

THE TALE OF THE GIRL WHO BECAME ROSE WARD HUNT



Harry Roseland, Henry Ward Beecher and Sally Diggs 1927
Collection of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn

The Columbia Harmony Cemetery, a burial ground for African Americans, sat on prime real estate in Washington, DC. In 1958, developer Louis Bell purchased the land with a plan to relocate all 37,000 graves to a farm he owned in Maryland, naming it the National Harmony Memorial Cemetery. One of the family plots relocated was the Hunts: James, Rose, Sallie, and Florence. However, Bell neglected to say that he would not pay to move the headstones. So, the bodies were exhumed, transferred, and reburied in unmarked plots. The monuments of so many African American families were sold as scrap and used as landfill at the Stuart Plantation in Fairfax, Virginia, whose legacy of slavery made this cavalier destruction particularly sadistic. The Hunt family plot has no markings and has disappeared into the fog of the past (figure 1). In addition, Rose Ward Hunt's obituary stated



Figure 1 The only monument to the Hunt Family. The marker identifies the location of their plot in the National Harmony Cemetery.

she was to be buried in Harmony, yet her burial records were garbled. The disappearance of Rose is an apt metaphor of a woman who played a part in the narrative of abolition in Brooklyn. We know about Henry Ward Beecher and his significance in that movement, but who was Rose Ward Hunt? And were there other nameless actors who were also significant?

Rose Ward Hunt, born Sally Diggs, was the 9-year-old girl that Henry Ward Beecher and the congregation of Plymouth Church rescued from enslavement. In the 1860s, Beecher held mock slave auctions from the pulpit to raise money to free actual enslaved people, inspiring Brooklyn and much of the country to work for the end of slavery. But Rose Ward Hunt was more than just a symbol of these mock auctions. She was a teacher, wife, mother, and homeowner—a whole person in the late 19th Century. As much as we can piece together, she and her story must be celebrated. Additionally, we should celebrate the Falkner family, also largely forgotten, without whose commitment Rose's rescue would never have happened.

Rose Ward Hunt was born as Sally Diggs in 1851, in Port Tobacco, Maryland, a small town outside Washington. Rose declined to name the family that

enslaved her grandmother, mother, and siblings. I have dubbed them the family that shall not be named in her honor. Cloe Diggs (b.1797), Rose's grandmother, was the matriarch of the enslaved Diggs family and is maybe the greatest hero of the entire story. The family that shall not be named let Cloe have a certain amount of autonomy, allowing her to rent her own cabin, furnish it, and feed her family of six with money she made outside of her work on the plantation. Eventually, the master and his wife died, leaving an orphaned daughter, and Cloe took on the responsibility of raising the child. To quote Rose, "Grandmother was a mother to her, nursing her through sickness, sending her baskets of dainty foods when she was in boarding school and doing everything that she could to make the motherless child happy." Once the little orphan grew up and got married, her husband convinced her to sell off all the enslaved people. Rose related to Rev. Durkee that the husband was beneath his wife. This betrayal, I believe, is why Rose declined to say their name.

Rose knew the names of all the enslavers the Diggs family passed through. First was a man named Campbell in Port Tobacco, and then next was Campbell's brother in Baltimore, to whom Cloe paid \$500 for her own freedom with money she had raised from her outside work during this time. Campbell then sold the rest of the Diggs family to a trader named Steward in Washington, DC, who then sold the group to John C. Cook. Cook broke up the family, selling Rose's mother and her two sons to a dealer in Richmond. Rose never saw her mother or brothers again. Cook kept Rose and her sister in Washington. In a letter to Rev. Durkee, Rose wrote that her youngest sister was adopted into a family in Washington. "Adopted" seems like a euphemism. I wonder if Cook assumed he would later collect her to sell when the time was right. The Civil War must have intervened. A Freedman's Bank document hints that Cloe may have rescued the other child, Letty. In the document, she is living with two children, Sally and Letty.

John Cartwright Cook (1815-1878) was born in Charles County, where Port Tobacco is, but moved to Washington, DC, by 1850. He was still there in 1860. He was already an enslaver in 1850, as per the census. After the Civil War, he owned a horse livery. He is interred in the Congressional Cemetery along with Mary Ann Hall, Washington's most famous madam, and J. Edgar Hoover.

Sally was reported to be only one-sixteenth African American because the family that shall not be named were also generational rapists--that is, four generations of whites raping their female slaves. In her essay "When Henry Ward Beecher Sold Slaves from the Plymouth Pulpit," published in Ladies Home Journal in 1896, Eunice Beecher wrote that "Rose was too fair for her own good."

Cloe is the true hero of this saga. The fact that a tenacious, newly freed 63-year-old woman found a way to rescue her granddaughter shows true personal strength. Of course, Beecher's fame and charisma raised the money. And without the Falkner brothers, Rose would not have made it to Brooklyn. But without Cloe Diggs, nothing would have happened. Her status as an African American woman would have rendered her invisible in the 19th century. In all the published accounts of Rose's rescue, she was only known as "the Grandmother." To my knowledge, this is the first time she has been named in print: Cloe Diggs. Through Ancestry.com, I was able to find her in census records. The census enumerator mistakenly corrected the idiosyncratic spelling of Cloe's name as Chloe. But when she had control of her own name, as printed in the local directory, it was spelled Cloe. That directory also mentioned that she was a widow. Smith Diggs was her husband, but in a sad twist, it appears that he was sold down the river, literally, in New Orleans. It does not look like he survived the war.

The young Rose (aka Sally) was sent to be raised by her grandmother. It was not unusual for enslaved small children to be raised by grandparents, as enslaved parents would have been working. Frederick Douglass was also raised by his grandmother until he was old enough to work. Once Rose was old enough to be sold profitably, Cook collected her from Cloe Diggs. Rose tried to escape by hiding in the attic, but she was discovered and taken to the Alexandria Slave Market, where John Cook negotiated her sale. With her youth and light skin, she would have been highly desirable and would have merited a high price, more money than her grandmother could raise.

This is where the forgotten Falkner family enters the story, as the little girl would have remained in bondage without them. As a general introduction, they hailed from Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in the United Kingdom. The first to immigrate was John Blake Falkner, 1832-1916 (figure 2), who settled in Germantown, PA, in 1848. As best we know, the census data

suggests that Bishop, Annie, and Lois, along with their parents Elizabeth and John Sr., immigrated to New York in 1850 and settled in Brooklyn. John Sr. died in 1854 and is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery. Annie was a member of Plymouth Church by 1855 and Elizabeth a member by 1858.

John attended Alexandria Theological Seminary, now known as the Virginia Theological Seminary. Through correspondence, I confirmed that John Falkner Blake attended from 1859-1861. For some reason, he changed his name for a period of time, but he attended as John Falkner Blake. The year 1861 is significant because it meant that he went back after the ceremony at Plymouth. He did not graduate, which was common, and he was ordained in 1861.



Figure 2 John Blake Falkner

John's younger brother, Bishop Falkner, 1834–1931 (figure 3), attended Union Theological Seminary. He was 93 when Rose returned to Brooklyn in 1927 and is a major source of information for the events described here. Bishop Falkner worked for Plymouth, operating a satellite Mission on Rochester Avenue. He was also a superintendent of the Sunday School. His mother and Brooklyn siblings were also members at the time. He later joined the Episcopal Church. After a sojourn to New Jersey, he returned to Brooklyn as a Rector at Christ Church in Bay Ridge and stayed there until retirement. John Blake Falkner became rector of Christ Church of Bridgeport, CT, then moved back to Germantown, PA, and took a position at Christ Church, where he stayed for 27 years. He eventually changed his name back to John Blake Falkner. He is buried in Philadelphia.



Figure 3 Bishop Falkner

Much of what follows comes from two sources: an amazing scrapbook in the Plymouth Church Archive and in a 1910 article in *The Brooklyn Eagle* where John and Bishop Falkner retell the saga of Sally's rescue. The article also liberally quotes Stephen Griswold, who served as an usher in 1860 and was still serving at Plymouth in 1910. The article celebrated the 50th anniversary of Rose's rescue, noting that the Falkner Brothers donated to Plymouth the

bill of sale of Rose and her manumission—her freedom papers—along with a photograph of the portrait of Rose by Eastman Johnson. The original bill now resides in the Center for Brooklyn History collection. A reproduction is hanging in the Arcade at Plymouth.

As Sally Diggs sat in the slave market, her grandmother must have been looking for help in every possible direction. She worked at a boarding house as a cook near the Alexandria Theological Seminary, where John Falkner Blake lived. That an old Black cook would solicit help from a random seminary student suggests how desperate she was. After learning of Sally's plight, John reached out to Henry Ward Beecher through his brother Bishop, who was at Plymouth. Beecher immediately agreed to help. After the ceremony, reporters from *The Brooklyn Eagle* accused Beecher of using the rescue to shore up his abolitionist credentials after a public spat with Theodore Tilton. He did lose face with the more radical Abolitionists in the Congregation over his support of an international missionary work organization that had not disavowed slavery.

John Faulkner Blake signed the bond, and John Cook said that he only allowed Sally to go to that den of abolitionists--Plymouth Church-- because a local resident signed the bond. It must have been quite a sales job to convince an enslaver that a British national who temporarily enrolled at a nearby school was a local. Blake succeeded and escorted Sally and her grandmother North. This story rings true, but Eunice Beecher tells another story. She relates that Cook wrote, "If Henry Ward Beecher has given his word, it is better than a bond." Beecher laughingly said, "It was the only tribute a slave trader ever paid to him." The second story is amusing but not necessarily believable. It does hint of the Falkners being written out of the story in the future, so I wanted to share it.

John and Bishop's mother, Elizabeth Falkner (figure 4), hosted Cloe and Sally Diggs at her home at 284 Pacific Street (figure 5), where Bishop and his sister Annie also lived. John arrived with them on Saturday, February 4th. There was a bit of a to-do about finding the right frock for Sally to wear the next day, and once this was accomplished, she was then put to bed. By the way, Annie gave Sally the comb that later so offended Henry Ward Beecher.



Figure 4 Elizabeth Falkner, mother of Bishop and John



Figure 5 The Falkner Home at 284 Pacific Street

On Sunday, February 5th, Henry Ward Beecher (figure 6) brought Sally (figure 7) with him to the rostrum of the Sanctuary of Plymouth Church. He did not use a traditional pulpit but preferred to pace while orating. After the service, he focused the Congregation on Sally, who was intimidated to be in front of so many people as the Sanctuary held almost 3,000 worshipers. At first, Beecher mimicked a Carolina auctioneer peddling flesh. Then he snapped back to his normal voice and asked if the Congregation was going to let Sally remain in bondage. Thunderstruck, the Congregation was so moved that they quickly filled the offering baskets. Beecher later recalled, "Never has rain fallen faster than tears fell that day." One woman gave fifty dollars, and another sent word that she would cover the rest if there were a shortfall. The Sunday School children, who had met Sally before the service, raised two hundred dollars amongst themselves, but it wasn't needed.

Rose Ward Hunt returned to Plymouth in 1927. *The New York Times* reported



Figure 6 Henry Ward Beecher in a photo dated around the time of Rose's rescue. He was 47 in 1860



Figure 7 Portrait of Rose Ward the day after gaining her freedom. Unknown photo process modeled after a tintype.

the events of Rose's return and quoted extensively from her reminiscences of the ceremony:

My own recollections of this time is very meager, only one incident standing out in my childish mind. My hair was combed back from my face and held in place with a long, curved rubber comb, such as children wore at that time. Evidently Mr. Beecher had not noticed this before I was put upon the platform, but when he did see it, he came quietly to me, removed the comb and said never wear anything in your hair except what God put there.

The other memorable events seemed not to have impressed me very much, and I am sure that the picture which I now hold of them is the result of repeatedly being told the story.

The next day, *The Brooklyn Eagle* remarked that it wasn't clear whether Sally understood the gravity of the events on that Sunday. She was nine, after all. She later recalled a packed house, which must have been terrifying. As for Beecher's dissatisfaction over the comb, was it Protestant modesty, or did Beecher want to emphasize that she did not have afro-textured hair? It gives credibility to the idea that Caucasian features made the girls relatable to the Congregation. With Sara, the other enslaved girl the church helped free, her long, flowing, straight hair is clearly visible in the famous etching (figure 9).

The poet Rose Terry, for whom Sally was renamed, had not brought a purse with her to the service but was so moved by Beecher that she placed a fire opal ring in the basket. She later said that even if she were wearing an Orloff diamond, she would have still put the ring on the offering plate. At the end of the service, a trembling little slave girl left as a freed girl named Rose Ward wearing a ring that wedded her to freedom. Beecher gave little Rose the last name Ward because he felt his surname was too famous. In choosing the name Rose, he selected a more dignified name in the same color family as pink. Rose/Sally's nickname was Pink, which has not aged well. It might be a stretch, but I do not believe Beecher would have noticed that rose is not only a color but a verb. Plymouth certainly helped Rose rise.

Accounts vary as to how much money the congregation raised. The day after the ceremony, *The Eagle* reported \$1007, but a 1910 article in *The Eagle* stated that it was \$1,500. Eunice Beecher said it was \$2,000. It doesn't matter as the event was both a financial and emotional success, and Plymouth made a significant contribution to Rose's life going forward.

It may make some angry today that *The Brooklyn Eagle* presented Rose like a carnival side-show when they suggested anyone wanting to see her could drop by the Falkners' house on Pacific Street.

One may also wonder whether fulfilling the bond signed by John Falkner Blake lined the pockets of an enslaver and perpetuated slavery. Perhaps, but Frederick Douglass also got considerable blowback when English benefactors purchased his freedom. Douglass was stranded in the UK, separated from his family due to the success of his memoirs, which made him too identifiable. His response to his critics could be paraphrased for Rose: that the benefit to the enslaver was short-term, but far more significant was to

demonstrate to the enslavers the commitment of a northern Congregational church to end slavery.

There is no question that slavery is evil and morally reprehensible, full stop. But the imitation and theatre of a mock auction are abhorrent and using a child as a prop in this mock auction is grotesque, no matter how you view it. However, it saved the girl Sally/Rose and her grandmother, Cloe, her only family, was not uprooted from her life as a freedwoman in DC. If not for Plymouth, their only option would have been to continue north to Canada to remake their lives in a new country, breaking the legal agreement between Falkner and Cook. Rose Ward may have been stunned by the events of February 5th, 1860, but not so traumatized as to be unable to attend school, build close relationships, and raise a family. Keep in mind she had already been torn from her mother's arms, never to see her again. It is interesting to note that Rose never identified her mother's name, perhaps due to trauma. In a letter to Rev. Durkee, she mentions that Mary and Sarah were also sent to Campbell. Other research identifies them as her aunts.

The following paragraphs tell the stories of other girls Beecher rescued through mock auctions, all of them light-skinned, perhaps because he felt the Congregation would relate to them more. Clearly, these girls would have been more relatable than a dark-skinned teenage boy. Mary and Emily Edmondson (figure 8) were the first to be rescued. I believe this was only part of the rationale, and that the imperiled girls' virtue was also important.

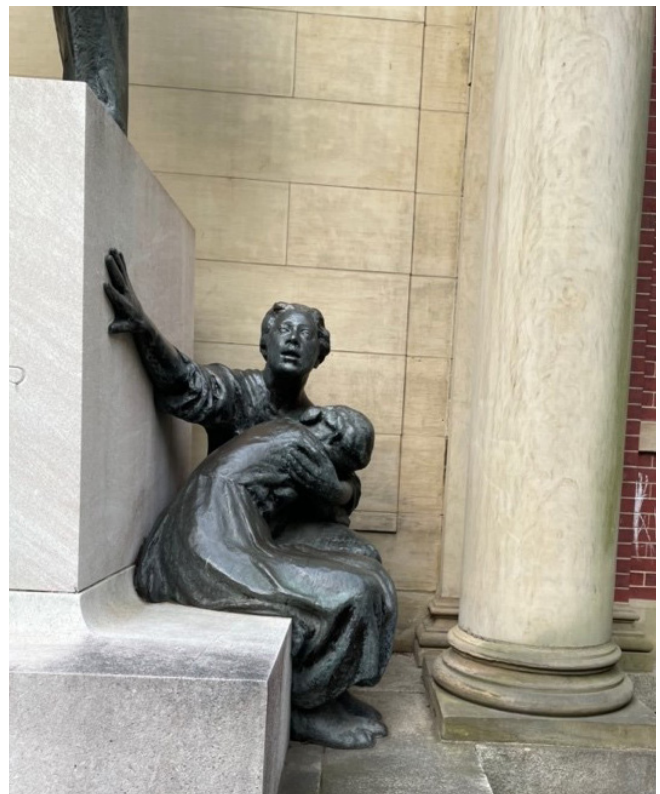


Figure 8 The Edmonson Sisters in photographed in their youth and Gutzon Borglum's interpretation of them at Plymouth.

Beecher performed his first mock slave auction of the Edmonson sisters not at Plymouth but at the Broadway Tabernacle. This catalyzed Beecher's radicalization as an abolitionist. The sisters were caught up in the Pearl Incident. In 1848, seventy enslaved people in Washington, DC, escaped en masse on the schooner Pearl. The intention was to sail to the free state of New Jersey. Due to weather, enslavers were able to catch the ship. As punishment, the girls were sent to New Orleans to be sold into prostitution as they were light-skinned. Yellow fever interfered with that plan, and they were returned to the DC area. Their father, who was a freeman, was able to connect with the Broadway Tabernacle, and in the subsequent mock auction, Henry Ward Beecher was electrified by the energy of the worshipers and raised the money.

Naurice Woods explains in his essay "Pink and the Fancy Gal: White Slavery, the Abolitionists' Crusade, and the Painter's Canvas" that it was widely known that light-skinned young girls were much valued in that heinous corner of the human trafficking trade. Fergus Bordewich, in *Bound for*

Canaan, tells of several underground railroad conductors who were inspired to start their dangerous work after seeing fair-skinned girls in chains on the way down the river. In addition, Beecher may have motivated his Congregation by making the horrors of forced child prostitution real: the child at risk stood right in front of them. It was the consensus at the time that this was going to be Rose's fate if they did not intervene. Even Eunice Beecher stated that Rose was "too light for her own good." The historian Heather Cox Richardson pointed out a pattern in the history of hysteria around protecting young girls' virtue, cataloging it from the Salem Witch trials to QAnon. At least in this case, the hysteria was used for the good.

The first mock auction at Plymouth, the subject of the famous etching (figure 9), was that of Sara, another fair-skinned enslaved girl. In this case, the man who enslaved her was also her father. Eunice writes that as Beecher introduced her to the Congregation, he stated, "She was being sent South—for what purpose you can imagine when you see her." The congregation rallied around her virtue, though Beecher hid that she had already been raped and had a child. Did he fear it would dampen their ardor to save her? The congregation had to raise two thousand dollars, which was more than double the price for Rose. As the money and jewelry came forward, Louis Tappin stood up and guaranteed to cover the cost if there was a shortfall. Much more money poured in, and with the extra cash, Plymouth purchased a farm in Peekskill for Sara, where Beecher also had a summer home. She raised chickens and sold eggs. Eunice socialized with Sara even after Henry died.



Figure 9 Henry Ward Beecher and the enslaved girl Sara. Note the long flowing hair

After the ceremony at Plymouth, Rose and her grandmother lived with the Falkner clan, who helped Rose's grandmother find work as a cook in Brooklyn. However, as Rose told reporters in 1927, her grandmother did not like being in the North, so she returned to DC with Rose. To quote Rev. Stanley Durkee's essay saved in the scrapbook, "They [the Falkners] wanted to keep her in Brooklyn and educate her as a missionary for her own people. But the grandmother begged, coaxed, pled, insisted the child come back with her to Washington. It was her grandchild, and she would have her."

The day after the service, Bishop Falkner, upon the recommendation of Theodore Tilton, took Rose to the Studio of Eastman Johnson on University Place in Manhattan, where Johnson painted *Freedom's Ring* (figure 10). It is beloved by many members of Plymouth Church and is now in the collection of the Hallmark Art Collection in Kansas City, MO.



Figure 10 Eastman Johnson, *Freedoms Ring* oil on canvas 18 ¼ x 22 ¼ inches
The Hallmark Art Collection Kansas City, MO

In the painting, Rose sits on the floor in a modest dark room with a bench and an open box. The 1910 article states that the pose in the painting refers to her hiding in the attic before Cook collected her. I am not sure that is believable. Another story is that Eastman Johnson saw Rose in the corner of his studio playing with the ring and was inspired. Eastman Johnson did not like Rose's fancy dress as it would be out of place with the modest background he intended to use. So, they covered the dress with a knit cape made by Annie Falkner.

Johnson, an active member of the National Academy, exhibited the painting in 1860 along with a painting called *Kitchen at Mount Vernon*. He exhibited a painting called *Negro Life in the South* the previous year. Now in the collection of the New York Historical Society, this painting is considered one of his greatest. Based on views Johnson had while visiting Washington DC, it evokes the world of Rose's childhood there.



Figure 11 Eastman Johnson Negro Life in the South, 1859 oil on canvas 37 x 46 inches
Collection of New York Historical Society

Henry Ward Beecher never owned the oil painting but rather a drawing that he proudly hung in his parlor. The first recorded owner was Thomas Hitchcock of Greenwich, Connecticut, and it was sold along with the rest of his estate in 1914. The next owner likely kept the painting until the Great Depression. In 1932, Rev. Durkee received a letter from Mildred Seitz that offered to sell the painting to Plymouth, explaining that its owner was in financial straits. Plymouth declined, and Macbeth Galleries likely purchased it.

In a way, Rose once again returned to Brooklyn in 1940 when the painting was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum on loan from Macbeth Gallery. Whether Macbeth Gallery sold it to Hallmark is unknown.

John Blake Falkner, Bishop, and Annie had another sister, Lois, who did not live with them because she was married in 1856 at Plymouth Church to George Addinsell. I only mention this digression because George Addinsell was a British cotton dealer. New York was notoriously and heavily involved in the cotton trade, which created a lot of support for the Confederacy. The British depended on Southern cotton for their mills, so they almost sided

with the Confederacy. Henry Ward Beecher's famous Liverpool speech of 1863 illustrated how tense it was. One wonders if Addinsell was an anti-slavery merchant like Henry Bowen. Or was there family strife? The Falkners were clearly passionate. Lois died at the young age of 30, and George eventually remarried and returned to the UK. But their descendants were in Brooklyn until the 1930s. The only Falkners that now remain in Brooklyn are in Green-Wood Cemetery.

Only a small amount is known about how Rose and her grandmother fared during the Civil War. She must have been a sort of abolitionist celebrity. According to Eunice Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher saw Rose in 1864 at the home of Supreme Court Chief Justice Samuel P. Chase. For those unfamiliar with Chase, before he became Chief Justice, he was in Lincoln's cabinet as Treasury Secretary. He was a more radical abolitionist than Lincoln and a rival. Beecher and Chase both hailed from Cincinnati and would have had to have known each other. Rose would have been 13 in 1864, which is an unusual age to be hobnobbing with such luminaries.

Oddly, Beecher reportedly said that he lost track of Rose after 1860. Why he hid his ongoing contact with Rose is a mystery. James is quoted in 1927 as saying that Rose and Beecher kept up epistolary. In her essay, Eunice wrote that they stayed in touch. James also noted that when Beecher spoke in DC, Rose would attend, and they would chat afterward. Rose's obituary in the *Evening Star of DC* also stated that Beecher sent her a ticket to the inauguration of Grover Cleveland, where he spoke. Beecher was a famous Mugwump who could not support the Republican candidate, James Blaine.

With the new information about Rose's Grandmother, Cloe, I was able to identify that Cloe and Rose were living together in 1870 as per the census. Amazingly, it appears they were living with another of Cloe's daughters, Emily Jenkins and her husband George. Cloe was retired. Eunice had mentioned that in 1864, she was already in poor health. Rose, 18, was working as a seamstress at the time the enumerator visited the house. Rose and another small child were the only members of the family that were literate. Had she finished her schooling or was she still working on her teaching degree?

Rose returned to Brooklyn to visit Beecher in 1885. She did not attend Plymouth but visited Henry Ward Beecher and his wife in their home. He

was an old man at this point, and seeing Rose thrive must have validated so much of his life's work. Beecher died two years later in 1887. A cute anecdote from this visit was that it was the first time Rose saw electric lights, and she burned her fingers inspecting them!

Eunice also relates a story about Rose's education. When Rose and Beecher spoke at Chief Justice Chase's house, Rose said she wanted to become a missionary to help educate the newly freed. Beecher offered to help with her education. He went back to Plymouth and asked the Congregation to donate to the cause, saying, "You redeemed her from slavery. Now you can redeem her from ignorance." There is a myth that the extra money raised in February of 1860 was the only funding for her education, but it's not true. Plymouth and Beecher continued to support Rose Ward Hunt.

It is widely reported that Rose attended Howard University. She didn't exactly; she attended an affiliated institution, the Normal School for Colored Girls. Myrtilla Miner founded the school in 1851. Emily Edmondson also went to the Normal School. Sadly, her sister Mary passed away from tuberculosis earlier while the two were at Oberlin, so Emily returned to Washington and attended the Normal School for Colored Girls. As free Blacks in antebellum DC, the Edmondson family lived on campus for their safety. The Normal School was supported by two Beechers: both Henry and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The school has an interesting history. In 1856, the Normal School established a board of directors. Beecher sat on the board along with Johns Hopkins. But could Beecher have seen Rose when he was there for board meetings? After the school closed in 1860, Myrtilla Miner moved to California for her health, returning to DC in 1864 and dying in a carriage accident soon after that. The Normal School re-opened during the Civil War in 1863 and was possibly made coed. The name was later changed to The Institution for the Education for Colored Youth. From 1871-1876, it was associated with Howard University. Rose would have been 20 in 1871, prime college age, and would have attended the affiliated institution. In 1879, it was absorbed by the city of Washington, DC, and used as the city's Black teachers college until Brown vs. Board of Education ended educational segregation. The Institute, through many mergers, evolved into the University of the District of Columbia.

Rose Ward attended the Normal School for three years and met her husband-to-be while there, James Hunt (1848-1930). Nothing is known of James' life before he entered Rose's life. Was he born free, freed himself through escape, or freed by the Emancipation Proclamation? It is unknown. Rose Ward taught for a few years after graduation, and they married in 1879. The 1880 census shows the Hunts living in Annapolis, MD. James was a schoolteacher and together they ran a boarding house. Rose had already given up teaching. James and Rose had five children but only two survived to adulthood: Florence and Eva. James was in the senior class of Howard University Law School, having returned to Washington by at least 1884. It was reported in many places that James was a lawyer, though it doesn't appear he practiced. James is only mentioned once in *The Washington Bee* in an article about his daughter Florence, so it is not a stretch that he led a quiet life in business and was not an activist.

In the 1900 census, James and Rose were renting a house at 237 Oak Street. He was selling insurance at this point. Ten years later, the census stated they rented a house at 1916 Tenth Street, NW, and he worked as a clerk at the Interior Department. *The Washington Bee* reported that in 1915, they lived at 916 S Street. After that, the 1920 Census reported they had become property owners of a house at 411 Florida Avenue, NW (figure 12). The importance of this cannot be overemphasized! The hurdles of buying property for African Americans were many, yet James and Rose succeeded. The census also reported that James worked at the Patent Office as a clerk. Eva inherited the house, which still stands, and the area is going through a period of gentrification.



Figure 12 James and Rose Hunt's home at 411 Florida Ave, NW

It appears James and Rose played active roles in the community. Rose may have been a member of the first Episcopal African American church in DC, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, founded by the famed activist Alexander Crummell in 1875. The church appeared multiple times in *The Washington Bee's* "Week in Society." Not only does it refer to the house on S Street, which slipped through the census records, it also gives a little richness to the lives of James and Rose's surviving children, Eva and Florence.

Florence was born in 1892. By 1915, she worked as a teacher. The *Washington Bee* related a saga of Florence's run-in with a community leader in Upper Marlboro. He demanded she be fired, but the community and colleagues rallied to her side, and she retained her position. The 1920 census reported that she no longer lived with her family but in a boarding house. Florence passed away in 1926. Her funeral was at the family home, not in a church.

There is more information about Eva, who was born in 1885. James always claimed her as a dependent, but *The Bee* reported that she lived in

Tacoma Park outside DC. The 1910 census shows she was a teacher. *The Bee* reported that in 1911, she left Washington to take a job as a Clerk for the Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias in Winston Salem, NC. *The Bee* even reported that Rose spent the summer with her in North Carolina in 1915. The 1920 and 1930 censuses lists that Eva worked at the patent office. Was it in the same office as her father? Eva survived her parents and stayed in the family home. The 1930 census reports that Eva, single, was still in the Florida Avenue house with boarders who may have been relatives. Emily Jenkins resurfaces in 1934. Although Emily was living in a nursing home in the 1930 census, Eva brought her home at the end of her life. Her death notice states she died at 411 Florida Avenue, NW. She was noted as the oldest member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church. How Eva fared through the rest of the Depression and World War II is unknown. Eva was not buried with her parents. In flights of fancy, I dream that there are family papers that survived and imagine the stories they could tell.

A note about a word nearly absent in this essay. Pink, Pinkey, or Pinkie, her nickname given to her by John Cook (on the bill of sale), is dehumanizing. Henry Ward Beecher changed her name to Rose Ward to rid her of the reminders of enslavement, but in her story, she is largely known by the enslaver's nickname. It should end now. She only used her enslaved name Sally for nine years and went by Rose for the rest of her life. I use Sally here when writing about the time before her rescue. Rose is the name the world should use when referring to this remarkable woman. Rose was a success by the metrics of the era. Brooklyn needs to meet Rose Ward Hunt and celebrate her life.

My research into Rose Ward Hunt was inspired by The Center for Brooklyn History and its vast online resources. It has been the perfect Covid-19 project since I could pore over the entire archive of *The Brooklyn Eagle*, which the Center maintains, from the comfort of my couch. Plymouth has also donated materials to the Center. One particularly moving piece is Rose Ward Hunt's freedom papers that John Cook and John Falkner Blake signed after Rose traveled to Plymouth. A tintype of Rose is also in their holdings (figure 14), though it has had a hard life and is deeply scratched. But if one looks closely, Rose slowly appears, a beautiful little girl in a pretty dress. Not unlike my research, as you read, a story appears before your eyes of a girl who went from enslavement to the society pages.



Rose Ward, 1860 tin type
Collection Center for Brooklyn History,
donated by Plymouth Church

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Lisa, for putting up with me while I obsessed over this project and helping edit the final text. Alice Wheatley, who worshiped at Plymouth when she was temporarily living in Brooklyn, needs a special note of appreciation. She doggedly persisted with genealogical records, not only inspiring me to keep working but also freely sharing all the new information she found. I am very grateful. In addition, without the History Ministry of Plymouth, this project would never have happened, and I am grateful for all of the help.

Stay tuned. The tale of Rose's return to Brooklyn will continue the story.....

Philip Dempsey

Working Bibliography

Scrapbook of Rose Ward Hunt. 1927 Collection of Plymouth Church.

FREED SLAVE TELLS OF 'SALE' BY BEECHER; 'Pinky' Visits Plymouth Church Where She Was Auctioned and Released in 1860. RECALLS FAMOUS PREACHER Speaks From Pulpit at Celebration of 80th Anniversary -- Voices Gratitude to Congregation. New York Times, May 27, 1927

SLAVE GIRL SOLD BY BEECHER FOUND

Now Wife of a Lawyer, She Will Attend at 80th Anniversary of Plymouth Church. LOCATED BY DR. DURKEE He Visited Home of Central Figure in Dramatic Episode While in Washington. New York

Times May 11, 1927

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Aged Negro "Tip" Led to Dr. Durkee's Discovery of Mrs. Hunt, Famous Slave Girl 'Pinky' by Henry Ward Beecher Brooklyn Eagle May 15, 1927

Bay Ridge Rector's Memory Skips Back to Sale of Pinky for Beecher's Pulpit Brooklyn Eagle May 14, 1927

Slave Girl Auctioned off in Plymouth Church Found after 67 Years, to Return. Brooklyn Eagle May 10, 1927

"Pinky" Ex-Slavery Negress Sold by Beecher in Fight on Evil, Dies in Washington, Brooklyn Eagle October 28, 1928

Slave Girl Sold to Brooklyn Bidders at Sensational Plymouth Church Auction Brooklyn Eagle March 21, 1934

Slave Girl Sold by Beecher is Washington Lawyers Wife Brooklyn Eagle May 11, 1927

Mrs. Hunt, former Slave Girl Pinky Avoids Publicity. Brooklyn Eagle May 11, 1927

Sale of Slave Girl from Plymouth Pulpit Recalled Today Brooklyn Eagle February 6, 1910

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1883-84

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