

The Stephen Jacob House

70-74 State Street



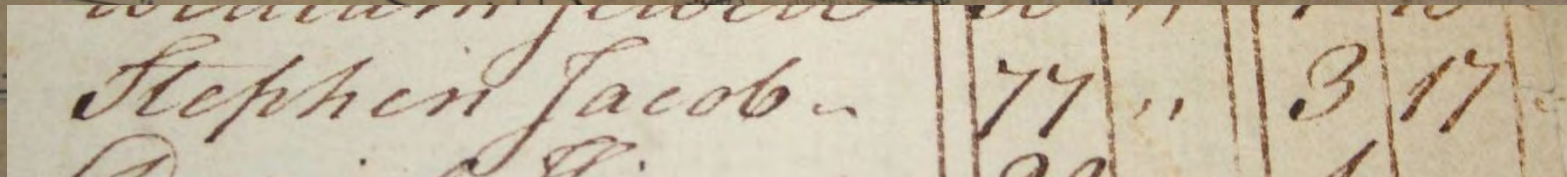
Windsor, Vermont

Property of Historic Windsor, Inc./Preservation Education Institute

Stephen Jacob: The Early Years

(Dec. 1755 – Jan. 1817)

- * Stephen Jacob was the sixth of 11 children of Richard and Thankful (Kellogg) Jacob of Sheffield, Massachusetts
- * Jacob spent time studying at Dartmouth College before transferring to Yale University, where he completed his college education in 1778, graduating with men the likes of Joel Barlow, Oliver Wolcott, Arthur Miller, and Noah Webster
- * After graduation, he read and studied law with Theodore Sedgwick of Sheffield
- * Jacob married Pamela Farrand (daughter of Revered Daniel and Jerusha [Boardman] Farrand of New Canaan, Connecticut) in 1779
- * The couple moved to Windsor, Vermont in the early 1780s



Stephen Jacob	77	3 17
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1786 Grand List, Windsor Vermont.

Town of Windsor, Vermont, *Records, 1786-1080, Windsor* (Vol. 1).

Stephen Jacob's Time in Windsor, Vermont

- * Jacob advertised his services as an attorney in Windsor; in 1782, his name was associated as counsel for 46 of the 58 cases heard in the October term
- * When Vermont was admitted into the Union as the 14th state, President George Washington elected Jacob as the state's first district attorney, a position he held from 1791 until 1797

1791
Friday, March the 4th 1791.

In conformity to the Summons issued by the President of the United States on the first instant, the Senate met this day at their Chamber, and having given due notice thereof the following communications were made to them by the President of the United States.

United States March 4th 1791

Gentlemen of the Senate

The Act for the admission of the State of Vermont into the Union: Having passed on this as the day of its ratification, it was thought that this would also be the first day on which any Officer of the Union might legally perform any act of authority relating to that State. Therefore requires your attendance to receive annunciations of the several Officers necessary to put the federal government into motion in that State.

For this purpose I nominate

Nathaniel Chipman to be Judge of the District of Vermont.

Stephen Jacobs to be Attorney for the United States in the District of Vermont.

Seamus R. Morris to be Marshall of the District of Vermont.

and

Stephen Keyes to be Collector of the Port of Allburgh in the State of Vermont.

G. Washington.

Stephen Jacobs to be Attorney for the United States in the District of Vermont.

Seamus R. Morris

Letter from George Washington appointing Jacob as Vermont's state attorney. George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799, Series 2 Letterbooks.

A historical map of Vermont, showing various towns and geographical features. The map is aged and has a yellowish-brown tone. Text is overlaid on the map, including a title and a list of Stephen Jacob's achievements. The map shows the Black River, Reading Pond, and various towns like Windsor, Cornish, and Wethersfield. The title 'Stephen Jacob's Time in Windsor, Vermont' is prominently displayed at the top. Below it, a list of his accomplishments is provided, starting with his role in the American Revolution and his various public offices in Vermont and nationally.

Stephen Jacob's Time in Windsor, Vermont

* While living in Windsor Jacob held a series of important positions, on both a state and local level as well as a national level:

- * Served in the American Revolution: 1777, 1781
- * Representative: 1781, 1788, 1794
- * Council of Censors: 1785
- * Elected selectman, lister, moderator, and school trustee at Windsor's first recorded town meeting: 1786
- * Clerk of the House: 1788-1790
- * Worked on a committee with other Vermont leaders to determine the boundary between New York and Vermont: 1789-1790
- * Vermont's first district attorney: 1791-1797
- * Chief Judge of Windsor County Court: 1791, 1797-1801
- * Member of Vermont's Constitutional Convention: 1793
- * Governor's Council: 1796-1801
- * One of the Cornish Bridge directors: 1802
- * Middlebury College trustee: 1800-1810
- * Vermont Supreme Court Judge: 1801-1802
- * Dartmouth College trustee: 1802-1817
- * Sold land to the state for the construction of the Vermont State Prison, which was in use until 1975: 1808

Judge Stephen Jacob and Dinah Mason White

- * Vermont's Constitution, written in 1777, was the first document in the United States to prohibit slavery
- * On July 26, 1783, Jacob purchased Dinah Mason White from Jotham White of Charlestown, New Hampshire for £40 in direct violation of Vermont's Constitution
- * Records indicate he kept Dinah, along with another unknown African American (most likely as slaves) within his household for quite some time, despite Vermont's anti-slavery stance
- * Around 1801, it is reported that Jacob stopped supporting Dinah when she became blind, sick, and infirm and threw her out of his house
- * Dinah, with no other feasible options, continued to live in Windsor until 1802, when the selectmen of the town (who also acted as overseers of the poor) sued Jacob for her support and payment of the fees they had expended for her care

John Gill	—	1	1	3	—	1	—	2	2	—	2
Stephen Jacob	—	—	1	3	—	1	—	1	—	—	—

1800 census record showing the presence of two (presumed) African Americans within the Jacob household (listed in the column to the far right); it is unclear who, besides Dinah, was living there when the census was taken.

United States Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, Windsor, Windsor County, Vermont, 1800.

Selectmen of Windsor v. Stephen Jacob, Esq.

(heard by the Vermont Supreme Court in August term, 1802)

- * At the time of the case, Jacob was one of three Vermont Supreme Court Judges; since he was prohibited from sitting on the case, it was presided over by Judges Royall Tyler and Jonathan Robinson
- * The plaintiffs tried to enter the bill of sale for Dinah as evidence that Jacob was indeed holding her illegally, while the defense argued that Dinah left of her own free will, and since Jacob knew slavery was illegal in the State of Vermont, he made no effort to bring her back into his service
- * The ruling in this case, which can be argued to be the first of its kind in the United States, was both hopeful and disheartening:
 - * Vermont's anti-slavery constitution was upheld when the bill of sale was not allowed to be admitted as evidence, setting a firm stance and precedent that the laws of the state's Constitution were not to be taken lightly
 - * While Judge Tyler stated that a master had the responsibility to care for his slaves, he ruled that Dinah could not be viewed as a slave because slavery did not exist within the boundaries of Vermont, and therefore Jacob could not be held accountable for her support

Excerpt from Windsor town records showing the fees associated with the 1802 case.

Town of Windsor, Vermont, *Records, 1786-1808*, Windsor, Vermont (Vol. 1), 162.

Dinah's Remaining Years

- * Dinah continued to live in Windsor and be supported by town funds, despite being “warned out” of town on several occasions
- * In late February or early March, Dinah died in Windsor; the town paid for medical services during her last sickness, as well as her coffin and bell-tolling
- * Although Jacob never offered any compensation to the town for Dinah’s support in light of the 1802 Vermont Supreme Court case, town records show that although it was ruled that Dinah was never a slave, town officials felt Jacob had shirked his responsibilities; records of expenses allotted by the overseers of the poor are listed in association with “Judge Jacob’s Dinah”

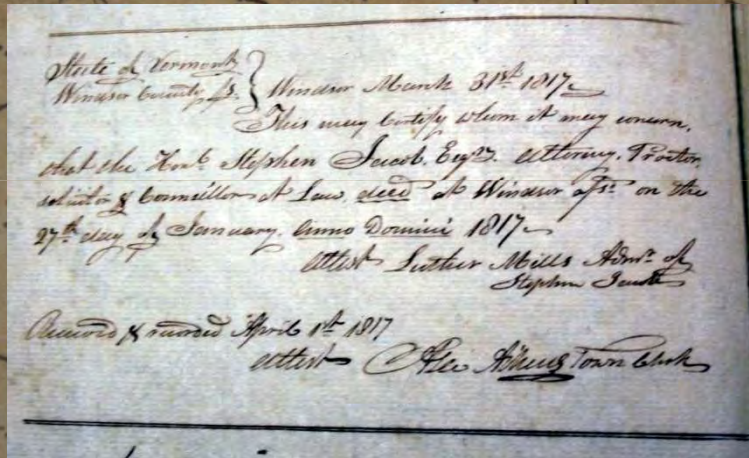
DIED,
In Bridgewater, Doct. Joseph Slayton.
In this town, Dinah, a woman of color.

Notice of Dinah's death.

Spencer's Vermont Journal, March 6, 1809 (Vol. XXVI, No. 1337), 3.

Jacob's Final Years

- * After the landmark 1802 case, Jacob's time as a public servant all but ended; he was not re-elected to the Vermont Supreme Court (although the two judges he served with were), and his involvement in state and local politics became virtually non-existent
- * On January 27, 1817, Jacob passed away in Windsor, cause unspecified, at the age of 61



Stephen Jacob's death certificate.

Town of Windsor, Vermont, *Births, Deaths, Marriages, Windsor* (Vol. 3 1786-1867), 3.



Grave of Stephen Jacob, Old South Burying Ground, Windsor, VT.

Photo courtesy of Heather Cox

The “Mansion House”

- * The house was built c. 1784, in the first years after the Jacobs moved to Windsor
- * It was called “among the most elegant” of the homes in town by J.A. Graham during his tour through Vermont in 1797
- * Although it is unclear exactly what the house looked like when the Jacob’s lived there, the building today is a two-and-a-half story, six by four bay, rectangular massed box with two four by one bay ells attached to the north (rear)
- * The house is located on State Street in Windsor, an east-to-west running road branching off of Main Street; the street is home to both residential, commercial, and public buildings including the town’s public library, school, and former Vermont State Prison (now housing), which lies on land Jacob once owned
- * When Jacob died in 1817 his widow was given the east half of the house and the right to use various amenities and conveniences; it remained divided down the middle for many years



The Jacob House Today

- * A local family who owned several other properties in town bought the property in the 1960s and converted the Federal-style house (which also has Greek Revival alterations) into a five-unit apartment building
- * When Historic Windsor, Inc./Preservation Education Institute (HWI/PEI) bought the property in November 2008, the house was in a state of disrepair and deferred maintenance; there were still five families living in the house, but despite the conditions it retained a high degree of original fabric, integrity, and finish
- * Since its acquisition of the Jacob House, HWI/PEI has strived to determine a long-range plan for the property and explored different avenues of possibilities for the property's final use; although that final use has yet to be decided upon, the organization is determined to use every aspect of the rehabilitation and restoration of the property as a means of education



Photos courtesy of Heather Cox

The Jacob House: Connecting with the Community

- * HWI/PEI has made connections with Windsor's middle and high school administrators and teachers in an effort to get students involved in all aspects of this project, which they estimate taking 5-10 years to complete; plans are also in place to contact the two vocational education centers in the region and see if a connection can be made with those institutions, as well
- * As a non-profit whose mission is to provide preservation building trades education to people of all means, professions, and walks of life, HWI/PEI has plans to turn the Jacob House into a laboratory and classroom, holding workshops and seminars in various preservation building trades, topics, and techniques
- * The people of Windsor and surrounding communities have shown their support for HWI/PEI's mission to realize the full potential of this historic property by participating in clean-up days and donating their time and services in a variety of capacities
- * Given the important history and events associated with the property, a National Historic Landmark nomination is underway for the Jacob House



Photos courtesy of Heather Cox



Thank you— we truly appreciate your interest in the Jacob House.

If you have any questions or would like to inquire about the property or its history further, please contact Historic Windsor, Inc./Preservation Education Institute:

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Slides prepared by Heather Cox, University of Vermont graduate student in Historic Preservation, and HWI/PEI intern

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