the Genesee Country with him but that he continued to hold humans in bondage right up until the day New York State ended slavery in 1827.

Although New York passed an act providing for the gradual emancipation of the state’s slaves in 1799, the law was constructed in such a way that it would not have much effect for another 25 years. Under the law, all children born to slave women after July 4, 1799, would receive their freedom but not before they had served their mothers’ masters for most of their productive lives. Male slaves would be emancipated at the age of 28, females at 25. Slaves born or sold into bondage prior to July 4, 1799, would remain chattel for life, although they

Feb. 26, 1811

I know all men by their presents, that I Nathaniel  
 Rochester of the town of Danville in the County of Steuben  
 and State of New York, hath, and by these presents doth  
 manumit and make free from Slavery, my Negroe Slave  
 named Benjamin about sixteen years old, and my  
 Negroe Slave named Casandra about fourteen years  
 old, In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand  
 at Danville this twenty ninth day of January 1811

N. Rochester

*[Circular seal with text "Seal of the University of Rochester"]*

Document of manumission freeing Benjamin and Casandra, signed by Nathaniel Rochester, January 29, 1811. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

would be reclassified as indentured servants, a change that meant little to the people affected by it.<sup>18</sup> The state would not pass a law abolishing slavery in its entirety until 1817, and even then that law would not take effect until July 4, 1827, at which point all remaining slaves were freed. Thus, when Nathaniel Rochester made the decision to move his family to the Genesee Country, New York continued to have the largest slave population (15,017) in the northern United States. Nationwide, nearly 1.2 million African Americans were enslaved, with the largest numbers of slaves in Virginia (392,518), South Carolina (195,365), North Carolina (168,824), and Maryland (111,502).<sup>19</sup>

Slavery in New York City, Albany, and the eastern part of New York State is well-documented, but relatively little is known about slavery in the Genesee Country during the decade between 1810 and 1820, when the future city of Rochester was surveyed and Euro-American settlement began. Until recently, the best sources of information on the slave experience were the autobiographies of Austin Stewart and the Rev. Thomas James, both of whom eventually obtained their freedom and settled in Rochester. Anne Schaetzke also shed some light on the matter in her 1998 article, "Slavery in the Genesee Country (also known as Ontario County), 1789 to 1827." She found that although slaves faced great challenges in the Genesee Country, the state's liberal attitude toward slavery afforded them some opportunities and advantages not shared by their counterparts in the South. For example, in 1809, the state

Jan. 29, 1811

This Indenture made the twenty ninth day of January  
in the year of our Lord Eighteen hundred & Eleven, Maketh full  
that James Smith & Warner Hartman Overseers of the poor of  
the town of Dansville in the County of Seneca State of New  
York, by and with the consent of Samuel Culbertson and  
John Mendenhall Esquires Justices of the Peace of the  
said County, whose names are hereto subscribed, have  
put and placed, and by these presents do put and place  
Eugene Casandra a poor child of the said town of the  
age of fourteen years on the fifteenth day of May last  
apprentice to Nathaniel Rochester of the same place, with him  
to dwell and serve from this day of the date of these presents  
until the said apprentice shall accomplish her full age of  
Eighteen years according to the Statute in that behalf  
and provided, during all which term the said apprentice  
her said master faithfully shall serve in all lawfull  
business according to his power, wit and ability, honestly  
orderly and obediently in all things as a domestic slave  
self towards his said master and all his, during the said  
term, And the said Nathaniel Rochester doth for himself  
his Executors & Administrators Covenant and grant to and  
with the said Overseers, and their and every of their successors  
for the term being by these presents that the said Nathaniel  
Rochester the said apprentice in the art and mystery of a  
Printer shall and well cause to be taught & instructed  
in the best way and manner that he can, use in the art  
and mystery of a Cook, and shall and will during all the  
foregoing, find provide and allow unto the said apprentice  
Compliment

Indenture placing Casandra, a "poor child" of Dansville,  
with Nathaniel Rochester, January 29, 1811. From the Department of Rare Books and  
Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

competent and sufficient, that, drink and apparel, washing  
bedding, and other things necessary and fit for an apprentice  
also that he shall and will cause the said apprentice to be  
taught and instructed to read & write, and at the expiration  
of the said term shall and will give to the said apprentice one  
new Bible, and further that he shall and will provide for  
said apprentice that she shall not be any way a charge to  
the said town, but of and from all charge shall and will  
save the said town herself and undiminished during the said  
term, and at the end thereof shall and will make, provide,  
allow or cause unto the said apprentice double apparel  
of all sorts, one suit of which to be new, In witness whereof  
the parties to these presents have hereunto undercharged by set  
their hands & seals this day and year first above written

Nathaniel Rochester  
in presence of 3

Israel Swin

Spencer Lord on 20th

N. Rochester

We whose names are subscribed, Justices of the Peace  
of the said County, do, as much as in us lies, consent to the  
putting forth the aforesaid Negro, by said apprentice, according  
to the intent and meaning of the above indenture

John Metcalfe, J.P.  
Saml. Culbertson J.C.



"recognized slave marriages and legitimized the children of these marriages," prohibited slave owners from separating spouses, and granted slaves the right to "own and assign" property. In 1813, slaves accused of crimes were given the right to jury trials.<sup>20</sup>

## The Rochester Family in Dansville

Prior to moving his entire household to the Genesee Country, Nathaniel Rochester decided to send his two oldest sons ahead "to make improvements and other arrangements for the accommodation of my family." He noted that while the rest of the family "acquiesces" in the decision to move, "William and John are anxious to go out this fall and act the pioneers for the rest of the family."<sup>21</sup> The colonel's sons set out on their trip in September 1809, accompanied by at least four slaves: "one Woman Named Nance, one boy named Ned, and two male children." An official receipt issued by the State of Pennsylvania permitted the young men to pass "unmolested" with their father's slaves. William declared his intention to pass through Pennsylvania, which had outlawed slavery in its state Constitution and early legislation, to reside in the State of New York with "no design to sell or otherwise dispose of said Negroes in this State."<sup>22</sup>

In May 1810, the entire Rochester family, their slaves, and some neighbors departed Hagerstown for a new life in Dansville. Nathaniel and Sophia Rochester's granddaughter Fannie Rochester Rogers passed down the story of the family's journey and elaborated upon the intimate relationships they had with their slaves, whom she again described as newly freed:

One should picture the cavalcade on its journey hither from Hagerstown, a modest enough household to be sure, for only ten freed slaves were brought north, including house servants, men to care for the horse and an old Mammy to take care of the baby. She was too old to leave behind in any case. There were the covered wagons packed with house furniture and goods, and the family coach, roomy enough for Mrs. Rochester and Mammy and the babies (two little girls) and sometimes the boy of four when he was tired of horseback and needed to take a nap in his mother's lap. The Colonel and his elder daughters and all his sons, including one boy of four, rode horseback all the way.<sup>23</sup>

When the 1810 federal census was taken later that year, Nathaniel Rochester's Dansville household consisted of six free white males, six free white females, and three slaves.



Available records give no indication of the whereabouts of the other seven slaves who had accompanied the family to the Genesee Country just months before. Two of the three slaves who remained in the household apparently were freed the following year. In a manumission record dated July 29, 1811, Nathaniel Rochester declared that he did "manumit and make free from Slavery, my Negroe Slave named Benjamin, about Sixteen years old, and my Negroe Slave named Casandra about fourteen years old."<sup>24</sup> Despite the testimony of Rochester family and friends, this manumission record is the only evidence located to date to support the claim

to the  
one Woman Named Nance, one boy named Ned  
& two male children, that the said Negroes  
belong to said W<sup>m</sup> Rochester's father that he  
has no design to sell or otherwise dispose of  
said Negroes in this State, but to pass on with  
them to reside in the State of New York  
further with not  
Sworn & subscribed  
Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 1809  
before J. Holliday

W<sup>m</sup> B. Rochester

To all those concerned. Permit William  
Rochester to pass unmolested with the above  
mentioned Negroes  
J. Holliday

Franklin County &c  
To J. John Lindley Prothonotary of  
Franklin County in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Do  
Certify that John Holliday Esquire before whom the foregoing  
deposition was taken was at the time of taking thereof and is at  
this time a Justice of the peace for said County

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my  
hand and affixed the seal of my office at  
Chambersburg the ninth day of September in  
the year one thousand eight hundred and nine

J. J. Lindley Prody

Receipt from Pennsylvania allowing William B. Rochester to pass through the state on his way to New York with several of his father's slaves, dated September 9, 1809. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

that Rochester freed his slaves. Benjamin's fate is unknown. However, additional documentation shows that on the same day that Casandra was freed from slavery she was declared a "poor child" by the Dansville Overseer of the Poor and returned to Nathaniel Rochester as an indentured servant "with him to dwell and serve from the day of this date... until the said apprentice shall accomplish her full age of eighteen years." According to Casandra's indenture, she was committed to "apprentice in the art and mistery [*sic*] of a Spinster..., also in the art and mistery [*sic*] of a cook." In addition to teaching Casandra these skills, Rochester agreed to provide her with "competent and sufficient meat, drink and apparel and lodging... [instruct her to] read and write... [and] give to the said apprentice a new Bible."<sup>25</sup>

According to Schaetzke, this was a common arrangement that worked to the benefit of slave owners such as Nathaniel Rochester. It was the result of a clause in the state's 1799 gradual emancipation act that allowed masters to abandon slave children. Under the law, a county's overseer of the poor would take charge of the abandoned children and contract them to "a new master, who would be paid up to \$3.50 per month" to care for them. "Thus, slaveholders not only received the services of blacks who were eventually to be free, but they were also paid for them."<sup>26</sup>

## A Slave Named Ned

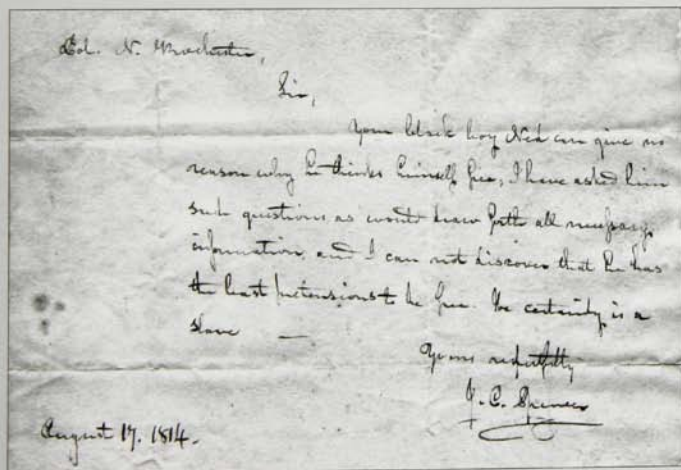
Although the federal census of 1810 lists only three slaves in the Rochester household, two of whom appear to have been freed in 1811, additional evidence indicates that Nathaniel Rochester continued to own slaves until 1827. While it is possible that Rochester had freed some of the slaves who traveled from Maryland with his family, as his descendents have claimed, it now seems as likely that they were hired out or living with other Rochester family members when the census-taker visited. Consider the case of Ned. Likely the same boy who traveled west with William and John Rochester in 1809, a slave named Ned was living with William in Bath in 1814 when he began agitating for his freedom, which was ultimately granted, albeit with apparent reluctance by the Rochester family.

A series of documents and letters written in 1814 and early 1815 describe Ned's awakening to his rights and the resulting difficulties it caused the Rochester family. The first of these is a letter from Canandaigua attorney John C. Spencer to Nathaniel Rochester reporting on a conversation the attorney had in August 1814 with Ned, who was claiming his freedom. Ned did not find a sympathetic ally in Spencer, who assured Rochester that Ned "is certainly a slave." Spencer went on to win several prominent government posts in the New York State

Legislature, Congress, and in presidential cabinets as Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury.<sup>27</sup>

By December, Ned had become increasingly intolerant of his treatment as a slave. He had become difficult for Rochester family members to control, despite their threats to sell him. William Rochester reported to his father that he planned to send Ned back to Dansville to get him away from the influence of free people of color in Bath: "I think it will be better for him to leave Bath on account of the number of free Negroes about here who will doubtless put disorderly notions into his head."<sup>28</sup> But on New Year's Eve, Ned returned to William's home in Bath, determined to live in that village and refusing to ever go back to Dansville. The eldest Rochester son had Ned jailed as he awaited his father's decision on the matter.

But four days in jail did little to dissuade Ned of the righteousness of his cause, and he continued to refuse to return to Dansville. Ned's disobedience ultimately convinced William B. Rochester that the slave would "never again be of service" to his father or the family. He wrote to his father to suggest "the propriety of manumitting him conditionally, that is assess



Col. N. Rochester,  
Sir,

Your black boy Ned can give no reasons why he thinks himself free, I have asked him such questions as would have gotten all necessary information, and I can not discover that he has the least pretensions to be free. He certainly is a slave —

Yours respectfully  
J. C. Spencer

August 17. 1814.

Letter from John C. Spencer to Nathaniel Rochester reporting that he finds no merit in slave Ned's claim to freedom, August 17, 1814. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

Bath 15. Dec. 1814.

Dear Father

I wrote you a letter last week  
to send by Ned; he however started before  
I thought he was ready, leaving both my  
letter to you and one from Sophia to  
Kitty - I shall start this to Dunsville  
agreeable to the request in your last  
letter and indeed I think it will be better for  
him to leave Bath, an account of the number of free  
Negroes about there who will doubtless put  
disorderly notions into his head -

I think he has been more obedient & tractable  
since John proposed taking him off; I have  
told him that he must be on his good  
behaviour as on that alone the treatment to him,  
would depend, that if he behaved ill  
you would most certainly sell him.  
this kind of cautioning has had a very  
good effect on him - Harriet  
altho' better, is yet very low - I much  
fear that Nathaniel is troublesome to  
Mama and the family - if so, I wish  
Mama would engage with Mr. Bamhart  
or some other truly woman to keep  
him - My love to all - y<sup>rs</sup> affectionately,

Wm<sup>B</sup> Rochester

N.B. Paper money from the South is much below par here -



Jan 5, 1815

Dr. Father.

Ned came to his respects fully well,  
after being in jail 4 days - I accordingly  
released him last evening - and thinking  
that probably you may not want  
him in Danville again, I will keep him  
at work till I hear from you -

I am conscious he will never again  
be of service to you or your family,  
and will suggest the propriety of  
manumitting him conditionally,  
that is a poor payment of such  
price in instalments, as you may  
require of him - such a contract  
would be valid appealable  
to a decision of our Supreme  
Court - Yours affectionately  
in haste

Wm B Rochester

P.S. I have not yet seen Mr. Cameron about Mr.  
Stout's lot - there is however a contract in  
Mr. Cameron's hands forfeited - probably  
it would be better for Mr. Stout to get



payments of such price in instalments [*sic*] as you may require of him—Such a contract would be valid agreeable to a decision of our Supreme Court.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, through resistance, Ned was able to secure his freedom. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to learn anything about Ned’s life post-slavery.

## A City at the Falls

Even while immersed in his affairs at Dansville and later Bloomfield, where he moved in 1815, Nathaniel Rochester held high hopes for his property at the Genesee Falls. “Dansville will be a fine village,” he is said to have told an interviewer, “but the Falls is capable of great things.”<sup>30</sup> With his family finally settled in their Dansville home, Rochester ventured north in 1811 to survey the 100-acre tract at the Genesee Falls and lay out a plan for what would become the Village of Rochesterville. The following year, the Hamlet Scrantom family moved onto the site, becoming the first permanent Euro-American settlers of the future city. Settlement progressed slowly at first because of the threat of British invasion from Canada during the War of 1812. Once the war ended, however, population growth was rapid. The news in 1817, the same year the Village of Rochesterville was incorporated, that a new east-west waterway, the Erie Canal, would pass through the village center turned it into the fastest growing community of the era and earned it the distinction of America’s first “boom town.” Between 1815 and 1818, the village’s population expanded from 331 to 1,049.<sup>31</sup> Among the residents were several slaves and free African Americans, including Austin Stewart, who moved to the city in 1817.

When Nathaniel Rochester finally moved his family in 1818 to the village he had helped incorporate along the falls of the Genesee River, he once again brought slaves with him. The 1820 United States Federal Census shows that Nathaniel Rochester’s household included four slaves, three of whom were under 14 years of age. Records also show that in both 1825 and 1827, Rochester charged Josiah Sheldon \$200 for “1 years rent of Slave,” indicating that he continued to own, rent, and derive income from enslaved workers up until the eve of New York’s Emancipation Day.<sup>32</sup> Slavery officially ended in New York State on July 4, 1827. On July 5, 1827, Austin Stewart officiated at a public celebration in Rochester to mark the event. Unfortunately, we have no record of Nathaniel Rochester’s reaction to the festivities.

In 1830, Nathaniel Rochester became seriously ill with what is believed to have been prostate cancer. On October 31, in what are thought to be his final written words to his children, Rochester asked “that they be kind and affectionate to their dear mother...and they be

kind and charitable to the rest of their fellow beings, as far as their means will admit, remembering that benevolence to them, and charity for their faults and necessities are duties they owe to God and to their neighbours...."<sup>33</sup> It is not clear whether he meant this sentiment to apply to his former slaves. Just as when he had penned an informal autobiography in 1826, Rochester mentioned nothing about his involvement in the slave trade or his ownership of slaves, nor did he share any recollections of the slaves who had shared his homes and supported his agricultural and entrepreneurial pursuits.

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Josiah Sheldon Esq.                                       |                 |
| In acc <sup>t</sup> with Nath. Rochester                  |                 |
| 1825  |                 |
| Nov <sup>r</sup> . 18. To 1 year rent of Slave            | \$ 200.00       |
| 1826  |                 |
| Jan <sup>y</sup> 1. To 11m <sup>o</sup> . & 17 days Dello | 73.32           |
| 1827  |                 |
| Jan <sup>y</sup> 1. To 1 year rent of Slave               | 200.00          |
| 1825  |                 |
| April 1. To 1 year rent of bark ground to Basin           | 30.00           |
|   | 10.00           |
|   | <del>4.37</del> |
| Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1. To 4 months. Dello                  | 50.00           |
| 1826  |                 |
| Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1. To 1 year. Dello                    | 70.83           |
| 1827  |                 |
| Jan <sup>y</sup> 1. To 5 months. Dello                    | 574.15          |
| 1825 Jan <sup>y</sup> .                                   |                 |
| By my order pay <sup>d</sup> . 18. Feb <sup>y</sup> 1825  | \$51.00         |
|   | 100.00          |
| Oct. 22 By Cash   | 62.00           |
| 1826  |                 |
| Mar <sup>y</sup> . 2 By Dello                             | 83.60           |
| April 1. By Dello   | 62.50           |
| June 1. By Dello  | 75.00           |
| Oct. By Dello   | 633.50          |
|   | 100.65          |
| due 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan <sup>y</sup> 1827                 |                 |

Bill showing the amount due by January 1, 1827, from Josiah Sheldon, Esq., to Nathaniel Rochester for the use of his slaves. From the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library.

# “We Called Her Anna”

Although numerous records detail Nathaniel Rochester's ownership of slaves, there is no mention in any of them of a slave named Anna. Indeed, while many African Americans are buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, including the Rev. Thomas James and two of Austin Steward's children, there is nothing in the records to indicate that any of Nathaniel Rochester's slaves or domestic servants is among them.<sup>34</sup> Despite months spent researching Nathaniel Rochester's slaves, the true identity of Anna, who rests in Section R, Lot 10, with the Rochester family, remained a mystery. Her gravestone itself offered few clues, with no mention of birth or death dates and no identifying last name, only, “We called her Anna.” So who was Anna?

The answer turned out to be relatively easy to find. The cemetery's own interment records list the burial of Ann C. Child, 6½ years old, in Section R, Lot 10, on September 9, 1851. Her cause of death was listed as scrofula, a form of tuberculosis.<sup>35</sup> Anna, it appears, was the beloved daughter of Nathaniel Rochester Child and wife Elizabeth Stone Prince Child, the granddaughter of Mayor Jonathan Child and his wife Sophia Eliza Rochester Child, and the great-granddaughter of Nathaniel and Sophia Rochester. Several additional sources, primary and secondary, helped to confirm this, including the 1850 United States Federal Census, an obituary that appeared in the *Rochester Daily Advertiser* on September 9, 1851, and an article in Volume 3 of the *Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series*.<sup>36</sup>


Perhaps the real mystery here is how Anna's true identity was overlooked for so long and how and why the story evolved many years ago that she was a servant, a slave freed by the Rochester family and kept on as domestic employee. In retrospect, it appears that present-

| DATE        | NAME                  | AGE    | CAUSE OF DEATH   | RESIDENCE     | WHERE INTERRED |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1837 Mar 21 | A. A. Chequillo Child | 23     | Bowel Complaint  | Frank St      | -              |
| 1837 No 2   | Joe Church's Child    | Notum  | Small Pox        | State St      | 5 1/2 14 R     |
| 1838 No 10  | Abraham Cherry        | 65     | Pneumonia        | Laureate St   | 26 B           |
| 1838 Sep 5  | Andrew Cherry         | 40     | Apoplexy         | Water St      | Pub-           |
| 1838 Sep 27 | David Church's Child  | 17 1/2 | Scarlet Fever    | State St      | A-67           |
| 1839 Jan 17 | Charles H. Chichester | 33     | Indur Lung       | State St      | A-67           |
| 1839 Mar 3  | William C. Crier      | 30     | Consumption      | Fitzburg St   | 2-10           |
| 1839 Aug 20 | Charles Church        | 53     | Bilious Fever    | Fitzburg St   | 2-10           |
| 1839 Aug 31 | Charles A. Church     | 22 1/2 | Congestion Brain | Washington St | 15 L           |
| 1851 Sep 9  | Ann C. Child          | 6 1/2  | Scrofula         | Fitzburg St   | 10 R           |
| 1851 Sep 16 | Charles S. Church     | 1 9/18 | Dysentery        | Alexander St  | 27 J           |
| 1851 Dec 1  | Edw. C. Child         | 14 3/4 | Measles          | Edw. C. Child | 10 R           |


Page from Mount Hope Cemetery interment record showing Ann C. Child's burial location.  
Courtesy of Mount Hope Cemetery.

## DIED:

In this city, on the 7th inst., of billious fever, ELIAS CLARK, aged 62 years, formerly of New Bedford


 New Bedford, Rhode Island and Cincinnati papers please copy.

In this city, on the morning of the 8th inst. EDWIN JERMAIN, infant son of David W. and Wealthy Allen, aged 1 year and 14 days.

 Funeral will be attended at their residence, No. 9 North Ford st., to-morrow, (Tuesday) the 9th, at 10 o'clock.

In this city, on the 7th inst., SARAH, twin infant daughter of S. D. Walbridge, aged 3 months.

In this city, Sept. 8th, ANNA CUTLER, daughter of N. R. and E. P. Child, aged 6 years and 6 months.

 Funeral will take place to-morrow afternoon, at 4 o'clock, from 93 South Fitzhugh st.

*Obituary of Anna Cutler Child, Rochester Daily Advertiser, September 9, 1851.*

mindful thinkers simply accepted Anna's lack of a last name as a sure sign of slavery. Perhaps swayed by the longstanding, although misguided, narrative that Nathaniel Rochester had freed his slaves, they likely saw no reason to explore any other possibilities. The notion that the inscription might be an endearment likely did not even occur to them. Today, the words "We called her Anna" take on new meaning, signaling the devastating emotional loss that Rochester family members must have suffered over the death of a cherished child at so young an age.<sup>37</sup>

## Nathaniel Rochester Revisited

The quest to learn Anna's identity and relationship to Nathaniel Rochester led to many unexpected discoveries about our city's founder. Not only did Col. Rochester own slaves and actively participate in the slave trade while he was living in the South, he brought slaves with him and continued to own and profit from them until New York State no longer permitted him to do so. This contradicts the story that has been passed down through generations that Nathaniel Rochester came to the Genesee Country to escape the evil of slavery in the South. But the fact that Rochester owned slaves does not diminish the contributions he made to western New York and the city that bears his name. It simply serves as an important reminder of the political realities in America during the years following the Revolution. In a land where



all men were proclaimed to be created equal, most Euro-Americans were able to accept the enslavement and inferior treatment of African Americans as part of the status quo in the North, as in the South.

It is not surprising that the evidence of Nathaniel Rochester's Genesee Country slave dealings has been obscured over the past 200 years. After all, in a city that prides itself on its history as a hotbed for nineteenth-century social activism and reform—from abolition to women's rights—it's much more convenient to think that Rochester's founder fit neatly into, and perhaps even started, the reform tradition. But the realities of Nathaniel Rochester's slave dealings and the records that revealed them have important lessons to teach. The materials in the Rochester Family Papers and other area collections provide information not only on Nathaniel Rochester but on the slaves he owned and their life experiences in the Genesee Country. They help to demonstrate the ways in which slaves contributed to the settlement, creation, and growth of the Genesee Country, including the City of Rochester. The records also show how proactive and resourceful slaves, such as Nathaniel Rochester's Ned, could be in taking their freedom in western New York. We've only scratched the surface.

As a community, Rochester should be grateful for the foresight that Nathaniel Rochester's descendants have had in carefully saving the tangible evidence that sheds light on an aspect of what is arguably the most complicated and painful part of American history and for having the prescience of mind to safeguard it in public repositories at places such as the University of Rochester and the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County. In an age when Watergate tapes are destroyed and public skepticism of official records and pronouncements are highly suspect, it is refreshing to have a record like this left to us to study and contemplate, allowing us not only a more complete understanding of those who went before us, but also a better understanding of ourselves and our own place in history.



## End Notes

1. Richard O. Reisem, *Buried Treasures in Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, New York: A Pictorial Field Guide* (Rochester, NY: Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, 2002), 48.
2. Ibid., 49.
3. Jane Marsh Parker, "The Opening of the Genesee Country," in "References to Nathaniel Rochester," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series*, Vol. 3 (Rochester, NY: Rochester Historical Society, 1924), 371.
4. The authors would like to thank Richard Miller, who assisted with the research for this article.
5. Blake McKelvey, "Colonel Nathaniel Rochester," *Rochester History* 24, no. 1 (January 1962), 2.
6. Rochester's militia duties included serving as major of the militia and paymaster and collecting provisions and supplies for the troops. He eventually won an appointment as a colonel. Ibid., 3-4.
7. Ibid., 4.
8. Receipt written in Nathaniel Rochester's hand and signed by Mr. Benton "for the purpose of buying Negroes &c" for himself and several other men, March 4, 1779. Rochester Family Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester (hereafter cited as RFP-UR).
9. Ron Netsky, "Portrait of a Slave Trader: Confronting the Real Nathaniel Rochester," *City Newspaper*, February 11, 2004.
10. Receipt signed by T. Critcher, August 28, 1783, for 95 pounds for the sale of negro slave Nedd to Nathaniel Rochester. RFP-UR.
11. Ledger leaf showing accounts of Eastern Shore Speculation, March 17, 1790. RFP-UR.
12. Memorandum, unsigned, no date, c.1790. RFP-UR.
13. E. Anne Schaetzke, "Slavery in the Genesee Country," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 22, no. 1 (January 1998), 10-11.
14. Letter from Nathaniel Rochester to Charles Carroll, July 21, 1809. RFP-UR.
15. Douglas Harper, "Emancipation in New York," <http://www.slavenorth.com/nyemancip.htm>.
16. Fannie Rochester Rogers, "Colonel Nathaniel Rochester," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series*, Vol. 3 (Rochester, NY: Rochester Historical Society, 1924), 323.
17. Manumission record, signed by Nathaniel Rochester, freeing Benjamin and Casandra, January 29, 1811. RFP-UR. Also see A.O. Bunnell, *Dansville 1789-1902* (Dansville, NY: 1902), 149.
18. Douglas Harper, "Emancipation in New York," <http://www.slavenorth.com/nyemancip.htm>.
19. William O. Blake, *The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Ancient and Modern* (Columbus, Ohio: H. Miller, 1861), 447.
20. Schaetzke, 33.
21. Letter from Nathaniel Rochester to Charles Carroll, July 21, 1809. RFP-UR.
22. Receipt from the State of Pennsylvania confirming ownership of slave property belonging to Nathaniel Rochester, September 9, 1809. RFP-UR.
23. Rogers, 323.
24. Manumission record, signed by Nathaniel Rochester, freeing Benjamin and Casandra, January 29, 1811. RFP-UR.

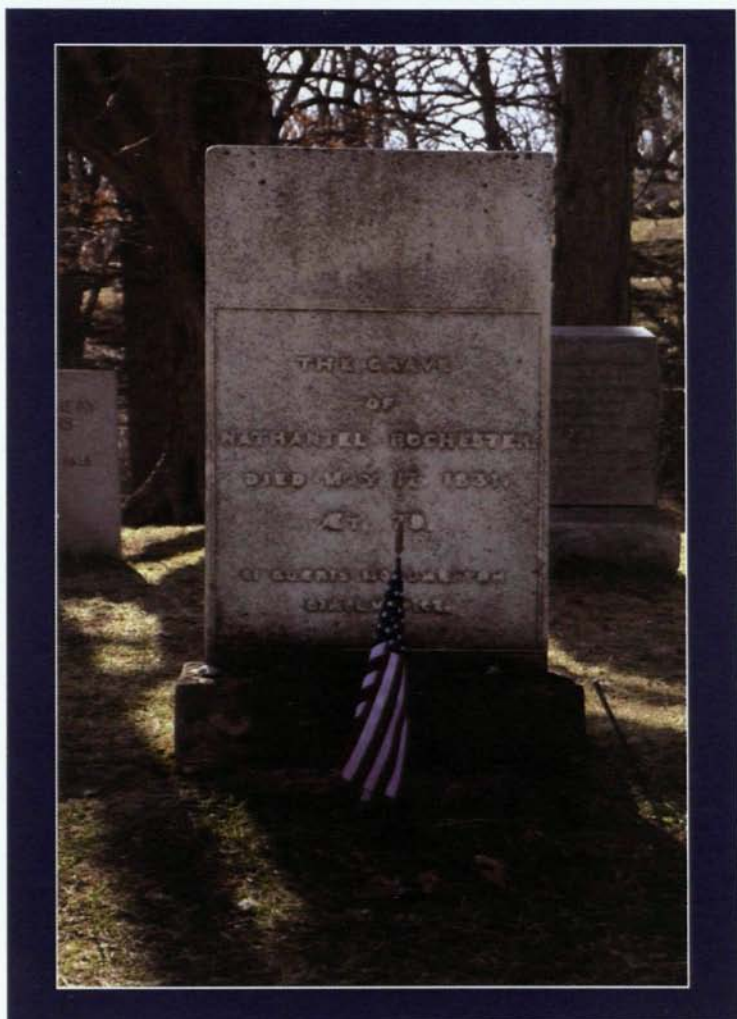
25. Indenture placing Casandra, "a poor child of Dansville," with Nathaniel Rochester, January 29, 1811. RFP-UR.
26. Schaetzke, 34.
27. Letter from John C. Spencer to Nathaniel Rochester, August 17, 1814. RFP-UR; Joseph W. Barnes, "Rochester's Congressman Part I: 1789-1869," *Rochester History* 61, no. 3 (July 1979), 9. John C. Spencer is listed in the Village of Canandaigua as owning one slave. Schaetzke, 26-27.
28. Letter to Nathaniel Rochester from William B. Rochester, December 18, 1814. RFP-UR.
29. Letter to Nathaniel Rochester from William B. Rochester, January 5, 1815. RFP-UR. This may be the same letter that Fannie Rochester Rogers cites as evidence of William B. Rochester's support for abolition.
30. Lockwood R. Doty, "History of Livingston County, New York," in "References to Nathaniel Rochester," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series*, Vol. 3 (Rochester, NY: Rochester Historical Society, 1924), 376.
31. *A Directory for the Village of Rochester* (Rochester, NY: Elisha Ely, 1827), 114.
32. Bill showing amount due by January 1, 1827, from Josiah Sheldon, Esq., to Nathaniel Rochester for the use of his slaves. RFP-UR.
33. End of life thoughts by Nathaniel Rochester to his children, October 31, 1830. RFP-UR.
34. Researchers from the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery have compiled a list of 303 "colored" people interred in the cemetery between 1860 and 1881, after which time "nationalities" were no longer recorded.
35. Mount Hope Cemetery interment record, 1851.
36. "Sophia Eliza Rochester," in "Descendants of Nathaniel Rochester," *Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series*, Vol. 3 (Rochester, NY: Rochester Historical Society, 1924), 351.
37. The authors would like to thank Carolyn Vacca for suggesting this interpretation of the origins of the Anna story and the meaning behind the short inscription on her grave.

## About the Authors

**Marilyn S. Nolte** is President of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. A Civil War historian and former reenactor, Nolte has extensively researched the United States Colored Troops, as well as other Civil War veterans interred in Mount Hope Cemetery.

**Victoria Sandwick Schmitt** is President of Corn Hill Navigation. A former museum historian, curator, and educator, she has researched, mounted exhibitions, and published numerous works on African-American history in Rochester and the vicinity.

**Christine L. Ridarsky** is the Rochester City Historian. She has a master's degree in American History from the State University of New York, College at Brockport (2003) and is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in the Department of History at the University of Rochester.



*Nathaniel Rochester's gravestone at Mount Hope Cemetery.  
Photograph by Ira Srole. From the collection of the Rochester City Hall Photo Lab.*



*On April 28, 2009, Mayor Robert A. Duffy, shown here with Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery President Marilyn Nolte, marked the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rochester's city charter by laying a wreath at the grave of city founder Nathaniel Rochester. Photograph by Ira Srole. From the collection of the Rochester City Hall Photo Lab.*



**Central Library  
of Rochester  
& Monroe County**  
[www.libraryweb.org](http://www.libraryweb.org)

