

PART 2

THE CLASS CALLED COLORED, 1834-1900

PROLOGUE

THE FREE COLORED IN THEORY

Scholars writing on the free colored have seen them as an awkward category, as much of the language used to portray them indicates. First, they are more often described in terms of what they were not—*not* white, *not* slave—than what they were. And second, they are considered to be an uncomfortably in-between group, an “intermediate class” (Augier et al. 1960: 159), aspiring to white status and scorning their slave origins, despised by both whites and slaves and despising both in return.

Such simplified portrayals are a classic example of contemporary scholars unwittingly accepting the point of view of one class, in this case the white governing class, and a particular one at that. For, as we shall see in what follows, the free colored were not any one thing: they were simply a legally defined category whose members ranged in wealth, status, and occupation, and who overlapped in these characteristics with both the legally constituted white *and* slave categories: some free colored were wealthier than some whites; some slaves were wealthier than some free colored; and so on. Forcing the free colored into an “in-between” category has obscured this variation, and in doing so obscured the complexities of free colored life.

It has also, as we shall see in what follows, obscured the dynamics of the process by which the free colored reacted to emancipation. As noted in the Introduction, the prevalent view of West Indian society as divided into three hierarchically ordered segments links *a* class and *a* color, so that the free colored are assumed to have been phenotypically “colored,” i.e., some shade of brown, and their successors are therefore assumed to be “colored” as well. Yet those who were legally confined to the free colored category were by no means all “colored”: there were too many ways of becoming a free colored—by being born free, by being manumitted, or by self-manumission—and thus too many possible phenotypic parental combinations (white father/brown mother, brown father/brown mother, brown father/black mother, etc., as well as any number of phenotypic in-betweens) for all, or even most, of the free colored to have been phenotypically “brown.” Nor were those who were phenotypically brown necessarily free colored: Sturge and Harvey, visiting the countryside in 1837, describe how one Moravian chapel for former slaves was full of “black” and “coloured” people, including several who looked “almost white,” while a Methodist infant school had only twenty or thirty “black” children out of a total of 130, the rest being “of every shade and complexion,” and a Wesleyan chapel had 300 people of “all shades of color” (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 18, 28, 30). And Mrs. Lanaghan, writing in 1844, pointed out how many “mulattos” were born slaves and not freed until general emancipation (Lanaghan 1844: 170), while visitors to the estates during slavery commented on the wide

range of phenotypic variation among the estate workers. Clearly, the free colored were not all “colored” any more than the laboring population was all “black.”

Thus the assumption of continuity hides the extent of phenotypic variation. The resulting straightjacket has forced scholars into some strange formulations: for example, one gentleman was described by the governor in 1836 as a “coloured inhabitant” who was “almost black” (CO 7/44, 1836); the same man was later described by Douglas Hall as a “dark-skinned coloured man” (Hall 1971: 152). Aside from the shift from “almost black” to “dark-skinned”—presumably an attempt to take twentieth-century sensibilities into account—what are we to make of the term “coloured” in this context? Clearly it does not mean phenotypically brown, but simply not fully white—or phenotypically anything from almost white to black.

The second assumption made in the discussion of the free colored segment in this color-class hierarchy is that it was a “separate and distinct” *group*. But although the free colored were legally a “separate and inferior class in the free community” (Goveia 1965: 270), this does not mean that they also behaved as a group—that they were a group both legally *and* socially. In the next chapter, I will argue that the legal category free colored not only encompassed a wide diversity of origins, and an equally wide range of wealth and status, but that while the free colored at times acted as a group vis-à-vis the white population, they were also internally layered and often divided. Further, the social boundaries between white and free colored were hazy, and those between free colored and slave were hazier still.

This leads to a third assumption: that a segment of the population that, in the pre-emancipation period, occupied the middle place in the three-tier hierarchy was biologically connected to the segment that occupied the same place in the same hierarchy in the post-emancipation period—that there was not only a social but a *genetic* connection between the two. This assumption is so easily accepted because the three-tier view is itself so embedded, but it has been reinforced by methodological approaches to the study of the former free colored in the post-emancipation period. In other words, many scholars have seen continuity because they assumed it existed and thus used methodologies that reinforced their assumptions. This has been particularly true of those who have used selected examples to generalize to an entire population and/or have focused on those free colored who made the transition to “colored middle class,” excluding from scrutiny those who did not (e.g., Campbell 1976, Heuman 1981). Such a methodology makes it virtually inevitable that change will be obscured.

The next two chapters look in detail at the assertion that the free colored in Antigua “became” the middle class. Chapter 4 discusses the free colored in the pre-emancipation era—when they were legally in the category called free colored. Then, using the results of the study of a number of specific families, Chapter 5 follows the free colored from emancipation until the end of the nineteenth century. Thus these chapters cover the same years as Part 1, but whereas the focus there was on the white planters and merchants, and on the sugar economy, here the focus becomes a part of the nonwhite population.

The basis for the analysis is a sample of twenty-four surnames that were selected for intensive study. These were broken into two sets: Set 1 consisted of twelve surnames randomly selected from a list of the known free colored community of the 1830s, surnames that were *also* held by members of the “brown middle class” of the twentieth century—hypothesizing a likely connection. (The twelve were later expanded to thirteen: one had to be dropped because it was

too common; two were added in order to expand the amount of information available for analysis.)¹ Set 2 consisted of another twelve surnames, these held by members of the twentieth-century middle class but *not* known to be among those held by the free colored—hypothesizing other origins, but also allowing for the possibility that if the free colored had indeed “become” the twentieth-century middle class, at least some of the second set could be expected to have links to the free colored population. For both sets, genealogical research was carried forward from the 1830s and backward from the 1930s, using a combination of informants and a varied assortment of archival material. Since the literature I have been referring to was not discussing the current-day twentieth-century middle class (i.e., the class of the 1980s) but of the period before World War II, I too focused on the middle class of this period. This was a class that was clearly recognized as such in Antigua, and one whose membership was widely agreed upon, by both those inside and outside.

The decision to use surnames, while necessary from a practical point of view, meant that the research was generally confined to the male line: if the children of married daughters had been brought into the genealogies and followed forward, the number of surnames—and therefore the research—would have become unmanageable after only one generation. Thus only if a daughter from one of the sample families married into another of the sample families, or married into a family already known to me—a list that, as we shall see, became quite extensive—am I able to discuss this line.

Finally, the nature of some of the data—wills, Blue Books, almanacs, juror and voter lists, grammar school rolls—meant that those most easily followed were those who had, in one way or another, made a mark: they had held office, acquired enough wealth to leave a will, gone to the grammar school, served as a juror, etc. This was not necessarily a drawback, since those of interest were by definition those who were most likely to turn up in just such records; but it did mean that, particularly in the early years, a child (legitimate or, more likely, illegitimate) could disappear from the records and still be part of the population. In fact, this undoubtedly did happen, and fairly frequently. In addition, people disappeared out of the genealogies because they left the island; the wills (and informants) were often helpful in telling where they went, but without these it was impossible to be sure that they had actually left. The key point, however, is that carrying the research both backward and forward made it less likely that someone could fall out of a genealogy and then come back in.

The chapters that follow will look at the historical origins of the nonwhite middle class. But this is only one part of the picture: another is the *belief* this class has about its origins. This turned out to be equally complicated. Thus when I arrived in Antigua, having read all the material then available on the free colored and being saturated in the discussions of the “brown

¹ The problem of extremely common surnames, as well as that of identical first and middle names and the practice of giving younger children the names of predeceased siblings, is one of the stumbling blocks to this kind of research in the Caribbean. Thus, to take one prominent Antiguan example, not only were there several Samuel Athills alive at one time—and dozens over four generations—but there were two Samuel Lauchland Athills contemporary with each other but related only through the original white settler five generations earlier. They themselves believed they had to be “some kind of cousins,” but only because they had the same name. (People with the same surname frequently assume they must in some way be related.) I had already run into this problem in St. Maarten, where children were frequently given *all* the names of totally unrelated, but admired, people (Lowes 1977).

middle class" that had supposedly developed from it, I immediately began to ask members of the middle class about their own free colored ancestors. I was surprised, as well as considerably dismayed, to find that absolutely *no one* could recall a free colored ancestor. Despite the ubiquitousness of the three-tier model—everyone knew about the free colored (or the "mulatto class," as they were sometimes called)--no one traced his or her own family to this segment of the pre-emancipation population. The category free colored had absolutely no import.

Instead, I heard a number of other explanations of both class position and phenotypic skin color. Most members of the middle class traced their families back to an "original" white ancestor, generally a grandfather but occasionally a great-grandfather, a man (always) who had come from England or Scotland during the slave era to be a sugar planter or merchant; obviously, few had actually known these men. This was true even though in many cases (as I soon discovered) the first white male to enter the family tree had not arrived in Antigua until the mid-to-late 1800s, well after emancipation. It was also true when the first white ancestor was so far back as to be untraceable: rather than great-grandfather, great-great-great would have been more accurate. In either case, the ancestor was brought within "knowable" range. Memory was thus "colored" and "gendered": the line on the female side (white or not) fades away while the line on the white male side is remembered—even if wrongly. The family's history becomes a "series of male milestones" (Douglass 1992: 117).² To be a founder of a family—to be placed at the top of the family tree—was by definition to be male, white, and free: none of my older informants ever started their genealogies with either a woman or a slave. Only the younger people talked—proudly—of having slaves for ancestors.

Thus the middle class had no *memory* of being related, genetically or even socially, to the free colored: they did not know if they had free colored ancestors, and would not have considered it important if they did. Only white male ancestors were important. They did not in fact know much about these men, and believed them to be both more important and longer resident than they actually were. But no matter how inaccurate, it was this history that was clearly central to this class's definition of itself.³

There were two other explanations for phenotypic skin color among the middle class. The first explained whiteness when there was no "memory" of a planter or merchant in the family, and the second explained color while avoiding association with slavery. Thus many people referred vaguely to "coming from English Harbour," the town on the south side of Antigua that had been a British naval base beginning in the 1700s. Many English Harbour people are fair and

² I also found what Diane Austin has called the search for the "elusive white grandfather" (cited in Douglass 1992: 93): I knew many people who went to England and Scotland looking for the "original" member of their family, and many more who thought they had found him in Oliver's genealogies (Oliver 1894-1899, vols. II and III).

³ Jack Alexander, one of the very few scholars to write about the West Indian middle class, also talks about this class's "origin myth," which he found in the liaison between white master and black slave—and proposes that this "charter" "relates events that have taken place in the past and that are yet still in the present, not simply as past causes of present conditions, but actually present. The origin myth formulates in the minds of informants the underlying, fundamental principles of the society against which all variations are measured" (Alexander 1984: 173). But while the cultural importance of this origin myth is persuasive, it is even more interesting when it is not the fact than when it is. Thus Alexander believes that the "origin of the middle class lies in the freedmen of the Jamaican slave society" (Alexander 1984: 175), that this middle class was a "development of the freedmen of the slave society," that it "articulated its interests in a way that clearly built on that of its predecessors, the freedmen," that the roots of twentieth century nationalism "lay in the eighteenth-century freedmen's claim for the rights of natives," and so on (Alexander 1984: 175-78). This goes beyond an analysis of the social force of the myth to posit links that may have no grounding either in fact or in his informants' own minds.

most are poor, so being from English Harbour does not have the class implications of claiming a planter ancestor. Color, on the other hand, was frequently explained by claiming Carib ancestry. The likelihood of this is minimal, since there have been no Caribs in Antigua since the 1600s, but it serves its purpose of explaining color without the taint of slavery.

An obituary for Edna Kelsick, a member of a prominent middle-class family who was phenotypically fair, provides a perfect example of all these tendencies, not only touching all these bases but also making a bow to contemporary Afrocentrism: "She came of English Harbour stock, as she would say, and had Carib, English, and African blood in her veins" (*Worker's Voice*, 1 December 1982). The fact was, however, that Edna Kelsick was one of the few remaining descendants of a free colored family: her father was the son of a prominent free colored shoemaker, and the Kelsick name will come up frequently in the discussion below. Yet neither Edna (as I discovered in interviews) nor the writer of the obituary was aware of this.

The nonwhite middle class also believed that its members had been the first nonwhites to achieve prominence. Thus when I asked them when they, or their parents, had become members of the middle class, I was proudly told how, in the first years of the twentieth century, they had broken the "color bar" and been part of a string of "firsts": the "first" nonwhite to be invited to dinner at government house, the "first" nonwhite lawyer, doctor, magistrate, newspaper editor, merchant, and so on. In fact, while in the longer view this was also a myth, in the shorter term it had its roots in reality. Thus as I learned more about the free colored in the pre-emancipation period, and as I followed them into the 1830s and 1840s, I began to realize that at some point in the mid-nineteenth century something had happened to set back the progress of nonwhites; indeed, the setback had been so severe that the nonwhite middle class of the twentieth century appeared, at least to its members, to have been born anew, to have no connection with any earlier nonwhite middle class. And from their (present) point of view, this was certainly the case: by 1890, there was only *one* nonwhite in the administrative branches of the Colonial Service,⁴ and he was a lowly clerk in the judicial department. In addition, there were only a few merchant establishments owned by nonwhites, no planters of any size, no estate attorneys, and only one doctor, one lawyer, and one newspaper editor. Thus this myth about the past was grounded in a version—truncated but nevertheless in one sense accurate—of reality.

The middle class's myths about its origin tell a great deal of its sense of itself and its identity, and should be kept in mind in the discussion that follows. But now we turn to what actually happened.

⁴ By this I mean the colonial secretary's office, the judicial branch, the treasury, etc., but not the jail, lunatic and leper asylums, hospital, prison, and schools. All of the latter category were run by the government and had many low-paid nonwhite employees.

CHAPTER 4

NEITHER BLACK NOR WHITE, NEITHER SLAVE NOR FREE: THE FREE COLORED IN ANTIGUA

The free colored segment of the population in Antigua developed very gradually. It was created in a number of ways: in the early years of the slave period, most of its members were born slaves and were freed—by a parent, sibling, owner, friend, or lover, by the state for meritorious service, or by themselves (through self-purchase). As time went on, more and more were born free, the offspring of free colored men and women, or of a free colored mother and white father. Slave children who were the offspring of white men and slave women (a child took the status of its mother) were sometimes freed at the father's death. "Free colored" was a legal category that had no color content, and as their varied origins make clear, the free colored were not "colored" as the term is used colloquially in the West Indies (meaning some shade of brown) but were of many phenotypic colors.

As the eighteenth century progressed, the free colored population began to increase rapidly, both absolutely and as a percentage of the total population, and by 1805 there were 1,300 free colored in Antigua. Yet the greatest increase was still to come: the number tripled in the next fifteen years, partly due to a growing number of manumissions, and by 1820 there were approximately 4,000 free colored—twice the number of whites—in a total population of 37,000. The following table shows the growth of the free colored population:

Year	White	Free Col.	Slave
1707	2,892	18	12,892
1729	4,088		22,611
1787	2,590	1,230	37,088
1805	3,000	1,300	36,000
1815	3,200	1,200	36,000
1821	1,980	4,066	31,064
1824		3,825	30,314 ⁵

But the gender and geographic distribution of the free colored population differed markedly from that of the white population: in 1821, the free colored were 58 percent female—2,360 females and 1,706 males (presumably more females because more were freed); while the white

⁵ The sources for these figures are as follows: For 1707, Gaspar 1985a: 162, citing CO 318/2, "An Account of no. of White Inhabitants, free Negroes & Slaves in Leeward Islands, 1672-1774"; for 1729, 1787, 1815, 1821, R.M. Martin 1843: 80; for 1805, Davy 1854: 386, citing Sir W. Young, *West Indies Common Place Book*, p. 3; for 1824, Oliver 1894-99: cli. Note that Davy 1854 and Sewell 1861 both cite Martin. Martin's title page states that his figures come from the official records of the Colonial Office. However, Oliver gives a much lower figure of 1,789 white inhabitants in 1729 (Oliver 1894-99: xcvi) and a lower figure of 30,985 slaves in 1821 (ibid.: cl).

Unfortunately, there was no census between 1821 and 1844. The 1821 census is cited in some detail in Lanaghan 1844: II, 284), and in R.M. Martin 1843: 80, and the 1844 census in Great Britain, Sessional Papers, 1845 (426), xxxi: 329 ff.

population was 58 percent male. And while both were highly concentrated in the Parish of St. John, which included the city of St. John's—where 70 percent of the free colored and 61 percent of the whites lived—there was another concentration of free colored in the Parish of St. Paul, which included the towns of Falmouth and English Harbour (and the naval station), while the whites were more evenly spread across the rest of the parishes. (All figures from 1821 census, cited in Lanaghan 1844: II, 284.)

Although the pyramidal view of West Indian social structure discussed above places the free colored in the middle in terms of wealth as well as phenotypic skin color, in fact by the 1820s there was a very wide range of not only wealth but of education and social status within the free colored category. At the upper levels, for instance, there were those with white or wealthy free colored fathers who had been educated abroad, and/or set up in business, established in a trade, or left with a substantial inheritance, mostly the land and merchant or artisanal establishments that they already worked in.⁶ There were a few wealthy free colored merchants and more somewhat less wealthy shopkeepers; there were writing clerks in private and public office, and in 1814 two free colored men, William Hill and Henry Loving, established the *Antigua Weekly Register*, which became the principle paper (Coleridge 1826: 241) for the next twenty-five years. A number of free colored owned slaves in order to increase their own wealth, and employed them in a wide range of activities, either working directly for the owner—as shopkeeper, seamstress, washer, ironer—or working for others and earning for their owner—as porters on the docks, for instance, or as skilled tradesmen (Cox 1984: 73). And with only a few exceptions, few free colored showed any inclination to part with their slaves (Cox 1984: 74); it is not surprising, therefore, that in Antigua, as in the rest of the British West Indies, even those among the upper levels of the free colored who fought most strenuously for amelioration—for proposals to ameliorate the conditions of both slaves and free colored, but not to abolish either status—did not necessarily support the abolition of slavery itself. Although many free colored owned slaves, the largest compensation claim was for 133, far above that of any other free colored claimant; the next largest was for 23, and most were for fewer than 5 (Oliver 1894-99: 305-18; *Antigua Free Press*, 30 October 1834). Some, however, like Nathaniel Hill, a prominent free colored supporter of amelioration, had freed their slaves earlier: Hill freed fifty slaves between 1821 and 1826 (Brown, pers. comm.).

Visitors to Antigua in the immediate pre-emancipation period all reported that there was considerable property among the free colored, and that they were doing better in Antigua than in most of the other islands—the key exception being Grenada (Coleridge 1826: 203; Bayley 1833: 311). As noted above, most of the free colored in Antigua—as elsewhere—were urban

⁶ There has been very little archival research done on the free colored in Antigua. The lone exceptions are David Barry Gaspar's article on freedmen before 1760 (Gaspar 1985b), as well as his discussion in his book (Gaspar 1985a), and an unpublished paper on Henry Loving by Michael Brown (Brown 1985). Although the basic outlines appear to be very much like those of the free colored in the better studied islands, including Jamaica and Barbados (Handler 1974; Heuman 1981; Cohen and Green 1972), as we shall see in what follows, with the free colored it is the details that are significant, and much more work needs to be done in this area. What I present here is only a beginning, and is pieced together from almanacs, visitors' accounts, and wills I found in the Antigua courthouse. In addition, Michael Brown kindly supplied me with some material from the Public Record Office in England. This includes the cites from the following: CO 7/71/37, 19 December 1831; CO 7/34/58, 1 November 1832; CO 7/34/60, 8 November 1832; CO 7/68/60, 7 August 1841; CO 7/86/53, 29 June 1847; *Herald Gazette*, 3 November 1832; and *Antigua Free Press*, 30 October 1834. In addition, David Farquhar, an Antiguan whose specialty is church history, gave two lectures in Antigua in 1980 on Methodist church history, and was also very helpful to me in identifying individuals.

dwellers, since deficiency laws, which required that a certain number of whites be employed on each plantation, effectively reserved the jobs of estate manager and overseer to white men (Goveia 1965: 165); by the early 1800s, only a very few free colored owned property outside of town, and only one owned a large working estate, although after the repeal of the White Servants Act in 1833 increasing numbers of nonwhites began to take the post of overseer—at a much reduced salary (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 48). Legal restrictions on the amount of land the free colored could own, as well as a lack of access to credit and labor, also prevented all but a very few from becoming involved in even small-scale agriculture on their own account (Goveia 1965: 225; see also CO 7/44, 8 November 1836).

In addition to this elite, there were many more free colored of lesser status: there were many artisans, of all sorts and degrees of wealth and status, from printer, cabinetmaker, coachmaker, butcher, and shipwright, to carpenter, shoemaker, mason, and ironmonger. There were teachers, tailors, traders, pilots and seamen, innkeepers, and hucksters (see Goveia 1965; Hall 1971; Thome and Kimball 1839). And below this modest level, there were many free colored who were poor, men and women hovering on the edge of slavery: for them the free colored status was fragile at best, since they always risked being returned to bondage (Gaspar 1985a: 163-64; see also Luffman 1789).

For reasons that are unclear, the free colored in Antigua had more political rights than the free colored in most other islands: they had the right to vote in Assembly and vestry elections (Goveia 1965: 82, 85, 216; Bayley 1833: 311), for instance, although this was severely restricted in practice by a property qualification.⁷ By 1832 the free colored made up two-thirds of the militia, although they could not hold a commissioned rank (Brown 1985: 2). Some were prominent Anglicans and served on the vestry; none, however, had ever been elected to the Assembly. Nor had they made many inroads into the upper levels of the civil establishment: an 1832 dispatch from the governor to the Colonial Office included a list of all the official appointments held by “gentlemen of color” and there were only seven, five of which were honorary military posts. These were David Cranstoun, James Hicks, Gratinus Hart, Joseph Shervington, and George Athill. The two who were part of the civil establishment had been recently appointed—in 1825 and 1822—and were John Athill, a merchant and landowner who was appointed Deputy Postmaster General, and Tyrrell Shervington, a merchant who was appointed Clerk of the Council (CO 7/34/60, 8 November 1832). All were men from prominent free colored families whose names will recur frequently in what follows.

The free colored were extremely active in the social welfare arena, particular in the years immediately preceding emancipation—perhaps, indeed, in preparation for it. They established the first friendly society in 1828, in St. John's, and the next in 1832 in the countryside, and by 1854 these had 12,588 members (Davy 1854: 394); both were associated with the Anglican church. They also established beneficial societies and were active in charity fundraising events. The Methodists among them had long been forceful advocates for education for the slaves, and had established a large Sunday school in English Harbour, as well as smaller schools on many estates. In the late 1820s, they established the Society for Aiding the Education of Poor Children: its officers—John Athill, G. Hart, Henry Loving, Nathaniel Hill, James Hicks, and Joseph Shervington—were again from the upper levels of the free colored community, including those

⁷ According to Lazarus-Black, this was a matter of custom, not law; it did not become law until 1822 (Lazarus-Black 1990: 50).

most active in the struggle for free colored civil rights (CO 7/34/58, 1 November 1832, enclosing a copy of the Society's 1829 report). Two free colored women had established a Distressed Females' Friendly Society in English Harbour in the early 1800s, which became the Female Refuge Society and then the Female Orphan Asylum and expanded into St. John's (Horsford 1856). The English Harbour free colored were also instrumental in the creation of a Poor Relief Fund, a Juvenile Association, and an English Harbour Benefit Society.

The free colored played a mediating role between the white planter class and the mass of the slaves, but it was a different role in different islands and different circumstances. This becomes clear when the social position and status of the free colored in Antigua are compared with that of the free colored in other British West Indian islands, for the differences are striking. In the first place, the relationship between the free colored and white segments of the population in the immediate pre-emancipation period varied from island to island. Edward Cox, comparing Grenada and St. Kitts (Cox 1984), has focused on demographic patterns and stage of economic development as the key variables, particularly as they relate to the ability to acquire land. He argues that where the ratio of free to unfree, and white to free colored, was low (in other words, where the free population as a whole and the white population in particular was a larger percent of the whole), as in St. Kitts, race relations were likely to be "more strained" and the free colored struggle for civil rights more difficult (Cox 1984: 109-110). Thus the white population viewed the free colored as competition, a demographically based competition that was exacerbated in St. Kitts—physically dominated as it was by large sugar estates—by the relatively large landless white population. The situation was reversed in Grenada, where the whites were a much smaller percentage of the free and the economy was less devoted to sugar, so that the free colored were able to buy land and to move into the internal marketing system. Such opportunities were not available in St. Kitts. Thus in Grenada, the free colored came to be seen—by the whites—more as partners than as competitors, while in St. Kitts the situation was just the opposite. In Grenada, more concessions were made to the free colored, relations were less tense, and the free colored had an easier (moderately) struggle to win civil rights for themselves.

To better understand the situation in Antigua, it is useful to extend this comparison by including both Antigua and Dominica (Trouillot 1988), starting, as does Cox, with the demographic variables. When all four islands are compared, they form a continuum, from St. Kitts at one extreme to Grenada at the other. This continuum is further emphasized when another percentage is added in, whites as percent of total population:

	Total population	White	Free colored	Total free
St. Kitts	24,000	1,900	2,500	4,400
Antigua	31,000	2,000	4,000	6,000
Dominica	23,000	1,100	2,700	3,800
Grenada	29,000	800	4,000	4,800

	Whites as % of free	Free colored as % of free	Whites as % of total	Free as % of total
St. Kitts	43	56	8	18
Antigua	33	66	7	19
Dominica	29	71	5	16
Grenada	17	83	3	17

Dominica was in many ways similar to Grenada, both demographically and economically: in both the free colored made up over 50 percent of the free population, while the whites were a somewhat beleaguered percentage of the total (although not as beleaguered in Dominica as in Grenada). Most important, the free colored in Dominica, like the free colored in Grenada, were able to move into coffee production, an agricultural sector not dominated by the sugar planters but nevertheless also based on slavery (if on a smaller scale), as well as into huckstering and higgling, and so were not in direct competition with whites. Thus Rolph Trouillot argues that for the free colored in Dominica, the irony was that emancipation was an “inconvenience” rather than a boon because it threatened the stability of their labor force (Trouillot 1992a).

If the economic base and social relations of Dominica and Grenada form one end of the spectrum, those of St. Kitts and Antigua form the other. Like Antigua, St. Kitts was one of the oldest sugar-producing colonies in the British Caribbean and, again like Antigua, it had virtually no other agricultural production, free colored or otherwise (for export, that is—all the islands had a vibrant slave-based provision-production system), and no virgin land available for new crops. The free colored in St. Kitts and Antigua made up a smaller percentage of the free population than in either Grenada or Dominica, while whites made up a greater percentage of the total.

Cox’s discussion of St. Kitts shows the extent to which the free colored’s struggle for full civil rights met with strong resistance from the white population. In St. Kitts, the white population was about the same size as in Antigua, but formed a much larger percentage of the free; thus the whites in St. Kitts were more likely to see the free colored as competition. In the struggle for civil rights leading up to emancipation, the white elite in St. Kitts was the more recalcitrant, and the number of free colored in St. Kitts actually declined between 1812 and 1826, while it almost tripled in Antigua, indicating a harsher policy toward manumission in St. Kitts. The free colored in St. Kitts did not get the vote until 1825, but once they got it, they voted as a bloc and elected their own: three free colored had won seats by 1833 (Cox 1984: 108). But the result, from the planter point of view, was paradoxical: it led the free colored in St. Kitts to form alliances with the slaves in the fight for emancipation, whereas in Grenada no such alliance developed. The government in St. Kitts was then forced to try to buy off one section of the free colored with ameliorative legislation at the expense of the rest (Cox 1984: 150). Thus where sugar was least dominant, where the white planter class was weakest, and where the free colored found an economic niche for themselves—in Dominica and Grenada—we do not find them arguing the case for their slave brethren; but where none of this was the case, as in St. Kitts, alliances were made that worked for the benefit of the larger group.

Although Antigua was as sugar-dominated as St. Kitts and the white population was as small a percentage of the total, the free colored population was a larger percent of the free. It therefore played a more important mediating role. On the one hand, the free colored were either granted, or took on, certain rights; on the other, they were much less tendentious in their

demands. They were able to move into certain urban roles—in particular, merchanting and artisanship—that were less available to them in St. Kitts. Thus while there was certainly resistance to free colored demands among the planter class in Antigua, it was a resistance that was tempered by the planters' confidence in their ability to maintain control of the estates and to be assured of a sufficient labor force—also the basis for their confidence in bypassing the apprenticeship period. The result was that the free colored in Antigua not only refused to ally with those below them, but eventually split over tactics even at the top.

In the first decades of the 1800s, members of the upper levels of the free colored population in all the islands, aware of their increasing wealth and sensing that slavery's days were numbered, began to mount a concerted effort to improve their legal status. Petitions began in earnest in the 1820s, when the British government sent out a commission to examine the administration of justice in the islands. In Antigua, beginning in 1823, the free colored began to put forward what would become a flood of petitions, addressed to the governor, the Assembly, visiting commissions, the Colonial Office, and eventually Parliament.⁸

In Antigua, as in other islands, the free colored at first chose not to argue for emancipation—not even for themselves, much less for the entire population—but merely for the amelioration of the disabilities under which they lived, a position with which the Colonial Office was already sympathetic, and for the removal of the penalties that were similar to those imposed on slaves (Cox 1984: 96). In that context they argued for certain specific privileges that up until then had been denied them: the abolition of the White Servants Act, which prevented them from being employed on plantations as managers or overseers; the right to hold commissions in the militia; the right to serve as grand and petit jurors; and the right to receive parochial aid in the parishes. Some of them also wanted the right to be buried in the Anglican churchyard and to sit beside whites in the pews—a kind of discrimination that must have been especially galling to those free colored who were both Anglicans and pillars of the free colored community (see Coleridge 1826; Brown 1985). In the 1823 Antigua petition, they specifically mentioned skin color, which they treated as incidental to their key attribute, that of being British-born subjects and “sons of Englishmen.” They argued that it was on this basis that they were entitled to certain privileges—despite the “vulgar prejudice” against them because of what they delicately describe as their “unfortunate complexion.” Because they are identifying as “English,” they do not mention the slave population: they argue that the disabilities that hamper their progress should be removed because they are *morally* equal to whites; they also make the veiled threat that if this does not happen, they will no longer identify with the white planters and that the “peace and harmony” of the community will therefore be disturbed (CO 318/76, 4 September 1823).

It is on the basis of these petitions, which are among the very few documents that the free colored produced, that most assertions about free colored attitudes toward both whites and slaves, and therefore about their “place and role in society” (Gaspar 1985b) are based. Yet all they actually show is the feelings that the free colored chose—without doubt carefully—to reveal for a particular purpose. In Antigua, they chose to portray themselves as reasonable, and their

⁸ The 1823 petitions, one to the Antigua Assembly and one to a visiting commission, are in CO 318/76 and dated 4 September and 8 October; the names were kindly provided me by Michael Brown. The 1830 petition to the British parliament, with signatories, is in Oliver 1894-99: cli; the 1832 petition, addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, is in CO 7/34/41. There may well have been many more: the “White Proprietor” cited below is apparently responding to a petition to the Assembly in 1828.

demands were cautious—in contrast, for instance, to St. Kitts, where they were considerably more militant. This did not mean, however, that their petitions, no matter how politely phrased, were welcomed by all the planters. In particular, the demand for the repeal of the White Servants Act met with stiff resistance: there were planters who felt, as one of them put it, that the “extinction of the white population [would be] the inevitable result of compliance” (1828 letter from a “White Proprietor,” Antigua archives, mimeo). It is not surprising that this issue raised such a furor: the free colored were well aware that without access to the estates, they would remain marginalized from the center of the economy yet dependent on it; the planters were equally aware that, with the free colored already entrenched in the merchant sector, the plantations were their last line of defense. The 1828 appeal to the local Assembly was rejected; it was followed by a petition to Parliament in 1830, which also focused on the White Servants Act. This too got nowhere until 1832—only two years before full emancipation—when a Free Coloured Relief Bill was finally passed, giving adult free colored males full civil rights.

The 1823 petition to the Antigua Assembly had 115 signatures; the 1830 petition to Parliament had 316. With a total male free colored population of 1,700 (in 1821, the closest census date), and supposing that 50 percent of these were children, 315 signatories—and all the signatories were male—would have been close to half the adult male free colored population.⁹ This can be taken to indicate not only a growing movement but a fair amount of solidarity of purpose. But it cannot therefore be assumed that the free colored were acting as a group in other ways as well, and closer inspection shows a clear division among them, one that correlates with wealth and status.

As in other islands (see, e.g., Heuman 1981 for Jamaica), it was not necessarily the wealthiest among the free colored who were at the forefront of the struggle for amelioration and emancipation, nor the poorest, but those of some wealth and, particularly important, education. Their leaders in Antigua included *Weekly Register* editor Henry Loving and his associate Nathaniel Hill, a member of the Anti-Slavery Society and signer of the covering letter accompanying the 1830 petition. Loving, born a slave and manumitted at age 9, was bitterly opposed to the legal disabilities that made him inferior to any white man, no matter how poor, ill-educated, or lacking in “gentility or standing in the community” (Brown 1985: 2). He formed a “Committee of Correspondence” that included Thomas W. Martin, George and David Cranstoun, Peter P. Walter, William Lynch, James and William Thibou, and Joseph Shervington, all prominent free colored, urban and mostly merchants. The committee began a correspondence to plead the free colored cause and sent Loving to London in 1831 to press its case.¹⁰

Yet even the modest pursuit of modest goals was too much for some of the free colored, and particularly for the Anglicans. Several of the most prominent—including John Athill, his brother George, and Tyrrell Shervington—signed none of the petitions. John Athill made it clear that he would only work for reform in the social arena; he was thus active on some of the free colored education and social service committees but refused to join any group working for free colored civil rights (Farquhar, pers. comm.). In 1831 he went so far as to write the governor to

⁹ The free colored population was more female than male, with a sex ratio of 1.5:1, and there were more children than in the rest of the population.

¹⁰ The committee that put together the 1823 petition was composed of John Tyley, Nathaniel Hill, Richard Wilson, David Cranstoun, William Lynch, William Thibou, and Samuel Picart. Only John Tyley and Samuel Picart did not also sign the 1832 petition, possibly because they were no longer alive; other Tyleys and Picarts did. (See CO 318/76, 4 September 1823.)

assure him of “free colored” support and to disassociate himself from any of Loving’s criticisms (CO 7/31/37, 19 December 1831). By 1836 Athill was temporarily in England, being, according to the governor, “always adverse to the pretenses of his coloured brethren” (CO 7/44/22, 18 November 1836).

Once full civil rights had been granted in 1832, the free colored split over how far they were willing to go to support full emancipation. When Loving’s committee demanded that the same rights that they had just been granted be extended to the slave population, David and George Cranstoun and Peter Walter, all former committee members, wrote to the *Herald and Gazette*—the planter paper founded in 1831 specifically to counter Loving (Brown 1985: 3)—to disassociate themselves from the committee, and in particular from its support for full abolition; they were in turn regarded by the committee as having been “tampered with in a certain official quarter” (*Herald and Gazette*, 3 November 1832). Loving’s pro-emancipation stance lost him so many subscribers to his own paper that he had to give up the editorship in 1833 (Brown 1985: 4).¹¹

There was a clear Anglican-Methodist division here: the Methodists were far more active among the nonwhite population—in 1804, there were reported to be only 22 white Methodists, along with 3,516 nonwhites (Ferguson 1993: 4)—and Loving was an active Methodist, as was another family active in the petition process, the Thibous (Horsford 1856). In addition, a number of Methodist free colored from the English Harbour area—where, as noted above, there was a large free colored population—also played a key role in the struggle. The “English Harbour circle” (Farquhar 1980) centered on the Hart, Lynch, and Gilbert families. Anne Hart, her sister Elizabeth, and their cousin Elizabeth Lynch were the leaders of the Female Refuge Society. Two of the three married white men active in the Methodist church: in 1798, to considerable public outrage, Anne married John Gilbert, cousin of the Reverend Nathaniel Gilbert, the founder of Methodism in Antigua, while in 1805 Elizabeth married Charles Thwaites, son of an Anglican clergyman who became a staunch supporter of the Methodists (Ferguson 1993).¹² Both Anne and Elizabeth were strong abolitionists, and several of their brothers signed the 1823 petition. In addition, Joseph Phillips, a white Moravian who carried one of the free colored petitions to England, was married to a free colored Methodist woman, and three Wesleyan missionaries, all white, married into the Lynch family (Farquhar 1980).¹³

The Athills, Cranstouns, and Shervingtons, on the other hand, were prominent Anglicans, and the Anglican church did not actively favor either amelioration or emancipation. Indeed, when the West Indian Bishopric was created in 1824, Bishop William Hart Coleridge ended all interdenominational cooperation: the high church Anglicans despised low church Anglicans and Methodists alike (Farquhar, pers. comm.).¹⁴

¹¹ It was therefore particularly ironic that immediately after emancipation the governor appointed Loving Superintendent of Police, and that he immediately began to issue harsh restrictive measures on the movement of former slaves (Brown 1985: 4).

¹² Moira Ferguson’s edited collection of some of the writings of the Hart sisters, along with additional contemporary writings about them, provides a glimpse into the lives of these women. However, her introduction makes generalizations about the free colored in Antigua that are extrapolated from studies of other islands and are frequently incorrect.

¹³ There was other white support for amelioration and emancipation, but it did not come from the planters. Thus a white-owned newspaper, the *Free Press*, was taken over by James Scotland in the late 1820s and took a pro-reform line—provoking Thomas Shirley Warner to establish the *Antigua Weekly Herald and Gazette* in 1831, in which he demagogically defended the planter interest (Brown 1985: 3).

¹⁴ The interrelationship of kinship ties and political leanings among the free colored must have been interesting. For

These internal divisions seem to have affected the political progress of the free colored in Antigua, who did not act as a group as they did in St. Kitts. In Antigua, despite the fact that they had had the vote for years, no free colored served in the Assembly before emancipation. On the other side of the coin, whereas in St. Kitts there was virulent protest when the governor appointed two free colored as his aides-de-camp in 1833 (Cox 1984: 109), there do not appear to have been strong objections when Tyrrell Shervington and John Athill were appointed to similar honorary positions in Antigua. (The appointment of Loving as Superintendent of Police did lead to threats of resignation from white magistrates [Brown 1985: 4], but this may have been as much because it was a post that reached deep into the countryside—planter territory—as because of his pro-emancipation stance.)

The position of the free colored in pre-emancipation society, while legally specific, was socially ambiguous. Deficiency laws, such as the White Servants Act, and control of the Assembly helped the white population in Antigua maintain economic and political barriers between themselves and the free colored, but maintaining social barriers between the free and non-free populations must have been considerably more difficult at all times, and increasingly so as the movement for amelioration—which would abolish all legal barriers to discrimination—grew. These difficulties were exacerbated by the undeniable fact that many of the free colored were equal economically to many whites, often courtesy of their white parents, and as well educated—in other words, they were objectively of a comparable status. While it seems likely that this was not perceived as a problem at the lower end of the economic scale, where the free colored and slave populations lived and worked together almost as one, it was clearly perceived as an issue at the upper end. Thus the most difficult situation of all must have been when the white population was connected by close kinship ties (such as half brother and sister or first cousin) to the better off and better educated segment of the free colored population, particularly when this free colored population was publicly demanding equal civil, political, and—by extension—social rights.

In Antigua, with its small population, this general problem would have been particularly acute. And the general solution for the white relatives was apparently to avoid the issue completely by leaving, or, barring that, by sending their children away. Thus the most prominent free colored families—the Athills, Thibous, Shervingtons, Hills, and Cranstouns, all of whom were leaders in both the pre- and post-emancipation years—had almost no white male relatives on the island by the 1820s, ten years before emancipation. This fact is all the more striking because these free colored had fathers or grandfathers who were members of prominent white families, many of which had been on the island for generations—according to Oliver's genealogies, the first Thibou arrived in 1699 and the first Athill, Hill, and Shervington in the early 1700s—and who numbered chief justices, members of the Assembly, and large estate owners among them. Yet in almost every case the white collateral family (the half-brothers and half-sisters, the cousins) had dispersed, either to other colonies, or into the Navy, or back to England, while the father or grandfather had died. On the other hand, the longer the white father remained, the better the children did: thus James Athill, Chief Justice and Speaker of the Assembly when he died in 1822, was able to bequeath a considerable estate to his nonwhite sons, including land and slaves. The white male cousins of these men had all died or left the island before

instance, "conservative" Tyrrell Shervington's brother Joseph was on Loving's committee, while Joseph's son was married to "conservative" John Athill's daughter; in addition, John Athill was married to William Hill's sister. For more on the Athills and Shervingtons, see Chapter 5.

emancipation (see genealogy). One female cousin, the daughter of their father's brother, did have children on the island, and one of these, Samuel Athill Turner, was appointed Chief Baron of the Exchequer to succeed James Athill in 1842 (CO 7/72/32, 5 September 1842). Thus although the free colored members of these families played a very public role in the years immediately before and after emancipation, they did not have close kinship ties to white men and women living on the island and therefore did not have to negotiate the tricky boundary between kinship and legal status. This meant, among other things, that the free colored who were arguing most stridently for full legal rights and social recognition were not also implicitly arguing for a place at their white relatives' tables—much less for their sons or daughters as marriage partners.

* * * * *

It should be evident from this brief discussion that when, at the stroke of midnight on July 31, 1834, the slave population of Antigua became legally free, the free colored as a whole did not suddenly become a "coloured middle class": there was too wide a range of both skin color and of wealth and status among them for this to have been the case. Nevertheless, because the white population drew such a strict line between themselves and all nonwhites, even the wealthiest among the former free colored could not become an upper class—any more than the white population could become a middle class. Outsiders did not necessarily see it this way: Sturge and Harvey, for instance, reported in 1837 that the middle classes included whites as well as nonwhites (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 90). But locally (and in England) this was not the general view: to whites, all nonwhites *had* to be a different class from whites.¹⁵ Thus the upper levels of the former free colored population—including those whose wealth and education was *greater* than that of many whites—became the middle class, forced into this structural position by the existence of the racial divide. It is to the subsequent development of this class, which I call the "first middle class," and of its successor, as both evolved over the following decades, that is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁵ And lest it be thought that this picture is overdrawn, it should be remembered that this happened only in those colonies in which there was a resident white population. Here a comparison between Dominica and Antigua is again instructive (cf. Trouillot 1992a, 1992b on Dominica).

CHAPTER 5

FROM FREE COLORED TO MIDDLE CLASS: MOVING OUT AND MOVING UP

The First Middle Class: Moving Out

In 1836, Governor Light wrote a dispatch on the “class called coloured” in which he discussed the upper levels (in wealth and status) of the newly freed population at some length (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). The uppermost group, which he called the “first class” among the nonwhite population, was distinguishable both economically and socially by its well-established prosperity, education, and, most important, respectability. As we shall see from the number of times that the word is used in the descriptions that follow, “respectability” was an elusive but essential attribute that was at the core of what was considered middle class status, an attribute that neither wealth nor education alone could guarantee, but that included parentage, behavior, and demeanor.

In this “first class,” the governor included merchants, estate managers and overseers, clerks in public and private offices, and shopkeepers. This same group was described by Sturge and Harvey in 1837 as being “persons of intelligence, education, and true respectability” (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 90) and Candler reported that in early 1850, “Many highly respectable men, who were also slaves now fill the office of Legislators, or are otherwise employed in civil office, owing to their talents and qualifications for public business” (Candler 1965: 52). Mrs. Lanaghan wrote extensively about this “higher class of coloured persons.” Not one to lavish praise on the majority of the nonwhite population, she nevertheless waxed enthusiastic about this class. “Among them,” she wrote, “are some of the most respectable merchants and planters; and the whites themselves, with but few exceptions, follow no higher occupation”—pointing once again to the fact that locally not being white, rather than not being wealthy, put this group into the “middle class” (Lanaghan 1844: II, 182):

These are men who, if not educated in England, have received the best instruction the West Indies could afford, aided by their own strenuous endeavors for information. Hospitable in the highest degree, with a hand ever open to grasp in friendship that of the strangers whom fate or the winds may lead to their pretty little island; living in an easy elegance of style—the possessors of warm and generous thoughts—the doers of high and noble actions—patriots in the full sense of the term, their services ever at the command of their country; of agreeable conversation and polished manners... (ibid.: 170)

Even the wealthiest of these “coloured persons” were not necessarily phenotypically “brown,” however. When the governor, in his 1836 dispatch, referred with distaste to the “second most prominent” as being “almost black,” he was indicating that for the British at the time, as well as for the general population (white and nonwhite), the term “coloured” was meant to define a social category and was not necessarily phenotypically descriptive (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). As far as phenotype was concerned, the governor, an Englishman, had a

deeply negative evaluation of phenotypic blackness *in and of itself*.¹⁶

Of all the nonwhites in Antigua at emancipation, it was clearly this upper level of former free colored, which I call the “first middle class,” that was best situated to take advantage of the opportunities offered once legal disabilities had been removed. This was particularly true of the retail sector: although the white population remained firmly in control of sugar production, many of the free colored who were merchants were well placed to take over the merchant sector (and thus the towns), and from there move into the political arena.

And in the prosperous years immediately after emancipation this did indeed begin to happen. By 1843, there were former free colored justices of the peace, police magistrates, an inspector of prisons, and visiting justices at the jail, while former free colored served on all the honorary city boards and commissions (health, water, market—but not roads, which remained a white planter affair) (*Antigua Almanac and Register* 1843). Some of this was the result of appointments made by Governor MacGregor, who was sympathetic to nonwhite demands for appointed positions and the year after emancipation had made his supporters John Athill and Tyrrell Shervington justices of the peace; by 1837 there were three former free colored justices of the peace, and by 1844, six. Shervington and John Athill were elected members of the Assembly, but Athill resigned in 1836, and no others were elected: the planters were clearly less accepting of the new situation than the governor, and at first those nonwhites who were elected were immediately disqualified. The Colonial Office refused to intervene (Sturge and Harvey 1838). By 1848-1849, however, there were three (Davy 1854), and by 1851 there were six (out of a total of twenty-seven) (*Antigua Almanac* 1851).¹⁷

In 1841, when John Athill—recently returned from England—was appointed to the titular post of Chief Baron of the Exchequer, he was described by the governor as “at the head of the class of society in the Island with which he is connected,” a man who takes a “consistent and prudent line of conduct in political matters” (CO 7/68/60, 7 August 1841). He did not have long to enjoy this honor, however, because he died in 1842. Tyrrell Shervington also held a number of appointed posts: he was appointed to one of the three posts of Puisne Baron of the Exchequer in 1842, and temporarily made police magistrate in 1847. His brother Joseph held a high position in the civil service, having been appointed Deputy Treasurer in 1840, a post he still held in 1851, by which time his son John was a senior clerk in the Treasury Department. Tyrrell died in 1864 and John in 1867. (John’s son, Tyrrell Mildmay Shervington, went on to be Attorney General of Grenada; John and his son married John and George Athill’s daughters.) Henry Loving, as Superintendent of Police, played a large role in drafting the first Contract Act, which was turned down by the Colonial Office as too harsh. He was appointed the governor’s temporary private secretary in 1835 and went on to be acting Colonial Secretary in Montserrat, Stipendiary Magistrate in Barbados, and finally Colonial Secretary and Registrar in Montserrat (Brown 1985); he died in 1850. Daniel Hill, another former free colored, was appointed private secretary to the governor in 1837 (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 20; Horsford 1856: 81).

There seemed to be progress in the social arena as well. For the first time, according to his

¹⁶ This was a racism based primarily on skin color (other characteristics—hair, facial features—may well have played a role, but they are never referred to by the British), and in this case it led the governor to refuse to appoint an otherwise socially qualified person to the post as his aide-de-camp simply because of his phenotypic color. We shall analyze a twentieth-century variation on this type of color-based discrimination in Chapter 10.

¹⁷ I say at least six because there are six with names known to me; there could have been more. Horsford (1856) reports five in 1856.

own account, the governor invited members of both militias to dine together, hoping to “banish forever the objections to the seating of mixed and pure blood on similar occasions” (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). By 1842, Mrs. Lanaghan was noting that “white and coloured gentlemen walk, and talk, and dine together—drink sangaree at one another’s houses, sit in the same juror’s box, and are invited, *sans distinction*, at ‘Government House’”; they also served together as pallbearers at funerals (Lanaghan 1844, II: 181, 189). St. John’s Lodge, the Masonic lodge founded in 1843, included at least one prominent former free colored among its seven founders and took in a number of others in its first few years.¹⁸ Shervingtons were particularly active: Joseph joined in 1848 and John in 1847; Joseph was Master in 1850, 1853, 1856, 1857, and 1861, while John was Master in 1863. Other Masters included William Bank Nibbs, Samuel Lauchland Athill, and David Nibbs Rannie (twice).

But it soon became clear to the former free colored that change was not coming as fast as they wanted. It is important to remember in this regard that the end of slavery meant different things to the three sectors of the population—white, free colored, and slave. The slaves interpreted emancipation primarily in economic terms: as the freedom to own land and grow crops, to change jobs, to negotiate wages, and if all else failed, to emigrate. The free colored had a far broader interpretation, one that involved not only economic rights, but political and social equality as well, and some of them made enough noise—holding public meetings to demand supremacy for nonwhites, for instance—to make both governor and planters very nervous (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). The whites had the most restricted definition: emancipation meant first and foremost a change in the mode of exploitation of the labor force, and hopefully not much else. Insofar as possible—and that meant primarily in the social and political, rather than the economic, arenas—the whites were determined to maintain the situation as it had been: they therefore made every effort to preserve their hegemony by maintaining the old social rules. Not only did the local whites mount a campaign to discredit Governor MacGregor for his efforts to reform the elections (Brown, pers. comm.), but the Assembly remained planter-dominated, and nonwhites were frustrated to find that they could not get legislation passed that did not fall directly in line with planter interests (Gurney 1840: 44).¹⁹ By the late 1840s, even those staunch allies of the government—Loving, Shervington, and Athill—were finding that they could only get so far in the civil establishment. In 1848, when Loving pleaded with the Colonial Office for a new position, he was told stiffly that his request

¹⁸ This information comes from a brochure prepared for the Lodge’s centenary celebrations in 1944, which includes a list of members for the years 1843 to 1854 (with date of joining and occupation), as well as a list of Masters from 1834 to 1944, and a short history of the lodge. In addition, the Master at the time I was in Antigua kindly read me the names of new members, with date of joining, age, and occupation, from 1890 to 1950. He would not let me see the rollbook because it includes the final disposition of members—for instance, if they have been removed—which he felt was privileged information, and unfortunately he did not have time to read the list from 1850 to 1890, although the names are there.

I have found references to other nonwhite lodge members who are not on the printed reconstruction of the roll (for instance, Horsford 1856), so it seems possible that the printed list undercounts the number of nonwhites.

¹⁹ Cox and Goveia have both documented how the activities of the free people of color were increasingly restricted in the eighteenth century, as the white population strived to protect its hegemonic position—an effort they felt could only be done by regulating *all* people of color (Cox 1984: 134; Goveia 1965: *passim*). Both then and after emancipation, the white population seems to have been working frantically to control a reality that was always one jump ahead of them: thus limits were placed on free colored inheritance only after white fathers began leaving substantial inheritances to their nonwhite children, while limits were placed on land and slave ownership only after the free colored began to own land, etc.

would be “considered in common with those of other candidates for employment” (Brown 1985: 6)—a far cry from the lavish praise he had received only ten years earlier. John Athill and Tyrrell Shervington met a similar fate: despite repeated requests, neither could get a paid post, and when the latter asked to be promoted to Provost Marshall, “or any other vacancy, in Antigua or any other colony,” he was told that there was little hope; in the end the governor appointed him temporary police magistrate as a “mark of favour.” According to Sewell, who visited in 1860, by that time the “middle class” was being excluded from the polls and the Legislative Council was entirely planters (Sewell 1861: 151). There were, for instance, far more nonwhite members of the Assembly in Dominica, Montserrat, Grenada, and even St. Kitts than in Antigua; in Jamaica, 17 of the 47 members were nonwhite.²⁰ It was in this context that the governor, in 1866, made his first attempt to dilute the power of the Assembly by turning Antigua into a Crown Colony (see Chapter 2), over considerable nonwhite opposition. The nonwhites in the Assembly were convinced that the move was being made specifically to disenfranchise the nonwhite population and made a strategic alignment with the absentee whites (who, it will be remembered, wanted to move directly to full Crown Colony status), thus threatening to subvert the entire project. The governor bought them off easily, however, by appointing one of their leaders to the Administrative Committee and bringing over the auditor general from St. Kitts to make house visits to assure them that they would not be excluded from power if they supported the governor. They capitulated and the measure passed.²¹

The number of nonwhites who acceded to high position was not only small but the circle remained very narrow: all the Assembly members were from upper level former free colored families. In addition, not only did many of the free colored institutions continue into the post-emancipation era, but they too remained in the hands of these same families—while the very same people created new institutions as well. Thus the St. John’s branch of the Female Orphan Asylum continued after Anne Hart Gilbert’s death in 1834: in 1844 it was run by her husband’s sister (who had married William Dawes, the manager of Gilbert’s estates as well as the coordinator of the schools that Charles and Elizabeth Thwaites had established before emancipation). In 1851, Miss Lucy Lynch and a Miss Hart were two of its three officers (and a Miss Athill was one of the two matrons). Its purpose may have changed somewhat, however: Sturge and Harvey reported that it now trained young women to be hired out as servants (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 40). Similarly, the St. John’s City Friendly Society, the Antigua Library Society, the Philharmonic Society, and the Polytechnic Association all still existed in 1851, and, insofar as one can tell from the names of the officers, remained firmly in the hands of the

²⁰ Here again, the contrast with other islands is instructive. As noted above, Trouillot (1992a) argues that for the free colored in Dominica, freedom was an imposed “inconvenience” because it changed the rules of a game that they had successfully mastered: the labor force fled from the plantations, signaling their eventual demise. The lack of a wage labor force meant that the merchant sector declined as well, and the former free colored were forced to turn to the only remaining arena open to them—state politics—for their livelihood. In Antigua the situation was entirely different: there emancipation led to a growth of the merchant sector, and, while the former free colored did not move into the plantation sector, the fact that sugar remained central to the economy meant that the merchant sector thrived. On the other hand, the state sector remained closed.

For Jamaica, Catherine Hall (1992) shows how the early post-emancipation belief (on the part of those who had favored abolition) in “brotherhood and spiritual equality, combined with an assumption of white superiority” gave way, in the mid-1840s, as prosperity waned, poverty and unemployment increased, and plantations were abandoned, to a virulent racism that attacked the entire emancipatory project.

²¹ For this story, see Rogers 1970: 247-55.

nonwhite elite.²² And, as if to emphasize the difference, several of these had a parallel white (and Anglican) institution with a similar purpose: throughout the 1840s and 1850s there was an Antigua Asylum for Destitute Female Children and a Daily Meal Society, both with the rector of the Cathedral as their heads.

Even in the two areas where nonwhites apparently felt a need to create new institutions of their own, these were in the hands of the same families: the St. John's Savings Bank, a clear response to the Colonial Bank (established in 1836) and the Bank of Antigua (successor to the West India Bank), had as its officers in 1851 Joseph Shervington, Treasurer, and James B. Thibou, Actuary.²³ Similarly, as we shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, the education system remained by and large separate.

The surname sample that I call Set 1—surnames of those who were known members of the free colored community and *also* of the twentieth-century middle class—included five names that are from this upper level free colored group: Athill, Cranstoun, Thibou, Shervington, and Anthonyson.²⁴ A close look at the post-emancipation history of these five families helps us understand what happened as the nineteenth century progressed. Well-situated to take advantage of the new circumstances, members of these families did, as we have seen, expand their economic and political presence immediately after emancipation. But progress did not continue, and in each case the second generation after emancipation was less prosperous and less prominent than its predecessor. By the 1860s, entire branches of each family had disappeared from the records, whether because they had left the island or because they had become so impoverished that they no longer played a public role. Even those who remained on the island and in the records were from the less prominent branches, were less wealthy, and held far fewer appointed and elected positions. By the end of the century, few even of these remained.

The Athills and the Thibous provide the best example of this process at work. John Athill was mentioned frequently above; he and his brothers Samuel and George were the sons of James Athill, Chief Justice and Speaker of the Assembly, by two women (see Genealogy 1).²⁵ All three were merchants, and seem to have been set up in business by their father. Despite this pre-inheritance, when James died in 1822, he left a huge estate, which, aside from a few large legacies—£4,560 to his widowed sister-in-law, £2,000 to a daughter in Edinburgh—went to his sons and their mothers.

²² Douglas Hall notes that the poor relief system in Antigua was much stronger than in the other islands (Hall 1971: 168), but does not seem to realize that all the societies he lists are run by former free colored families (he instead ties them to the churches). It is not clear why the system should have been stronger in Antigua than elsewhere, although it may have had something to do with the frequent natural disasters.

²³ The Colonial Bank would not lend money on security of land or property, and would only provide personal loans to well-known people (Lobdell 1972); this alone must have made a parallel bank, with different standards, necessary.

²⁴ One surname from Set 2, Rannie, also seems more appropriately placed in this group. See note 18 below.

²⁵ James Athill owned Byam's estate. His brother Samuel, owner of Lynch's estate, was for many years president of the Assembly; he married Mary Lynch, who died in 1808. Samuel died in 1832, and only one of his six children, a daughter, stayed in Antigua. James does not seem to have ever married; instead, he had relationships with at least three nonwhite women: Mary, a "free mulatto," Betty, a "free negro," and at least one other. He had eight children by these women, two daughters who went (or were sent) to Scotland, two who died young, a son who went to Bermuda, and the three brothers: Samuel, George, and John. Samuel was Mary's child; George and John were Betty's.

Genealogy 1
Descendants of Chief Justice James Athill

As we saw earlier, John went on to become the governor's defender, Deputy Postmaster General, and a pillar of the Anglican church. He seems to have bought rather than inherited Byam's—his father's will had directed that it be sold. John married Eliza Hill, from another prominent free colored family, and they had at least eight children, four sons and four daughters. The sons either died or left the island, and only one daughter was married—to John Shervington. John's half-brother George (who served as Acting Deputy Postmaster General in 1839) married and had three daughters, and again only one of them married—to John Shervington's son Tyrrell, the one who went on to become Attorney General of Grenada. George's brother Samuel, who died before emancipation, never married but had three daughters and one son by a slave woman. One of the daughters married Richard Stork White, from still another prominent free colored family, one married and left the island, and the third never married.

Of all the Athills, from all the branches, it is thus only Samuel's son, also named Samuel, who might have been able to carry the Athill name forward into the next generation (see Genealogy 2). But Samuel is something of a puzzle: his name does not appear in the marriage or death records, or in the books of wills; nor does he appear on any list of merchants, landowners, colonial civil servants, or jurors, and he was not a member of the Masonic Lodge. He was presumably born before 1822 (the year his father died) and so must have been a young man at emancipation—just the right age to take a public role. But he does not appear to have done so.

All of this would suggest that he left the island. He is, however, mentioned in a deed executed in 1904. According to this deed, Rebecca, Eliza, Grace, and Samuel Athill (the children of the Samuel who died in 1822) were willed a piece of land in St. John's; Rebecca, Samuel, and Eliza had all died by 1897, at which point Grace gave the land to one Samuel Lauchland Athill, who then sold it in 1904. It seems possible that Samuel Lauchland Athill was therefore the child of Samuel's son Samuel.

Samuel Lauchland Athill is a legendary figure among older Antiguan, in part because he was something of a character and in part because of his accomplishments. He was born in 1846, but I found no record of his birth (the date comes from the death register) so I do not know who his parents were. However, he was married twice, the first time to the niece of (and heir to) Alicia Horsford, herself the adopted daughter of the Rev. John Horsford and the wife of John Hart Moore, both prominent free colored men. The second marriage was to a woman from a prominent nonwhite Montserrat family. She died young, and there do not seem to have been children from either marriage.

By 1874, when Samuel Lauchland Athill joined the Masonic Lodge, he was listed as a clerk, and he worked for A.J. Camacho, one of the largest plantation merchants. At the time of his death, and for many years before, he lived at a nonworking estate called Dry Hill and he is particularly remembered for being one of the first people in Antigua to drive a horse and carriage into town; he also gave a large Christmas party for poor children. He was in the governor's favor, and was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1887. But although Samuel Lauchland Athill is admired for all this, it is his nickname that gives us another view: a very dark-skinned man, he was known as "We the whites," apparently for a remark that he made (presumably more than once for it to be so well remembered) that "If the negroes would only work, we the whites would pay them." The implication, of course, is not only that he dissociated himself from the nonwhite population, but that he considered himself a member of the upper class.

Genealogy 2
Descendants of Samuel Athill

And this would make perfect sense if Samuel Lauchland Athill was a descendant of the former free colored elite. The important point here is that if he is, he would be the *only* link to the free colored Athills. Further—and this point must be emphasized again—even if there is a connection, it is an unacknowledged one: present-day Athills know of Samuel Lauchland Athill, and know of his relationship to them, but know nothing of where he came from.

Samuel Lauchland Athill had no children, but he did have a nephew, also named Samuel Lauchland Athill, and a niece named Avis; they were both important members of the twentieth-century middle class, but neither had legitimate children, and this branch of the Athill line ended with them.²⁶ In addition, another Athill—Samuel Ernest Martin Athill, born in 1862 and clerk to the St. John's City Board—had three sons who were briefly part of the twentieth-century middle class until they migrated to the United States. Samuel Ernest Martin is believed to have been a cousin of Samuel Lauchland (Sr.), possibly another brother's son.²⁷

Like the Athills, the Thibous were also a prominent free colored family, as well as an even older and considerably larger one: by emancipation there were three distinct free colored branches whose relationship to each other seems to have been several generations old—in 1851, a member of one branch named a member of another branch as executor of his will and referred to him as a “friend,” not a relative.²⁸

The first branch of the Thibous was the wealthiest and best documented. The first male was John (see Genealogy 3). I have found no reference to John's color, and it is possible that he was white, but he married (in 1809) a “coloured” woman named Jane. John died sometime before 1838 but Jane lived until 1874, running a grocery. It is their sons—John George Watkins Thibou, James Byam Thibou, and Thomas Henderson Pearson Thibou—who make up the first branch of the free colored Thibous. All signed the free colored petition and all were merchants. Thomas and James were members of the Assembly and entertained many of those who came to Antigua to evaluate the effects of emancipation. All married women from free colored families—James and John married two Hill sisters.

John George Watkins Thibou had one son, John Watkins, who became a watchmaker; Thomas does not seem to have had any. James, however, had five—three sons and two daughters. One daughter married a Wesleyan minister and one son never married. Another son, Jesse Wheelock, played a relatively prominent public role until his death in 1879: he was a doctor, a Mason, a member of the Legislative Council, and a small estate owner. Yet Jesse too never married, and although he had a number of outside children, they were all daughters; they therefore disappeared from the records. The last son, James Cox, was a chemist (or druggist); he married but had no children with his wife. His outside child, Samuel Alexander Thibou, was a

²⁶ Samuel Lauchland Athill had at least two children, but both were “outside” (illegitimate) children and neither took their father's name.

²⁷ Antiguan will ask how Newton Athill, a well-known dispenser who died in 1959, and his children (John, Wendell, Wentworth, Norman, Christine, Gertrude, and Avis) are related to these Athills. Newton Athill was the son of James Howard Horatio Athill (born 1864), described in the marriage register as a cooper, and his wife Lucretia Augustus Evanson, described as a “laborer”; they were married in 1896. I could make no connection to the free colored Athills. In fact, like many names that belonged to prominent white families, Athill was probably taken by a number of former slaves and is now a fairly common name in Antigua.

²⁸ According to Oliver's genealogy, the first Thibou to arrive in Antigua was Lewis, a merchant who came from South Carolina in 1699; by 1753, there were four male Thibous listed in the census, at least two (and possibly all) of whom were Lewis's sons. All married and had children; most of these children left the island, but one, Isaac, had the son named James who is discussed here.

Genealogy 3
Descendants of John Thibou

shopkeeper far from St. John's, in Parham.²⁹

That leaves the remaining child, a daughter named Louisa Austin. When James Byam Thibou died in 1873, he willed his store to his wife for her lifetime and then his children, and it was Louisa who eventually took it over.³⁰ Louisa Thibou, being a woman, could not serve as a juror and so appears on no lists. She married Delos Martin in 1886, but carried on the business in her own name; Delos Martin also had a store, and his name first appears on the jurors' roll in 1888. They had one child, a daughter, who migrated to South Africa. After Louisa Thibou (as she was always known) died in 1907, Delos Martin married again, this time an Englishwoman, and when he died in 1914 she returned to England.³¹

The origins of the second and third branches are more obscure, and they were also less wealthy and less prominent. It begins with four brothers, all of whom signed the free colored petition, and two sisters (see Genealogy 4). Neither of the sisters seems to have married, one son (a cabinetmaker) emigrated to Australia and another (a wheelwright) had no children. Of the remaining two sons, one, Henry Jarvis Thibou, was a merchant who had two sons and four daughters. Only one of the sons (a clerk and accountant named William Hatley Thibou) seems to have had children himself. He had three—Loftus, Maria, and Ida—all of whom were alive at the end of the century. But they played no prominent role, either economically or politically, and they remained socially aloof: Ida and Loftus never married; Maria (who died in 1918) married a druggist named John Watts, and their one son left the island to become a doctor and never returned.

Henry Jarvis's brother William was also a merchant, but he was somewhat more politically active: he was a member of the Assembly, as well as the Executive Committee and Administrative Committee (he lived longer after emancipation, dying in 1861, while Henry Jarvis died in 1847). William and his wife had four children: a son who died young, two daughters who never married, and one daughter who married but whose son was apparently born out of wedlock since his surname was Thibou; he in turn does not seem to have had any children (his will leaves all his belongings to his wife). Thus only the first set of siblings remained by the end of the century, and by the 1920s these too had apparently left the island.

And finally, there is a third branch of Thibous (see Genealogy 5). The origins of this branch are the most obscure of all: although Louisa Thibou referred to one of them in her will as a cousin, it was probably through her Hill mother, not her Thibou father. The member of this branch who signed the free colored petition—F.G.W. Thibou—was listed in the 1844 census as a

²⁹ Samuel Thibou's children—including Percy, Coxy, Anderson, and Alex—were unaware of any connection with the earlier Thibous.

³⁰ An ad for the store, called Antigua House, says it opened in 1873, so presumably she renamed it when her father died.

³¹ Once again, the connection between Louisa Thibou and the earlier Thibous is the result of archival research but is not part of people's memories. It was generally assumed that Louisa was a Thibou because of her name, but the connection to the free colored Thibous was not known. And as for Delos Martin, some people were sure he was white and English, some were sure he was white and Antiguan, and some were sure he was Antiguan and not white; none knew his family origins. However, the fact that he was appointed to fill the "coloured class" slot in the Legislative Council confirms that he was nonwhite and Antiguan (see note 38)

Interestingly, Delos Martin and Louisa Thibou are two of only three people (the other was Bessie Harper) I came across in all my research whose phenotypic color was remembered differently by different people. All three were presumably phenotypically very fair—Bessie Harper in particular—but in every other case this did not make a difference: people *knew* who was white and who was not. Bessie Harper was also related by marriage to a former free colored family: her father's sister married a Cranstoun (see note 32).

Genealogy 4
Descendants of Unknown Thibou

Genealogy 5
Descendants of Joseph Stevenson Thibou

“linguist” and lived on Tanner Street. Joseph Stevenson Thibou, who was born in 1834 and became chief clerk in the Registrar’s Office, a prominent clerkship, was presumably his son. Joseph Stevenson died in 1874. He had two sons: Joseph Theodore, who served as Registrar and Provost Marshall in St. Kitts before retiring in 1890 and becoming publisher and editor of the *Antigua Standard*, and James William Garry. All but one of Joseph Theodore’s daughters left the island, while the only son had two outside children and then left himself. The final daughter, Jean Marie, married William Boyer Rannie, a member of a family that also probably had free colored origins (see note 33).

James William Garry Thibou was a clerk for a large estate merchant; he married and had five children, but died in 1893. One son went to St. Kitts, where he worked as an engineer in public works and married a Kittitian; the other four—three daughters and a son—stayed in Antigua. The son was a clerk and a Mason, but none married or had known children. In fact, the family was remembered for “keeping itself to itself,” and one daughter, who had spent some time in the United States and reportedly “passed” (for white), snobbishly isolated herself from other Antiguan on her return. Once again, the branch ended.³²

What are we to make of this morass of genealogical tracking? If branch members had stayed in the island and had children, and if those children in turn had stayed and had children, and so on, the numbers would have increased geometrically after only two generations. Yet the opposite was the case: while the second generation after emancipation was as large as might have been expected, the third generation was dramatically smaller, and the fourth generation smaller still. Furthermore, the tremendous narrowing that took place in each branch of the sample families sometime in mid-century was repeated in others from the upper level of the free colored.³³

³² Although this branch of the family, like the others, did not know of its free colored ancestors, the insistence on being different was echoed in its myth about its origins. Coralee, who was probably in her nineties when I was in Antigua, had told several people that her family was French—in fact, many people believed that the Thibous were originally from Guadeloupe (because the name sounds French), but Coralee said her grandfather and his brother had come from Paris and settled on opposite sides of the island, that the brother had married less well than her father, and that that was why the other branch of the Thibous was of a lower social class than hers. In fact, the “other” branch that she was referring to, while it included the only other Thibous that she felt might be related to her, was shopkeeper Samuel Thibou’s family and was only very very distantly related.

It is also interesting that only Coralee was phenotypically fair. The other siblings were described to me as “dark.” Coralee refused to talk to me, but was interviewed by one of the few women she let visit her.

³³ The other families are considerably less complex, and are included in this footnote both to reinforce the argument and because the information will be of interest to Antiguan.

Shervington. The two brothers who signed the free colored petition were Joseph and Tyrrell; both, as we saw above, won prominent honorary posts courtesy of the governor: Joseph was Deputy Treasurer and Tyrrell was a Puisne Baron. Both were prominent Anglicans. There is no clear record as to who their parents were, but it seems likely that they were the illegitimate children of a prominent white man named Richard Tyrrell Shervington before his marriage to Grace Redhead, the daughter of a planter. One indication of their prominence is that they make it onto Oliver’s Shervington genealogy, an honor that none of the nonwhite Athills or Thibous were deemed worthy of. (Oliver also indicates that Richard may not have been the father of both Tyrrell and Joseph; however, Joseph’s will refers to his brother Tyrrell.) Joseph and Tyrrell married two Hill sisters, both of whom died very young and in the same year (1833). Tyrrell apparently had children, but since he married in 1831, it could not have been many; however, there was a William Shervington who was a clerk in 1875 and may have been his son. Joseph, on the other hand, had three sons

Two factors were central to this phenomenon. The first is economic: the initial post-emancipation prosperity was short-lived, and, as we saw in Chapter 1, by the mid-1850s planter fortunes had taken a turn for the worse and the number of estates in cultivation had declined precipitously. This meant that the former free colored had even less of a chance of moving into planting, and the three nonwhites who owned sugar estates had all lost them by the 1850s, and some before: David Cranstoun's estate was out of production from 1820 onward and parts were then sold off.³⁴ John Athill's oldest son had acquired Byam's after his father's death in 1842, but it had another owner by 1851. Marginal estates such as the free colored were able to acquire

with his wife, as well as at least four outside daughters. One son, John, became an accountant in the Treasury; a second, Joseph, was a clergyman who went to Montserrat; there is no record of what happened to the third. John married an Athill, and his son Tyrrell married his mother's (much younger) cousin, also an Athill. This is the Tyrrell mentioned above who went on to be attorney general of Grenada.

Thus by the end of the century, it appears that, even more than the Thibous and Athills, there were no Shervingtons in Antigua who were direct descendants of the original free colored family. (The present-day Shervingtons are descended from Thomas Shervington, an estate manager who married Marie Antoinette St. Luce. It is not clear that there is any connection with the free colored Shervingtons.)

Anthonyson. The Anthonysons provide a much smaller, and more extreme, version of the Shervington example. The first to enter the records was Isaac Ebenezer, a nonwhite planter who died in 1883. He had at least seven children with his wife, three of whom migrated and three more of whom had died by 1895. The eldest son, William Ebenezer, had three children with his wife, but in his will (he died in 1888) he only provided for the education of his son; the balance of his estate went to his brothers and sisters and to his "two natural sons, in equal proportions." One of these had illegitimate children who remained in Antigua—but again, did not know of the connection to the free colored.

Cranstoun. The picture here is somewhat different: the Cranstouns are the one family in the sample for which there is a direct line from the free colored family into the twentieth century. But although the Cranstouns differ from the other families in this respect, in other ways they follow a similar pattern, not least in the fact that the living Cranstouns had no idea—until I told them—that their great-grandfather had been a prominent free colored gentleman.

As with the Shervingtons, the family begins with the petition signers: there is no record of any white Cranstoun, and there is no Cranstoun genealogy in Oliver. By the 1830s, however, the free colored family was prominent: two brothers, David and George, signed the free colored petition, while a sister, Ann, was president of the Female Orphan's Asylum. Ann never married, but a second sister, Jane, married into another prominent free colored family. David was a planter, a justice of the peace, and a prominent Anglican; his brother George was a writing clerk and merchant. George never married, but David married twice and had a total of ten children, seven by his first wife (three of whom died young) and three by his second. David was compensated for 23 slaves, but his estate, Buckleys—bought not from a white planter but from another free colored, Daniel Hill—was not cultivated after 1820 and was then sold off.

There is no record of what happened to David's second set of children, and only John Duer, the oldest of the first seven, had legitimate children. He had three: a daughter who married a "seafarer" and was written out of his will, a daughter who never married, and a son. This son was a small planter who managed a number of estates; he married Evelina Harper, the daughter of a planter in Montserrat (her brother was James Dudgeon Harper, Bessie Harper's father), and they had seven children—five daughters and two sons. One son migrated to Canada, but the other son and the five daughters all remained in Antigua. All five daughters married—and all married men from other islands (one married Arthur Edward Mercer from St. Kitts, who will be discussed further in Chapter 9), while the son married a woman from St. Kitts.

Finally, *Rannie*, while in Set 2 because the name did not appear on the free colored lists, fits this pattern. David Nibbs Rannie was a merchant, born in 1842; it seems possible he is the brother of James Newton Leader Rannie, also listed as a merchant at the same time and at the same address. James Newton Leader Rannie was the son of James Graham Rannie, who may have been nonwhite as well—thus following the Thibou pattern by being the legitimate sons of a nonwhite free colored man. However, no Rannies signed any petitions; on the other hand, there are no white Rannies listed in Oliver.

David Nibbs Rannie had two sons, one of whom married a Thibou; a daughter married Robert Potter, son of another merchant. All three children worked in Antigua briefly in the early 1900s and then migrated.

³⁴ The estate is listed as owned by Cranstoun in the 1851 *Antigua Almanac*, but by 1872 it has another owner and is down to 68 acres.

were undoubtedly the first to be hit by any difficulties, financial or otherwise.

Those former free colored who were retail merchants, as many were, suffered greatly from each dip in the economy. Dependent on the buying power of the population and lacking capital, they were the first to be effected by the post-emancipation constriction: in 1847, for instance, Tyrrell Shervington was forced to petition the governor for a job in the public service because his business has failed (CO 7/86/53, 29 June 1847). In addition, this economic niche was steadily narrowed as the white retail merchants, mainly Scotsmen, took over; some of these had been there before emancipation, but many more arrived in the 1850s and 1860s (see Chapter 1).

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the occupations that the second generation after emancipation took on were considerably less prestigious than those of their parents or grandparents. A very few became civil servants, but not of the rank of the first generation of Athills or Shervingtons; a few were merchants, but not as many, or of the same wealth, as their free colored forbears, and many more were reduced to clerking for white merchants. By the 1890s, only three members of former free colored families still owned stores: William Hart Moore, David Nibbs Rannie, and Louisa Thibou.³⁵ None owned producing estates, and few even managed them: the Cranstouns, for instance, although they remained a planting family, were reduced to managing other people's estates and the fourth generation son left planting altogether. The only prominent Athill by the 1860s was Samuel Lauchland, at that time a clerk in a merchant establishment, while the most prominent Thibous were a doctor, a watchmaker, several clerks, a journalist, and two small merchants. None were of the stature of the first free colored generation.

The economic marginalization of the former free colored was made easier because of their failure to expand in numbers: many left the island; others never married, did not have children—or both. The men were more likely to migrate, the women to stay. Because of the nature of the data, or rather the lack of it, it is difficult to know much about this process, but the wills tell us a little. Some of the women, for instance, were sent abroad to be educated—often to Scotland—and never returned; this seems particularly to have been the case in the immediate pre- and post-emancipation periods. At least two men, one Thibou and one Athill, went to Australia; others joined one or another branch of the armed forces, generally the navy. In addition, David Farquhar reports that many nonwhite Antiguan began to go to Sierra Leone in the 1850s, where they felt that the freedom denied them in the West Indies would be available, and at about the same time John Candler reported that “If the means of emigration were easily to be found, large numbers would probably quit the West Indies for an African home. A few pioneers have already gone” (Farquhar, pers. comm.; Candler 1965: 57).

On the other hand, in generation after generation, the majority of the sisters in a family stayed in Antigua, remained unmarried, and grew increasingly impoverished. These women are

³⁵ In addition to the Thibous and Athills, merchants William Lamb Nibbs and Thomas Nibbs, signers of one or another free colored petition, were gone by 1870. They were listed as merchants in James Byam Thibou's 1866 will, but do not appear on the 1872 jurors' roll or in 1860 newspaper ads. William Hart Moore (son of John Hart Moore, also a merchant) had opened his store in 1871, and an 1879 newspaper ad reported that it sold dry goods and wines, a curious combination that made it unique among Antiguan merchants (or advertisers). At some point W.H. Moore & Co. became Moore, Moore, & Co., and other Moores, including John Hart Moore, Jr., were involved. But it was not smooth sailing and there were interruptions: in 1885, William Hart Moore rented one of his premises to a white merchant, and in November 1888 he declared bankruptcy. By 1891, however, Florence Elizabeth Moore, Mary Harriet Moore, and Maria Scotland Moore were again trading as Moore, Moore, & Co.

often mentioned in the wills, both because they remained in Antigua and because special care was taken to insure that they were guaranteed property to live in, and an income, however meager, to live from. In addition, many of those who did marry married non-Antiguan men—men from other islands who had come to Antigua to work—and then either left or sent their children away. This was therefore a group that was unwilling to add to its numbers by marrying Antiguans that it did not consider socially suitable: they preferred to maintain their social distance, even if the price was the erosion of their numbers in the society, rather than recruit from—or even ally with—those they did not consider their equals. As Horsford noted in 1856, “Respectable coloured gentlemen generally marry their equals in point of intellect and character” (Horsford 1856: 56).

In addition, although the men continued to have outside children, they were less likely to consider them part of the family, particularly in terms of inheritance. There was no longer the pattern of the pre-emancipation years where the father took his illegitimate sons into his business, or set them up in trades or businesses of their own.

An indication of the extent to which this class failed to reproduce itself—or, more specifically, to produce a next generation—can be found in the rolls of the Antigua Grammar School. In the ten years from 1890 to 1900, only two of the six Antiguan nonwhites admitted to the school were from these families; there were *none* among the twenty-nine admitted between 1900 and 1910. Their social clubs died with them: the next set of middle class clubs was not founded until the early 1900s. The Masons, which had had many members from this class in mid-century, once again became increasingly white, and in 1899 a large group of whites left St. John’s Lodge to form a new lodge; the membership of St. John’s then declined, until there were only fourteen resident members in 1922. In addition, an all-white men’s club (the New Club) was founded in the mid-1890s, when the white population felt most under siege.

The nonwhite middle class, pushed onto the fringes of economic life, was soon pushed out of the political arena as well. As early as 1850, Candler was reporting that nearly all the magistrates were once again white men, and that although nonwhites were occasionally appointed to a honorary office, “in no instance has any place of *emolument*, combined with the honorary, been given to one of that class of the community” (Candler 1965: 57). By the 1860s, nonwhites were no longer serving on honorary policing bodies, and there were only two nonwhites elected to the revised Legislative Council in 1872 (plus one appointed), and only one in 1890—down from six in 1851. There were four in 1895—until the planter vote for Crown Colony government removed them all. These four—David Nibbs Rannie, Samuel Lauchland Athill, James Dudgeon Harper, and William Bleby Moore—were the last of the upper level free colored families to take part in Antigua political life,³⁶ and they, along with a few others from their class, fought a losing battle to retain their elected seats on the Legislative Council. Thus the meeting held in January 1896 to stir up opposition to the vote (discussed in Chapter 2) was convened by David Nibbs Rannie, while James Theodore Thibou, editor of the *Antigua Standard*, was a key speaker.³⁷ Thibou criticized the government for the “fast and loose” practices that

³⁶ Samuel Lauchland Athill and David Nibbs Rannie were discussed above. James Dudgeon Harper, Bessie’s father (see note 30 above) was a small planter from Montserrat who married a Cranstoun and owned a drugstore, while Bleby Moore was a lawyer and the third son of John Hart Moore and Alicia Horsford—both the Moores and the Horsfords were prominent free colored Methodist families. Samuel Lauchland Athill’s first wife was Alicia Horsford’s niece.

³⁷ It is interesting that there always seems to have been one nonwhite newspaper editor (although not necessarily owner) in the post-emancipation period (although not necessarily of the same paper), and that he was always from a

made it impossible for there to be a full measure of popular representation on the Council—all of which he dutifully reported in his own paper (*Antigua Standard*, 1 February 1896). Another raucous meeting, in November 1897, which was convened by Bleby Moore and chaired by Delos Martin, ended with a call to extend the franchise by lowering the property qualifications and introducing a salary qualification—presumably a popular rallying cry as well as a way to ensure their own seats. The motion to vote came from David Nibbs Rannie and Joseph Theodore Thibou (*Antigua Times*, 13 November 1897). We can see why they wanted the franchise extended: as noted earlier, the number of voters had declined from 442 in 1872 (*Almanac for 1872*) to 349 in 1897 (CO 152/223/608, 12 October 1897).

But this was clearly a case of too little, too late. By this point, the nonwhite middle class had no economic base from which to mount a challenge to the governor and planters: they were few in number, marginal to the economy, and hopelessly compromised in their ability to take a firm position—much less to marshal support from other sectors of the population. And, as we saw in Chapter 2, none of the protests did any good, and the white planters and merchants voted the Legislative Council out of existence. For the next thirty years, the place of nonwhites on the new council was strictly controlled: there was a “slot” for a nonwhite unofficial, and this remained the preserve of the remnants of the former free colored families.³⁸

Not only was the nonwhite middle class excluded economically and politically, but it was increasingly excluded socially as well. Despite what had looked to some like progress, it was clear from many of the visitors’ reports that white prejudice against nonwhites had remained entrenched: Candler, for instance, heard bitter complaints from the nonwhites he visited, who believed that such discrimination was being fostered by the white planters (Candler 1965: 55). And Thome and Kimball, who gave a generally rosy description of post-emancipation society and reported a general diminution of prejudice, acknowledged that it continued behind the scenes—by which they seem to mean in the home. Even Mrs. Lanaghan, who also felt that great

former free colored family. Thus Henry Loving founded the *Antigua Weekly Register* in 1814, in partnership with William Hill and then, after his death, with Sarah Hill), until he left in 1833; at that point the editorship was taken over by another former free colored named Gratinius Hart (who also produced the 1843 *Antigua Almanac and Register* and was probably the brother of the Hart sisters). The *Weekly Register* was edited by W. Mercier by 1844, but by then the *Antigua Observer* had been founded (in 1843) and was being edited by A.B. Hill—again from a former free colored family. The *Antigua Times* was established in 1851 by an American named Fred. S. Jewett and in 1853 was purchased by Paul Horsford (brother of the Rev. John Horsford), editor of the *Almanac for 1872* and the *Almanac for 1878*, and again from a free colored family. After Paul Horsford’s death in 1878, the *Times* was taken over by Messrs. Macmillan and J.H. Hill (*Almanac for 1878*: 84), but then closed down. The gap was filled by the *Antigua Standard*, founded in 1874 and from the early 1890s until about 1908 owned and edited by Joseph Theodore Thibou. In addition, by the 1890s the *Observer* was owned and edited by still another former free colored, Daniel W. Scarville. Both Horsford and Scarville served on the Legislative Council, Scarville (who was also a baker) from the late 1870s until the mid-1890s. By 1909, the *Antigua Standard* had been sold to Allan Husband Nurse, a Barbadian, who renamed it the *Sun* (CO 152/310/217, 13 May 1909); it closed in 1922 for lack of financial support.

The pattern of free colored, or, after emancipation, upper level nonwhite, editors of newspapers was common in the Caribbean. See, e.g., Heuman 1981 for Jamaica and Trouillot 1988 for Dominica.

³⁸ The first was Delos Martin, followed by James Dudgeon Harper and Langford Cranstoun. Delos Martin and Dr. Wyckham were the only previously elected people who opposed Crown Colony status and yet were immediately appointed to the new council. Martin filled the one nonwhite “slot”—described as representing the “coloured community” (CO 231/265, 11 May 1898). Wyckham served on the Council until 1899, and when he resigned the governor appointed Harper, who had also been an elected member of the previous Legislative Council and who had also testified before the Norman Commission on behalf of the laboring population, to Wyckham’s “place.” When Delos Martin died, Harper in effect took the nonwhite slot.

advances had been made, noted that “the assertion ... that prejudice is entirely done away with, is incorrect. It still exists, and that, perhaps, very strongly; but policy forbids, in great measure, its outward show” (Lanaghan 1844: II, 180).

There was a key distinction at work here: those who wrote of a lessening of prejudice were describing gatherings that were limited in two ways: they were public—in the street, at Government House—and they were all-male, like the Masonic Lodge. Privately—at home—or socially, both in the sense of domestic social life and in the sense of those institutions that served the family—the barrier between whites and nonwhites remained. Thus the social services that women were involved in were confined to either whites or nonwhites, while a more public organization like the Antigua Mutual Life Assurance Company, established in 1844, had both white and nonwhite directors. When Candler “took tea” at the home of Thomas Thibou in 1850, there were only nonwhites present, and none of the visitors, including the indefatigably sociable Mrs. Lanaghan, reported any mixing between whites and nonwhites when women were present.

In addition, the practice of white men having open liaisons with nonwhite women—and therefore two families—diminished: with emancipation, Mrs. Lanaghan wrote, the “unhallowed custom of concubinage” greatly decreased, such alliances having become “generally reprobated” (Lanaghan 1844: II, 181). The governor reported that “no white man of respectability dare now openly violate the laws of morality...” (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). This change was possible in part because the sex ratio of white men to women improved, and may also have been linked to the retraction of the economy—maintaining two families is an expensive business (Lazarus-Black 1990: 202). In addition, the white population had become increasingly homogeneous as social differences among them disappeared and as their roles became entirely proprietary, managerial, and professional: there were practically no white artisans by the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, and the only two I found reference to had become socially part of the *nonwhite* population, marrying nonwhite women. In addition, the merchant sector, which had been the center of the free colored economic life, was, as noted above, taken over by the Scotsmen.

But while these factors facilitated ending the practice of open concubinage, the need to protect the social hierarchy—and particularly the division between whites and all nonwhites—provides the key to understanding the redefinition of the connection between class and respectability, respectability and marriage. As Ann Stoler, describing Indonesia in the early part of the twentieth century, has written, once European supremacy was jeopardized, the colonial elites “responded by clarifying the cultural criteria of privilege and the moral premises of their unity” (Stoler 1989: 639). After emancipation, the white population had to find a means of exclusion that would enable it to maintain its position. Because of pressures from the Colonial Office, a comfortable translation of pre-emancipation legal distinctions into distinctions of skin color was not possible. The Colonial Office felt that economic factors should be the key: as James Stephen wrote (when discussing whether to award John Athill the titular title of Baron of the Exchequer), “... now that a white skin is no longer a badge of aristocracy, there is no other principle than that of comparative wealth and poverty by which rank is assigned to any one man over his neighbors” (CO 152/7/68/60, 7 August 1941).³⁹ This was not acceptable to the white population, however, for as the economy worsened it became clear that it would not sufficiently distinguish whites from nonwhites, since many of the former had more wealth than the latter.

³⁹ Stephen would have preferred that a scheme of knighthood be introduced into the colonies, but, barring that, he was willing to approve a local titular baronage as a way of breaking “the dead level.”

But in Antigua neither skin color nor wealth had ever been sufficient for entry into the elite: they had to be accompanied by “respectability,” and it was the content of respectability that changed. It now began to have legitimacy—and therefore marriage—as a core component. A careful reading of Governor Light’s 1836 dispatch shows this shift at work: although Light describes the man who wanted to be his aide-de-camp with obvious distaste as “almost black,” he introduces him as the “illegitimate offspring” of a white man and a nonwhite woman. This distinction had not been important for Light’s predecessor, MacGregor, who had appointed a number of illegitimate nonwhites to government posts, including Henry Loving, John Athill, Tyrrell Shervington, and Frances Watson (Watson was the son of planter James Watson and his “housekeeper” [Oliver 1894-99]), and it was not important to Light’s description of other former free colored, so clearly the combination of illegitimacy and color were crucial. Light went on to describe how he intended to hold the “pretensions of the mixed blood” in check until the “rising generation” acquired “more correct notions of social order,” as well as sufficient “rank, property, and respectability.” He ended his dispatch with the assurance that “I am very desirous of considering the claims of a class who were too long deprived of their rights, but were I to have no consideration for those of the more powerful body here [the white planters], I should retrograde rather than advance the interests of the others” (CO 7/44, 18 November 1836). By 1836, Thome and Kimball were being told by the local planters that illegitimacy and occupation, not color prejudice, had become the key to lack of greater socialization among whites and nonwhites—although, as Mrs. Lanaghan was quick to point out, this attitude did not affect their ability to socialize with illegitimate white people and conveniently ignored the fact that a majority of the younger free colored were legitimate (Lanaghan 1844: II, 180).

It is in this context that open concubinage among the white elite, readily accepted before emancipation, declined so precipitously. It was not that the number of illegitimate children necessarily decreased, even children with white fathers, but that these children were less and less an acknowledged part of respectable white family life. Thus, for example, by mid-century illegitimate children are seldom mentioned in their father’s wills, in striking contrast to both the pre-emancipation and immediate post-emancipation periods. For there to be a class divide, there had to be a sex divide.⁴⁰ While concubinage between whites and nonwhites had been an issue before emancipation—precisely because, as we saw earlier, the free colored were believed to be a destabilizing force—once all legal barriers had been dismantled, this type of relationship became an even greater threat.

The Anglican church, which had always disapproved of illegitimacy on moral grounds, played a major role in institutionalizing marriage as the norm and making illegitimacy a barrier to social advancement.⁴¹ Thus as early as 1832, when the Bishop embarked on discussions

⁴⁰ Before emancipation, marriage had been a means of exclusion of nonwhites because it had been so difficult for them to marry. In terms of the free colored, marriages between whites and free nonwhites were discouraged, and in any case the unbalanced sex ratio made marriage an unrealistic possibility for many free colored women (Lazarus-Black 1990: 108-109). As Barbara Bush has written, “No matter how respectable coloured women were, they could never transcend the fact that they were, according to the official norms of white society, concubines, never wives” (Bush 1981: 258).

⁴¹ While slaves and free colored may have married in the Methodist and Moravian churches, their marriages were not considered legal in the eyes of the state (Lazarus-Black, pers. comm.). It is not clear how they were seen by those who married: there were several cases where a married slave considered “emancipation” to mean emancipation not only from slavery but from marriage as well, and went off and married someone else (Sturge and Harvey 1838: 27). Sturge and Harvey also note that at emancipation the fees for marriage went up, which further discouraged marriage.

In the immediate pre-emancipation years, the Rev. Robert Holberton, Archdeacon of the Leeward Islands and

about establishing a grammar school—the first in Antigua—he argued that it should not be open to illegitimate children. Despite strenuous objections from his free colored parishioners, he got his way, establishing a rule that would last for over one hundred years; it hardly seems coincidental that this happened in the same year that the free colored gained full civil rights. After emancipation, a church wedding became the necessary (if previous) counterpart to legitimacy, and all ranks of society aspired to it. Only the white upper class and the nonwhite middle class, however, were able to cement the connection between marriage and legitimacy: for the mass of the population, neither was the norm.⁴²

Women were key to the enforcement of the revamped definition of respectability. Mrs. Lanaghan, ever the astute observer and, not incidentally, a woman, was quick to catch on to the new discourse: “It is said, that the white ladies are the strongest upholders of prejudice; but that their refusal to mix with this [i.e., the upper level nonwhite] group of persons is not occasioned from any shade of colour, but on account of their general illegitimacy” (Lanaghan 1844: II, 181). White women were, to use Ann Stoler’s phrase, the “custodians” of the community:

Whether or not white women exacerbated racial tensions, they certainly did not create them, as is sometimes implied. On the other hand, we should not dismiss the fact that colonial women were committed to racial segregation for their own reasons and in their own right.... it is perhaps not surprising that these women championed a moral order that both restricted their husband’s sexual activities and reconstituted the domestic domain as a site demanding their vigilance and control. (Stoler 1992: 333)

As we shall see in Chapter 10, women’s control over the “domestic domain” was as crucial a component of the process of constituting the nonwhite middle class as it was of the white upper class.

By the 1890s, then, it was clear that the promise of the 1830s had been broken. The wealthier free colored and their offspring, who on the face of it had seemed so well placed to continue to accumulate wealth, property, political power, and social acceptance once the restraints of free colored status had been removed, had not achieved any of this. The white population—both those who remained and those who came as new arrivals—increasingly hard-pressed economically and beleaguered socially, had (with the help of various governors and the Colonial Office) successfully embarked on a path of exclusion: the small opening to nonwhites was gradually closed. In fact, the middle class now followed much the same path as the white population: crudely put, they chose to get out or die out. As the nineteenth century wore on, and as their economic, political, and social options narrowed, the middle class that had developed out of the free colored population failed to reproduce. Like the white population, they too sold off their properties, sent their children abroad, and left themselves. And in a situation

Rector of St. John’s Cathedral, had expelled unwed mothers from the church and forbade material support for their children (Farquhar, pers. comm.). After emancipation, the Anglicans, as part of their attempt to regain control of the religious life of the population—having lost considerable ground to both Methodists and Moravians—tried to extend their reach by enforcing their exclusive right to marry people; this lasted until 1844, eight years later than in Britain (Lazarus-Black 1990: 76).

⁴² The different marriage patterns in the West Indies have been discussed by anthropologists since the 1950s. Lazarus-Black goes further, however, and documents not only how the ability to implement the ideal of marriage was stratified by class but how ways of interpreting the link between marriage and respectability differed by gender as well (Lazarus-Black 1990: 262-72).

where class status was tied to marriage but there were not enough “suitable” men to marry, the women who stayed remained unmarried—whether through choice or social or familial pressure—rather than marrying “beneath” them. Those who remained looked after each other: women took care of their fathers and brothers; fathers and brothers left legacies to their daughters and sisters to help them survive. What was left by the end of the century was a number of elderly men and a host of elderly never-married women, without exception of very modest means, without political or economic power, and socially excluded from white social life.

The Second Middle Class: Moving Up

If the upper reaches of the nonwhite population, those who formed the first middle class, had by the end of the nineteenth century almost disappeared, what about those immediately below in wealth and education? Did they, rather than their more affluent brethren, become the middle class of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? If not, who did make up this class?

The second tier of what Governor Light described in 1836 as the “class called coloured” consisted of men and women who were by occupation primarily “artisans and mechanics,” terms that included a wide range of activities, from butcher to tailor, coppersmith, goldsmith, wheelwright, shoemaker, printer, and shopkeeper; the women were seamstresses and, later and increasingly, teachers. Although most people in this category probably worked for themselves, a few owned large enough businesses to have employees of their own: for instance, the largest butchers, ironmongers, tailors, bakers, and coachmakers all employed others. Most lived and worked in St. John’s. They often showed their status in their dress: the leading butcher, whose open-air abattoir was in the market, went to work in a black suit and high starched white collar. These were also trades that tended to be practiced by a number of members of one family, both simultaneously and over time. In several cases, the first family member to enter the trade was a freed (or free) man, the trade then handed down from one generation to the next through the nineteenth century.

The free colored artisans of the immediate pre- and post-emancipation periods were much more difficult to research than the upper level free colored. They can be found in birth and death records, and sometimes on juror and voter lists, but only the wealthiest among them left wills, which provide such a font of information for the upper level, and since they did not hold public office, they do not appear in the almanacs. However, the jurors’ rolls provide some insights because they are effectively lists of those who met certain property qualifications *and* were considered respectable enough to have been asked to serve.⁴³

⁴³ A further word about the jurors’ rolls is in order here, since much of what follows depends on them. The first roll I found was for 1872, and it did not distinguish Special and Petty jurors. The 1875 and following rolls did. The qualifications for Special Juror were an income of £200 or possession of 100 acres of land. The qualifications for Petty Juror were far lower: an income of £50 (or a freehold worth £50, but this was dropped by 1880). These qualifications remained at least through 1911. By 1918, however, they were more complex: Special Jurors needed an income of £150, a salary of £200, or possession of 100 acres, while Petty Jurors needed an income of £30 or a salary of £50. It was an indication of the decline in incomes that reducing the qualifications did not increase the number of jurors. Each roll gives name, place of residence, occupation, qualification (property or income), and indicates the Special Jurors.

The jurors’ rolls were certainly not a complete list of even male citizens. Fears of nonwhites overwhelming the juries presumably meant that the registrar tried to get all the white men available, even in the countryside (and one roll has attached to it a list of those who have to be tracked down). On the other hand, some people tried to avoid serving, and the names of a number of prominent white men are missing. Fortunately, because of their prominence, they can be

Unfortunately, the first jurors' roll I found was for the year 1872, thirty years after emancipation. Nevertheless, it gives a sense of how important a part of the population the artisans were. By this time the qualification was an income of £50 per year, and the roll included 224 men, 40 of whom were artisans—compared to 85 planters, 40 merchants, 52 clerks, and 7 “other.” The artisans covered a wide range of occupations: carpenter, plumber, wheelwright, cabinetmaker, shipwright, shoemaker, tailor, tinsmith, goldsmith, bootmaker, blacksmith, and watchmaker (but not butcher or baker)—indicating that all these occupations included wealthier members. The 1875 list of 163 Petty Jurors included 35 artisans, and the list of 74 Special Jurors included 6 (1 shipwright, 3 carpenters, 1 blacksmith, and 1 baker); these men needed a larger income—£200 a year—to qualify.

If we turn now to the sample families, of the remaining six surnames in Set 1—those whose names appear on the free colored petitions *and* in the twentieth-century middle class—four—Swift, Harney, Nanton, and Willock—fall clearly into this group.⁴⁴ The free colored ancestors were, respectively, a butcher, a pilot, a joiner/cabinetmaker, and an ironmonger/blacksmith. In addition to these four, I will include in the discussion two additional surnames, from artisan families that were undoubtedly free colored although not petition signers: the Henrys and the Kelsicks.⁴⁵

Because of the absence of information, it was difficult to trace these families back to the petition-signing ancestor, much less to a pre-emancipation relative—white or nonwhite. But in fact this very absence of information is an important attribute of the group, and a key component of what distinguishes it from the upper level: not only were the connections unacknowledged—to the twentieth century members of these families (as to the upper level), the term free colored had no import—but they were through, and back to, less prominent people, which in turn helps explain why they were so difficult to trace. Again unlike with the upper level, some of the petition signers came from families that had been free (but nonwhite) for several generations and a few may in fact have had *no* connection to the white population, having been part of that ill-defined (at least academically) category of free black.

In some cases, it is the naming patterns that suggest a connection to the white population: for the Willock surname, for instance, the free colored petition signers were William and William, Jr., while Frank Gore Willock was a prominent ironmonger who was probably born just after emancipation. The first white Willock in Antigua was a merchant who died in 1801; one of his sons and one grandson were named William; another grandson was Frank Gore Willock, a captain in the Royal Navy who died in 1834 at the age of 47; one has to presume some connection between the white and nonwhite Frank Gore. Similarly, a free colored Kelsick had three children, Thomas, William, and Sarah, while the first white Kelsick, a merchant who died in 1800, had a wife named Sarah and sons named Thomas and John. On the other hand, there were no white Swifts, Harneys, or Henrys, which reinforces the presumption that all three

picked up in other ways; this is not true for the less prominent, and it is possible that these are underrepresented. Countering this, however, is the fact that the less prominent *wanted* to serve, as a sign of their status, so that the Portuguese, for instance, flood onto the rolls in the 1880s.

⁴⁴ Two surnames remain: Kirwan and Hewlett. I will argue below that although there were free colored Kirwans and Hewletts, the twentieth-century nonwhite families in fact had other—later—origins.

⁴⁵ One Charles Henry signed one of the free colored petitions, but I could not tie him into this Henry family, although it is possible that there is a connection.

families were free well before emancipation.⁴⁶

Unlike with the upper level nonwhite families, some of the white families with the same surnames as the members of this group remained on the island well into the nineteenth century; but, also in contrast and perhaps in partial explanation, they were not among the wealthiest or largest white families. Thus most of the Willock sons went into the armed services and died overseas. Only Louisa Wyke Willock, owner of Willocks, a small estate in the south, was compensated for slaves, and then only for twelve; she was still listed as owner in 1851, but not by 1872; her brother W.A.R. Willock was a director of the Planters Provident Society in 1852, one among several names of small planters. Similarly with the white Kelsicks and with another family not in the sample, the Whites (nonwhite father and son were coachmakers): none of the whites were compensated for slaves and none owned estates.

The wills and genealogies show that in the immediate post-emancipation period, this artisan group was interconnected through ties of marriage and friendship; it is also notable that most were indeed married. The Swifts, Harneys, Willocks, and Kelsicks all demonstrate this. John Swift, Sr., who died in 1832, was a butcher who signed the free colored petition, as did his son John, also a butcher (see Genealogy 6).⁴⁷ John owned land and buildings in High Street and in Long Street, as well as his butcher business, which he carried on with the help of his son, a shopman, and two assistants. He left his business, as well as his land and buildings in Long Street, to his son, his house in High Street with its furnishings to his wife, and the residue to Thomas, William, and Sarah Kelsick, his sister's children. Thomas Kelsick was a "boss shoemaker" in the mid- to late nineteenth century; one son, another Thomas, married Frank Gore Willock's daughter, while another son married a Scarville and a daughter married a Langley. John Swift also stipulated that the Long Street property was not to pass to his son John unless he (the younger John) purchased the freedom of his sister Susannah, another example of the complex familial relationships between free and unfree.⁴⁸ There were two other Swifts, brothers, who were butchers at this same time: Joseph, born in about 1806, and Zaccariah, born in 1829; Joseph's son was also a butcher, while their sister Louisa married another butcher, Jacob Martin, whose brother and son were also butchers. Butchering was clearly a

⁴⁶ Most of the early information on planter families comes from Oliver, who includes genealogies even for families that were no longer in Antigua at the time he was writing. The presumption is therefore that since Swift, Harney, and Henry were certainly not slave names, they must have belonged to white settlers (but not necessarily planters and not necessarily wealthy) of an earlier period, or were first name converted into surnames. These names would have been acquired by the nonwhite families either at birth or simply because a former slave took the name of his/her owner.

⁴⁷ The death registers, which include skin color categories, are tantalizing, as well as ambiguous, sources of information as to the Swift family's origins. Joseph Swift, Jr. (c.1806-1896) is described as black; his brother Zaccariah (1829-1911) is described as colored. Joseph's wife Phoebe (1812-1911) was also described as black. But their son, Jacob Christopher (1849-1928) was described as colored (and Phoebe was remembered—by a darker person—as a "mulatto"). Similarly, Zaccariah's wife Mary (1823-1913) was described as colored, but their son John Kirton McDonald (1877-1913) was described as black. Note that the dates are indeed correct: this generation of Swifts lived into their nineties.

⁴⁸ It seems possible that the father did not do this himself because Susannah was not John's full sister—in other words, she was not John Sr.'s child.

family profession.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The Henrys were another butchering (and baking) family. The first for whom I have data (some of it oral) were three brothers—Roland Edward, Adolphus, and William—all of whom were born after emancipation; the first two of these were butchers (and it is possible that the third was as well), and it is therefore likely that their father was a butcher too. William's son, Samuel Ward, was a well-known baker and provisioner (known graphically as "Stinking Cheese" Henry). Samuel Ward was the father of Bert and Rowan (among other children) and Roland Edward was the father of Roland Edward and Ella (also among others).

Genealogy 6
Descendants of John Swift

As the Swifts and Martins were butchers, so the Harneys were pilots. But here the similarity ends, for the Harneys are representative of a slightly lower level of artisan, not only in terms of wealth but also in terms of respectability: the Harneys were not jurors, for instance, and were not married. Four Harneys signed the free colored petition; at least one (John) was a pilot, as was his brother William and a third, Jacob. William and Jacob both left wills which show how wealth was dissipated when there were large families to take care of. William, who died in 1848, had children by several women and took care of them—eight in all—in his will by paying them small legacies, as he also did his brothers, his brothers' children—seven in all—and two male friends. And he had very few material possessions: his boat, sails, and rigging, along with a small dinghy, went to his brother, while another boat, with fishing seine and tackling, went to one of the mothers of his children (called his "housekeeper" in his will); his dwelling house and land in Popeshead Street went to this same woman, while some additional land went into a trust for her children. His land and buildings in St. John's Street went to an "old friend," and then to her daughter and grandchildren (her daughter married Thomas F. Buckley, a tailor). The other pilot, Jacob, also had few material assets and many people to share them: his piece of land in Stevens Village was left to his seven children, as was his pilot boat (which was to be run by his eldest son).

The business, including its premises but also its equipment, was the most important asset these artisans had, and they seem to have made a concerted effort to pass it on to someone who would benefit from it—preferably a family member, otherwise a trusted employee. There was also a concerted effort to take care of the elderly women—mothers and/or "housekeepers" and "old friends." This was particularly necessary for those who were not married—hence the wills. This can be seen in the Harney wills; it is also clearly shown in another example, that of Horatio Nelson Kirwan, a cooper who (in 1856) left his land and buildings to his mother for her life, and then to his "friend" Jane Mackay in trust for his "natural son James." James was still a child, however, and so Horatio left his "truck" (presumably for carting finished barrels, etc.) under the care of the porter who had been looking after it, its profits to be divided among the porter, his mother, and Jane Mackay. His working tools were put under the care of another cooper, Daniel, in trust for James; if James decided not to become a cooper himself, then Daniel was to provide James with whatever tools he needed for his chosen trade and to keep the coopering tools for himself.

While it was undoubtedly the case that many members of these families left the island, the overall pattern was one of expansion rather than contraction—one more difference with the upper level group. Yet despite this staying power, they did not increase in either economic or political prominence during the nineteenth century: none became merchants, for instance, much less doctors or lawyers or planters; and none held any appointed posts in the government, much less served in the Assembly. In addition, they remained socially distinct from the upper level families: they were more likely to be Methodists and Moravians than Anglicans, Lodge members rather than Masons: only one artisan was invited into the Masonic Lodge in the twenty years after it was founded, and that was a wheelwright named Richard King Nanton in 1853. If they went beyond primary school, it was to the Moravian school in St. John's or perhaps Coke College (see Chapter 6).

Most important in terms of the issue of reproduction, although by the second generation after emancipation, they often married, they did not marry into the upper level group. Some recruited mates from off the islands—many were women who had come to study at the Spring Gardens Teacher Training College, which opened in 1840 but did not begin to take in women

from other islands in any numbers until the 1850s. This was not at the expense of locally born women, however, because—at least compared to the upper group—there were far fewer spinsters in these families. And this is because of another key distinction between the two groups: the artisan group was willing to recruit from inside as well, by marrying Antiguans of their own *or* of lower social status. Thus by the end of the nineteenth century this artisan group had married into another group, one that developed beginning in the mid-1800s. This second group included almost all the members of Set 2—those who were in the twentieth-century middle class but whose names did *not* appear on the free colored petition—as well as a number of others from similar backgrounds who will be included in the discussion because of their subsequent importance.

Like Set 1, Set 2 also included eleven surnames: Derrick, Heath, Jeffrey, Lowen, Pigott, Walling, Watt, Dyett, O'Reilly, England, and Gore.⁵⁰ These families had one of two origins. The first, and most frequent, family origin was when a white estate manager or overseer (often from Scotland) who had arrived in Antigua in the mid-1800s had children with a nonwhite woman; these children, and their children, married into the artisanal group—whose own children, it should be noted, were by this point less likely to be artisans than clerks in stores. This was the pattern for the Pigotts (see Genealogies 7 and 8, Chapter 7), O'Reillys, one branch of the Derricks, the Gores, and the Lowens. In addition, there are many other families that fit into this category.⁵¹

The second family origin was the urban counterpart of the rural process: here a white male artisan or clerk, usually but not always recently arrived, either married or had children with an urban nonwhite woman; these children in turn were central to the twentieth-century middle class. This was the case with the Jeffreys, for instance: John Jeffrey had come from England sometime before 1850 to work as printer and bookbinder and married a white Antiguan woman (see Genealogy 9, Chapter 7). Their son John Frederick (1853-1896) was a writing clerk who married a nonwhite Antiguan,⁵² and their son John Lushington was a prominent member of the middle class, a man whose name will appear again in subsequent chapters. He married Hilda McFeeters, herself the daughter of a Scots overseer and a nonwhite woman. Similarly, Charles George Derrick was a shipwright from Anguilla who married a nonwhite woman; one of their children married into the other (until then unrelated) Derrick family, whose members were the offspring of a white planter and a nonwhite woman. Again, there are many more examples that fit this category. John Winter came to build a wharf at Parham;⁵³ the first white male Thompson was a lawyer's clerk, the first Brown a policeman, the first Mason a bailiff, and the first Heath a schoolmaster, all in the immediate post-emancipation period.

There was one other grouping of families that was not part of either sample but whose

⁵⁰ It originally included the surname Rannie as well, but research revealed that the Rannies, although not petition signers, were more accurately placed in the upper level of Set 1, and they were discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵¹ Their names will be familiar to Antiguans, and include Edwards, Hewlett, Abbott, and Kirwan. Although there were free colored Kirwans and Hewletts, as well as prominent white Kirwans and Gores, the Kirwans, Edwards, Hewletts, Abbotts, and Gores who were in the twentieth-century nonwhite middle class were, on the male side, the children and grandchildren of newly arrived white overseers.

⁵² This was one of the very few marriages I found between a white man and a nonwhite women in the nineteenth century (the Methodist missionaries excepted). There were probably very few other whites of his social status—the others being artisans.

⁵³ Or so the family believes. There was, however, a John Winter who was Superintendent of Police in 1843.

members were prominent in the twentieth century middle class. They fall somewhere between the patterns of the artisans in Set 1 and the rural and urban families in Set 2: they were nonwhite male artisans who could not be traced back to the free colored population but who nonetheless eventually intermarried with the artisans from Set 1 and, even more frequently, with Set 2; they may have been free colored, or they may have been from artisanal former slave families. Thus the first St. Luce came to Antigua from Martinique, and was listed as a “gentleman” in 1843 when he bought property from James Byam Thibou, but by 1844 he was a “shopkeeper.” He had seven children, one of whom was a coachbuilder who married twice and whose children were all in the twentieth-century middle class. Similarly with Christian and Goodwin: Theophilus Emmanuel Christian (1860-1928) was a carpenter and reportedly the son of a saddlemaker; his two sons—Donald Preston and Sydney Theophilus—and three daughters were central to the middle class, as were his sons’ children. And Joseph Montreville Goodwin, who worked as an estate manager, was the son of a joiner.⁵⁴

Here then lay the origins of what I have called the “second” middle class: in the artisanal former free colored and in the children of white men and nonwhite women, most of the men being new immigrants who had come to work on the estates or, less frequently, in urban clerical occupations. Who these white men were is important: there were other white immigrants who arrived after emancipation, particularly as merchants and estate owners, but they were not the fathers (or grandfathers) of this class. Instead it was the lower level whites—a new generation of Mrs. Lanaghan’s “mushrooms”—who, unable to bring wives for economic reasons and unable to find them on the island for social reasons, “mixed up” with the local population.

As the nineteenth century progressed, this class filled an economic niche that did not overlap with that of the white population: its members were not merchants or planters, but

⁵⁴ There are two surnames on the Set 2 list—England and Watt—that I could not trace back to a white ancestor but that fit the urban Set 2 pattern in that the first relative I could find in the records was a merchant’s clerk (probably white) in the late 1800s. Thus Joseph Alexander Timothy England was a merchants’ clerk who died in 1910 and had two children: one, William Wentworth England, also a merchant’s clerk, married a St. Luce; his sister, Isabella Garden England, who briefly worked in the civil service, married Robert Bindon Holberton Nanton. Similarly, William Llewelyn Watt was a merchant’s clerk and probably the father of John Steadman Watt, who worked as Inspector of Weights and Measures and for the City Health Board. Dyett is more difficult: Henry Dyett, who died in 1896, was a Monserratan and the father of Edward Farley Dyett, a civil servant who married a Wall from Montserrat; Henry Dyett was nonwhite, but how he was related to the white Monserrat Dyetts is unclear—although the family is sure there is a connection.

The final surname in Set 2, Walling, was somewhat anomalous. The Wallings believe they are descendants of an Irish man and nonwhite woman, whose son and grandson were both fishermen; the great-grandchildren, Steadman and Sydney, came to be members of the middle class through hard work (and cricket), but at a later stage.

One other surname—McDonald—deserves some space, both because it belongs to a family that was absolutely central to the twentieth-century middle class (although not in either sample), and because it has been possible to document it better than some of the others. Part of this is thanks to the work of the family itself—both branches, white and nonwhite.

The first McDonalds were two brothers who were merchants. One had an outside child named Samuel, who was born in 1828 (possibly before the father married—his legitimate half-brother was not born until 1838). He appears to have either been born free or freed, and actually worked in his father’s merchant establishment until his legitimate older brother came home from school abroad and he was then thrown out—or so the story goes. In any case, he subsequently seems to have done a bit of everything: he was listed as a merchant in 1872, a baker in 1875, a notary public in 1890, and an auctioneer at other times. In 1856 he married Amelia Mason, member of a prominent free colored family. Their eldest son, Donald Edward (1858-1906), was a Methodist minister; he married Ella Buckley, the daughter of the Rev. John Andrew Buckley, one of the earliest nonwhite Antiguans to become an ordained Moravian minister, and they lived in Guyana until the father died in 1906. Donald and Ella’s ten children, who returned to Antigua with their mother, were key members of the new middle class.

artisans and then, as the artisanal occupations declined, merchants' clerks.⁵⁵ These men and women therefore either held occupations already vacated by the white population—as noted above, there were almost no white artisans by the mid-nineteenth century—or those that the white population was rapidly vacating (a process that will be described in more detail in Chapter 7). They therefore did not threaten the positions that the white population considered essential to its continued control.

There was a distinction among the members of this class, however, in marriage patterns, and this became crucial to their prospects: the urban clerks and artisans, white and nonwhite, married the mothers of their children, while the rural white men—all of whom worked on the estates—did not. Further, the urban men married women from a different class than the women who lived with the rural men: several of the urban women were teachers who had gone to Spring Gardens, while others came from “good,” although not wealthy, families. In contrast, although there is much less information available on the rural women, those that did find their way into the records are listed as seamstresses, laundresses, or hucksters. The men left few wills—they probably had very little property to leave—so we do not know the extent to which they acknowledged their children; what does seem clear is that even though they never married the mothers of these children, these were stable household-based relationships, and by and large the men did not have other families (or even children by other women). This was part of what made up the sense of “respectability” that became as central to this class’s concept of itself as it had been to the class that preceded it.

In the chapters that follow, I turn to a detailed examination of this new middle class as its members struggled gradually—very gradually—to establish themselves, economically, politically, and socially, until by the 1920s it had truly become “the” middle class. Since for this class, education became the key to social mobility, I turn to that first.

⁵⁵ The decline in the artisanal occupational category, as well its changing content, can be traced through the jurors lists, while the censuses give a sense of how the upper level artisans that I have been discussing were only a small part of the overall category.

The 1844 census has a general category of “mechanics and artisans,” which includes 2,521 people out of a total population of about 36,000. The 1861 census has a much more detailed occupational breakdown, and by this point the total for all the artisanal occupations is 2,380. By 1921, the number of people in the same occupations is down to 1,083, the result of an import-dependent economy and the consequent phasing-out of these trades.

In the same year, 1921, the jurors’ list included 172 names, only 17 of which were artisans—compared to 41 in 1875. A large part of the decline was in the largest and most general categories: while there were 804 cabinetmakers and carpenters in 1861, there were only 342 in 1921, and the decrease was on a similar scale in other occupations—masons (336 down to 101), tailors (224 down to 69), coopers (299 down to 42), and shoemakers (132 down to 48). But the more highly skilled occupations also declined precipitously: while there were 64 wheelwrights in 1861, there were only 12 in 1921; similarly for butchers (59 to 21), saddlers (48 to 22), and shipwrights (37 to 15). Some occupations—coppersmith, millwright—disappeared altogether. Others were transformed by the addition of a new trade: while there were 199 blacksmiths in 1861, there were 117 “engineer fitters and blacksmiths” in 1921; similarly, the 11 plumbers of 1861 had become 22 “plumbers and tinsmiths” in 1921. Still others decreased to so few in number that categories were combined: there were 13 watchmakers and 4 goldsmiths in 1861, but only 7 in a combined category in 1921. Two categories, coachmaker and barber, were new.