

Petition 2

Proposed Name: Susanna Toby Brook

Current Name: Negro Brook

Location: Townshend, Vermont

Mouth: **Latitude:** 43.043351 **Longitude:** -72.692991

Source: **Latitude:** 43.0222096 **Longitude:** -72.413005

Main Petitioner(s):

Alex Hazzard, 310 Market Street, South Burlington, VT 05403

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All petition requirements met:

Yes

Brief Reason for the Proposed Name:

"Negro" being an outdated, offensive, and perjorative term to describe a person's perceived race-- particularly African-American and/or Black people. I would like to identify a family or individual of color who can be associated with that land to honor their history and heritage respectfully.

Description of the Region:

Flowing into the West River (mouth due south from Fair Brook), under State Forest Road (bridge over it also named Negro Brook Bridge) and into the Townshend State Forest.

Notices:

Public Notice distributed in Newspaper of Record, Brattleboro Reformer, on 11/7/2020. Published to Department's Website and State Calendar.

Areas of Concern:

The last name "Toby," in relations to slavery, is considered a regional slur and is listed on the racial slur database. Concerns name would be abbreviated in the long run to "Toby Brook."

Historical Research Prepared by April Shaw:

The historical research conducted by Elise Guyette strongly supports and demonstrates a link between the Huzzy family and the Townshend area. There are instances of the family being recorded as residents of both Acton and Townshend depending on if it was a military pension record (often listing Acton as the residence) or a Census record (often listing Townshend as the residence). Regardless, the documentation shows that the family resided in the Acton/Townshend area for many decades. The pension records and court documentation supplied by the petitioners demonstrates that Susannah Huzzy did accomplish a historically important court battle in winning the award of her husband's pension and bounty land.

Additional research conducted by myself shows the marriage of James Huzzy and Susannah Toby was recorded in the Town of Upton, MA on January 1, 1785. (Written marriage records from the Upton Town Clerk attached). Additionally I consulted the United States Census records to locate information on the Huzzy family and learned the following:

- The 1810 census records a black male named James Huzzy as a resident of Townshend, Vermont. As his name is recorded directly under James Hazeltine, it is fairly certain this is the first record of the Huzzy family living in Townshend.
- The 1840 Census shows Susannah at age 88 as a resident in Acton, VT. Images are attached.

Further research into Vermont history books located information about possible "Warnings out" and church records for Susannah:

- A list of "Warnings Out" in Southern Vermont shows that a Susannah and James Husa (possibly Husa) were listed as being warned out of Brookline, VT on January 29, 1812 and warned out of Townshend, VT on July 1, 1805. It's possible this is the Hussy/Huzzey family as the typed pages were transcribed from handwritten warning notices and I do not have access to the originals.
- Susanna Huzzy noted as a constituent member of the Second Baptist Church in West Townshend, VT. Received by letter into the church on July 4, 1827 and death date noted as October 18, 1866.

It is troubling that several support letters note the Huzzy/Hussey family settled in Townshend prior to the establishment of the town in 1792 when there are no records to support this.

Regarding the brook itself, a check of the Historical Gazetteer mentions Negro Brook and the surrounding brooks but contains no notes on the history of the name. There is also no mention of the Huzzy/Hussy family, nor any other black families living in the area. The earliest mention of this brook on a historical map is the Beers Atlas for 1869. There is no information available about the origins of the brook name other than some residents heard it was named for a black family that had a saw mill in the area of the brook at one time (information obtained from the letters submitted by the petitioners). There is no mention of the history of the brook name in *A Stitch in Time*, a history of Townshend. There is discussion of the history of the town as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Additional Notes:

Historical record most commonly lists Susannah as Susannah Huzzy (or Hussey/Huzzey) and not as Susannah Toby.

The bridge above the brook is also named Negro Brook Bridge and would need to be updated with ANR and the National Historical Register as it is part of the "Follet Arch Bridge Historic District."

If the Board turns down this petition, further research could be conducted into the history of mills in the area – Vermont Industrial Census may have clues. There are also several examples of other black families in the area, and research could be done into those families as well.

Resources:

Hamenway, Abby Maria, ed. (1891). *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer: A Local History of All the Towns in the state, Volume V*. Higginson Book Company.

Rollins, Alden M. (1997). *Vermont Warnings Out: Vol. 2 Southern Vermont*. Picton Press.

"Massachusetts, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1626-2001," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L979-HK8Z?cc=2061550&wc=Q4DC-W3L%3A353349801%2C353568401%2C1006085401> : 29 November 2018), Worcester > Upton > Births, marriages, deaths, town records 1770-1825 > image 135 of 214; citing Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, Boston.

"Massachusetts, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1626-2001," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G979-4P3J?cc=2061550&wc=Q4DH-6TG%3A353349801%2C353568401%2C1006084102> : 22 October 2020), Worcester > Upton > Births, marriage intentions, marriages, deaths 1736-1860 > image 123 of 407; citing Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, Boston.

Townshend Historical Society. (2003). *A Stitch in Time: Townshend, Vermont 1753-2003*. Townshend Historical Society, Inc.

"United States Census, 1840," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YYJ-9682?cc=1786457&wc=31SV-FSW%3A1588669987%2C1588666035%2C1588666457> : 19 May 2020), Vermont > Windham > Acton > image 2 of 2; citing NARA microfilm publication M704, (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

"United States Census, 1810," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YY1-PWY?cc=1803765&wc=QZZZ-MYB%3A1588182102%2C1588182163%2C1588182172> : 30 November 2015), Vermont > Windham > Townshend > image 1 of 6; citing NARA microfilm publication M252, (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

Formal Statement from Petitioner:

Please see petition for formal statement

Additional Documentation Attached Separately:

- Scanned PDF copy of the original petition
- Current Map of the Region
- Elise Guyette scans of research and research notes
- Various definitions of “Toby” and related terminology
- Supplemental research materials of the brook and Susanna Toby
- Letters of support received directly