Lesson 6, Worksheet 2
Assistance in Brooklyn’s Free Black Communities

Brooklyn’s African Woolman Benevolent Society
In 1810, brothers Peter and Benjamin Croger established the Brooklyn African Woolman Benevolent Society. It was the first mutual aid society in Brooklyn created by the African-American community in order to care for and assist widows and orphans of its former members.

Peter Croger’s African School
In 1815, Peter Croger founded a school which he named the African School. The school was located at his home on James Street (the street no longer exists) and offered day and evening classes to African Americans. The school was important, as Brooklyn’s first district school initially refused to accept students of color and kept them in a separate classroom once they did.

Brooklyn’s AME Church
On February 7, 1818, the Croger brothers, together with other residents of Brooklyn’s black community, opened the African Methodist Episcopal Church on High Street in the village. They were forced to establish the church after being segregated to an end gallery which they had to pay for, and forced to listen to the pro-slavery views of the church’s Irish pastor Alexander M’Caine at Sands Street Methodist Church. The Brooklyn AME church was more than a place of worship; it also served as a venue for political protests, educational meetings, and a haven for newly arrived fugitives who had escaped slavery. The church was renamed Bridge Street AME after relocating in 1854, and moved to Bedford Stuyvesant in 1938. Today it is Brooklyn’s oldest black church.