Denise:

Women have been a part of carrying the gospel where it's not for generations. And part of the legacy they've left can be found in the courage. Their stories inspire in an entirely new generation of women who would go, but that legacy can only be realized if their stories are told. Welcome to the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast.

Denise:

Well, hello and welcome back to your Velvet Ashe's Legacy podcast. Sarah, can you believe that we have covered seven women so far?

Sarah:

I know it's so fun.

Denise:

It is so fun. Um, you know what, some of those have been writers, some of them have had stories that were told by others that we just got to share with you, but this month we're covering a woman for whom we have very little either written about her or by her that still exists today. So it made our job a little bit more difficult this month, but we feel like it was still something that was worthy of being shared, actually. Um, there's only really one great source about this woman, um, and the author of that, his name is Gregory Nobles, and he actually called out the fact that history, as we have it, is largely recorded by white men.

Denise:

And so women and especially women of color, have fewer things written down about them to help us remember their lives and legacies. But we really still feel like this is a place where we wanna tell those stories. So Betsey Stockton, the woman we're covering this month, she falls into that category. Um, her legacy is still one you need to know about. So through the little information that we have, honestly, it's a journal. It's scraps of paper. It is a will that she left, uh, things written by men during that time that wrote things, acknowledging her. Those are the types of resources we've had to kind of pull together Betsey's story for you. Um, but her, her story inspires a lot of things, uh, that we wanna talk about. It inspires conversation points. So, so we're going to bring you the story of Betsey Stockton today, the first black missionary woman, um, sent out that we can find any information about.

Denise:

So, um, we do wanna recognize a couple of things as we tell the story today. We wanna recognize from the beginning that we are two white women sitting here trying to tell the story of the first black missionary woman to be sent out. And the truth is, Betsey's story cannot be separated from the narrative of slavery at the time. And we know we will never be able to speak into that topic with any authority or full of wisdom for what it might have been like for her. Um, however, we have both served as cross-cultural women, and so we feel a sisterhood to her in that aspect. Um, we can speak as women who join her in answering the call to take the gospel where it wasn't, and, and honestly, the things that are written about her, more focused on just her contributions to society in the field of education. And we want to bring, um, light to her contributions as a missionary. So Sarah and I today are gonna do things a little bit differently. She's going to actually walk you through the narrative of Betsey's life. And as there are points in the story where we wanna stop and chat about conversations that her life inspires

for us to have today, we're just gonna do that. We're gonna stop and have those conversations. So without any further, um, introduction, let's get into the life of Betsey Stockton.

Sarah:

Well, you're gonna hear this theme sort of over and over today. The things we know and the things we don't know about Betsey's life. And one of the things that isn't actually recorded is her birthdate. So some reports show it was around 1800, but if you go back from the age that is listed on her tombstone, it would be in 1798. And that's kind of the most commonly accepted. Now, she was born into slavery to the family of Robert Stockton in Princeton, New Jersey. And I just have to say, I didn't realize that Princeton was a town in addition to being a university, but it is in fact a town. So we know that Betsey's mother was black and that her father was white, but there's no record for sure of who either of them were. At a very young age. Betsey was given as a slave to Robert Stockton's daughter Elizabeth, who was married to Ashbel Green. He taught at the College of New Jersey, which eventually would become Princeton, and was also a pastor at a prominent Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. Betsey would've only been, you know, maybe like three or four when she was enslaved by the Greens. We kind of get glimpses of Betsey's life through the writing of Ashbel Green, at least, you know, his perspective of things, mostly from the journals that he kept. According to him, uh, she misbehaved and was considered spiritually unfit, uh, is what he said until she was around like 13 or 14 years old.

Denise:

Isn't that actually the first words we have ever written about her was when he was writing about her misbehaving in his journal. The first time she enters the scene is misbehaving.

Sarah:

Yes. Yes. It seems like a lot of time when he was writing about her. That's what it was. <laugh>. Well, Elizabeth Green became ill in 1802. So basically from the beginning, Betsey would've been helping care for her. Elizabeth Green later passed away in 1807. And it is interesting, Betsey was given as a slave to Elizabeth. So after her death, this would've meant Betsey was no longer enslaved. But this didn't actually, you know, mean freedom for her. She would actually stay in Ashbel Green's household and be under his control for another decade after this. One of the things that happened during this time was that Betsey taught herself to read. Ashbel Green was a professor and pastor, so he would've had, you know, this vast library of books, available. It doesn't sound like really he cared one way or another. We don't really get that from him. But I guess he didn't ban her from learning. It was actually his sons, though, who would've been a little bit older than Betsey that actually helped her learn to read. And honestly, this was one of the most important steps that she took in her life, you know, her, her self-education and learning to read.

Denise:

Well. And when you remember this time in the world, there were not necessarily public libraries. Libraries were personal libraries, and she happened to be in a home that had an extensive personal library. What a gift for her as she's, you know, surrounded by things as she's learning how to read.

Sarah:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, in June of 1813, when Betsey would've been a teenager, Ashbel Green sold three years of her life for labor in these states in the north of the us indentured servitude was becoming more common, and often it was a punishment if someone was deemed unruly or unwanted for whatever

reason. We don't totally know the circumstances of why Ashbel Green made this move. But Betsey went to live with the family of the Reverend Nathaniel Todd. And one of the big things that happened during this time that we know she continued to grow in her self-education. So, uh, Nathaniel Todd was a teacher and a pastor also. And so he had many books. We don't know much about what happened during her time with the Todd family, but after she returned to Ashbel Green in 1816, she had been deeply impacted spiritually. And again, this is from Ashbel Green's perspective, but he noted a great change in her.

Sarah:

It was after she came back to live with Mr. Green, that she applied for membership to the Princeton Presbyterian Church. This is one of the, you know, official records that we actually have of Betsey when she was accepted for full membership to the church. And it was somewhere during this time that she was also officially given her freedom. So now she was able to move around a little bit more as she pleased and also earn money for her work. In 1821, we find out that she had a desire to serve as a missionary. Mr. Green actually wrote her a letter of recommendation where he shared at least his version of her story to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions or the A B C F M. This was still, you know, a fairly new missionary sending organization. Actually, it had been started in 1810 by graduates from Williams College. And some of the first missionaries sent out were Adoniram and Ann Judson who, you know their names might be familiar to you. We don't know Betsey's Heartfully. We don't have a journal or correspondence from her at this time. But if you think about this point in United States history, even though she was free, her options would have been more limited as a woman, but also as a black woman.

Denise:

And just even the ability to dream about a freedom to go somewhere of her own choosing. So far she has been told to move here, move there, go serve with the Todds, you know, she didn't have a choice in it. This is the first time in her life that she, number one, just had a choice about where she was gonna live or where she was gonna go. And then number two, being a woman, but also being a black woman at that time, how much would she have had the autonomy even to choose how she wanted to live her life, what she was passionate about, to live out something she was passionate about, to live in her giftings. You know, so far she has been told how to live, what to live, how she would serve whatever gifts she personally had. You know, she might not have been given the freedom to grow those gifts and to expound them in any way.

Denise:

And so, so I just imagine this opportunity presenting itself and inspiring her on multiple levels. And honestly, Sarah, like you and I both served as women cross-culturally. And a lot of the conversations that surround the reason why there are so many proportionately more women that serve on the field than men, some of that has had to do with the fact that there are opportunities for women to lead and serve and do things that haven't always been afforded to women who chose to stay here. Um, you know, I don't know if you found that to play at all into your decision or that conversation that you might have had with others, but, you know, that's definitely something that we have run into as we speak to women who are going, it's like I, they're offering me positions of leadership to, to go and to do things that I feel restrained to do here.

Sarah:

Yeah. And we also have the layer that she was a single woman, and at that time, especially, like no one was really sending single women. And so you have all these different layers and it, it's interesting thinking how some of that is still, like, it still enters the conversation today of what you can do as a woman or even as a single woman. And there does seem to be a little bit more freedom or maybe opportunities or like, the conversations are a little different, at least when you think about doing these types of things cross-culturally.

Denise:

Absolutely. And, and I just, you know, we don't know. She, we do not have words written by her to, you know, guess at, to what she might be feeling. So these are just our assumptions of things that are applicable to us today. And we can only assume that these same thoughts and feelings might have been circling in her mind as she's making this decision to go. You know? And in the same way as we, you know, continue on with her journey, we don't maybe have a lot of her words about her preparation to go and her leaving, and what does that feel like? But for those of us who have gone, we can put ourselves in her shoes and understand what it was like to set out on something so unknown and, um, and the feelings that you take with you. So, Sarah, as we continue on her story, maybe we can, if you've experienced that, kind of remember those moments for you as you set out on your journey.

Sarah:

Right. Well, in the midst of her desire to go to the mission field and trying to figure out the best option and placement, Betsey was connected to Charles Stewart. He had been a student of Ashbel Green at Princeton, and he had a desire to go to what was then called the Sandwich Islands. What is today, Hawaii. So when Charles Stewart applied to A B C F M, he requested that Betsey also go as his assistant. Even at this point, you have these layers that limit what Betsey could do or even decide for herself. She Ashbel, Green, and Charles Stewart made this sort of contractual agreement where she was to assist the Stewart family as well as serving kind of the larger missionary cause. But she wasn't expected to what they said, um, provide any menial services. So in some ways, she was kind of put under the protection of Mr. Stewart and his family. And this maybe would've been, you know, kind of a common practice for the single women at this time. Charles Stewart got married shortly before they were set to leave, and he and Betsey raised the support they needed, so they were ready to go.

Denise:

So one of the things I found interesting about the contract, you know, was it was like they didn't know what to do with her. And it, and it sounds, it's, it's almost indicative of Ashbel Green didn't know what to do with her. It's like he didn't wanna have slaves, and yet she was given as a slave, and now he's releasing her into this freedom. And honestly, they didn't think they would ever see each other again. This was goodbye for good. And I think he's like saying this as go with Charles Stewart as a way to be like, but she's not a slave. And so let me put these parameters around how she can be treated and how she can't be be treated and she's not to do this type of work, because I'm sure that would be the assumption for everyone else. And, you know, they're in the north and slavery, you know, was viewed differently up there during this time.

Denise:

It was, you know, being repealed and versus what the thought was in the South. So he's probably just like wanting to cover all of his bases of, no, this is how she should be viewed and treated. And he felt like he needed to define that for a culture as he was sending her off into that. And, and this is before the

Civil War, just a reminder to people, and you know, we, we have covered missionaries that have happened right after the Civil War, but she would've, you know, been living during the time when all of this tension was happening.

Sarah:

Yeah, for sure. So their travel to the Sandwich Islands or Hawaii would've been very different than how we think of missionary travel today. For sure. Betsey and the Stewarts sailed on a whaling ship, leaving on November 19th, 1822. There were 17 missionaries traveling together, um, mostly married couples. Betsey was the only single woman. This is one of the rare times in her life actually, where we have a record of her words. She kept a journal on the voyage. Actually, several of the missionaries also kept a journal through the whole time. So the voyage lasted from the end of November until the following April. So they were at sea a little over five months. So she had plenty of time for thinking and journaling. Unfortunately, the original journal is lost, but she would send portions of it back to Ashbel Green, and he published it in the Christian Advocate, a religious publication where he was working. It definitely wasn't all hype and adventure. She spoke really honestly about her struggles and doubts and even, you know, struggling in her faith. There was sickness and bad weather, and that's just a long time to be confined to a ship with the same people.

Denise:

Didn't she have like some humor in there too as well? Like talking about one part where she had hung a hammock up over the table to try to sleep because she was so sick and they were, people were just trying to help her out, and then they hit a wave and it threw her out and she ended up like, hitting the floor or something. And, and she writes about it with humor, like, yeah, once everyone found out I was okay, we all just laughed at what I looked like being hurdled through the sky, you know? And so it's so fun having these words of hers as, you know, like we get to hear a little bit of her personality and her thoughts. Um, but she also was writing it knowing that she was gonna be sending this to Ashbel Green. So there's a, there's a level of, these aren't her interpersonal thoughts so much as knowing that these were gonna be used to send to somebody.

Sarah:

Well, and Ashbel Green would've potentially had the liberty of editing as he was putting it into the publication. We don't know that for sure, and we can't necessarily compare because we don't have the original journal. But it seems like, you know, he mentions other places that her writing was impressive. He thought it was good. And so it's, I don't know that he felt like he had to do a lot of editing, but there is the potential for that. But we do get more of a glimpse into the life on the ship. And, you know, the missionary families that are traveling together as they make their way to Hawaii. Betsey's friendship really deepened, uh, with the stewards during this time. So we have Charles Stewart and then his wife Harriet. While they were on the ship, Mrs. Stewart gave birth to a little boy that they named Charles, and Betsey was the midwife for that birth.

Sarah:

So we finally find them arriving in April, 1823, and they kind of get settled into work. They weren't the first American missionaries to Hawaii, but the work was still relatively new. And the primary way the missionaries connected to the people was through education. In addition to helping the Stewarts, Betsey also became a teacher, and she established the first school for the local children, those who weren't rich or royalty. I think Betsey's work in Hawaii is really impressive. Um, she worked hard to learn

the language. She started the school to focus on the common people when that wasn't a thing. But she was also part of a bigger narrative, you know, a bigger missionary movement at the time that didn't just bring good things.

Denise:

Right. And I think that that is a really big topic of conversation that a lot of number one, millennials and Gen Z are having. And I think it's something that we just can't skip over. And some of that is like, how much have we learned about the best practices in bringing the gospel to a culture? I think this time they, they tied the gospel to Western thought and Western practices, and we see now that, that that isn't the case. That, you know, the way you dress, the way you take care of yourselves, the way you express yourself doesn't have to be tied to your salvation. And I think that wasn't understood at this time. So it is a bit painful to relive some of these stories where that was the impression of the time, that Jesus equaled a certain type of lifestyle. And when we get that here, we get that when we read her journals and we hear about the way they talked about the natives and their assessment of, oh, they're leaving their heathen practices behind. And you know, yes, there are some things that when we are transformed from the inside out, we recognize some of the way that we live our life needs to also be affected by that. That, but there are some things that are, you know, part of culture, and I think some people mourn the loss of some of those cultural things that did not need to be lost, but were tied so much with salvation and, and so therefore they were deemed as bad. Um, I don't know. Do you come across those conversations, Sarah?

Sarah:

Yeah, and I think, you know, today, a lot of times we still have the conversations of is a heart for Jesus enough, or is it good to have some, you know, missiological training or cross-cultural training? And people like Charles Stewart would've had seminary training, but I don't know that, you know, any of them had conversations about like, how do you enter another culture? And like you were saying Denise, like how do you distinguish between the things that the Lord needs to transform and the things that are a special part of this culture that just might be different from my own culture, you know? And so I think some of that we maybe at least are having conversations or potentially getting training and you know how to think about it and approach it that maybe they were not able to do then.

Denise:

And I just would encourage everyone to think about this. And as you enter into conversations, I know in young Gen Z, even some younger millennial conversations that we're having, it's, it's a throw the baby out with the bathwater conversation. It's a, there was harm done by missionaries who went with less knowledge than we have today, so therefore going is bad. And that's not the answer either. It is, you know, hopefully throughout our entire lives we are people who are growing and learning and changing our actions based on the knowledge that we have. And we are the most equipped now to do good because of the things that we have learned from past missionaries that have served and how those who are being sent out today enter into cultures with an awareness that others didn't have. And so instead of the idea of there was harm done, so we need to not go, I'm like, there was harm done and we can learn from that and now go more effective than we have ever been before.

Denise:

And so to me, when I read this, there's a, you know, and hear her journals and even Charles Stewart, who isn't that a prince? Like, wasn't there a Prince of Scotland or something named Charles Stewart? I

don't know. Every time I read that, I keep thinking that, but okay, maybe not. Um, anyway, when I hear that, it makes me sad and it makes me hopeful and grateful and thankful for all of the training orgs, the sending orgs, the churches and the people who know better and are doing better. And that's what I would hope people take from any story that they read that has, you know, seasonings of this unhealthy practices, um, and interpretations from before.

Sarah:

Yeah. And I think awareness and conversation is also important that we're thinking through long range impacts and like you were saying, not just throwing everything out, but how can we keep growing and learning and have a heart to do that?

Denise:

Hmm. Yes. Yes. And I would just say there are organizations that are working to help equip those who are doing that. Even, um, Kindred Exchange, um, who is somebody that we are partnering with in February on Velvet Ashes for a webinar. Um, their heart is to help ethical missions happen. Well, so we'll just put that in there. If you, if this is something you also are passionate about, there are ways you can find out more about how to do this well.

Sarah:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, Betsey and the Stewarts too probably thought this was for life. You know, they thought they would die on the mission field, but Harriet Stewart had suffered with health struggles pretty much the entire time. They tried changing islands and finding different doctors to see if that would help. But really her health was quite precarious. And so after just a couple of years in Hawaii, the Stewarts left because doctors felt like a colder climate would be the most helpful for her. And through all these different moves to the different islands and everything, Betsey went with them. So they set out in October 1825, first going to England, and then onto the US finally arriving in the US in the summer of 1826 in New York, where the stewards were from. There was an account of these missionaries that all left together that said they had "bidden adieu forever to all that is dear to them on earth and gone without the expectation of return to proclaim the gospel of peace". But this wasn't the case, you know, Betsey had really grown very close to the Stewarts. So we assume that she was willing to do whatever was necessary for them to help with the kids and help take care of Harriet. And I think so often we do that for our teammates and they do it for us, but it's such a reminder of how our expectations can be so different from what actually happens.

Denise:

Well, and we joke about sometimes, you know, that the expectation for missionaries that were going in the early days was you packed in your coffin, you know, and maybe they did not pack in the coffin, but that was definitely the mindset when they left, they said goodbye and it was goodbye. We aren't coming home for weddings or funerals or niece's birthdays, you know, it was goodbye. And, and yeah, I think that there is the, you know, obvious closeness of Betsey with the Stewarts, not only for reasons that we will get to later that we can understand how close they were, but just the obvious evidence that she left with them. There was, this is my family, this is the family I chose to have. You know, she was, you know, forced into a family situation before and she chose this family. And so I think that there's evidence of that.

Denise:

I also think, you know, her journals talk about she struggled with depression, and I don't know how much of feeling alone, you know, if Charles was busy all the time, and Betsey was sick a lot, and you know, she worked to start schools for the underprivileged of the island, not just for the elite on the island. And, you know, I'm sure that that work could have felt lonely if she was the only one who was championing that cause. And then the thought of her only friends that she felt close to leaving, you know, maybe it was just being left alone that she just didn't feel like she could do, but whatever it was, her expectations to stay forever were not met. And, and I think it was it only just a couple of years then that she actually ended up serving on the field.

Sarah:

Yeah. Not quite three.

Denise:

And and yet when you hear about her later, just like so many of us, it defined her life. She was introduced then as missionary Betsey Stockton, and, and that became almost part of her resume. And, and I don't know how many of you feel that no matter how long your time of service was on the field, it becomes so defining in your life. We were on the field for five years, and, and when I think about in the big picture of how long we have lived in the States, uh, that five years defined and changed our lives so much that it, I mean, it's, it weighed so much more in the scales of our life of how we served our time. And so for her, I, I think it was one of those heavy two years that was defining and changed her life and the work that she did there starting schools then carried on to what she would do for the rest of her life. It was a training ground and a shaping ground for her, for what God had for her for the rest of her life.

Sarah:

Yeah. And we don't know how she felt about some of this, which is unfortunate. I wish we could, you know, have tea with Betsey and hear her heart. But I just think it sometimes when our life overseas doesn't go like we thought it would, you know, whether a ministry doesn't work out or it's a lot shorter than we thought it would be, that can feel like failure. Um, and so sometimes that can feel like a bigger label, really a more defining thing. And sometimes, like for Betsey, we'll see that it opened doors for her, but sometimes what we did on the field doesn't really work on a resume. Like, you can't just put, I'm an expert at getting rid of big bugs, you know, or washing clothes, um, by hand or even like teaching or leadership might not cross over to our passport country well, and so sometimes it can almost feel like this defines me and I don't know what to do with it.

Denise:

Well, and I think what you thought brings up a good point, and that is how many times do we think the time that we served was it, that we are only useful and that the epitome of our Christian service is our time on the field? But I wonder how many of us would that have come back off of the field? And for those of you that may eventually are then surprised to know no, that that was still part of the training ground and that all of it is used of him, but what he was training you for actually prepared you for the service that he had next for you and equipped you in special ways and shaped you and molded you. And, and so we have to reframe our expectations that this isn't necessarily the epitome, but my whole life is valued by the Lord and he uses every single thing, and that what I was shaped for might equip me for what I'm serving next for him.

Sarah:

And we definitely see that Betsey's life was marked by her time as a missionary. After several years of caring for the Stewart family, she was invited to come help start what they called a colored infant school in Philadelphia. And really it was sort of a, a preschool for kids ages two to five, and they had more of like a hands-on approach to education. So because Ashbel Green had published Betsey's Journal and the letters that she wrote to him while she was in Hawaii, she had a reputation as a teacher and that she was really good at it. So when she got this invitation, she said yes, and she moved to Philadelphia and then opened the school less than two weeks later. It was a super quick turnaround. We get a little peek into the school and to Betsey from the Infant School's Oversight Committee in their reports.

Sarah:

So they said the numbers had increased from 40 something to 60 something students pretty quickly. And they said of her that she was "active, energetic, and intelligent. She appears well calculated for the situation in which she is placed". This experience really set her, you know, on a long path of education. And that was how she spent the rest of her life. She was asked to come to Canada to help train and set up sort of a demonstration school. So she went for several months to get that work started, and then she kind of moved around. Um, Harriet Stewart's health had continued to be a struggle, and she passed away in September of 1830. So Betsey went to take care of the children in New York. There were three children at this point. Charles Stewart had become a Navy chaplain. And when he went back out on a voyage, Betsey took the three Stewart children back to Princeton.

Sarah:

I don't know, you know how Betsey saw Princeton in light of being enslaved there, but it was familiar and it was home, I think in a lot of ways for her, her, there would've been good schools there for the Stewart kids. And she saw the youngest Green son, um, as a friend, an ally, and he was living there in Princeton. Here in Princeton. Betsey's focus shifted a bit to work with sunny school. So there was a fire that destroyed the Princeton Presbyterian Church in 1835, and essentially where the white and black members of the church had worshiped together, or at least in the same building. They weren't allowed to sit together, but now they were split and had two separate buildings and formed, you know, two separate congregations. The black congregation eventually became the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church. And in addition to teaching at the public school for black children, Betsey also taught Sunday school, even though the Witherspoon Street Church was their own congregation, there was still this element of control from the white institutions in Princeton.

Sarah:

The seminary would send students over to kind of oversee the Sunday school program, and Betsey was known as someone who bridged the gap and could really be a go-between for the congregation and then those who saw themselves in authority. When Betsey saw a need, you know, she just looked for ways to meet that need in this time as slavery was sort of rising in conversation and like, what did you about it? But then also rising in prominence even more in the South, it was dangerous to be a black person. And so the church and the Sunday school and, you know, even the public school served as sort of a level of security and protection. And I imagine Betsey's steady presence was a big part of that, of making these spaces feel safe. She also saw that literacy among adults was a big problem. And so she was part of starting a school for adults through the church to help with that.

Sarah:

One of the few records we have of her life is actually her last will and testament, which she put together in November, 1862. So she would've been kind of in her early sixties. She had three people that she left things to in her will. She left a woman that she called her niece, uh, who wouldn't have been like a blood relative, but was a nearby neighbor who was about 20 years younger than Betsey, and also taught Sunday school at Witherspoon. Uh, she left her all her clothing and you know, we don't know, like if it was really nice clothing or what, but it would've been a blessing to this woman, um, who was a single parent and just in the work that she was doing. And then we have, uh, Charles Stewart, the missionary that she had gone to Hawaii with. She left him her library of books, letters and papers along with a picture that she had of the landing of, the first missionaries in Tahiti in 1797. And unfortunately we don't have a list of what books she had or you know, what these papers were. And then everything else went to the younger Charles Stewart who she had helped bring into the world while at sea, uh, what the will called "all the residue and remainder of my property, both real and personal". So we see two of the Stewarts here were an important part of her life.

Denise:

Well, and I, I think it's interesting to note that one of the pieces of information that we have that even shapes what we know about her is that there is one book in existence. It's in a rare book store that is, um, owned by her. Her name was written in it. She wrote her name out. And you know, when you think about her not owning things, but for her to want to write her name in this book and claim it as her own, um, I think was a really, you know, neat thing that the author of the book was able to, to do. And then, and then also, you know, just even one of the things that I had read about her talked about, there was a census taker who was walking around, you know, taking a census through the end, uh, toward the end of her life. And he wrote her name down as a teacher, and that she was the only black person who had a title like that recorded. And so I think that that was pretty fantastic that, you know, she, she was remembered in that way and that, that that was written about her.

Sarah:

Yeah. And she kept teaching just about to the end of her life. Also here, uh, several months after making her will, she also sat for a photograph, probably the only one she'd ever had taken of her in her life or, you know, that we know about. She looks very serious, very solemn in the picture, which was how they did photographs back in the day. But we do have this picture of her mm-hmm.

Denise:

<affirmative>. Yeah, the only one. So if you google her name, you will see the one and only picture of Betsey Stockton.

Sarah:

Yeah. Well, Betsey saw the end of the Civil War, but unfortunately not the full ratification of the 13th Amendment, which came in December, 1865. Betsey passed away on October 24th, 1865. She had stopped teaching just a couple of months before this and had, you know, just kind of been declining in health. But I think it shows the level of respect that the community had for her. It wasn't just members of her church that came for her funeral, but there were also prominent members of Princeton and friends and clergy members from Philadelphia and New York that were there at her funeral as well. She wanted to be buried near the Stewarts, you know, who were really, really her family. And so she's buried in Cooperstown, New York. Her headstone includes the line, a life of great usefulness, which kind of sounds humble, I think, but I think that captures a lot of who Betsey was. She never married or had

her own children, but I just think of the impact that she had on kids through the years, you know, from her teaching in Hawaii and the infant school, her Sunday school work, and the Stewart children, you know, just yeah, the, that impact through the years.

Denise:

And I would even say that there is a stained glass window at her church that acknowledges her investment, and it reads that it is from the scholars of Elizabeth Stockton. And, you know, knowing that the town is Princeton and using that word, scholars, you know, you may think of the university, but no, they viewed themself as scholars because she invested in their education. And so that just goes to the quality of investment that they believed that they got from her, the type of education that they considered themselves scholars because they studied under her. And, um, I just found that, I found that fascinating.

Sarah:

And there's actually a couple of places at Princeton on the campus too, that were put up in just like, even just 2018 that recognize and acknowledge her.

Denise:

Yes. And she was buried near the Stewarts and her gravestone. Um, I know that there was a time when it had fallen over from neglect, but recently people are talking more about her and wanting to make acknowledgements of the legacy that she had in so many areas, you know, with education. And so there have been works done to kind of re-stand that back up and, you know, help it be something that people could go and see if they wanted to. So it, it is there. The house that she was a slave is is in Princeton if people were to go there, she is acknowledged there as well. But yeah, she just, she contributed so many things to the world. There are so many things that we can name, and yet she was this quiet, persistent person. I heard it quoted that she had a persistent resistance.

Denise:

So she's not an outspoken advocate for anti-slavery and anti-racism. She's not an outspoken advocate for conversion and gospel and the Bible. And, you know, she quietly just kept moving forward each day when she saw a need, she worked to meet that need. She's probably the most well-traveled black woman of the day, honestly. And it was because she saw a need and she went to meet it. She saw a need and she went to meet it. And so when we come to the end of her life here we are left with quiet change that happened by persistent resistance. You know, there were, there were women of this time that were names that were outspoken, like Harriet Tubman and um, Rosa Parks, you know, a little bit later. Um, she, but she was just quietly one of these women that history acknowledges because of what she did by taking the step forward every day.

Sarah:

Yeah. And I think, you know, we can look at her story and see all these different firsts, um, and all these significant things, and yet she just, she didn't, you know, elevate herself I guess, or um, that type of thing. But I think it just shows too how these types of stories, the people who are not, you know, the famous people necessarily, but people who are doing extraordinary work in almost ordinary ways. You know, just taking on these hard tasks and working to create change. Not in big ways, although we, we need that too, but just in small sort of enduring ways. And so I think that is something that I so appreciate about Betsey Stockton's story.

Denise:

Yeah. So I don't know who needed that encouragement today, who needed to hear that. You don't have to be big and flashy and making big ripples, wherever you are, but that your ability to just keep doing good and meeting the needs that are around you make a lasting difference in the world.

Sarah:

Absolutely.

Denise:

Well, on behalf of Sarah and myself, we just wanna thank you for spending your time with us today. And if you know someone who might find encouragement from the story, future stories, past stories that we've done, we're gonna keep bringing it to you every month. So we would love it if you would share this episode. We would love it if you would give us a review. We would love to hear from you in general. Um, your likes and comments help other people find this, and we are so grateful for that. The music that we used in this podcast is Daughters and Sons, from our dear friends Eine Blume. And until next time, remember, you may be living the story that will be the courage for someone else's legacy. We'll see you next month.