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Francis Guy, *Winter Scene in Brooklyn*

Dominic Carter: This is what downtown Brooklyn looked like in 1819, when it was just a village.

Brooklynites of the time would have recognized many if not all of the figures in Francis Guy's *Winter Scene*. In the foreground on the far left, Benjamin Meeker, a woodworker, is holding a framing square.

In the center of the canvas, there's Abiel Titus feeding his chickens. Titus was a prominent citizen of Dutch extraction; he owned the sprawling Dutch barn just behind him. You can also see his servant Jeff, carrying a pail toward the well.

Many African Americans lived in Brooklyn at the time, and their presence in this painting is one of the things that appeals to the social historian Victoria Missick.

Victoria Missick: Well, it makes it somewhat ours. And I'm using that term very broadly and perhaps other African Americans won't feel that way about the painting, but it's part of our documentation as African Americans living in New York City and particularly Brooklyn.

Dominic Carter: Guy's *Winter Scene* is more than just a document of historical interest, says curator Terry Carbone.

Terry Carbone: I personally like the Dutch character of the picture, the fact that it's a snow scene, especially these beautiful clouds and atmospheric effects, which were relatively rare in American pictures of the period. So aesthetically it was as significant as it was as a document.

Dominic Carter: Part of the painting is actually missing. A fire in the 1880s destroyed two feet of canvas on the left side.

Terry Carbone: The interesting thing is that Guy painted a second version simultaneously and that's in a private collection. It's one of the ways in which we regain knowledge of the whole picture, before it was damaged.

Dominic Carter: The missing part depicted a few of the newer houses of Brooklyn's mercantile elite. Guy may have wanted to highlight the contrast with the old Dutch-influenced Brooklyn shown here.