

# "My Life Is My Own..."

The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Deerfield MA is proud to lift up ten African American men and women, past and present, in Pioneer Valley history who developed vibrant lives ensuring their dignity, individual freedom and richness of life. They were painted by Louise Minks as artist in residence at PVMA's Memorial Hall Museum in 1993/4. Since then, the portraits have traveled to many schools and other institutions.

**In its 150th year**, PVMA renews its goal of supporting the achievements and creativity that different cultures bring to American history.

**Today, on the occasion of Juneteenth (June 19th, a special day observed by many African Americans marking the end of slavery at the close of the Civil War), we invite you to celebrate African Americans as they continue to take ownership of their own stories.**



**Sojourner Truth**

"I am coloured. I thank God for that. I have not the curse of God upon me for enslaving human beings." Sojourner recorded her life story from slavery to freedom, and from her earnings from the book sales, she bought her own home in Florence, MA. Her life matters.

**Jennifer Hines**

In 1985, fifteen year old Jennifer Hines of Amherst was frightened by a teenage member of the Ku Klux Klan who was attending the same church youth conference she was. Here she stands before a burning cross, for to this day, it is a painful memory to carry. Her life matters.



**Lucy Terry Prince**

A slave in Deerfield in the mid 1700s, Lucy Terry delighted those around her with written stories and songs. As free people of color, Lucy and her husband, Abijah Prince, lived until old age with courage and dignity in Vermont where they often went to court to protect their family's property rights. Her life matters.

**Horace Boyer**

Horace Boyer was carried beyond his childhood in segregated Florida to become a national authority on gospel music. "It has been a joy to find, for the people who sang their way out of slavery, that the music of the Lord will take you through." His life matters.



Louise Minks letters an MLK quotation on the flag.

Mary Wyatt shares with a young friend.



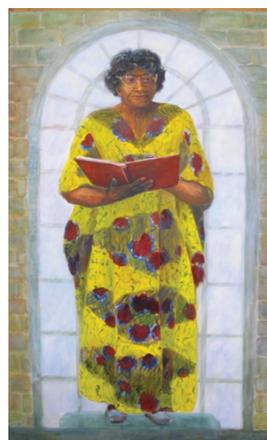
Louise Minks painting **Frederick Douglass**  
Lecturer and writer against slavery. His life matters.



**Ida B. Wells**  
Newspaper publisher, crusader against lynching. Her life matters.



**Janis Hadley**  
College president. Her life matters.



**Mary Wyatt**  
Musician, social worker, church leader. Her life matters.



Louise Minks paints **John Lollar Jr.**  
Wood carver, chef. His life matters.



**Martin Luther King, Jr.**  
National church leader against segregation, for civil rights for people of color. His life matters.

## Black Lives Matter... Black History Matters...

The African American portrait series above launched the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association's on-going *African Americans in Early Rural New England* project, now in its 25th year. This effort included an African American site map of Old Deerfield; special installations in its Memorial Hall; seventeen teacher workshops about Black history; a data base of 18th Century African Americans in the region; and many Black history public concerts and programs. The current goal is a new website, *Lucy Terry Prince: A Window into the Lives of Early New England African Americans*.

*This newspaper exhibit is sponsored by: Tim Neumann and Tom Mershon & Carol and Peter Letson*