

Shem was an African-American enslaved being who lived in Guilford, Connecticut. He was born in 1726 and was first enslaved under a man named John Scranton the 3rd. John Scranton had 10 children, including his daughter Submit Scranton. John owned two slaves, a Black man, 1Shem, and an Indian woman. In his will, John detailed that after his death, his slaves were to choose which of his children they wanted to serve. After John had died, Shem went to serve Submit Scranton, the child of John's that he had chosen. Eventually, Submit married a Deacon Simeon Chittenden, a very well respected man, and became Submit Chittenden. When Submit was married, all of her legal possessions were under the control of her husband, meaning Shem now belonged to the Deacon. Submit gave birth to seven children and Simeon detailed in his will a hierarchy of who would receive his properties, property including Shem. His belongings were to be given to his wife, Submit, first, then his children, then ultimately his grandchildren. Shem and Simeon clashed a lot, as Shem would often outright refuse the Deacon's orders and was resistant towards the religion that Simeon forced upon him. For 40 years, Shem continued to resist and he was told by Simeon to pray to the lord to "raise the curse that was upon him." Eventually, by his own choice, he did choose to pray and strengthened his spirituality and closeness to god in the process. As the American Revolutionary began in New England, Shem actually fought in the war as an enslaved human being, not for his own freedom but the freedom of those enslaving him. Later, on April 12th 1789, Dean Simeon Chittenden passed away and now Submit once again owned him. She owned him all the way up to Shem's death in 1794, and then eventually died herself in 1796. Shem was forced to serve the same lineage for his whole life and sadly never got to enjoy freedom.