

A Guide to the History of
Slavery in Maryland



THE MARYLAND STATE ARCHIVES, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

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Figure 1: Engraving of Africans unloading tobacco on a Chesapeake Bay wharf, ca. 1750

At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, slavery and its legacy have gained a prominent place in the American consciousness. It has been the subject of numerous movies, TV documentaries, radio expositions, monuments, museum exhibits, as well as books, CDs, and websites. Its place in American culture has informed American politics, with presidential visits to slave factories on the west coast of Africa, congressional hearings, legislative apologies, law suits and, of course, the vexed matter of reparations. In such an environment, slavery and its role in Maryland's history—as well as the state's curricular mandate—demand that chattel bondage be addressed in classrooms and other forums. This *Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland* provides a brief, but comprehensive, overview of the history of slavery in the state. Built upon the most recent scholarship, this *Guide* offers teachers and students a starting point with which to begin their own exploration of an institution that, in so many ways, has made their world.

500 Dollars Reward,

For the following Runaway Negroes, if brought to me or secured so that I get them all, or 100 Dollars for either of them---viz.

Sam, Nathan, Boatswain, Henny and Cyrus.

SAM ran off four years ago—He was an accomplished House Servant—Black—about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, bow-legged, well made and very active—walks with a quick and short step—he had a scar low on his jaw (believed the left.) He is now about 24 years of age. Sam is no doubt employed as a house servant in some private house or tavern—or he may be a gentleman's body servant.

NATHAN ran off in August 1812. He is about 45 years of age, and supposed to be 5 feet 7 inches high, very black and not well made, but moves briskly. He was a Gardener and Coachman, and waited in the house. He took snuff, was addicted to drink, and when in liquor was very talkative and good humoured, elipt his words and laughed a good deal. He has been seen often in Jersey, Philadelphia and Delaware, since he ran off—He is probably employed about a garden or stable.

BOATSWAIN and HENNY are man and wife, both black—ran away 4th September, 1814. He is 27 years old, about 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, likely, well made and strong; speaks quick and thick, and had a great many bumps in his face, he is apt to stammer when first spoken to.—Henny is 23 years old, of rather a meek and downcast look, but she has a high temper, and very thick lips. She is of common size, and good figure, very healthy, and never had any children. She had, it is believed, a scar or two on one arm, perhaps the left. Boatswain and Henny are both field negroes, but capable of being made any thing.

CYRUS ran off 7th March, 1815. He is a house servant and a good gentleman's servant; black, 21 years old; bold but civil in his manners, fond of dress, speaks quick and rather thick, bow-legged, well set, about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, and walks with great activity and pride. He often wears a short jacket; he rides well.

All the above servants are remarkable for their cunning and sagacity. It is not necessary to mention their cloathing, as they all took a great variety with them, which they will change. They will most probably also change their names. The above reward will be given by the subscriber for all or either of them, and all reasonable charges paid.

All the above servants ran off without cause or suspicion.

Robert H. Goldsborough,

Easton, Talbot County, E. Shore, Maryland

August 12th, 1815.

D-2085-51-5-1A

Figure 2: 1815 Reward poster for runaway slaves

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From the colony's founding in 1634 until the state abolished slavery in 1864, enslaved Africans and African Americans were important in shaping Maryland's history. The commodities they produced provided the foundation for Maryland's economy and formed its society. Slaves labored on the tobacco plantations that fueled the colony's economic growth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The fortunes amassed from the labor of enslaved workers allowed Maryland's gentry to dominate colonial politics and propelled some to national prominence. By the nineteenth century, slaves could be found in every corner of Maryland: slaves labored in Cecil County's iron furnaces; enslaved farmhands harvested wheat in Washington County; and skilled slave artisans like Frederick Douglass caulked ships in Baltimore's harbor. During the Civil War, African Americans reclaimed their freedom, but the weight of slavery's history was not easily obliterated, as slavery continued to cast a long shadow over the state. Blacks have endured poverty and discrimination into the twenty-first century. Slavery's influence can still be felt, as the recent debates about the state song and reparations demonstrate. In 2000, recognizing slavery's importance to Maryland's history, the legislature created the Commission to Coordinate the Study, Commemoration, and Impact of Slavery's History and Legacy. Seven years later,



Figure 3: Maryland, ca. 1671

both houses of the Maryland legislature and the Annapolis City Council officially expressed their “regret for the role Maryland played in instituting and maintaining slavery.”

As the official apologies affirm, slavery is now recognized as a great crime, but, for most of human history, few considered it either illegal or immoral. Slavery flourished in ancient Greece and Rome and was recognized by the Bible, Koran, and other sacred texts. Customs and law in Africa, Europe, and the Americas justified slavery and the trade in human beings. When Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans came together in the fifteenth century, each had knowledge of the institution of chattel bondage. Familiar with slavery and accustomed to a world of social hierarchies,

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the people of Africa, Europe, and the Americas sold slaves and purchased them without fear of violating either the laws of God or of man. To the European colonists who settled in Maryland, the enslavement of Africans and sometimes Native Americans and the establishment of a society based upon slave labor required no special justification. They acted in a manner familiar to men and women throughout the Atlantic world of their day.

Over time, slavery wore many faces in Maryland. The lives of enslaved black men and women in 1650 bore little resemblance to those living in 1750 or 1850. Slaves living in different parts of the state had diverse experiences, and former slaves often commented on slavery's diversity. George Ross, who had been enslaved near Hagerstown, highlighted one of the differences between northern and southern Maryland when he observed, "Down in Prince George's County... they are a little harder than they are in the upper part of the State."

A Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland traces slavery's history from the founding of George and Cecil Calvert's colony through the American Civil War and is organized around three broad questions:

Figure 4: Woodcut depicting agricultural work in antebellum Maryland

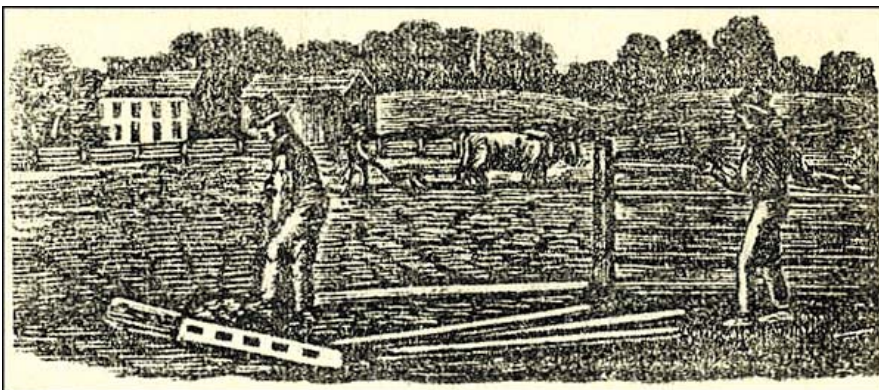


Figure 5: Cecil Calvert, grandson and slave boy, 1670

- Why did Maryland's landholders shift from a reliance on indentured servants to slaves in the late seventeenth century and what were the implications of that shift?
- How and why did slavery evolve during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?
- Why did slavery decline following the American Revolution and how did that decline shape Maryland society during the nineteenth century?

In considering these questions, this *Guide* also examines how enslaved men and women navigated the difficult years of bondage and how, in the process, they created families and communities, institutions and ideologies which—when the moment arrived—allowed them to seize their freedom.

I. The Beginnings of Maryland Slavery

On November 22, 1633, English colonists sailed for the Chesapeake Bay, where George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, had requested ten million acres to establish a colony. Crammed into the *Ark* and the *Dove*, these settlers survived a harrowing Atlantic passage. Their arrival in the winter of 1634 marked the beginning of permanent European settlement in Maryland, but not the beginnings of slavery, which was already well ensconced in the western hemisphere.

By 1634, a plantation system that employed enslaved labor to grow exotic crops—tobacco, rice, coffee and, most importantly, sugar—for an international market flourished throughout the Atlantic world. During the three centuries prior to Columbus’s arrival in the New World, Europeans established plantations in and around the Mediterranean, crossed the great ocean, and gained a foothold on the coast of Brazil and then in the Antilles. Although planters cared little about the nationality or race of their slaves, they became increasingly dependent upon Africans. Thus, long before the settlement of Maryland, the plantation system based on enslaved African labor had been established.

Despite slavery’s importance to the economies of other New World colonies, the institution remained marginal in Maryland during most of the seventeenth century. Indentured English and Irish servants outnumbered enslaved Africans until the 1690s. Black people comprised a small minority

—less than 10 percent—of the colony’s population. Moreover, not all of these were slaves; some labored as indentured servants and others had gained their freedom.

Historians have labeled the colony’s black men and women Atlantic Creoles, because of their origins in the larger Atlantic world. Most came from the Caribbean islands, while some were born elsewhere in the Americas. Many spoke English, practiced

Christianity, and were familiar with English law and trading etiquettes. Mathias de Sousa, a man of mixed racial origins, accompanied Father Andrew White, one of the first English settlers to Maryland. Another of the early black arrivals, John Baptiste, successfully petitioned the Maryland Provincial Court for his freedom in 1653.

Although purchased as laborers and worked hard by their owners, these Atlantic Creoles formed families, joined churches, and incorporated

themselves into Maryland society. Living and working alongside white indentured servants and trading among themselves and with others (both free and enslaved), they accumulated property. Like de Sousa and Baptiste, they secured their freedom. In 1676, Thomas Hagleton, who was born in Africa but spent time in England, won his freedom in court. Others purchased their liberty, and many more received it as a gift from their owners. Free black men and women also migrated into the colony from Virginia. Together, such men and women composed black Maryland’s Charter Generation.



Figure 6: Artist’s rendition of Mathias de Sousa

II. The Plantation Revolution

The last decade of the seventeenth century witnessed a profound transformation of Maryland society and, with it, a change in the character of slavery. In 1689, following a revolt against Calvert family rule, Maryland planters took control of the colony, consolidated their grip on political power, expanded their landholdings, and increased their need for laborers. At the same time, economic and political developments in Europe disrupted the supply of indentured servants, prompting planters to turn to African labor, most of it imported directly from the continent. The end of the English Royal African Company's slave trade monopoly in 1698 also made it easier for Maryland planters to obtain Africans. African slavery, which had been legalized in a series of laws starting in the 1660s, grew rapidly, and black slaves replaced white indentured servants as the primary source of plantation labor.

The nature of the trans-Atlantic slave trade changed. Slaves no longer dribbled into Maryland in small numbers carrying knowledge of the languages, religions, and trading etiquette of the larger Atlantic world. Rather, they entered the colony by

Figure 7: Illustration of captured Africans being led in coffle to slave ship

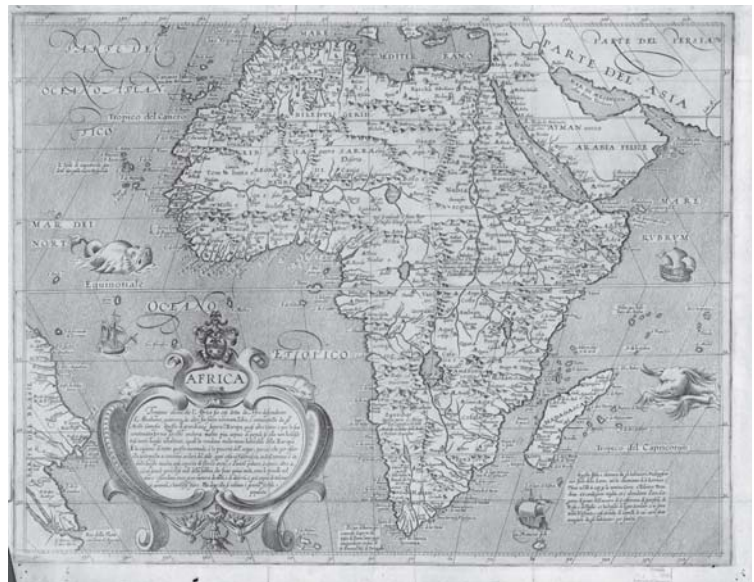


Figure 8: Africa, 1600

the boatful, stuffed into the holds of ships under the grimmest of conditions. While fewer than one thousand Africans arrived in Maryland between 1619 and 1697, nearly 100,000 disembarked during the three quarters of a century prior to the American Revolution. By 1755, about one third of Maryland's population—in some places as much as one half—was derived from Africa, mostly from the interior of the continent. The colony became as much an extension of Africa as of Europe.

The men and women dragged across the Atlantic were called "Africans." But they were not Africans when they boarded the slave ships. Rather, they were members of particular nations—Angolans, Igbos, and Mande, for example—each with its own political hierarchy, social structure, traditions, and culture. Some were matriarchal and others patriarchal. Some Africans labored as farmers, worked as village-based artisans or merchants, or served as soldiers. Most had been free, but some had been slaves. They wove different kinds of cloth, made different kinds of pottery, smelted different kinds of metals, sang different songs, and worshipped different gods.

For the most part, Maryland planters cared little about the origins of their slaves, and those who did had but small ability to get the slaves they wanted. Nonetheless, the workings of the inter-

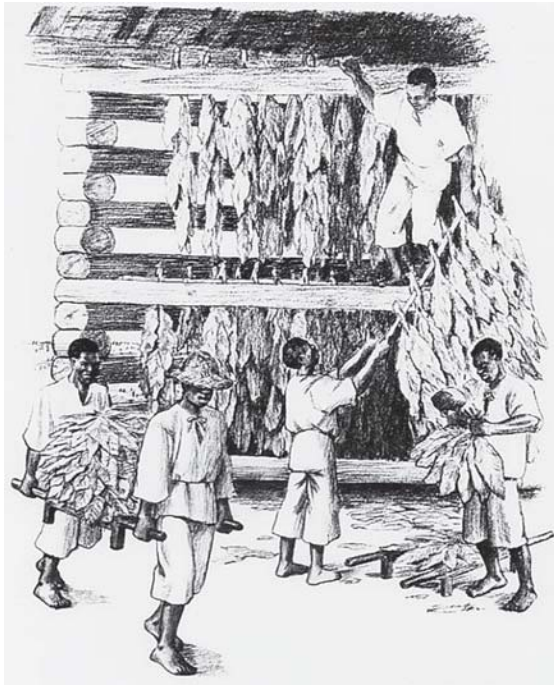


Figure 9: Enslaved blacks working in a tobacco barn

national trade gave Maryland slaves a unique national or ethnic profile. Although the Africans who came to Maryland derived from all parts of the continent, the vast majority—some three quarters—originated in the Windward and Gold coasts of West Africa; in particular, Igbo culture deeply influenced black life in the colony.

The advent of the slave plantation—what has been called the Tobacco Revolution—had a devastating effect on black life in Maryland. Members of the Charter Generation decamped or were swallowed by the massive wave of African imports. Under the new system, few black people gained their freedom and, in the half century prior to the American Revolution, the proportion of black people enjoying freedom declined from one in four to one in twenty-five. Planters put the newly arrived Africans to work in primitive inland plantations, where the largely male population lived lonely lives without friends or families. Driven to work at a feverish pace, slaves suffered grievously. Deadly diseases, for which newly arrived Africans had little resistance, killed them at a murderous rate. The sexually imbalanced population—in part a product of the planters' preference for slave

ADVERTISEMENTS. 3

J. M. WILSON
 HAVING REMOVED TO THE
CORNER OF ESPLANADE & MOREAU STS.
NEW ORLEANS.

Will keep on hand and be constantly receiving during the season,
 LARGE SUPPLIES OF

MARYLAND
 AND
VIRGINIA NEGROES;

CONSISTING OF
 Field Hands, House Servants, Cooks,
 Seamstresses, Washers and Ironers,
 Mechanics, &c,

ALL OF WHICH WILL BE SOLD
LOW FOR CASH,
 OR, ON TIME, FOR GOOD CITY ACCEPTANCE.

PLANTERS AND PURCHASERS
 Generally are respectfully invited to
 Call and Examine before Purchasing elsewhere.

Figure 10: Sale notice for slaves in Maryland and Virginia

men—could not form families. During the first decades of the eighteenth century, the fertility rate of the black population declined and its mortality rate increased as the harsh regimen of tobacco agriculture transformed Maryland into a charnel house for black people.

Violence, isolation, exhaustion, and alienation led African slaves to profound depression and occasionally to self-destruction. But enslaved people also contested the new regime. Resistance took a variety of forms. Slaves refused to accept the names given to them by their owners, secretly retaining their African names and customs. Some slaves ran away, often moving toward the backcountry in large groups to reestablish African society in the New World. Others paddled into the Atlantic, pointing their canoes eastward toward Africa.

Some confronted their owners directly in bloody frays. Yet others used guile rather than their muscle. They destroyed livestock and farm equipment and feigned ignorance, leading one English visitor to proclaim, “Let an hundred Men shew him how to hoe, or drive a Wheelbarrow and he’ll still take the one by the bottom, and the Other by the Wheel.” Yet, despite their best efforts, slaves could not topple the planters’ regime.

III. Africans to African Americans

Sometime during the 1740s, Maryland slavery began to change yet again. This transformation, nearly invisible at first, would permanently reshape black life in Maryland. As enslaved Africans developed immunities to the diseases of the Americas, they lived longer. Planters, seeing the advantage of an indigenous, reproducing labor force, imported women as well as men so that the ratio of men and women in the slave population struck an even balance. As the sex ratio flattened, black men and women again established families. Planters gave women some time off during the last trimester of pregnancy and the black population began to increase naturally.

Figure 11: Watercolor painting of Hampton Mansion, Baltimore County, Maryland



Figure 12: Illustration of slave families on a plantation

With the growth of an African American population, planters relied less on the trans-Atlantic slave trade to replenish their labor force. By the middle of the eighteenth century, few Africans were entering the colony and the black population was largely native born. Maryland lawmakers officially ended the colony’s participation in the international slave trade in 1774, but, in fact, the trade had all but ceased by mid-century. On the eve of the American Revolution, 90 percent of the colony’s enslaved population was native born, and black people completed the process of transforming themselves from Africans to African Americans.

African American slaves differed from their African forebears in important ways. Fluent in English and familiar with the countryside, they developed skills that propelled some into the artisan class and allowed them to create their own small independent economies. The so-called slave economy—raising stock and barnyard fowl, working gardens and provision grounds, and crafting baskets, pots, and other saleable items—provided the material basis for slave community life. Families knit themselves into networks of kin that spread across the Maryland countryside, creating complex social connections, patterns of belief, and recognized leaders.



Figure 13: Illustration of a burial ceremony among slaves

IV. Slave Life in Maryland in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

“Tobacco, as our staple, is our all, and Indeed leaves no room for anything else,” wrote Benedict Leonard Calvert in 1729. More than any single aspect of slave life, the cultivation of tobacco shaped the experience of Maryland’s black people. Since tobacco could only be grown in small patches, planters divided their slaves into small squads and spread them out across the countryside. Although the great slaveowners maintained large home plantations with great houses and numerous outbuildings that housed artisan shops of all sorts, most agricultural laborers worked and lived in small units called “quarters” that were scattered about Maryland’s landscape. Tobacco exhausted the soil, so these quarters had to move frequently. The mobility of the slave quarter and the small size of units of production meant the slaves were always on the move. Visiting was a common occurrence among the enslaved, especially since many husbands and wives lived in separate quarters.

Although quarters were often supervised by a white overseer, planters frequently turned their management over to an elderly or trusted slave.

The presence of slave patriarchs or matriarchs on the quarters increased the independence of enslaved blacks, allowing them a great degree of control over their domestic and religious lives. Joining the memory of Africa with the circumstances of life in Maryland, African Americans began to create their own society, different than that of Africa and different than that of their white overlords, but connected to both. The unique character of African American life could be seen in all aspects of slave culture from the way black

people prepared their food to the way they buried their dead. Evidence from slave cemeteries suggests that slave communities used the burial of a loved one as a time to assert their collective identity, create bonds among themselves, and re-establish links to remembered African customs.

V. The Revolution in Black Life

The American Revolution again transformed the lives of African Americans in Maryland. Although slavery survived the upheaval unleashed by the Revolutionary War, the institution of chattel bondage underwent sweeping changes as Maryland became a state in the new American Republic. Amid the turmoil, black men and women found opportunities to challenge slavery and reclaim their freedom.

Military necessity forced the opposing armies to seek black military laborers and soldiers. Recognizing slavery’s importance to the Chesapeake’s economy and the potential value of black soldiers, the British government acted first. In early November 1775, Virginia’s royal governor, Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation that offered freedom to the

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indentured servants and slaves of rebellious planters. Although the number of enslaved black men and women who responded to Dunmore's proclamation was small—historians estimate that fewer than one thousand slaves escaped under the governor's edict—his order echoed throughout the Chesapeake. While their masters denounced British tyranny, slaves renounced their owners by flocking to British lines, where they found refuge and freedom. The approach of British forces encouraged bondsmen and women to escape. In 1780, when British warships sailed into the Chesapeake, a desperate planter wrote to Maryland Governor Thomas Sim Lee, cautioning that, "If a stop is not put to these Crusers I am Convinced that all our most Valuable Negroes will run away." Indeed, by the end of the American Revolution, some five thousand Chesapeake slaves had escaped to the British. Many of these slaves enlisted in the military struggle against their former owners. In Virginia, Lord Dunmore organized fugitive slave men into an "Ethiopian Regiment," which battled American forces in 1775 and 1776. Others waged a guerrilla war against slaveholders. On the Eastern Shore,

Figure 14: Artist's rendition of British soldiers reading Lord Dunmore's proclamation



Figure 15: Drawing of fugitives escaping from the Eastern Shore of Maryland

fugitive slaves joined bands of marauding outlaws (many of whom were white) and attacked plantations.

American military officers and politicians were slow to recruit slaves or even free blacks. Maryland's tobacco planters had invested heavily in slavery, and they were reluctant to surrender their valued property or to take actions that might threaten slavery's survival. By 1780, however, military necessity forced them to reconsider. Unable to recruit enough white soldiers for Continental and state service, the legislature agreed to accept slave volunteers, provided that they had their owners' permission. The following spring, Maryland lawmakers subjected free blacks to the draft.

Changes on the battlefield soon affected life on Maryland's plantations and farms. Slaves became increasingly unruly, and fear of slave insurrections shot through the slaveholding class. The slaveholders' authority, once absolute, unraveled as slaves encountered black and white outlaws, marauding redcoats, and American recruiting officers. Declining commodity prices, which ruined many planters and rendered them unable to clothe and feed their slaves, further weakened the masters' authority. As conditions on the plantations worsened, many slaves fled.

Other changes that accompanied the war transformed slave life. The disruption of international tobacco markets forced planters to become more self-sufficient. Unable to purchase British manufactured goods, planters trained slave men and

women to fashion barrels, weave cloth, and smelt iron. The skills that enslaved artisans acquired during the American Revolution imbued them with a new confidence. Some hired their own labor with—and sometimes without—their owners' permission. Planters also turned from tobacco to the production of food stuffs, growing corn and small grains. Mixed farming required fewer slaves than tobacco monoculture, encouraging slaveholders to sell some slaves, hire others, and occasionally free others.

VI. Slavery and Freedom in the New Nation

The combined pressure of the American Revolution and the decline of the tobacco economy forced Maryland's lawmakers to consider slavery's place in the new Republic. To the north, slavery was fast collapsing under the weight of the egalitarian promise of the Declaration of Independence. Even before the war ended, constitutional conventions, legislatures, and courts abolished slavery in New England. Lawmakers in Pennsylvania passed a gradual abolition act in 1780, and—after considerable delay—New York and New Jersey followed. Antislavery forces—a combination of evangelical and secular egalitarians—pressed their case in Maryland, bringing the question to the floor of the state legislature several times in the 1780s and 1790s. Slavery survived abolitionist challenges in Maryland, but it did not survive unscathed.

When the state refused to act, individuals moved on their own. Manumissions increased during the 1780s, and grew even more numerous when, in 1790, the legislature allowed slaveholders to free their slaves by will as well as deed. Successful escape itself

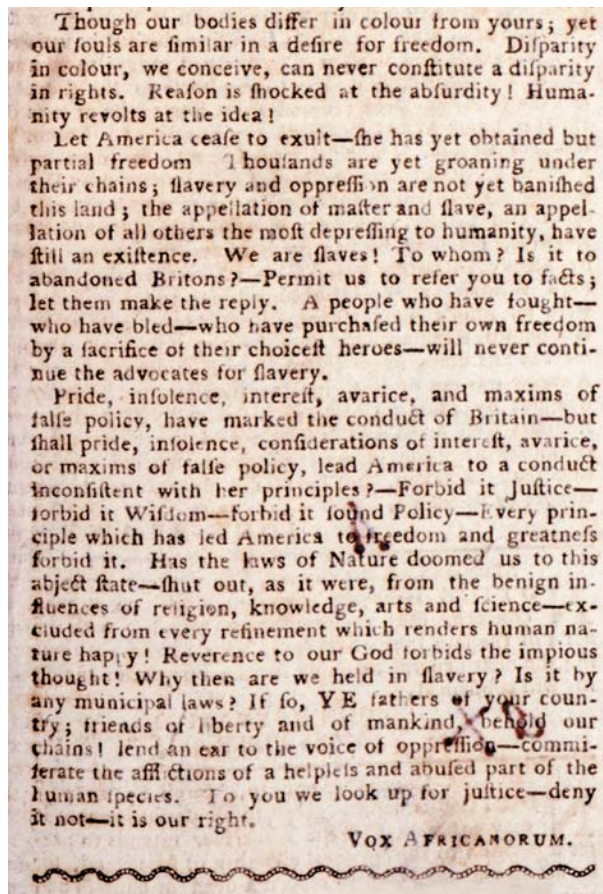


Figure 16: Article by Vox Africanorum from the May 15, 1783 Maryland Gazette (MSA SC 2311-18)

became easier as the number of black people enjoying freedom grew. The greatly enlarged free black population aided friends and relatives in the purchase of their liberty and, when that was not possible, they often assisted them in making their escape.

Emboldened by revolutionary ideology, newly freed blacks pressed for greater civil and political rights, publishing a plea for freedom on May 15, 1783 in the *Maryland Gazette* a few months before the removal of the United States capital to Annapolis.

In Baltimore, free black Thomas Brown campaigned for the Maryland House of Delegates. Although he was defeated, Brown's bid for office suggests the powerful impact of the American Revolution. Indeed, Brown based his campaign on his commitment to the revolutionary movement. In a letter to Baltimore's voters, Brown noted that he had been "a zealous patriot in the cause of liberty during the late struggle for freedom and independence, not fearing prison or death for my country's cause."

Still, at century's end, slavery remained deeply entrenched in Maryland, and slaveholders continued to be a powerful force in the state's economic and political life. As abolitionist sentiment waned, the defenders of slavery seized the initiative. The legislature strengthened slavery and circumscribed free blacks' liberty. Fearing that free blacks would subvert the extant racial order, legislators enacted a series of laws that limited their civil and political rights. In 1796, the General Assembly prohibited free blacks from testifying in freedom suits. That same year, the legislature passed strict vagrancy laws, allowing county governments to sell unemployed free blacks into terms of servitude and to apprentice their children to white planters. Six years later, lawmakers disfranchised black men. There would be no Thomas Browns in the Maryland State House.

Figure 17: 1812 Manumission Record, Anne Arundel County, Maryland

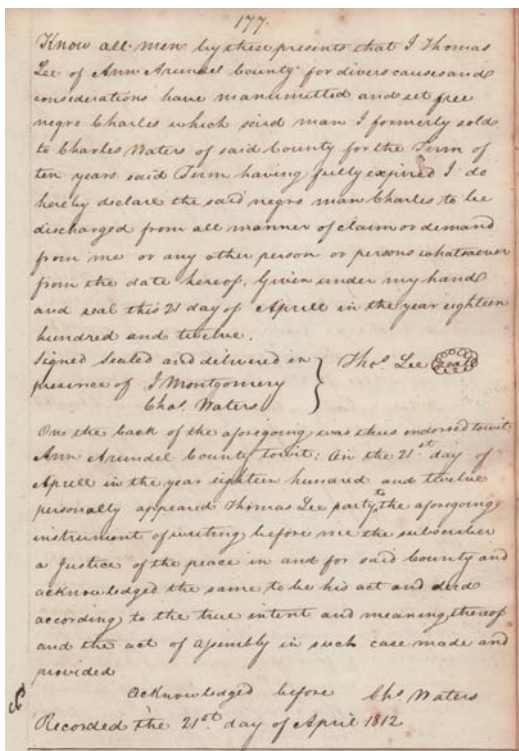


Figure 18: Seaman George Roberts who served aboard the *Chasseur* during the War of 1812

VII. The War of 1812 in the Chesapeake

By the 1820s, the revolutionary upheaval that had moved the state to the edge of abolition was becoming a distant memory. But, as the nation edged towards another war with Britain, black people —enslaved and free—again sensed new opportunities to appropriate their freedom. When British forces sailed into the Chesapeake Bay in 1813, black men and women seized the main chance.

British warships attracted hundreds, if not thousands, of slaves. An estimated three to five thousand Maryland and Virginia slaves fled to the British, and Maryland's leaders again feared for slavery's future. While Maryland planters fretted about the growing number of fugitives, the British enlisted them as pioneers and guides. On Tangier Island, they trained a small "Corps of Colonial Marines," consisting entirely of escaped slaves. These soldiers fought in numerous actions against American forces and were praised for "their great spirit and vivacity, and perfect obedience" and their "extraordinary steadiness and good conduct

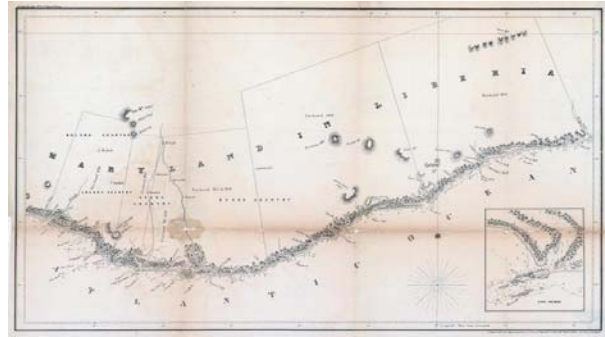
Figure 19: Liberia, 1853

when in action against the enemy.” A Washington newspaper reported that fugitive slaves became pilots while a British officer noted that former slaves often exclaimed “me free man, me got cut massa’s throat, give me musket.”

At war’s end, between three to five thousand black men and women received their freedom from the British. However, in the years that followed, they faced a difficult struggle. A handful of refugees, including the “Colonial Marines,” was sent to Bermuda, where they served at an English naval base, while others found homes in the West Indies. The largest group of refugees—some two thousand former slaves—took refuge in Nova Scotia. Some of these men and women would later migrate to England and then to the new colony of Sierra Leone on the coast of West Africa.

VIII. Maryland Diaspora

Changes in black life accelerated after the War of 1812, increasing in velocity during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Black Marylanders—free and enslaved—were uprooted in a Second Middle Passage and scattered throughout the North American continent and the larger Atlantic world. In some cases, these migrations were voluntary. The abolition of slavery in the northern states encouraged many to follow the North Star. By the outbreak of the Civil War, thousands of black Marylanders had settled in the northern United States and Canada. The law was used to curtail the unauthorized flight to freedom. Samuel Green, an itinerant Methodist minister from Maryland’s Eastern Shore who helped his sons escape to Canada, was sentenced to 10 years in the Maryland Penitentiary for owning a copy of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Other black



men and women sailed off to Africa, settling in a portion of the new colony of Liberia called “Maryland in Africa.” Yet not all black Marylanders left the state voluntarily. Instead, they were forcibly deported and relocated in the American southwest by migrating planters and slave traders.

The industrial revolution that swept across Europe and the northern United States created an insatiable demand for cotton. Lured by fertile land and the promise of great profits, planters from the seaboard states migrated south to meet that demand and made fortunes growing cotton. The Cotton Revolution created a seemingly limitless demand for slave labor in the southwest. Slave prices soared, and Maryland newspapers reported that “throughout the entire South there is a great demand for slaves, and enormous prices are paid for them.” By 1850, slave dealers were offering between \$1,200 and \$1,600 for healthy, young men. With the tobacco economy sagging and slavery losing its profitability, Maryland’s slaveholders saw opportunity in the sale of slaves south. Between 1830 and 1860, they sold an estimated 20,000 slaves to the cotton planters of the southwest.

The interstate slave trade had a devastating impact on black families. As the coffles trudged south, slave husbands and wives came to appreciate the fragility of the marriage bond and slave parents learned their children would disappear, never to be seen again. Sales south shattered approximately one slave marriage in three and separated one fifth of the children under fourteen from one or both of their parents. “I have seen hundreds of cases where families were separated,” recalled one Maryland slave. “I have heard them cry fit to break their hearts.”

Slaves struggled to keep their families intact, pleading with their owners to respect the sanctity of their households and, when that failed, threatening violence and flight. Some slaveholders yielded to their slaves' appeals, others did not. All, however, respected the slaves' threats, especially those within reach of the free states. According to one former slave, Maryland's location made slave masters reluctant to act because "it was so near the Northern States." Indeed, the ability of Maryland slaves to follow the lead of Frederick Douglass—to get on a train in Baltimore as a slave and disembark in Philadelphia as a free man—made the slaveholders into supplicants. When Harry Dale escaped from slavery, his frustrated owner placed a newspaper advertisement promising Dale that "if he will return home, I hereby pledge myself to let him choose a master, if he does not wish to live with me."

As the possibilities of bargaining with their owners increased, slaves entered into agreements that allowed them to buy their freedom. Delayed manumission or "term slavery"—agreements under which slaveholders pledged themselves to free their slaves after a certain number of years of loyal service—weakened the power of the owners, but did nothing to alleviate the harsh realities of African American life, free or slave.

IX. Black Life in the Nineteenth-Century Countryside

During the nineteenth century, Maryland's economy and political culture fractured along regional lines. In the state's northern and western counties, farmers became increasingly dependent upon diversified agriculture, in which slavery played a diminishing role. On the Eastern Shore,

Washington County 1820

| Total population | Male slaves | Female slaves | Total slaves | Free Black Males | Free Black Females | Total Free Blacks |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 23,075 | 1,699 | 1,502 | 3,201 | 289 | 338 | 627 |

Washington County 1860

| Total population | Male slaves | Female slaves | Total enslaved | Free Black Males | Free Black Females | Total Free Blacks | Total slaveholders |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 31,417 | 684 | 751 | 1,435 | 803 | 874 | 1,677 | 398 |

Figure 20: Graph of Washington County, Maryland population in 1820 and 1860

soil exhaustion and declining tobacco prices forced farmers to abandon tobacco, manumit their slaves, and cultivate their farms with free black and white farmhands. In the state's southern counties, however, tobacco and slavery remained the cornerstones of the agricultural economy, and planters retained their considerable economic and political might. The effects of these divisions grew more pronounced with time, so that the circumstances and aspirations of black people in different regions diverged sharply.

As they lived and worked alongside white non-slaveholders and free blacks, slaves became a diminishing portion of northern Maryland's mobile and flexible workforce. Farmers raising cereals and corn did not want to support workers throughout the year; instead, they hired workers during planting and harvesting seasons, then discharged the unneeded. In such an economy, slaves were a liability, not an asset. Northern Maryland's slave population then entered into a steady decline. In Washington County, the slave population peaked at 3,201 in 1820 and fell precipitously to 1,435 in 1860. A similar pattern emerged in Cecil County, where the slave population plummeted from 3,407 in 1790 to 950 in 1860. So dramatic was slavery's decline in the non-tobacco producing counties that one observer wrote: "in the grain and pastoral counties of Cecil and Allegheny, slavery appears to be undergoing a gradual extinction."

The decline of slavery also informed all aspects of black life on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The region's slaves seldom worked in large gangs, but labored independently or in small groups, often

alongside their owners, white farmhands, and free blacks. Slaves performed a variety of tasks during the growing season. Winter found slaves chopping firewood, slaughtering livestock, threshing grain, and hauling produce to markets in Baltimore and Washington. During the spring, summer, and fall, slaves planted corn, mowed grasses, tended livestock, and harvested crops. While performing these tasks, enslaved blacks acquired numerous skills and knowledge of the countryside. Slaves found opportunities to hire themselves, which allowed a considerable measure of independence.

Independence, however, came with a price. Because the region's slaveholdings were small, slaves could not forge communities and families on their home farms and often endured long separations from their friends and families. Like the black family, the black community was not defined by the boundaries of farms or plantations, but spread extensively over entire neighborhoods. Black communities often coalesced in the region's towns and meeting places, where slaves and free blacks gathered to socialize and worship on holidays and weekends. In Hagerstown, for example, the constable noted that the town's white residents were "very much aggrieved from the great concourse of negroes that frequently infest the public square, especially on the Sabbath Day."

Southern Maryland presented a stark contrast to the state's grain producing counties. Tobacco and slavery retained their vigor, as evidenced by census returns. In 1850, Maryland's southern counties—Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince



Figure 21: Nancy Campbell, manumitted slave from Washington County

George's, and Montgomery—were home to 50,000 whites, 9,500 free blacks, and over 48,000 slaves. In many ways, slave life remained unchanged between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The relentless demands of tobacco production dominated workers' lives. Slaves continued to labor in large gangs under an overseer's

lash. They had less independence and fewer opportunities to acquire skills, seek outside employment, or purchase their freedom than their counterparts elsewhere.

The economic divisions within Maryland ignited an intense debate about slavery's continued viability. Agricultural reformers argued that slavery was an outmoded, inefficient system that stunted Maryland's prosperity. Pointing to the declining white population in the state's southern counties, slavery's enemies claimed that the "peculiar institution" discouraged white immigrants and chased their sons and daughters from the state. These opponents of slavery hoped that gradual emancipation would attract white farmers and wage laborers. "The diminished use of slave labour leaves many vacant farms, and many large and uncultivated tracts of land," wrote one reformer, "which must (from the unprofitableness of slave labour) only be cultivated by free, white labour." Slaveholders were reluctant to abandon their human property, but they found their position increasingly untenable; declining tobacco prices, soil exhaustion, and their decreasing authority over their bondsmen and women forced many planters to consider emancipation. Although slavery remained important to the state's southern counties, it declined elsewhere in the state.

X. Black Life in Baltimore in the Nineteenth Century

Recalling his childhood in Baltimore, Frederick Douglass noted “a marked difference” between his treatment in the city and country. “A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation,” Douglass wrote. “He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation.” Although African Americans faced crushing poverty and hostility from their white neighbors, Douglass’s remarks accurately reflected the lives of many enslaved black people in Baltimore.

From the founding of the city, black workers, free and enslaved, played a critical role in the city’s economy, especially its maritime sector. They worked the city’s warehouses and wharves; labored in shops that produced ropes, sails, and barrels; and constructed ships in Baltimore’s sprawling shipyards. The widespread opportunities for employment made Baltimore a haven for fugitive slaves from the surrounding counties who could find work with few questions asked. The growing number of free blacks who might shelter a fugitive only made Baltimore that much more attractive as a destination for runaways. The steady erosion of slavery sent chattel bondage into a decline from which it never recovered. By 1860, Baltimore’s African-American population had swelled to 27,000, over ninety percent of whom enjoyed legal freedom.

Black Baltimoreans organized their community around a variety of civic and religious organizations. The thick web of associations provided black people with education, spiritual guidance, and a measure of economic security. Many were the product of white exclusivity. Denied entry to the city’s public schools, black men and women created



Figure 22: Poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

their own, such as the Watkins Academy for Negro Youth which the noted poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper attended through the age of fourteen. But other black institutions had their origins in the unique experience and needs of black people.

Benevolent and fraternal societies protected members against illness, unemployment, and injury, and assured a decent burial at death. Black men organized Free Mason and Order of Odd Fellows lodges and joined with black women to create a host of literary societies and lyceums.

The heart of the black community was, however, the city’s African American churches. Beginning with Daniel Coker in the 1790s, Baltimore’s black leaders played a critical role in establishing the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Such churches provided the foundation for the city’s black community; church buildings served as schools, halls for social gatherings, and platforms for political mobilization. By the eve of the Civil War, Baltimore blacks had created some two dozen churches of various denominations.

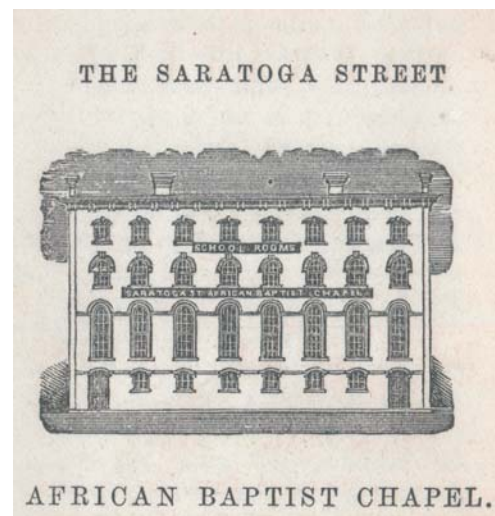


Figure 23: Saratoga Street African Baptist Chapel

XI. Jubilee! Civil War and Emancipation

At the outbreak of the Civil War in the spring of 1861, Maryland's elected officials steered a difficult course between preserving the Union and protecting slavery. As Governor Thomas H. Hicks declared, "I care nothing for the Devilish Nigger Difficulty, I desire to save the union, and will cooperate with the Administration in everything to that important result that is proper." While slave-holders struggled to retain their slaves, slaves chafed under their owners' authority and clamored for their freedom. Their unrelenting demands for liberty destabilized slavery and forced the state's political leaders—most of them slaveholders—grudgingly to embrace emancipation.

The arrival of federal soldiers during the first year of the war presented Maryland's slaves with numerous opportunities to escape from bondage. When a train carrying Union soldiers passed through Frederick, slaves secreted themselves aboard and escaped. Similarly, the encampment of federal soldiers near Hagerstown allowed one enterprising slave to flee from his owner, hire himself to a northern officer, and begin his life as a free man. But the Lincoln Administration—fearful that Maryland would desert the Union for the Confederacy—remained

committed to the preservation of slavery through 1861 and into 1862.



Figure 24: Rev. Daniel Coker



Figure 25: Unidentified soldier, United States Colored Troops

Still, the outbreak of the Civil War heralded the beginning of slavery's demise. Opportunities for escape abounded. Although slaves yet had no legal guarantee to liberty, they claimed it nonetheless. Writing to his wife from a federal camp, John Boston, a former Maryland slave, proclaimed, "this Day I can Address you thank god as a free man... I am free from the Slavers Lash."

Some federal officers were sympathetic towards the state's slaveholders, but most lost patience with slaveowners more concerned for their property than for the Union. They grew increasingly reluctant to return fugitives to their secessionist masters. Fugitive slaves—or contrabands—were valuable military laborers and servants, and soldiers recognized their importance to the cause. Soldiers assaulted and intimidated slaveholders who came into their encampments searching for fugitives. When a Charles County planter ventured into

a federal camp, the soldiers surrounded him, screaming "shoot him, bayonet him, kill him, pitch him out," and pelted him with stones. Slavery was on the defensive.

A Guide to the History of
Slavery in Maryland

The federal government's slow march towards emancipation strained slavery in Maryland. When Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia in April 1862, Maryland slaves found another safe harbor. Slaves from the countryside flocked to Washington where they found employment laboring for the army and navy and in military hospitals. It was but a short step from employing fugitive slaves to freeing them and allowing slave men to serve as soldiers in federal ranks, which Abraham Lincoln did in his Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. Lincoln excluded Maryland from the proclamation, but the president's edict nonetheless emboldened the state's enslaved blacks. "Our slaves are walking off... every day," observed a Baltimore newspaper. "The slightest coercion to compel moderate labor, and they are seized with a desire to walk off to a free state." Before long, black men from Maryland had their chance to enlist in the Union army.

Figure 26: Slave nurse with child



Figure 27: Arrival of freedmen and their families at Baltimore, ca. 1865

Soldiering provided the acid that dissolved slavery in the state. Federal recruiters demanded access to the state's black population, enlisting enslaved men by the thousands. Slaveholders opposed the enlistment of their slaves, despite the bounty they would be paid. Still, the policy found many white supporters, as slaves counted towards the state's draft quotas, thus saving white men from the draft. The small and middling-size farmers who employed free black workers had little liking for a policy that enlisted their workers while leaving the planters' labor force intact. By late 1863, many of the most die-hard slaveowners had conceded that slavery was beyond repair and—however reluctantly—accepted its demise. The willingness of Maryland slaves to exchange slavery for military service proved them right. Given the opportunity, slave men filled the ranks of Maryland's segregated regiments and joined the crusade against slavery. In November 1864, Maryland ratified a new constitution prohibiting slavery.

Emancipation was not the final chapter in the long story of slavery in Maryland. For more than two hundred years, slavery stood at the core of Maryland life. Slaves grew the tobacco, harvested the wheat, dug the coal, and smelted the iron upon which Maryland's economy rested. They helped build the C&O Canal and the B&O Railroad. They cared for and taught the children of their white owners. Slaves informed the struggle over

Art. 24. That hereafter, in this State, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: and all persons held to service or labor as slaves are hereby declared free.

Figure 28: Article 24 of the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland Constitution of 1864

Figure 29: Return of votes against the 1864 Maryland Constitution prior to the addition of absentee ballots cast by federal troops

The Late Vote on the Constitution.
 The following official result of the home vote For and Against the new Constitution of Maryland will be interesting for reference as the returns of the Presidential election come in from the several counties:

| | For. | Against. |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Allegany county..... | 1,839 | 954 |
| Anne Arundel..... | 281 | 1,360 |
| Baltimore city..... | 7,778 | 2,053 |
| Baltimore county..... | 2,001 | 1,860 |
| Carroll..... | 1,534 | 1,600 |
| Calvert..... | 57 | 634 |
| Charles..... | 13 | 978 |
| Cecil..... | 1,611 | 1,611 |
| Caroline..... | 479 | 423 |
| Dorchester..... | 499 | 1,486 |
| Frederick..... | 2,908 | 1,916 |
| Howard..... | 462 | 583 |
| Harford..... | 1,083 | 1,671 |
| Kent..... | 289 | 1,246 |
| Montgomery..... | 422 | 1,367 |
| Prince George's..... | 149 | 1,293 |
| Queen Anne..... | 320 | 1,577 |
| Somerset..... | 464 | 2,066 |
| St. Mary's..... | 99 | 1,078 |
| Talbot..... | 430 | 1,020 |
| Worcester..... | 486 | 1,658 |
| Washington..... | 2,441 | 1,633 |
| Total..... | 27,541 | 29,536 |
| | | 27,541 |
| Majority Against on Home Vote..... | | 1,995 |

freedom that gave the American Revolution and the Civil War their cosmic meaning. The determination of black men and women to maintain their humanity in the face of great inhumanity and force others to accept it transformed not only their lives but also the lives of all Marylanders.

The struggle for equal rights and opportunity would continue long after emancipation. In Maryland, efforts at re-enslaving young black men and women through a revival of a particularly onerous indentured servitude sanctioned by the Orphans Court, was reversed through the use of a writ of *habeas corpus* in the federal courts. In *ex parte Elizabeth Turner* (1867), a precedent which followed in principle Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney's *ex parte Merryman*, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase struck down an attempt to keep Elizabeth Turner in bondage. The battle for full, unfettered citizenship was far from over, however. Integration and enforcement of civil rights would not come for another century, standing as a lesson to all that moving from principle to practice in a democracy requires persistent vigilance and civic engagement at all levels and branches of government.

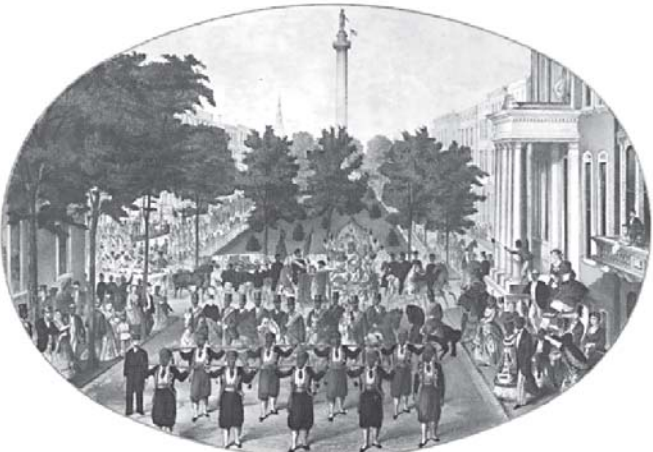


Figure 30: Depiction of a Baltimore parade celebrating the Fifteenth Amendment which gave black men the right to vote, 1870

Maryland State Archives S45G-E011968Y.TIF



For much of its nearly four hundred year history, Maryland was a society of slaves and slaveholders. The remnants of slavery's history can be found in all corners of the state from Frederick Douglass's birthplace on the Eastern Shore to the iron furnaces of western Maryland. Two important and accessible sites to understand something of slavery's presence in the state are the Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County and Hampton Mansion in Baltimore County. They represent the many historic places that feature the importance of slavery in the creation of Maryland society.

Figure 31: Sotterley Plantation, west view, c. 1914

Historic Sotterley Plantation and the Kane Family

Sotterley Plantation, a National Historic Landmark located in Hollywood, Maryland, is a local, extant example of an authentic tidewater tobacco plantation. Sotterley's resources include an estuarine shoreline, woodland trails, meadows, and colonial revival gardens. It has authentic eighteenth and nineteenth century architectural holdings highlighting plantation life, including a customs warehouse, smokehouse, slave cabin, corn crib, brick necessary, mansion, and schoolhouse. By preserving, researching, and interpreting diverse peoples, cultures, and environments, the historic site serves as a public educational resource, helping bring to life the nineteenth century regional economic divisions of Maryland. Encompassing three hundred years, the history of Sotterley addresses the ever-changing role of slaves within the operation of a tobacco plantation, their lives, culture, economic and historical contributions.

The story begins with James Bowles, son of a wealthy London tobacco merchant and member of Maryland's Lower House of Assembly, who purchased a 2,000 acre tract of land that would become Sotterley Plantation. In 1703, he built the original plantation house. Ownership was transferred to the W.H. Stone Briscoe family in 1826 and during this era the plantation had one of the largest communities of enslaved African-Americans in the southern Maryland region. While the traditional historical record contains scant information about members of this community, much is known about the Kane family due to the efforts of descendant and historian Agnes Kane Callum.



Figure 32: Front view of Sotterley's main house as it appears today

Hillery Kane was born a slave in St. Mary's County in 1818. He was born to Raphael Kane and Clara, slaves who were owned by different masters. Hillery lived with his mother on the plantation owned by William Neale of Jeremiah until he was about eight years old. At this time, his mother was sold to another plantation. In 1827, at the age of nine, Hillery was given to James J. Gough to settle a debt.

On Gough's plantation, Hillery learned the craft of plastering and also farming techniques. In 1837, he married fourteen-year-old Mariah, another slave on the plantation, and they had seven children. Frank, their youngest child, was born in 1848. That same year, slave owner J. J. Gough died, and his will dictated that the family be divided among Gough's seven children. J. J. Gough's estate was liquidated and Hillery Kane, his wife and children were put on the slave auction block in Leonardtown.

Hillery was sold to Colonel Chapman Billingsly for six hundred dollars. In 1849, Mariah and her children were sold to Dr. Walter Hanson Stone Briscoe, whose plantation, Sotterley, was situated next door to Billingsly. Hillery was permitted to

live at Sotterley with his family. Mariah died shortly after arriving at Sotterley and Hillery married a second time to fifteen-year-old Alice Elsa Bond. Together, they had thirteen children, all born in a small cabin in the slave quarter at Sotterley.

Elsa was a spinner and a laundress, and she taught these skills to her daughters. Dr. Briscoe maintained a boarding school for girls on the Sotterley property, and many young ladies would live in the manor house during the school year. Elsa would tend to their laundering needs. Although the slaves were not allowed to attend the school or learn to read and write, Hillery's son Frank was responsible for lighting the fire in the schoolhouse and keeping the classroom clean.

Hillery was often away from Sotterley, as his master, Colonel Billingsly, often hired him out for plastering jobs. Oral tradition relates that Hillery Kane plastered many of the finest homes in St. Mary's County. He also plastered the small cabin he lived in along the Patuxent River with his family. There is a story of hog killing time on the plantation, when slaves would collect the bristles that were scraped from the skin of the newly killed hog. These bristles, when mixed with clay and salt from the river served as important "chinking" between the cabin's rough hewn logs for the winter months—a kind of plaster.

Today, Sotterley plantation contains one of the few remaining original 1830s slave cabins located in the state of Maryland. This cabin is relatively large at eighteen feet by sixteen feet, but is still typical of slave housing just prior to the Civil War. The chimney appears to be original and would have been superior to many of the wooden chimneys in the homes of poor white people at mid-century. Its hewn and sawn pine plank walls represent a common method of Chesapeake construction for simple



Figure 33: Current view of Sotterley's slave cabin

agricultural buildings. However, John Michael Vlach, in his study of slave architecture, *Back of the Big House*, notes that this particular cabin is unusually well constructed—a testimony to the African Americans who built it. The frame is entirely hewn and sawn, rather than left partially unworked as in the manner of some cheaper quarters. As was typical, the interstices were daubed with clay and mortar. One notable difference from other such structures, earthfast posts were abutted to the plank walls to prevent them from buckling. The posts were held in place by pegs. This is the only known example of this method of stabilization. The cabin's partial visibility to the manor house is typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century tidewater plantations. Its proximity indicates that it likely housed slaves who worked in the manor house.

When Hillery Kane was with his family at Sotterley and not laboring in the fields, he made furniture including beds, chairs, and tables for the cabin. He also made, and played quite well, the banjo. Knowledgeable about medicinal herbs, Hillery was considered the "doctor" for the plantation's slaves. He used roots and herbs to treat a variety of ailments. The family also spent time outdoors, cooking their rations of fatty pork and corn which they received at the back door of the manor house on Saturdays, and hunting for rabbit, deer, and opossum to supplement those rations.



Figure 36. North portico, Hampton, 1936

Hampton National Historic Site

The story of Hampton National Historic Site in Towson, Maryland is the story of people—enslaved African Americans, indentured servants, industrial and agricultural workers, and owners. It is also the story of the economic and moral changes that brought riches and fame to some Marylanders and poverty and misery to others. When completed in 1790 by Captain Charles Ridgely, Hampton was the largest house in the United States. Set among beautifully landscaped grounds and gardens, it remains a showplace today. Behind the scenes was a large community of people who labored at the ironworks, in the fields, on the docks and ships, in gardens and orchards, and inside the mansion. They lived and worked in obscurity in return for shelter, rations of corn, pork, herring, flour, clothing, shoes, and perhaps—but not always—small grants of cash.

In colonial days, the Hampton labor force included indentured servants, mainly immigrants from the British Isles, who labored for a period of years until their passage fee to America was remitted. In addition, there were free artisans and tradesmen, convict laborers, and, during the Revolution, British prisoners of war. Families, including children, worked together. Most of these people eventually enjoyed some degree of social mobility—unlike enslaved people. Although Charles Carnan Ridgely freed most of his slaves upon his death in 1829, the era of forced servitude at Hampton remained until the Maryland Constitution of 1864 ended the practice—in the midst of the Civil War.

Slaves were present at Hampton from its beginnings and worked in every capacity. Hampton's



Figure 37: Current lawn entrance view of Hampton

enslaved population at its height numbered more than three hundred, making it one of the largest slave plantations in Maryland. Slaves were instrumental in building the mansion, and their work undergirded the gracious lifestyle of the Ridgelys. Enslaved people worked in both skilled and unskilled capacities; they were field hands, cobblers, woodcutters, limestone and marble quarriers, millers, ironworkers, blacksmiths, gardeners, and jockeys. Slaves also performed household chores including cleaning, cooking, serving food, and caring for children. The Ridgelys often paid many slaves for extra work in addition to their regular duties.

Slavery at Hampton was unusual for two reasons. First, the Ridgely's holding—unlike the typical Southern plantation—was a factory as well as a farm. Second, Hampton is very close to the free state of Pennsylvania and the city of Baltimore with its huge population of free blacks. Refuges for runaways were close by. It is very difficult to make an accurate estimate, but the Ridgelys enslaved literally hundreds of people—certainly over five hundred—over those years. The second owner of Hampton, Governor Charles Caman Ridgely, owned approximately three hundred and fifty slaves at his death, and manumitted all that he legally could. This is one of the largest manumissions in the history of Maryland, but it did not end slavery at Hampton. His son, John, purchased some seventy-seven or so more slaves and manumitted only one.

Researchers have been unable to find a single possession owned or a single piece of writing by a Hampton slave. Therefore, everything known about the lives of the slaves is derived from the voices of others, mostly white slave owners. Newspaper advertisements, family memoirs, business papers, and other records allow us to catch a glimpse of slave life at Hampton.

What then was the nature of slave life at Hampton? Did the slaves strum banjos and sing spirituals or were they too exhausted to do much more than eat, feed their families, and go to bed? How did the chronic discontent manifest itself? Hopes for freedom were totally impractical for many slaves until Charles Carnan Ridgely's manumission in 1829 and the general emancipation thirty-five years later. An occasional escapee made it into freedom, with the number of successful fugitives increasing sharply after mid-nineteenth century. But escape remained difficult and was not an option for most Hampton slaves, who were deeply attached to family and friends.

The biographies of two Hampton slave women—Nancy Davis and Lucy Jackson—suggest the range of attitudes among slaves and ex-slaves. Nancy emerged as the model slave to the Ridgelys—a strong personality, and favored for that, but loyal until death. Nancy came to Hampton from the adjacent Cowpens property with Margaretta Howard when she married John and Eliza E. R. Ridgely's son and heir, Charles (b. 1830). Nancy married a Hampton slave and became a much-beloved personal servant to the Ridgely children. Six photographs of her exist in the



Figure 38: Nancy Davis and her charge Eliza Ridgely

Ridgely archives, unique because she is the only slave who can be identified among thousands of family photographs. Following emancipation, Nancy stayed with the family. She became the only African American to be buried in the Ridgely family cemetery and has been advanced for decades as the typical Ridgely slave.

In contrast with Nancy Davis stands Lucy Jackson, who was purchased from Samuel Owings Hoffman for \$400 in 1838. The Ridgelys never recorded her age, but she was pregnant when bought which probably elevated her price from the average of about \$270 for a woman of child-bearing age at the time. A son, Henry, was born a month after her purchase, and she had another son, George in 1842. The latter died young and Lucy apparently talked the Ridgelys into burying him in the downtown Catholic cemetery and underwriting the bill, an audacious request. During her entire career at Hampton, Lucy served as a house servant, in continuous and close contact with family and, like Nancy, was accorded special privileges. In 1841, young Diddy Ridgely brought home a “three bright color comfort” for Henry when she attended school in Baltimore, and Henry was included in the yearly Christmas presents from the Ridgelys during his childhood.

But there the similarity of Nancy Davis and Lucy Johnson ends. In 1861, with the beginning of the war, Henry—then age twenty three—fled. That may have emboldened his mother, because Lucy was missing from the semi-annual clothing lists after May 1862, well before the 1864 Maryland emancipation. She did not return but instead,

in 1866, engaged a Washington lawyer to write the Ridgelys demanding the dispatch of property she claimed to have left behind. The letter revealed much of Lucy's previous hidden life in the Hampton household, for it claims that the property was given her by "her free Husband." A unique listing of the items claimed includes twenty-one dresses, including six of silk, six pairs of "White Lace Sleeves" and "furrs & muff." Whatever the validity of the claims, they nonetheless throw into relief a Lucy far from the traditional perception of the docile and contented slave. With better chances for successful flight than most, Lucy personified the discontent and desire for freedom that was typical of many slaves.

Hampton is the story of its people—many of whom were like Nancy Davis and Lucy Jackson. Scenes from Hampton's past include a colonial merchant shipper amassing thousands of acres of property along Maryland's Chesapeake shore; indentured servants casting molten iron into cannons and ammunition for the Revolutionary army; and enslaved people loading barrels of grain, iron,



Figure 40: Hampton's slave quarters, 1936


and timber onto merchant ships bound for Europe that would return with fine wines and luxury goods. A visit to Hampton offers a glimpse into their lives, how they intertwined, and how they were affected by changes. A wealth of artifacts and scenery recreates a world where, for the better part of three centuries, a community of hundreds of individuals played out the dramas of their own lives against the backdrop of America's development as a nation. For more information on Hampton National Historic Site, please reference its website, www.nps.gov/hamp/ 

Figure 39: John Jr., Louise, Louis, and Bryan





Slavery in Maryland & Its Legacy, 1634-2007



1634

200 settlers found St. Mary's City. Mathias De Sousa (Matt Das Sousa) arrives in Maryland aboard the *Ark*. As an indentured servant, De Sousa must face seven years of servitude to pay off his debts and earn his freedom.



1642

Mathias De Sousa (Matt Das Sousa) is the first person of African descent to sit in a legislative assembly in the English Colonies. In 1642 he votes as a freeman in the Maryland Proprietary Assembly.

1663/1664

Maryland legalizes slavery. Free white women who enter into marriage with a black slave are declared slaves for the duration of the life of their spouse. Imported Africans are given the status of slaves for life. Maryland passes a law prohibiting marriage between white women and black men. *An Act Concerning Negroes & other Slaues [sic], Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, September 1663/1664.*

1681

Maryland passes a law that children born to free black women and black children of white women would be free. *An Act concerning Negroes & Slaves, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, August/September 1681.*

1692

Maryland passes a law requiring white men to serve seven years of indenture for marrying or having children with African American women. African American men who have sexual relations with white women are also penalized. *The Act concerning Negroes and Slaves, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, May 10/June 9, 1692.*

1717

Marriage between white women and free Negro or mulatto men is forbidden. Any white man that shall intermarry with any Negro or mulatto woman, such Negro or mulatto shall become a slave during life, excepting mulattoes born of white women, who, for such intermarriage, shall only become servants for seven years. *Law relating to Servants and Slaves, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, May 28 - June 8, 1717 Bacon's Laws of Maryland, V.33; Chap. XIII; V.*

1731

On November 9, the black astronomer and mathematician Benjamin Banneker is born to free parents in Ellicott City, Maryland.

1767

Kunta Kinte (featured in Alex Haley's *Roots*) arrives in Annapolis as part of a cargo of slaves.

1774

Duties are placed on importation of Negroes into Maryland.

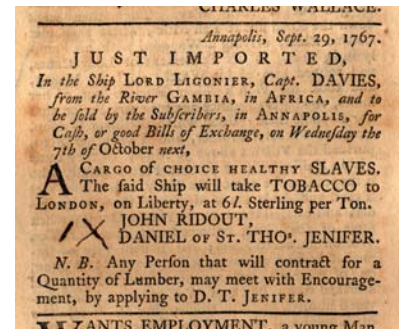
1775

In an attempt to intimidate rebellious colonists, Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, promises freedom to the slaves of disloyal masters.

American Revolution begins.

1776

Continental Congress declares independence from Great Britain.



Notice of slave auction, 1767

Figure 41: (Opposite page) Captured slaves walking in coffle

1780

Daniel Coker, black Methodist minister, is born in Frederick County.

Pennsylvania enacts a gradual emancipation law.

1783

Maryland prohibits the importation of slaves. Massachusetts outlaws slavery.

May 15, *Maryland Gazette* publishes ‘*Vox Africanorum*’ editorial on the inequality of the new nation promoting liberty and justice for all while keeping thousands enslaved.

1784

Connecticut and Rhode Island enact gradual emancipation laws.

1786

Maryland courts begin hearing petitions from enslaved blacks who claim their freedom based on descent from white women. These freedom suits are facilitated by a court ruling that oral testimony can be accepted as evidence in such cases.

1789

Anti-slavery advocates, including Charles Carroll of Carrollton, found the Maryland Society for the Relief of Poor Negroes and Others Unlawfully Held in Bondage. In 1789 and 1790, the organization unsuccessfully petitions the Maryland General Assembly to enact a gradual emancipation law. The organization also provides legal assistance to slaves petitioning for their freedom.

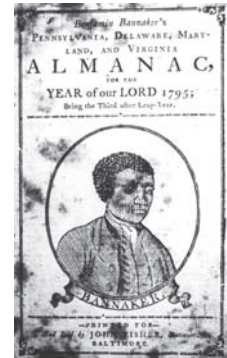
Josiah Henson, believed to be the inspiration for “Uncle Tom” in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is born in Charles County, Maryland.



Josiah Henson

1791

Benjamin Banneker publishes the first edition of *Banneker’s Almanac* and aids in the survey of Washington, D.C..



Banneker’s Almanac

Slaves and free blacks launch the Haitian Revolution. During the following decade, many displaced Haitian planters and their slaves settled in Maryland along with free people of color.

1792

Thomas Brown campaigns for the Maryland House of Delegates by placing an ad in the Philadelphia-based John Dunlap and David Claypoole’s *American Daily Advertiser*.

1793

Congress passes the first fugitive slave law, which allows for the prosecution of runaways and their return to their masters.

1796

Maryland courts declare that black testimony is inadmissible in freedom suits.

The Maryland General Assembly liberalizes the state’s manumission laws. Slaveholders can now manumit their slaves during their final illness and by will.

1798

Joshua Johnston, believed born 1765 in the West Indies, places an advertisement in the *Baltimore Intelligencer*. He is the first African American artist to receive widespread recognition.

1799

New York enacts a gradual emancipation law.

1802

Maryland’s General Assembly declares that free blacks cannot vote.

1804

New Jersey enacts a gradual emancipation law.

1806

On October 25, Benjamin Banneker dies.

1807-1808

Britain and the United States outlaw the Atlantic slave trade.

1818

Frederick Douglass is born in Talbot County, Maryland.

Author, clergyman, and abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward is born on Maryland's Eastern Shore.



Frederick Douglass

1822

Harriet Tubman is born in Dorchester County, Maryland.



Harriet Tubman

1825

Writer and abolitionist, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, is born in Baltimore to free parents.

1831

The Maryland Colonization Society forms to colonize Maryland blacks in Africa.

On August 21, Nat Turner leads slave revolt in Southampton, Virginia



Nat Turner

1832

In response to the Nat Turner Revolt, Maryland's legislature prohibits free blacks from entering the state. At the same time, the legislature bars free blacks from owning firearms without a certificate from county officials and outlaws the sale of alcohol, powder, and shot to blacks. The legislation also impinges upon black churches, as blacks can no longer hold religious meetings unless a white minister is present.

1833

Reeling from a massive slave revolt in Jamaica (1831) and bowing to abolitionist pressure, Britain emancipates 800,000 slaves in its remaining New World colonies.

1838

Frederick Douglass escapes from slavery in Baltimore.

1845

Frederick Douglass' autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is published.

1846

Rev. Charles Torrey dies in the Maryland Penitentiary. An abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor, he was among many who were arrested and imprisoned for aiding, enticing or assisting enslaved blacks to run away.

1848

Denmark and France abolish slavery in their overseas colonies.

1849

Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery. In the years that follow, she mounts numerous missions into Maryland's Eastern Shore to lead enslaved blacks to freedom.

1850

Congress enacts a strengthened Fugitive Slave Law as part of the Compromise of 1850. The law outrages northerners, who resent provisions requiring them to assist in the capture of runaway slaves.

1851

While attempting to reclaim his fugitive slaves at Christiana, Pennsylvania, Baltimore County farmer Edward Gorsuch is killed by free blacks. The “Christiana Riot” is an early example of armed resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law.

1852

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is published. The novel is a nation-wide success, selling over 300,000 copies.



Harriet Beecher Stowe

1854

Maryland’s legislature prohibits free blacks from leaving their employers before the completion of their contracts. Blacks may be arrested, imprisoned, and fined for abandoning their contracts.

1857

The U.S. Supreme Court hands down the infamous Dred Scott decision, which denies African Americans equal rights as citizens. The decision also states that Congress cannot restrict slavery anywhere, thereby allowing the geographic expansion of slave holding. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney of Maryland writes the decision.

1857

Rev. Samuel Green of Dorchester County is arrested for “knowingly having in his possession a certain abolition pamphlet called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.”

1859

John Brown launches assault on Harper’s Ferry from the Kennedy Farm in Washington County, Maryland, on October 16.



Kennedy Farm

1860

Elizabeth Keckley, former slave and seamstress to Mary Todd Lincoln and Varina Davis, wife of Jefferson Davis, begins to teach dressmaking classes to young African American women in Baltimore.



Elizabeth Keckley

Maryland General Assembly outlaws manumission by deed or will. At the same time, the General Assembly establishes a mechanism for free blacks to renounce their freedom and become slaves. In response to the worsening legal climate, many free blacks decamp for Pennsylvania and other northern states.

Abraham Lincoln is elected president.

1861

In April, the Civil War begins.



Abraham Lincoln

1862

In April, slavery is abolished in the District of Columbia

In September, the Army of the Potomac defeats General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Antietam near Sharpsburg, Maryland. The Union victory provides President Lincoln the opportunity to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

1863

Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, which frees all slaves in the territories currently in rebellion.

1864

On November 1, slavery is abolished in Maryland. *Maryland Constitution of 1864; Art.24.*

1865

Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders to General Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia at the Appomattox Court House.

Slavery is abolished in all of the states by the 13th Amendment.

1867

October 13, In *In re Turner*, federal courts strike down the practice of apprenticeships of black children, ruling that they were essentially involuntary servitude. (See p. 17; *In re Turner*, 24 F. Cas. 337 (D. Md., 1867).)

1868

The 14th Amendment is ratified validating citizenship rights for all persons born or naturalized in the United States.

Maryland does not vote to ratify.

1870

The 15th Amendment is ratified granting voting rights to all black men.

Maryland does not vote to ratify.

1895

On February 20, Frederick Douglass dies in Washington, D.C.

Excerpt from Senate Joint Resolution 6

“WHEREAS, Slavery and discrimination are utterly contrary to the principles 9 that this Nation and this State profess; and 10 WHEREAS, It is time for the State of Maryland to acknowledge the role the 11 State played in maintaining the institution of slavery and its attendant evils; now, 12 therefore, be it 13 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the State 14 of Maryland expresses profound regret for the role that Maryland played in instituting 15 and maintaining slavery and for the discrimination that was slavery’s legacy; and be it 16 further 17 RESOLVED, That the State of Maryland commits itself to the formation of a 18 more perfect union among its citizens regardless of color, creed, or race;”

1913

On March 10, Harriet Tubman dies in Auburn, NY.

1953

On April 13, Harriet Tubman’s restored home in Auburn, NY is memorialized by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

1959

April 28, 1959, Maryland Senate ratifies 14th Amendment.

1973

March 28, 1973, Maryland Senate ratifies 15th Amendment.

1988

Recognized as the Frederick Douglass Home by the National Park Service in 1962, the abolitionist’s Washington D.C. house is redesignated as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site on February 12.



Josiah Henson’s slave cabin

2006

January 6, 2006 - Montgomery County Planning Board agrees to buy the property and acre of land on which the slave cabin Josiah Henson lived in now exists.

2007

Maryland resolutions of apology for slavery are approved. On May 8, 2007, the Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., president of the Senate; and the Honorable Michael E. Busch, speaker of the House of Delegates, sign Senate Joint Resolution 6 and House Resolution 4.

On May 14, 2007, Mayor Ellen Moyer and the Annapolis City Council approve Resolution No R-17-07.

Resources for Studying Slavery in Maryland

Broad overviews of slavery in the North American colonies and the United States and works that put American slavery in the context of world history can be found in the following works:

Berlin, Ira. *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. London: Verso, 1997.

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Primary Sources

For the printed sources that historians use to better understand slavery there is no better place to begin than John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). Included in Blassingame's collection are dozens of interviews with former slaves from Maryland.



Figure 42: Harriet Tubman

Also, John W. Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, 5 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979-1992.

The Freedmen and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland has published hundreds of documents describing emancipation, the development of free labor, and the struggles of black soldiers. Culled from the holdings of the National Archives, the project's volumes include an array of primary sources describing conditions in Maryland during the Civil War and Reconstruction. For a sampling of the project's work, see Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War* (New York: The New Press, 1992).

Over the past decade, several universities and government agencies have constructed websites that make a wealth of primary sources available to the general public.

The Maryland State Archives posts numerous primary sources relating to slavery in Maryland including slave runaway advertisements, committal notices, court records, case studies, census data, interactive maps, pardon records, and jail dockets in its *Beneath the Underground* project at: <http://www.mdslavery.net/ugrr.html>

The Maryland State Archives also offers the *Documents for the Classroom* series online (<http://teachingamericanhistorymd.net/>) which includes facsimiles of original documents available for use by teachers and students. Topics in African American history include: *The Perils of Reading; In the Aftermath of 'Glory': Black Soldiers and Sailors from Annapolis Maryland, 1863-1918; Celebrating Rights and Responsibilities: Baltimore & the Fifteenth Amendment, May 19, 1870; The Road from Frederick to Thurgood: Black Baltimore in Transition, 1870-1920; From Segregation to Integration: The Donald Murray Case, 1935-1937; Is Baltimore Burning?; and Civil Rights in Maryland*

The interviews with former slaves and their descendents conducted by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the 1930s are an invaluable resource for historians of slavery. These interviews may be accessed by going to the Library of Congress's American Memory website <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/> and clicking on "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938" or "Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories." Among these interviews—which are arranged by state—are several with people who had been enslaved in Maryland.

The Documenting the American South Project www.docsouth.unc.edu at the University of North Carolina includes several slave narratives written by Marylanders, along with other primary sources describing slavery in Maryland. A partial list of the documents describing slavery in Maryland includes:

Ball, Charles. *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, as a Slave under various Masters, and Was One Year in the Navy with Commodore Barney, during the Late War.* New York: John S. Taylor, 1837.

Bluett, Thomas. *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa; Who Was a Slave about Two Years in Maryland; and afterwards Being Brought to England, Was Set Free, and Sent to His Native Land in the Year 1734.* London: R. Ford, 1734.

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Figure 43: Slave Cabin

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See Also:

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Slavery in Maryland

Figure List



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Photograph of Harriet Tubman from the scrapbooks of Elizabeth Smith Miller and Anne Fitzhugh Miller. (New York: Geneva, 1897-1911, section 16, no. 9, p. 47). National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Courtesy of Library of Congress Cover

Slave Nurse and Child, Courtesy of the Charles Schwartz Collection Cover

“Oh, mas’r, please do buy my daughter!” from Stowe, H.B. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or, Life among the Lowly*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1896), 394 Cover

Detail of *John Jr., Louis, Louis and Bryan*, Courtesy of Hampton National Historic Site Cover

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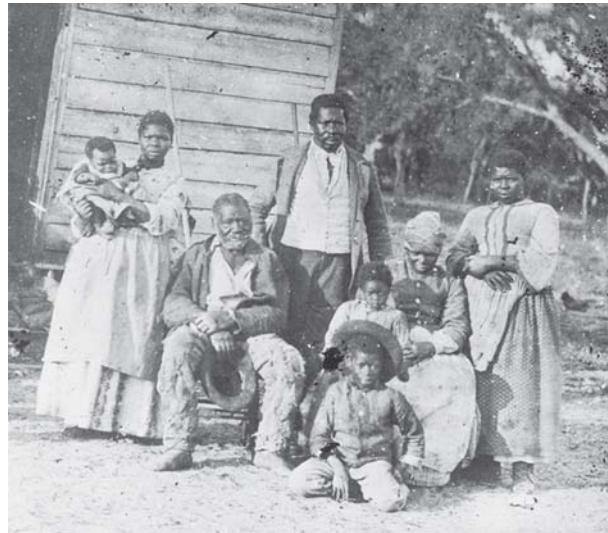


Figure 45: *Nineteenth century African American family*

“Josiah Henson” from *Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life*. (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1858), frontispiece.

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“Harriet Tubman.” Detail of photograph, Courtesy of the Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

“Nat Turner” from Woodson, Carter G. *The Negro in Our History*. (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1927).

“Harriet Beecher Stowe” from Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or, Life among the Lowly*. (Boston: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1896), frontispiece.

Kennedy farm in Washington County, Maryland from Historic American Buildings Survey Engineering Record, Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

“Elizabeth Keckley,” Courtesy of the Jackie Napoleon Wilson Collection.

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“Josiah Henson’s Slave Cabin,” Courtesy of Montgomery County Parks and Planning, <http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/>