

Jin Cole

first name	Jin
last name	Cole
gender	female
birth, death year	circa 1723 , 1808
first, last year in records	--, 1808
confidence level	confirmed identity
freed status (year freed)	enslaved, then free
enslaver(s)	Ashley, Elihu; Ashley, Jonathan;
location(s)	Deerfield, MA
place of origin	Guinea, West Africa

Bio

According to George Sheldon, author of *The History of Deerfield Massachusetts*, “Jinny Cole, or simply Jin, as she was called, was a native of Guinea. By the tale she always told, she was daughter of a king in Congo, and when about twelve years old, she was one day playing with other children about a well, when they were pounced upon by a party of villains.... and the whole party were seized and hurried on board a slave ship”. Jin lamented that she and the other children would never see their mothers again. The ship came to the American colonies and three or four years later, Jin, with her infant son, Cato, arrived for sale in Boston, Massachusetts. Both were enslaved by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts. He and his wife, Dorothy, had been married only a few years. The young couple (Jonathan was 26 and Dorothy was 25) had lost their first child, a baby of nine months, the same year that Jin and baby Cato were brought into the Ashley household. Jin's days were spent cooking, doing household chores, gardening, and tending to the Ashley's growing family while also tending to Cato. She cared for Dorothy during her pregnancies, which included the loss of another infant and a toddler. By 1755, the Ashleys had five children ranging in age from 1-16 years, and in 1757, Dorothy would have her last child.

The only account or daybook entries concerning Jin are in those of shoemaker, Zadock Hawks, who made or mended her shoes numerous times between 1761 and 1788.

In Jin's old age Sheldon wrote that “she fully expected at death, or before, to be transported back to Guinea; and all her long life she was gathering, as treasures to take back to her mother land, all kinds of odds and ends, colored rags, bits of finery, worn out candlesticks, fragments of crockery or glassware, peculiar shaped stones, shells, buttons, beads, cones, -anything she could string. Nothing came amiss to her store.”

Jin outlived Reverend Ashley and the gradual end of slavery in Massachusetts but continued working for Dorothy as well as helping to raise the Ashley's son Elihu's children during the remainder of her long life. She died on September 1, 1808, of a broken neck. She was about 85 years old and had fallen down the cellar stairs of a neighbor. Dorothy Ashley survived her by only a few weeks. Days before Jin's death the two women had been sewing a shroud for Jin. She had served the Ashley family for 70 years.

Sources Consulted

A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, Vol. II, George Sheldon, 1895-96, pp. 896-897

Primary Source Entries for Jin Cole

Entry	Source	Vol Name	Date	entry id
• Jenny a black woman killed by a fall 90	<i>First Congregational Church of Deerfield, Massachusetts</i>	Single	1808 Aug	1000
• to making a pair of Shoes for Jene 1-0-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1757-1790	1769 Oct	1370
• to Souling Jenes Shoes 0-7-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1761-1780	1761 Jan	1367
• to a pair of Shoes for Jenne 1-10-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1761-1780	1761 Dec	1366
• Februry to mending Gins Shoes 0-6-6	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1761-1780	1763 Feb	496
• to a pair of Shoes for Jenne 1-10-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1761-1780	1763 Nov	1368
• to makeing a pair of Shoes for Jenne 1 - 0 - 0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1768-1783	1769 Oct	2033
• to mending Ginnes Shoes 0-7-6	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1768-1783	1774 Dec	680
• to makeing a pair of Shoes for Janie 1 - 2 - 6	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1768-1783	1777 Dec	1390
• to mending Jinneys Shoes 0-6-3	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1768-1783	1778 Feb	781
• March To mending Solomons Shoes & Janes 0-15-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1768-1783	1779 Mar	1397
• to mending Gins Shoe 0-1-0	<i>Zadock Hawks Account Book</i>	1784-1786	1785 Jan	1408
• To mending Gins Shoes 0-2-0	<i>Zur Hawks Day Book</i>	1787-1789	1787 Mar	1412
• to mending Jans Boots 0-1-6	<i>Zur Hawks Day Book</i>	1787-1789	1787 Dec	698
• To mending Jins Shoes 0-1-0	<i>Zur Hawks Day Book</i>	1787-1789	1788 Oct	1413
[Cole, Cato and Jenny - previously noted in research] ? U.S. Census 1810?	<i>Deerfield Vital Records to 1850</i>	Births, Deaths, Marriages	1810	1479
• Negroes:Jenny, Aug __, 1808 a 90 y, CRI	<i>Deerfield Vital Records to 1850</i>	Deaths	1808 Aug	826