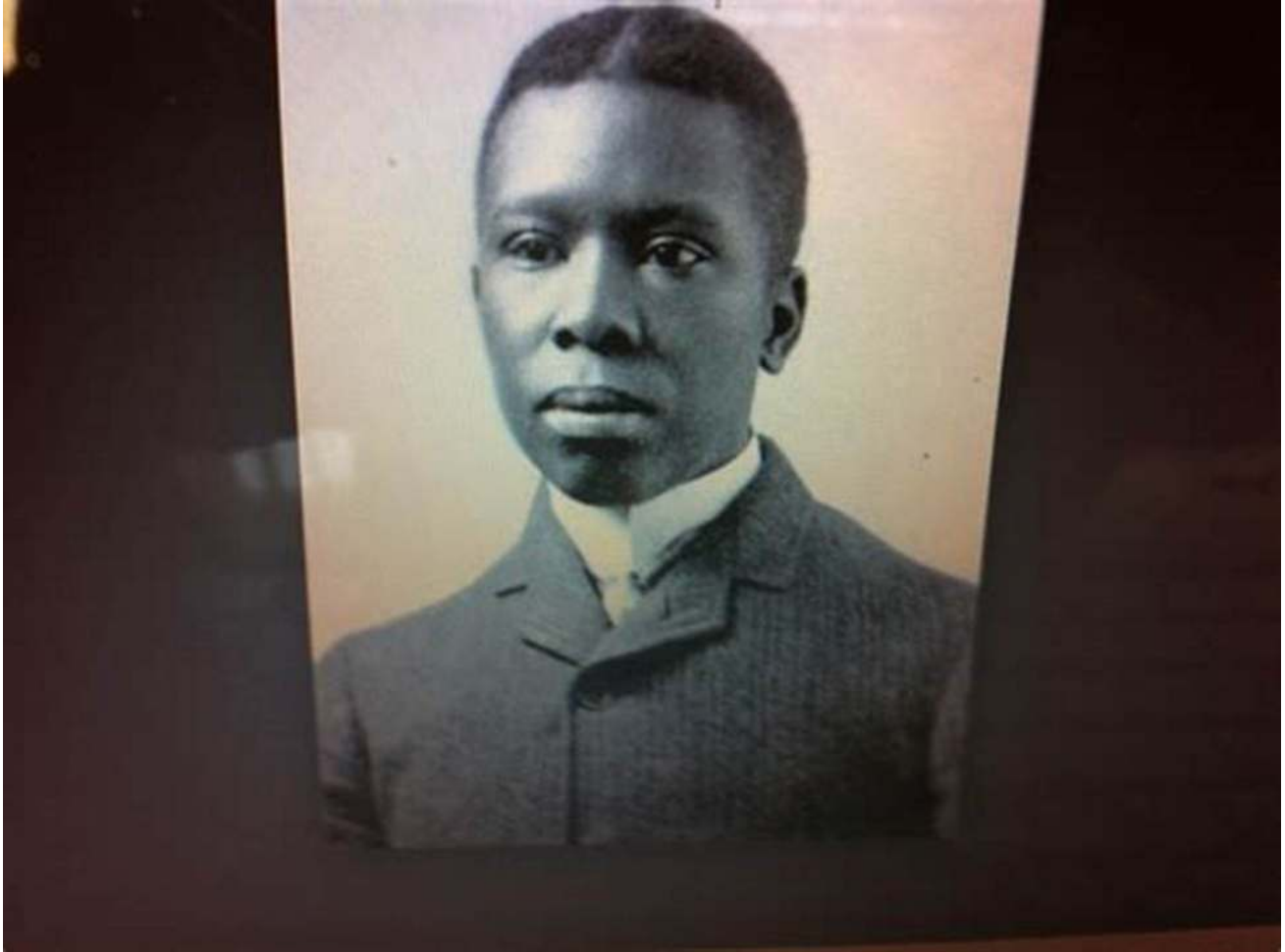


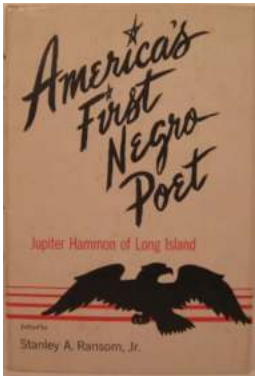
# America's First Black Poet: Jupiter Hammon of Long Island



When it comes to American literature, there is one name that often gets overlooked - Jupiter Hammon. Born into slavery in Long Island, New York, in 1711, Hammon rose above adversity to become not only the first black published poet in America but also an influential figure in the fight against slavery. This article will delve into the life and works of Jupiter Hammon, shedding light on his contributions to American literature and history.

## Early Life and Education

Jupiter Hammon was born into slavery on October 17, 1711, on the Lloyd Manor estate in Long Island. Owned by the prominent Lloyd family, the plantation provided limited opportunities for education and intellectual growth. Despite this, Hammon exhibited a natural inclination towards learning from an early age.



## America's First Black Poet; Jupiter Hammon of Long Island by Stanley A. Ransom Jr. (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 6161 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Print length	: 185 pages
Lending	: Enabled



At the age of thirteen, Hammon started working in the Lloyd household as a domestic servant. Here, he found himself surrounded by books and educated individuals, who shared their knowledge with him. Recognizing his talent, his owners allowed him to attend school sporadically, even though it was uncommon at the time for slaves to receive an education.

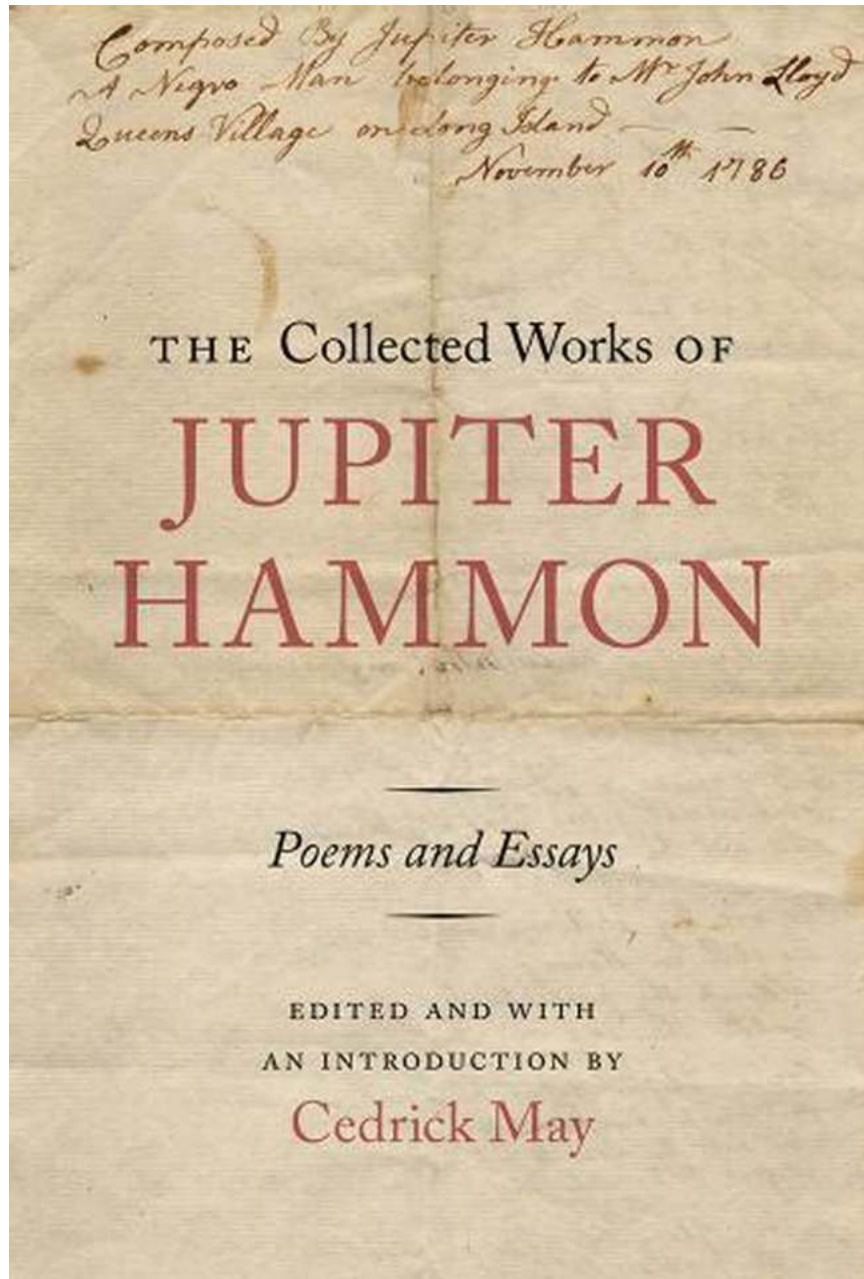


Hammon's exposure to literature and his passion for learning allowed him to develop his skills in reading and writing. He eagerly consumed books, particularly those related to theology and religious teachings. With time, Hammon's writing prowess began to flourish, leading him to compose his first poem at the age of eighteen.

## **The Power of Voice**

Hammon's poems primarily focused on religious themes, reflecting his strong Christian beliefs. His writing often addressed the concept of slavery and its contradictions with Christian principles of love and compassion. One of his most notable works is his poem "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ, with Penitential Cries," published in 1760.

"An Evening Thought" showcases Hammon's poetic talent and serves as a heartfelt appeal for religious awakening and spiritual redemption. The poem demonstrates Hammon's astute understanding of the power of words to convey emotions, religious devotion, and social messages.



Being a firsthand witness of the atrocities of slavery, Hammon used his poetry to advocate for the rights and humanity of enslaved people. His work subtly challenged the prevailing notion of black inferiority and condemned the institution of slavery itself. By doing so, he became a prominent voice in the early abolitionist movement.

## **Legacy and Impact**

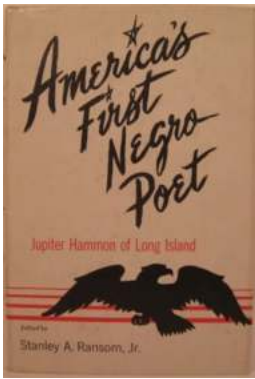
Jupiter Hammon's extraordinary contribution to American literature and his courage to speak out against the institution of slavery make him a highly significant figure in American history. As the first black poet published in America, he paved the way for future African American writers and poets, providing a voice for those who were often silenced.

It is important to note that Hammon's works were written during a time when the majority of black Americans were denied basic education, let alone the opportunity to publish their writings. Despite the limitations placed upon him, Hammon's poetry remains as a testament to the resilience and intellectual capabilities of enslaved individuals.

His influence on American literature continues to be recognized today. In 2019, a commemorative plaque was placed at the entrance of the Lloyd Manor estate, honoring Jupiter Hammon's legacy. His poems have been anthologized and studied, shedding light on the often forgotten contributions of people of color to the development of American culture.

Jupiter Hammon's life story and poetic works are a testament to the enduring power of the written word and the indomitable human spirit. Against all odds, Hammon rose above the chains of slavery to become America's first black poet. His poems, infused with religious fervor and advocacy for human rights, continue to inspire generations.

As we learn about Jupiter Hammon's remarkable journey, we are reminded of the importance of recognizing and celebrating the achievements of those who were marginalized by history. By acknowledging Hammon's contributions to American literature and his fight against slavery, we honor the resilience of all those who paved the way for justice and equality.



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Colleges, schools, libraries and military bases in the US and abroad have been searching for ways to celebrate notable persons of color and to provide positive programs to promote racial harmony in our communities. “America’s First Black Poet; Jupiter Hammon of Long Island,” published by Outskirts Press in 2020, includes his poems, prose pieces and new information about Jupiter Hammon’s life, including photos of the homes where Hammon lived. While Hammon is the first black poet to publish his own verse, this book also includes recognition of Phillis Wheatley as the first female black poet to publish her own works. It includes “Hammon’s Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley,” both his poem and a four part Gospel Choir arrangement available for use. This book informs readers about what life was like in the 18th century, and how Jupiter Hammon, a slave, was able to travel at will, publish his poetry, and be a preacher to his intended audience, “the brethren,” his fellow slaves, at a time when few slaves could travel. “Celebrating Black Poetry Day,” offers suggestions for October 17th programs or observances. A list is given of the 34 noted black poets who have spoken and given readings at Plattsburgh, NY, State University since 1984 as part of their ongoing Black Poetry day celebrations.

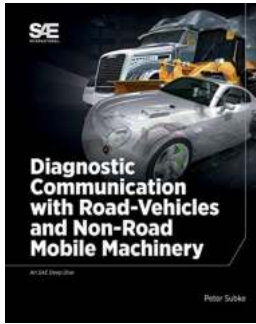
With the publication on Christmas Day, 1760, of the 88 line broadside poem “An Evening Thought,” Jupiter Hammon became the first published African American contributor to American poetry. A natural intelligence and a deep religious fervor led Hammon to publish additional poetry and prose, and his “Address to the Negroes of the State of New York,” which first appeared in 1787, was later reprinted and distributed by the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. Jupiter Hammon spent most of his long life on Lloyd Neck, later a part of Huntington, Long Island, where he was a slave to the Lloyd family. Some of his most productive years were spent in Hartford during the American Revolution. With newly found genealogical information on Jupiter, this present volume with new found poems has become the most complete and authoritative work on this early American black poet.

Hammon’s poetry reveals his joyous intoxication with religion, and in this vein he precedes the composers of those Black spirituals which are today an integral part of American culture. This collection of his poems and writings now includes two newly discovered poems found in New York Historical Society Library and in the Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University. Ransom notes that Hammon used several codes and indirect ways to let his fellow slaves know his real feelings about slavery. He used his Biblical knowledge as a cover.



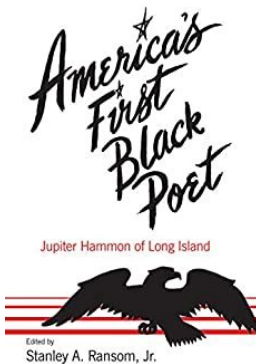
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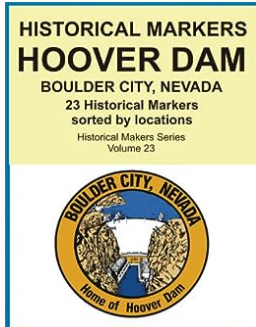
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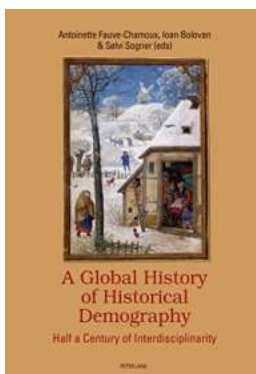
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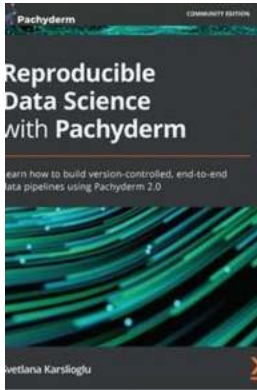
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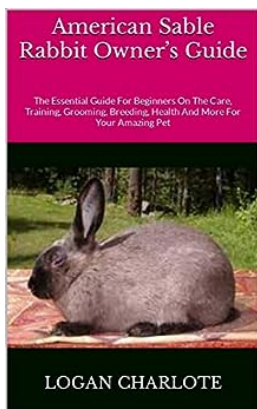
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