The 1828 Deed for Liberian Territory, Unvarnished: A Holding of the Library of Congress

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Introduction

Archival holdings of manuscripts by early black Anglophone writers (1760–1830) present both a challenge and an opportunity to twenty-first-century scholars. The reason for the preservation of these manuscripts was usually that members of white society had an interest (in the many meanings of that word) in the black author and his or her text. One corollary of such interest was that white men or white women, acting as transcribers, editors, patrons, or publishers, sometimes brought black-authored manuscripts into print. However, these white handlers of manuscripts introduced changes, great and small. The challenge for scholars is that a black-authored document from these years often is known today only as a white handler envisioned and recrafted it. The opportunity is that some archives hold the original black-authored documents so that scholars can strip away the varnish that was added when these were first published. The changes that were implemented as black-authored manuscripts went into print might sometimes have been welcomed as corrections or improvements by the authors themselves, yet most emendations seem to have been made to reshape the words of a black author for the purposes of white society.

The document transcribed here is the deed that established the nucleus of the territory of the modern nation of Liberia. It was executed in 1828 by a black settler and four African kings. Four black settlers were witnesses. Several of these settlers had been active in the

1820s in conflicts between the Americo-Liberians and indigenous Africans. The deed was quickly printed in an American periodical. The point of the current transcription (the first one made from the manuscript itself) is that white handlers made small changes in the deed and set it in a context that the executors never intended in order to cast the settlement of expatriated U.S. blacks in West Africa as humane. In reality, the Liberian settlement of the 1820s was characterized by the highest human mortality ever recorded as well as by deadly conflict between settlers and indigenous groups over land, trade, and labor. Thus the goal of the current transcription is not only to achieve a more accurate view of the deed but also to understand the reasons for the white handling of the document. A further goal is to suggest that scholars working with black-authored texts of this time period be aware not only of archival holdings but also of the necessity, when possible, of understanding the white varnishes that were added some two centuries ago. Scholars have sometimes assumed that the white handlers' version is good enough, but, while it might be interesting for many reasons, it is often not good enough.

Documentary editors concerned with early Liberia are additionally aware that in the civil war that commenced in Liberia in 1989 the documentary record dating to 1824 and held in the National Archives Building in Monrovia was irreparably damaged. It seems likely that sixty percent of the collection was destroyed, while the remaining papers were subject to the elements before being transported to a secure location, the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law of the University of Liberia (Ellis 2001, pp. 322–323). U.S. holdings—primarily at the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Congress—were already invaluable, yet the losses that began with the looting of the National Archives Building in 1990 enhanced their importance.

Both the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Congress hold manuscripts

written in the 1820's by Lott Cary, a freed black Richmonder who in 1821 emigrated to West Africa (first to Sierra Leone and, in 1822, to Cape Mesurado) and in 1826 became vice-agent in Liberia of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States (the official name of the American Colonization Society). Cary's papers held at the Virginia Historical Society are interspersed in the papers of Benjamin Brand, a white merchant who sought to become the black man's patron. Brand combined benevolence and business in making gifts of tools and bibles to Liberian settlers as well as hoping that Cary and he could establish a transatlantic trade in finished goods from Virginia (bacon, flour, tobacco, whiskey, cloth, glassware, and firearms) and raw materials from West Africa (camwood, palm oil, coffee, ground nuts, and ivory). Cary responded with letters both extolling the potential of African agricultural and extractive commodities and cajoling provisions from Brand, who shipped not only gifts but also goods on credit as a way of nurturing trade. Moreover, in 1827 Cary sent Brand an address promoting black colonization—Brand was treasurer of the Richmond and Manchester Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society—that was the most extensive document written by a black Virginian of the early republic. Although Cary requested that his address be published, Brand retained it in his papers without acting. It was first published in 1996 (Saillant [ed]).[1]

The holdings of the Library of Congress include Cary's communications to Ralph Randolph Gurley, editor of *The African Repository* and secretary of the American Colonization Society, housed in the District of Columbia. One important link must be noted: Brand knew both Cary and Gurley personally and he followed Gurley's instructions in

1. Brand's papers also contain about two dozen letters exchanged between Cary and him, along with letters to other men commenting on Cary and bills of lading recording shipments from Brand to Cary in Liberia. A brief overview of Cary's and Brand's relationship appears in Tyler-McGraw (2007, pp. 40–42), which also notes (pp. 39–40) that soon after the foundation of the American Colonization Society in 1816 Virginia had the largest number of state auxiliaries and that the Richmond and Manchester Auxiliary was the largest and most active in the state. Indeed, that Auxiliary declared itself an independent state society in December 1828, subordinating the other Virginia auxiliaries to the Virginia Colonization Society (Tyler-McGraw, 2007, p. 44).

recommending Cary as a liaison between American and African traders.[2] Among the papers of the American Colonization Society are a letter from Cary to Gurley, dated April 5, 1828, and a document purporting to be the deed for land on which a new Americo-Liberian settlement was being made in 1828 (American Colonization Society, Box 1 Folder 1). Millsburg was the new settlement, named for two early American Colonization Society agents, Samuel Mills and Ebenezer Burgess. Fifteen miles from the mouth of the St. Paul River, Millsburg was near the limit of tidal navigation, a location that made it an attractive entropot at the nexus of Atlantic shipping and mixed riverine–overland routes to the interior (Schick 1977, pp. 74–76). Since Monrovia was situated south of the mouth of the St. Paul River, an additional five to ten miles were required to travel between Monrovia and Millsburg. The Millsburg territory was controlled by the Dei, who were the middlemen in trade between the settlers around Monrovia and more distant groups (some both coastal and inland, some solely inland) like the Vai, Gola, and Mandingo (Schick 1977, pp. 28–29, 92). Millsburg followed Monrovia (1822, named 1824) and Caldwell (1825) and would itself be followed by New Georgia (1827). Nearby Careysburg (1829) was named for Cary, who died from injuries sustained in a gunpowder explosion in 1828.[3] Probably with Dei blessing, Americo-Liberian settlers had begun arriving in early February 1828, two months before the deed was signed (Clegg 2004, p. 89). On the new territory and on other matters, Cary was quoted liberally in both *The African Repository* and Gurley's 1835 biography of Jehudi Ashmun, the American Colonization Society agent who named Cary vice-agent in 1826 and who himself died (almost certainly of malaria) in 1828.[4] In appointing Cary vice-agent, Ashmun deferred to the wishes of the settlers, to whom Cary had been a leader since the early

2. Brand to Joseph King and Thomas Tyson, March 31, 1824, Benjamin Brand Papers.
3. Born ca. 1780, probably on the Charles City County plantation of Gideon Christian, Cary died on November 10, 1828, in Monrovia. A brief modern biography is Saillant (2006).
4. Gurley (1835) devotes its Appendix (pp. 147–160) to Cary.

1820's.

Transcriptions of Cary's writings by his white contemporaries reveal much about colonizationist thought. Most active from about 1815 to 1850, the U.S. colonizationists were those dedicated to the removal of free blacks, although a twenty-first-century perspective the enterprise appears to have been a semi-forced expatriation, not colonialism. In the colonizationist periodical, *The African Repository*, Gurley claimed, for instance, to present Cary's prose "without alteration, even a letter," yet extant manuscripts show that he refashioned the black man's prose to promote colonization (Gurley 1835, Appendix, p. 153).[5] There is no way to avoid the conclusion that Gurley doctored documents Cary sent him. The holdings of the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Congress allow us to see that Cary's prose was heavily edited before it was published. Colonization was promoted in print, but Cary, although he wrote much in favor of the expatriation of free African Americans, was excluded from print culture in several ways. Most obviously, Cary never chose which of his works was published; indeed Cary's request for publication of his address was rejected, yet another address that he described as "not sharp enough to shave the Beard" was published and widely disseminated ("Address of the Colonists at Monrovia" 1827).[6] Cary's prose was corrected, although perhaps he would have welcomed the alterations. Finally, it seems unlikely that Cary ever read what was published under his name, since it appeared in *The African Repository*, which was published in the District of Columbia and, as far as is known, not shipped to Liberia before 1829. Here appear for the first time transcriptions attempting to

5. Tyler-McGraw (2007, p. 231) notes the importance of blacks' "private letters" as a counterpoint to "white-edited religious letters and ACS publications," but she does not confront the problem of the many letters and other documents that were written by blacks and then published only under the heavy editorial hand of a white colonizationist.

6. For Cary's dismissive comment, see Cary to Brand, September 21, 1827, Benjamin Brand Papers. The address was reprinted or excerpted as follows: *The African Observer*. 1828. 1, pp. 372–375; *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), p. 188; *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1829. 5 (1), p. 29; *Reports of the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society*. 1831. Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Colonization Society, pp. 29–33.

stay close to the author's prose of Cary's letter of April 5, 1828, and of his deed for the Millsburg territory. These should be placed in the context of white men's use or misuse of his writings in the 1820's, so that some features of colonizationist thought can be highlighted and so that possible differences between black English and white English of the upper Southern states of the U.S.A. in the 1820's can be appreciated.

Dated April 4, 1828, and enclosed in a letter of April 5, 1828, the deed for the Millsburg territory was published in the August 1828 number of *The African Repository*.[7] The transcription was probably Gurley's. It seems unremarkable that the transcriber corrected the document submitted to him before it was published. Yet he set it in a context in the journal that communicated information about colonization. Numbering thirty pages, the August 1828 number of *The African Repository* commenced with a refutation of Littleton Waller Tazewell, United States senator from Virginia (1824–1832) and chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (1827–1832) and soon to be governor of Virginia (1834–1836). Tazewell had argued that although the federal government had the power under the constitution of acquiring new territory "by discovery, conquest, or negotiation," there was in Liberia no "legitimate acquisition of . . . new territory" (1828, pp. 163–165). Since there was neither American discovery nor American conquest in West Africa, according to Tazewell, only negotiation could have legitimated acquisition of Liberian territory.

To the possibility of negotiating for territory Tazewell made two responses. First,

7. Extracts, *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), pp. 182–184. Every other work (other than the present one) commenting on early Liberia follows the 1828 transcription. Some notable examples are Gurley (1835), Appendix, pp. 154–155; Taylor (1837), pp. 78–79; Alexander (1846), pp. 249–250; and Fisher (1922b), p. 444. Modern scholarship invariably refers to the 1828 transcription. Examples are Huberick (1947), 1, pp. 368–369; Cassell (1970), pp. 91–92; Sanneh (1999), p. 213; and Tyler-McGraw (2007), p. 132. Moreover, Fisher also attributed the 1827 Address of the Colonists at Monrovia to the Free People of Colour in the United States to Cary (1992b, pp. 438–443), although Cary had specifically abjured it and proposed his own address in its place in a letter to Brand (see note 7 above). See also Fisher (1922a, p. 412), in which Fisher writes, "It is not too much to presume that the address was gotten up by Lott Cary."

such negotiations were of necessity between two "sovereign" governments, yet without indigenous governments in Liberia parallel to the American federal government there could be no negotiating. Second, the distance between North America and West Africa was so great that even if territory were gained, it could never truly be incorporated into the country as a state, so there could never be a true acquisition (Tazewell 1828, p. 166).[8] The rebuttal of the American Colonization Society rested on the power of Congress to promote "the general welfare" of the United States (Tazewell 1828, p. 167–168, 170). Any power that promoted the general welfare and that was not expressly denied the federal government by the Constitution was, according the American Colonization Society, legitimate, so the Congress could not only support colonization financially but also acquire new territory for expatriated blacks.[9] The relevance to this view of federal powers of the Millsburg deed printed just a few pages later was obvious, yet only slightly less obvious was the effort by the American Colonization Society to lend dignity to its work by association with Congress and the Constitution. Indeed, the rebuttal of Tazewell lamented that "it has been so much the fashion of late, to cavil at the exercise of the simplest and most obvious powers of the General Government—prejudice and interest have so often combined to reduce those powers to a scale wholly disproportioned to the demands of the country, and wholly incompatible with the intentions of the framers of our Constitution." (Tazewell 1828, pp. 166–167)

Gurley, acting as editor, continued to dignify colonization by association, passing from the federal government to Southern masculinity and commerce. Thus next appeared the report of the Lynchburg Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society, delivered by Jesse Burton Harrison. Speaking for the largest of the slave-holding states, Harrison suggested that

8. The best analysis of Tazewell's role in the discussion of the constitutionality of federal support for colonization is Ford (2009), pp. 318–321.
9. Tazewell 1828, pp. 170–172. The editor returned to the disagreement with Tazewell a year later: Mr. Tazewell's Report. *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1829. 4 (11), pp. 330–347.

benevolence was at high tide in Virginia among colonizationists and hoped that others would recognize that "*we* too speak as SOUTHERN MEN" (Harrison 1828, p. 173). By contrast, he argued, New Englanders felt no benevolence for blacks, while many had wrongly mistaken South Carolinians' intransigence about colonization as representative of Southern opinion. Harrison also corroborated the hope maintained by both white colonizationists and black expatriates that the Liberian settlement would be profitable. Asseverating that "benevolence" could be "business," Harrison wrote, "Ambition and avarice come of a healthy stock, and they last their generation. Unmixed benevolence no one would expect to live long in these States; but we trust, that by adding to our benevolence no small quantity of self-interest, and some politics, this scheme gives vital heat enough to the philanthropy of the Virginia friends of Colonization" (Harrison 1828, p. 179). Marie Tyler-McGraw describes Harrison as conjuring up a "fantasy future" for Virginians, one "grounded in the absolute necessity of combining emancipation and emigration" in order to promote the state economy and republican liberty (2007, p. 106).

Yet if politics and commerce mattered to colonizationists, their more fundamental concern was moral. Despite nineteenth-century and twentieth-century critiques of colonizationists as proslavery and as segregationist, the perception, in Tyler-McGraw's words, "of an uncaring deportationist Board of Managers and agents is not supported by the records of the ACS" (2007, p. 230). A report on the slave trade lamented mortality on the high seas.[10] Zeroing in on Cary, Gurley set a paragraph from Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart immediately before the news from Liberia. Stewart urged belief in "the improvement of the world," concluding that "prejudice, slavery, and corruption, must gradually give way to truth, liberty, and virtue" and that "in the moral world, as well as in the material, the farther our observations extend, and the longer they are continued, the more we shall perceive of

order and of benevolent design in the universe."[11] Stewart's reputation in epistemology and moral philosophy was at high tide in America from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. The Richmond and Manchester Auxiliary counted several Scottish immigrants among its first members (Tyler-McGraw 2007, p. 41). Cary succeeded Stewart. The edited version of the Millsburg deed then became the standard one to which all subsequent scholarship referred. Following Cary were several short notices suggesting hopefully that more auxiliaries were being formed and funds were being raised to support colonization. A sympathetic note appeared describing Ashmun's arrival in poor health in New Haven. A notice about the prospects of settlers assured that each man received a "plantation" to which he could, within two years, hold "a title in fee simple." This notice also quoted extensively from "address" purportedly sent by "the Colonists themselves" and closed with an appeal for charity to support emigrants. The call for charitable support of the emigrants was followed by a poem, "Africa," by William B. Tappan, a well known author of hymns.[12]

In the context of this number of *The African Repository*, Cary's raw prose, using little punctuation and apparently spelling some words phonetically, had no chance of publication. Cary's errors seemed egregious, and his prose lacked Dugald Stewart's literary distinction. In the twenty-first century, Tappan's poem inspires few thoughts of literary polish or depth, but to the editor of *The African Repository* it almost certainly affirmed the perception that colonization was humane and benevolent. Humaneness, benevolence, literature, and colonization all supported one another. Colonization demanded new territory, yet the American Colonization Society, based in the District of Columbia, was confronting a politician no less significant than Littleton Waller Tazewell and a body no less powerful than

10. Slave Trade. *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), pp. 179–182.
11. Valuable Thoughts. *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), pp. 182. The quotation was culled from Stewart (1814), 1, p. 228.
12. Notice; Africa. *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), pp. 187–189, quotation p. 188.

the United States Congress over the matter. Cary had to be recruited and Cary's deed, then, as emended, had to perform several tasks. It had to answer Tazewell's bar to negotiations over new territory. It had to corroborate Harrison's vision of economic opportunities. And it had to confirm the colonizationists' sense of their own benevolence. This last task was probably the paramount one in the minds of the editor and authors of *The African Repository*—though there is no proof of this relative to the deed other than the layout of the August 1828 number. Cary, emended, was framed by the lament on the death of captives of the slave trade and the statement from Stewart on "benevolent design" (before) and "remarkable liberality," missions, Ashmun's trials, charity, and "Africa," the poem (after). To confirm such benevolence, Cary's prose had to be correct, measured, elevated, much like Stewart's philosophy and Tappan's poetry. Nothing raw, rude, or untutored could have done. So an editor, probably Gurley, who was the recipient of the deed, rose to the task and corrected Cary. Below appears a new transcription of Cary's letter to Gurley, April 5, 1828, and the deed to the Millsburg territory.

The transcription method is as follows. Arrows are used to indicate characters added; angle brackets are used to indicate words characters crossed out; square brackets are used to indicate editorial interpellations made after transcription, with a question mark inside the square brackets when a character or a word is unclear. Two endnotes describe features of the document that cannot be easily reproduced in a modern transcription. The document itself comprises two sheets of paper written with ink. The substance of the document occurs on the first leaf, the first overleaf, and the second leaf. The second overleaf is reserved for the witness, the description of the contents, and the address, the different orientations of which, not reproduced here, suggest that after writing Cary folded the pages then added the description of the contents and the address as he reoriented the folded pages. After the

transcription is an analysis of the changes made by the editor of *The African Repository*.

Transcription

[page 1]

Monrovia April 5th 1828

To Revd R R Gurley Secretary to the Board of Managers of the American Colonization Society

Gentlemen

By this conveyance I have the honor to forward a few lines – But as I just late ↑last↓ night returned from a palaver which I found necessary to hold with the Kings for the Millsburg lands which I hope is settled in a way that may be satisfactory to the Board – The agreement I shall forward by this opportunity –

I have also to forward a draft of a larger amount by far than I expected to have done so early[13] But as an opportunity offered earlier than I expected to purchase such goods as you will find in the list[14] And such indeed that we could not do without unless subjecting the Colony to incalculable inconvenience and difficulty if caught without such kind of goods the insuing rains – I think the present <stocks> supplies will enable us to keep our factories at work through the present season – I was obliged to make the supplies larger as I found that the Millsburg factory will soon be ready for business and I think that it will be the most important station conected with the Colony besides the prospect of collecting of African produce – But above all the ease and convenyance the situation affords for croping – And I feel <confi> ↑safe↓ safe in saying that from the quality and soil of the land and the quantity

13. Cary normally ended a sentence not with a period but with a long dash. However, "early" was both the last word of this sentence and the last word written on that line on the page, and in this case Cary used no punctuation. He started on a new line and capitalized the first letter of the first word of the next sentence.
14. Here, "list" was both the last word of this sentence and the last word written on that line on the page, and in this case Cary used no punctuation. Once again, he started on a new line and capitalized the first letter of the first word of the next sentence.

cleared that the ensuing season will sit the Inhabitants intirely independent to the Natives and every body else for such necessarys of life as Africa can afford – The little company I judge has between 24 and 28 acres nearly ready for planting and the land promises as much as any land that is generally found in America

I do certainly wish that the Honourable Board of Managers would make some such arrangement as might enable all who are disposed to farm ↑to obtain lands↓ either by a sale of their lands or otherwise – For all <the able> the old settlers begin to see the importance of raising their own crops and the lands on the Cape do not promise enough to encourage the inhabitants to cultivate theirs <lands> – As you will have a sufficient scope of country to settle any number of farmers

[page 2]

that can possibly come to this country And as a ↑place↓ of retreat in the dry season I trust will be found suitiable[?] for health

I must close by saying that the most prudent case possible to avoid expences will be taken and I hope that the present will not be dissatisfactory to the Board – They are all nearly such articles as I was instructed to procure the first opportunity – I am happy to say that every thing goes on smo↑o↓thly and I hope will continue so to doe.

[page 3]

Known all men by these presents that we Old King Peter and King Governour King Jamey and King Long Peter – Doth on this 4th day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty eight – doth grant unto Lott Cary acting Agent of the Colony of Liberia in behalf of the American Colonization society – To wit –

All that tract of land on the north side of Saint Pauls River – beginning at King Jamey's line below the Establishment now called "Millsburg Settlement"

We the Kings as aforesaid doth bargain sell and grant unto the said L Cary acting for the Colony of Liberia and in behalf of the American Colonization Society – all that aforesaid tract or parcel of land situated and bounded as follows – boundaries by the St P[page torn] er on [page torn] th and thence runing an east north [page torn] said Lott [page torn]y or his succesors in the agency or the civil authority of the colony of Liberia should think proper to take up and occupy – And bounded [insert on] the west by King Jamey's and running thence a north direction as far as our power or influence extend

We do on this day and date aforesaid – Grant as aforesaid for the consideration of one Barrel Rum 6<0> bars Tobacco 4 pieces Cloth 5 Iron pots 1 Reg powder 1 box soap 1 box pipes 1 Iron bar Grant – And will forever defend the same against all claims whatsoever

In witness whereof we have set our hands and names

(signed) Old + King Peter

King + Long Peter

King + Governour

King + Jamey

[page 4]

In presence of C L [Lott Cary?]

Witness – Elijah Johnson

F James

Daniel George

Richard White

Conveyance

Monrovia April 5 1828

Deed for Millsburg Sett[t]

April 4, 1828

Treaty with several [page torn]

Kings mentioned in [page torn]

this Letter

Rev. R. R. Gurley

Washington City

Analysis

Believing in the humaneness and benevolence of colonization, the editor of *The African Repository* revised Cary's prose to bring it in line with Scottish philosophy and American hymnody. Inevitably a number of features of interest to twenty-first-century scholars were lost in the 1828 transcription. Cary's punctuation was very sparse. Aside from the long dash between sentences, there are virtually no marks of punctuation. Moreover, he used the edge of the paper as a substitute for punctuation. When he completed a sentence near the right edge, he omitted punctuation and simply moved to a new line, capitalizing the first letter of the first word on that line. The editor added marks of punctuation such as commas and periods. Inconsistent and unusual spellings may indicate his pronunciation of an initial vowel sound: in one paragraph he wrote "insuing," "ensuing," and "intirely." In the same paragraph he wrote "conected" and "croping [i.e., cropping]," followed in the next paragraph by "crops" and "scope," once again suggesting that his pronunciation may have been different from that of a twenty-first-century Virginian. He wrote "case" for course, "convenyance" for convenience, "doe" for do, "runing" for running, and "succesors" for successors, as well as initially writing "smothly" before he corrected it to "smoothly," possibly indicating vowel sounds we would not expect today. The editor regularized his

orthography.

The editor of *The African Repository* also made a change of another order. Cary had included the deed of April 4, 1828, in a letter of April 5, 1828. This letter indeed mentioned commerce, a perennial issue for colonizationists and a potential sequel in the August 1828 number to the report of Jesse Burton Harrison. But the letter also casts the negotiation between Cary and the African leaders as a "palaver," exactly the sort of exchange Tazewell had dismissed. Thus the editor quashed the April 4, 1828, letter, replacing it with transcriptions (also corrected) of Cary's letters of March 27 and 29, 1828. These made clear that the settlers aimed "to realize all the expectations of Mr. Ashmun, and render entire satisfaction to the Board of Managers, if they can reconcile themselves to the necessary expenses" of acquiring land. Moreover, they assured readers that "a new road" (including passage on the St. Paul River upstream from Millsburg) allowing "the reception of goods" would be opened from the new settlement to Boporo territory, some sixty miles northeast of Monrovia.[15] This road complemented American Colonization Society plans, since American entrepreneurs hoped to shuttle African raw materials through settlements like Millsburg, Caldwell, and Liberia to eastern ports of the USA. Indeed, both the American Colonization Society and the black settlers themselves had been courting the favor of King Botswain, a leader of the Boporo territory who had shown his willingness to trade with the Americo-Liberians. Although Cary was not reserved about commercial prospects, the editor's choice of the earlier letters emphasized more clearly the opportunities for trade. The editor made another alteration, in the list of witnesses, spelling out Cary's "F" as Frederick but deleting the fourth settler witness's name, Richard White.

If his American editor aimed for literary dignity, Cary himself sought formality. He

15. Extracts. *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal*. 1828. 4 (6), pp. 183–184. Alternate spelling "Bopolu," Shick (1977), p. 30.

addressed his letter to "Gentlemen," he mentioned the "Honourable Board of Managers," and he called himself "Lott Cary acting Agent of the Colony of Liberia," not vice-agent of the American Colonization Society. The deed itself utilized language that Cary must have considered appropriate for a legal document. "Doth" appeared for do, though not consistently. 1828 was written out as "the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty eight." A high level of formality was indicated by words and phrases like "these presents [i.e., the document itself]," "to wit," "aforesaid," and "thence." He also took care to spell men's names in accordance with biblical and English models yet not converting the African Jamey into an English James: Old King Peter, King Long Peter, King Governour, and King Jamey (as signatories) and Elijah Johnson, F. James, Daniel George, and Richard White (as witnesses). He was clearly familiar with both the Bible and legal documents yet not capable of imitating them extensively in prose despite remaining true to features like names. Cary's familiarity with legal documents probably stemmed from several sources. He had worked in Richmond tobacco warehouses as a shipper and marker, and he had sold his own barrels packed with wastage of other dealers. He had received bills of lading accompanying goods shipped from Virginia to him in Liberia (a bill of lading was a template printed in formal language with blank spaces for information about particular shipments). And he had bought freedom for himself and two children, then purchased twenty acres of land in Henrico County, in the mid-1810's—certainly occasions for handling legal documents.

It seems likely that the editor of *The African Repository* understood Cary's prose as what would within a century of 1828 be commonly understood as literary dialect, a written representation of nonstandard African American speech. African American authors like Charles Chestnutt, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, and

Richard Wright would, within a century, deal with the issue of whether literary dialect aided or hindered blacks' progress. Gurley encountered the language of Southern blacks both on paper and in person: a number of letters from Southern blacks seeking to emigrate to Liberia arrived at the Washington, D.C., office of the American Colonization Society, and Gurley himself visited Liberia three times. Lisa Cohen Minnick has noted that beginning in the early twentieth century there was on the part of creative artists, critics, and scholars a "rejection of the work of writers solely in response to their use of dialect" as well as a dismissal of "literary dialect as irrelevant to a study of language" (xvi). A foreshadowing of these can be seen in the relationship among Cary, Gurley, and Brand. Cary requested that his substantial "Circular" be published and distributed and he may well have anticipated that other documents, like the Millsburg deed, would have been promulgated. Yet Cary's prose probably seemed too raw and untutored for the way white colonizationists understood their efforts. Cary had boasted of his own writing as "Sharp," but apparently it was too sharp for Brand.

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