

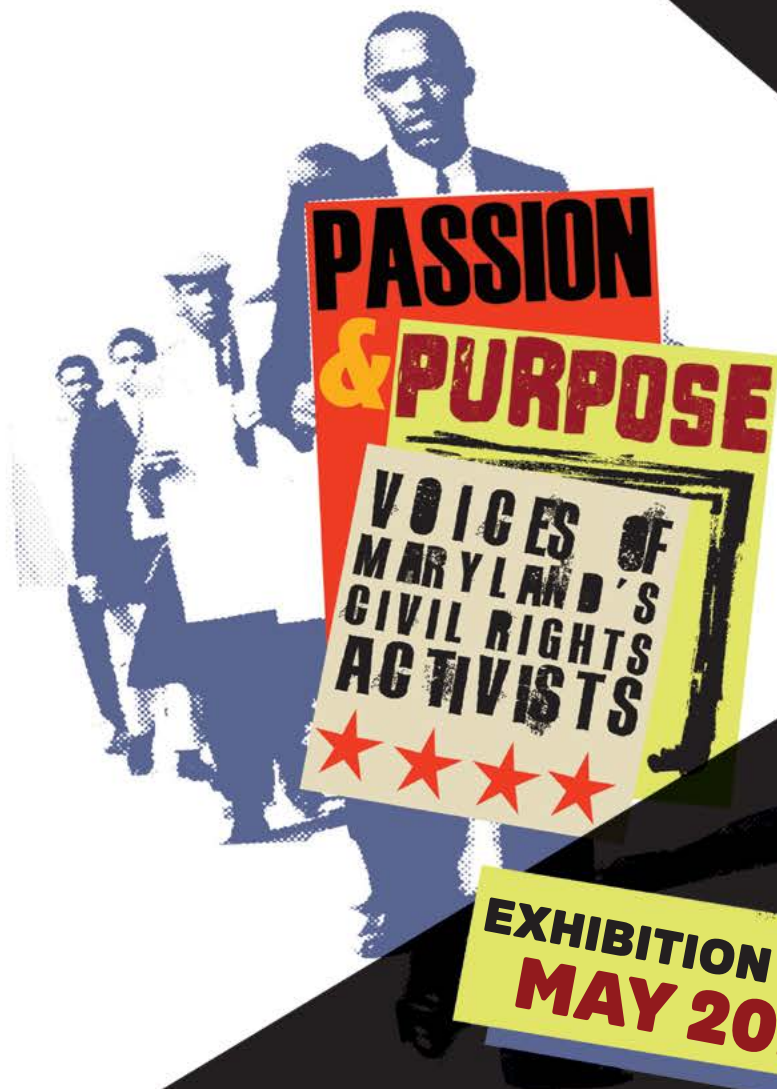
# MARYLAND

## HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

JOURNAL OF MARYLAND HISTORY AND CULTURE

FALL/WINTER 2021





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*REBECCA DORSEY RIDGELY* (1739–1812), oil on canvas by John Hesselius (1728–1778), c.1767.  
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# MARYLAND

## HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

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ALEXANDER H. LOTHSTEIN

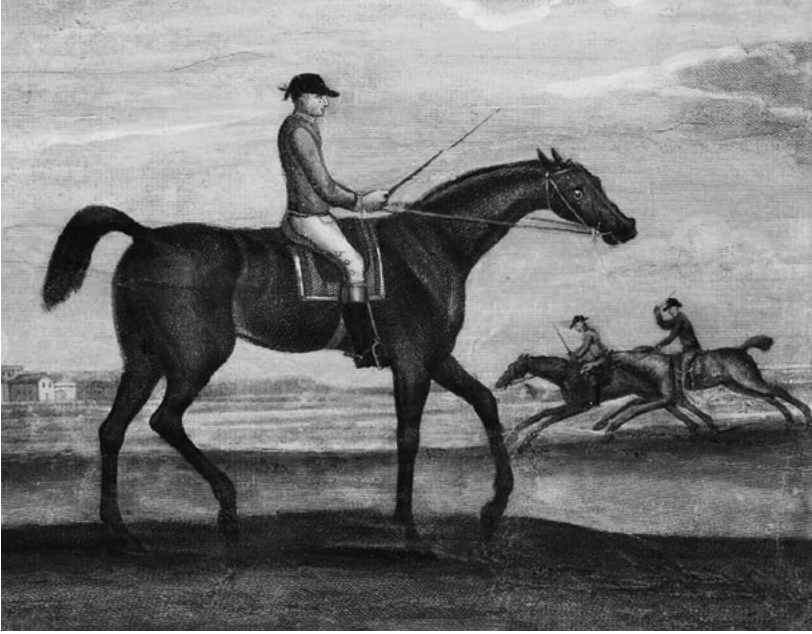




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# MARYLAND HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

JOURNAL OF MARYLAND HISTORY AND CULTURE

FALL/WINTER 2021



# From the Editor

MARTINA KADO, PHD

Dear readers,

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS, “Museums consistently rank among the most trusted institutions in the U.S.”<sup>1</sup> Proud to be part of this trusted group, at the Maryland Center for History and Culture we continue to work on raising our collections care and engagement with our patrons to the next level. We are thrilled to report that MCHC raised over \$23 million toward our *Shaping the Future of History* campaign, by far exceeding our initial goal of \$12 million. These funds will enable us to invest in our educational and visitor experience, access to our resources, and the sustainability of our organization so that it may continue to serve all those interested in Maryland history.

In this issue of the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Richard Bell’s “Border State, Border War” traces Maryland’s thorny antebellum years as a border state. By examining individual fates and broad patterns alike, Dr. Bell shows the channels established from freedom to enslavement and how networks that thwarted them operated. Dr. Bell is a Trustee of MCHC and Chair of the Education Committee. His article won the 2020 Joseph Arnold Prize for Outstanding Writing on Baltimore History, awarded annually by the Baltimore City Historical Society.

To illustrate the content of this insightful article for our readers, our Museum Learning Manager & Associate Curator Alexander Lothstein has curated a portfolio of images from MCHC’s Digital Collections. “Border State, Border War” was also published as a chapter in *The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered*, edited by Charles W. Mitchell and Jean H. Baker and published by Louisiana State University Press in 2021.

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1. American Alliance of Museums, *Museums and Trust 2021*, accessed September 30, 2021, [aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021](http://aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021).



“The ‘Expereance’ of Rebecca Ridgely: The Religious Memoir of a Maryland Gentlewoman, 1786–1798” by Tucker Adkins provides a close reading of this personal narrative of Ridgely’s conversion to Methodism. Situating it in the broader context of religious awakenings in this period, the article also contains the full text of the memoir: readers will note striking errors in grammar and spelling, even compared to the relatively flexible standards of the time. The “expereance” of Rebecca Ridgely contributes to our understanding of laypeople’s role in early colonial awakenings, but should also be understood through the lens of her race, class, and gender: the resources that the Ridgely family had to participate in religious activities and support itinerant preachers were obviously not available to everyone at the time. More about the history of Ridgely family wealth and its reliance on indentured and enslaved labor can be found in previous issues of *Maryland Historical Magazine*: R. Kent Lancaster’s articles “Almost Chattel: The Lives of Indentured Servants at Hampton/Northampton, Baltimore County” (*MdHM* 94.3, Fall 1999) and “Chattel Slavery at Hampton/Northampton, Baltimore County” (*MdHM* 95.4, Winter 2000). The manuscript is available at MCHC’s collections for further research, enriched by a newly digitized version and a transcript by Dr. Adkins.

We bring you two more excerpts from MCHC’s new book, *The Material World of Eyre Hall: Four Centuries of Chesapeake History*. “Escaping Enslavement by Whaleboat, 1832” by Alexandra Rosenberg addresses the same theme as Dr. Bell’s article: channels of escaping enslavement during the antebellum period, this time focusing on waterways. Seventeen enslaved individuals and one free Black man from several plantations in Virginia’s Northampton County stole a whaleboat and fled round the tip of the Eastern Shore and up the Atlantic coast to New York City. Fourteen were captured and taken back by state-appointed slave catchers; the author reconstructs from scant sources their motivation and subsequent fates.

“Hoofprints,” written by Elizabeth Palms, will appeal to enthusiasts of equestrianism among our readers. Tracing the Eyre family’s history with horse breeding and racing, this chapter paints a broader picture of horsemanship in the Chesapeake. Family lore has it that one of the oldest and most precious items at Eyre Hall, the “Morningstar” punch bowl, which dates back to 1692–93, was nicknamed after the horse who won it in a race.

Our Museum and Library are open to visitors and researchers, and our virtual, onsite, and members-only programs provide plenty of opportunities to engage with us. We look forward to seeing you in our galleries, Special Collections, offsite field trips, or virtually through your screen. You can find everything to plan your

safe visit on our website, [mdhistory.org/visit](http://mdhistory.org/visit). For information on how to submit to the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, please visit [mdhistory.org/publications/mdhs-magazine](http://mdhistory.org/publications/mdhs-magazine).

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# Border State, Border War: Fighting for Freedom and Slavery in Antebellum Maryland

BY RICHARD BELL

THE FARMHOUSE LAY JUST TWO MILES from the Maryland line, in West Nottingham, Pennsylvania. It belonged to the Millers, Joseph and Rebecca, and it was Rebecca who answered the knock at the back door at eleven in the morning on the very last day of 1851. Through it barged their former postman, Thomas McCreary. A resident of Cecil County, Maryland, on just the other side of the state line, McCreary was notorious in the neighborhood for abducting free people of color to sell as slaves to dealers in Baltimore. Pushing Rebecca aside, he grabbed the Millers' domestic, Rachel Parker, bundled the seventeen-year-old into his buggy, and took off toward the nearest train.

Joseph Miller soon gave chase. By the next morning he had tracked captor and captive to Baltimore and there filed charges of kidnapping to try to prevent his servant from being swiftly sold and shipped out to Natchez or New Orleans as a slave. Rachel would be stashed in the city's jail until the charges could be litigated. But Miller's intervention on her behalf would cost him dearly. On his way home that night, he disappeared. Two days later, locals found his dead body strung up from the branch of a tree by the side of railroad tracks not far from the city.<sup>1</sup>

Investigations followed on both sides of the border. Against all evidence to the contrary, a jury of inquest in Baltimore ruled that Miller had hanged himself. Their decision effectively exonerated Thomas McCreary, the prime

Richard Bell is Professor of History at the University of Maryland and a Trustee of the Maryland Center for History and Culture, where he chairs the Education Committee. Dr. Bell is author of the book *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and their Astonishing Odyssey Home*, which was a finalist for the George Washington Prize and the Harriet Tubman Prize.

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\*EDITOR'S NOTE: "Border State, Border War" won the 2020 Joseph Arnold Prize for Outstanding Writing on Baltimore History, awarded annually by the Baltimore City Historical Society. It was published as a chapter in *The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered*, edited by Charles W. Mitchell and Jean H. Baker, published by Louisiana State University Press in 2021. The text was reproduced as published by LSU Press, without edits or corrections. Figure 1. Detail of *Maryland in Liberia*, oil on canvas by John H. B. Latrobe, 1835. Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1885.3.1

suspect in his murder. Months later, the original kidnapping charge finally brought McCreary to court. But at the trial his defense lawyers alleged that Rachel was actually a fugitive slave from Maryland named Eliza Crocus and so, under the terms of the new federal Fugitive Slave Act, the judge barred her testimony. After more twists and turns, McCreary's lawyers succeeded in getting the charges dropped and the case dismissed.

Across the line in Pennsylvania there was disbelief and outrage. Townsfolk in West Nottingham called the decisions preposterous and absurd, and cobbled together a reward of \$1,000 for the arrest of Miller's murderer. Others threatened to lynch him. Bowing to extraordinary public pressure, Pennsylvania's Governor, William Bigler, eventually requested that Thomas McCreary be extradited to the state to face trial there. But Maryland's Governor, Enoch Lowe, refused the application. He was concerned, he claimed, that doing so would ignite sectional feelings.

In truth, that fire was already blazing. Ever since northern states had moved to disentangle themselves from race slavery, Maryland had been a battleground. Slavery's slow death in neighboring Pennsylvania, a process that began with passage of a gradual abolition law there in 1780, had turned the border between these two states into a theater of war in which enslavers, the enslaved, fugitives, freedpeople, and activists all struggled for advantage. Joseph Miller's murder on the first day of 1852 only confirmed what everyone along this stretch of the Mason-Dixon line had known for decades: that opportunistic kidnapers preyed repeatedly upon the fragile liberty of the region's free Black community, producing fierce (sometimes murderous) flare ups of violence in and around the borderland where Pennsylvania and Maryland met.

Thomas McCreary's plan to abduct Rachel Parker should also be situated in a much larger context. As McCreary was well aware, by the 1850s Baltimore had become a major center for slave dealing, a hub for traders who made their living buying enslaved people and then shipping them south to be sold to sugar and cotton planters in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This domestic slave trade was big business, turning profits of \$50 to \$100 per head, and Baltimore's docks had been a primary point of embarkation since the 1820s. Demand for Black bodies to fill departing ships was so high in the second quarter of the century that "legitimate" slave traders sometimes did side deals with criminal traffickers like McCreary if the price was right and no one was looking. Oversight was minimal, and on the rare occasions that they were called to account, men like McCreary would simply hide behind the petticoats of national fugitive slave laws, protected by a political and legal establishment in Maryland that treated enslaved men and women as expendable machines and regarded free Black people as nuisance non-citizens.<sup>2</sup>

This essay argues that Thomas McCreary's Maryland can best be understood as a border slave state engaged in a border war. To do so, it mines a rich vein of recent scholarship on the slave experience, interstate sales, fugitivity, free Black life, colonization, and kidnapping in Maryland in the decades from 1825 to the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. It reconstructs several major shifts in power, politics, and population over this critical period as well as the fights and furies that resulted. In so doing, it



shifts our attention away from other, more familiar flashpoints of the sectional crisis—Nat Turner, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Dred Scott, and John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry—and toward a new understanding of the war before it unfolded in Maryland, a border slave state that Lincoln and the Union could not afford to lose.<sup>3</sup>

## The Wasting Disease: Slavery in Antebellum Maryland

"It is generally supposed that slavery, in the state of Maryland, exists in its mildest form," Frederick Douglass reported in 1855, "and that it is totally divested of those harsh and terrible peculiarities, which mark and characterize the slave system, in the southern and south-western states of the American union." Born and raised in Talbot County on the Eastern Shore, Douglass knew from personal experience that this was nonsense. But the claim was commonplace nonetheless, turning up in a host of other antebellum sources ranging from reports generated by well-intentioned white anti-slavery activists to novels authored by proslavery propagandists. In John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* (1832), for example, the fictional enslaved Marylanders are carefree, playful people, more than happy to work in the fields from dawn to dusk.<sup>4</sup>

Commentators like Kennedy considered slavery in Maryland both tolerable and humane in comparison to labor regimes further south. They pointed to the fact that the cash crops cultivated in southern Maryland and around the Chesapeake Bay did not require the same grueling, all-consuming toil as cotton and sugar, that slaveholdings there were generally small enough to limit the worst excesses of plantation capitalism, and that there had never been any significant slave rebellions in the state. They argued that the proximity of free soil, just across the line in Pennsylvania, likewise meant that enslavers in Maryland were, in one contemporary's words, "afraid to whip [the slaves], because they knew, if they did, they would run away from them." They noted as well that some enslavers in the state entered into self-purchase agreements with their unfree workers and that many more allowed them to hire themselves out to third parties and to keep a small portion of their earnings for themselves, arrangements that allowed enslaved people considerable personal autonomy and some degree of control over their conditions of work.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the truth was that slavery was slavery whatever the details, and African Americans who later spoke or wrote about their experiences of enslavement in Maryland were anything but nostalgic. One man remembered his former master as "an unfeeling tyrant" who had provided his unfree laborers with "hardly anything to eat" and "no chance to eat it." Douglass himself never shook the memory of Edward Covey, a smallholder on the Eastern Shore who specialized in "breaking young negroes." In 1833, when Douglass was just sixteen years old, Thomas Auld, his owner, had sent him to work for Covey as punishment for trying to start a Sunday School. Covey beat the boy with abandon, lashing him with a cow-skin whip until Douglass eventually snapped.<sup>6</sup>

There was nothing mild and benign about the likes of Edward Covey, and the hundreds of enslaved Marylanders each year who risked everything to try to escape their

bondage are the most damning proof of the regime's degradations. As we shall see, in the six counties closest to the Pennsylvania border (Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Frederick, and Washington), so many bondspeople took to their heels in the second quarter of the nineteenth century that slave labor began to lose some of its economic viability. By 1850, the cash value of enslaved people there had fallen to just \$177.50 per person; a decade later, in 1860, enslaved people accounted for just 5 percent of these counties' populations.<sup>7</sup>

It was far more difficult, of course, for enslaved people to vote with their feet in the many counties that did not share a border with Pennsylvania, however much they wanted to. They could smell free soil, but never taste it, and their enslavement felt all the more bitter as a result. Slavery in the southern and eastern parts of the state remained robust—not quite thriving, but not quite stagnating either. Tobacco cultivation using slave labor continued apace in Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties, while on the Eastern Shore planters had recently retooled and retrained their enslaved workers to raise wheat, corn, rye, and oats. By the time Frederick Douglass was born in 1818, that transition was largely complete, and a new equilibrium had emerged on the Delmarva peninsula. Visitors there in the second quarter of the century described it as stuck in time and set in its ways, a place where enslaved laborers continued on as they had for generations, living in "rude log-cabins" on scattered smallholdings, their extended families divided across multiple farms.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1. African American Population of Maryland Counties, 1820–1860**

	Region	Total Population	Enslaved	Free Blacks
1820	Northern	121,575	20,721	6,149
	Baltimore City	62,738	4,357	10,326
	Southern	101,328	47,016	7,555
	Eastern	121,709	35,303	15,700
1840	Northern	147,172	15,951	11,587
	Baltimore City	102,513	3,212	17,980
	Southern	103,003	44,945	11,162
	Eastern	117,331	25,629	21,349
1860	Northern	208,439	11,109	16,201
	Baltimore City	212,418	2,218	25,680
	Southern	121,064	48,905	13,784
	Eastern	145,128	24,957	28,277

*Source:* US Census; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 62. Northern counties include Allegany, Baltimore County (excl. Baltimore City), Carroll, Frederick, Harford, and Washington. Southern counties include Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's. Eastern counties include Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, and Worcester.

Visitors to Baltimore, the city rising rapidly across the Chesapeake Bay, sang a very different tune, and the experiences of its small community of enslaved laborers were far more tumultuous and unpredictable. During a stay there in 1835, a New England-born lexicographer named Ethan Allen Andrews concluded that “in this city there appears to be no strong attachment to slavery, and no wish to perpetuate it.” That sentiment only grew over time, and in 1845 John Carey, a Baltimore politician, complained that slavery “is a dead weight and worse; it has become a wasting disease.”<sup>9</sup>

In a city in which wage labor was the norm, such claims were common. But they obscure the subtle, enduring centrality of slavery to Baltimore’s economy in the antebellum era. The city’s lawyers and bankers made their money greasing the wheels of the entire southern slave system, and many of the hulls built at the shipyards near the docks were designed to serve the maritime slave trades. Baltimore was also a major processing center for slave-raised cash crops like tobacco and cotton. By 1850, it was home to 120 cigar-making businesses as well as factories that produced finished cotton worth more than a million dollars each year. Its several thousand enslaved workers were an essential element in Baltimore’s labor market too, contributing crucial manpower to its manufacturing, commercial, and service sectors. Across the city, enslaved people pressed tobacco leaves, milled wheat, and forged iron. Some worked in construction, shipbuilding, caulking, and sail-making. Many more toiled each day as porters, waiters, servants, cooks, maids, and seamstresses in hotels, restaurants, and private homes.<sup>10</sup>

The nature of the urban labor market was such that Baltimore’s enslaved population—many of them hired out by slaveowners living in surrounding counties—often worked side by side with free Black wage earners doing similar tasks. Proximity to that much larger community created all sorts of opportunities. Baltimore was a place where enslaved men and women could seek out and join free Black churches, Sunday schools, and self-improvement societies, and construct all sorts of social ties. When Douglass was dispatched to live with Thomas Auld’s brother in Fell’s Point, he did all that and more, teaching himself to read, buying books, and meeting his future wife, Anna Murray, at a gathering of the East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society, where he was the only enslaved member.<sup>11</sup>

In his memoirs, Douglass recalled his “ecstasy” when he learned he was to leave the wheat fields of Talbot County and go to work in the big city. But the move brought dilemmas and dangers of its own. When he arrived in Baltimore, the eighteen-year-old lad was confronted by “troops of hostile boys ready to pounce upon me at every street corner. . . . They chased me, and called me ‘Eastern Shore man,’ till really I almost wished myself back on the Eastern Shore.” Worse was to come. Hired out to work in William Gardner’s shipyard as a caulker, Douglass was beaten savagely by white journeymen who resented the downward pressure his employment there put on their wages.<sup>12</sup>

In Baltimore, Douglass found himself caught between slavery and freedom, a predicament that embodied the broader contradictions of the slave experience through-

out this border state. Legislators in Annapolis reflexively batted down petitions to abolish slavery gradually, even as more and more white Marylanders complained that slavery was a drag on the state's economic fortunes. The size of the overall enslaved population held steady, decreasing by only a few thousand each year between 1830 and 1860, even as conditional manumissions, large numbers of escapes from northern counties, and ever more out-of-state sales frayed slavery's edges.<sup>13</sup>

## Dead, Heavy Footsteps: Maryland and the Domestic Slave Trade

Those interstate sales propped up the value of slaves in several parts of border-state Maryland, maintaining the institution's viability there against mounting challenges. Most sales were to traders supplying planters setting up along the Gulf Coast. The American settlers crowding into that ever-expanding region demanded a nearly bottomless supply of forced labor to cut sugarcane and pick cotton. They preferred young men, but would take almost anyone, including women and children—and they would pay top dollar, usually \$200 more per person than buyers in more settled regions could afford. With the legal supply of slaves limited to domestic sources, Maryland slaveowners struck deal after deal with interstate traders, helping to fuel the rise of the Deep South.<sup>14</sup>

On the face of it, enslaved people were sold away for all sorts of reasons, including debt, downsizing, the death of a slaveholder, or to divest oneself of troublesome individuals. One man sold a woman in his possession because of her "Impertinent Language to her Mistress," while an enslaver in Frederick, Maryland, claimed that he sold a Black family of six for no other reason than that he had "too many." But the main reason was money. Selling slaves raised cash. It turned assets into liquidity. It turned people into profits. When the Jesuit leaders of Georgetown University needed to raise funds quickly to shore up the school's finances in 1838, they did so by selling 272 of the African Americans they owned in Prince George's County to interstate traders who took them to Louisiana. The Jesuits pocketed \$115,000 in that single transaction, enough to save the school.<sup>15</sup>

Maryland's slaveowners sold off as many people as they thought could fetch a price. Coffles, as these human convoys were known, were common sights on the roads of the state's six northernmost counties, as owners there tried to sell their slaves south before they could disappear in the direction of the Pennsylvania line. In Hagerstown, George P. Hussy recalled seeing "*hundreds* of colored men and women chained together, two by two, and driven to the south [and] tied up and lashed till the blood ran down to their heels." But the largest number of forced migrants came from southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. In Talbot County slaveholders sold away one-third of the enslaved population in the 1830s alone; they sold another sixth in the 1840s when a recession briefly depressed cotton prices, and another third in the 1850s. Almost every

enslaver made a sale at one time or another, and between 1830 and 1860, owners forced 18,500 enslaved Marylanders to leave the state.<sup>16</sup>

Slave traders were the middlemen who made this happen, and in the second quarter of the century Maryland swarmed with dozens of them. They buzzed around the state's county towns from September to March "watching for chances to buy human flesh," Frederick Douglass recalled, "as buzzards to eat carrion." Because of the small size of most Maryland holdings, it could take weeks to put a coffle of thirty or forty slaves together, and so traders worked an area intensively, like loggers or strip-miners. They took up residence in hotels and taverns and filled local papers like the *Centreville Times*, the *Snow Hill Messenger*, and the *Cambridge Chronicle* with advertisements. Some, like John Denning, promised sellers that they would never separate any family groups "without their consent." Others, like William Harking, pledged to buy "all likely negroes from 8 to 40 years" old and to pay "the highest cash prices" with no questions asked.<sup>17</sup>

Some of these traders worked independently, but many more were agents for firms headquartered in the region's larger urban centers. On his visit to Baltimore in 1835, Ethan Allen Andrews counted "a dozen or more" slave dealers with offices and pens in the city. Each pen could hold "three or four hundred" enslaved captives at once and was usually "strongly built, and well supplied with *iron thumb-screws and gags*, and ornamented with *cowskins and other whips—often times bloody*." Most were concentrated in a few easy-to-find downtown blocks on Lombard Street, Camden Street, and Pratt Street that were close to onward transportation.<sup>18</sup>

These businesses boomed. By the 1840s, Maryland traders exported huge numbers of enslaved people to the Deep South annually: three thousand over the first six months of 1845 according to a contemporary estimate. One Baltimore-based trader, Walter Campbell, sent fifty-nine shipments of slaves to New Orleans alone between 1844 and 1853, carrying about 120 people out of Maryland each year. Despite occasional bans on printing 'Cash for Negroes' ads in city newspapers, and howls of protest from local activists such as Hezekiah Niles, Benjamin Lundy, and William Lloyd Garrison, the domestic slave trade was a major part of Baltimore's economy. When Frederick Douglass lived in the city, he was often woken from sleep by "the dead, heavy footsteps and the piteous cries of the chained gangs" being marched towards the ravenous bellies of the waiting ships at Fell's Point.<sup>19</sup>

The most visible and successful slave dealer in Baltimore in the second quarter of the century was Hope H. Slatter. In the mid-1830s, Slatter set up shop on West Pratt Street, between Sharp and Howard, and did a brisk business there for more than a decade. He specialized in "purchasing for the New Orleans market" and built a state-of-the-art, escape-proof slave pen next to his office that he equipped with separate cellblocks for men and women and an enclosed yard for exercise—facilities, Slatter boasted, that were "not surpassed by any establishment of the kind in the United States." At first, he sent many of his captives to New Orleans by ship, hiring a fleet of



omnibuses to carry them to the docks; later, he was one of the first Baltimore dealers to commandeer rail cars to dispatch them to New Orleans via the iron road. Slatter was a well-known man about town. He saw himself as a gentleman providing an essential service, and made a point of giving tours of his facilities and donating ostentatiously to charity.<sup>20</sup>

To the people he bought and sold, however, Slatter was a devil, the stuff of nightmares. Enslaved people were terrified of traders like him, and the constant dread of sale sent some of them mad, like the man Alexis de Tocqueville met during a tour of the Baltimore almshouse in 1831. "The Negro of whom I speak," Tocqueville later wrote, was terrorized by a vision of a slave dealer who "sticks close to him day and night and snatches away bits of his flesh." Enslaved Marylanders did everything in their power to resist these sales or negotiate their terms as best they could. One mother was able to prevent the transport of her son, William, to New Orleans by finding a local farmer who would purchase him instead. Other parents simply fell to their knees to beg their owners not to sell away their children and break up their families.<sup>21</sup>

Occasionally that worked. Most often it did not, and so when an out-of-state sale seemed inevitable, enslaved people sometimes resorted to extreme measures. Some dug in, like the man who shot to death the trader who came to collect his wife and children. A few even turned weapons upon themselves, like the young woman who severed her hand with an axe to make herself unsellable, or the mother from Snow Hill who "first cut the throat of her child, and then her own" upon learning that the pair were to be sold and forever separated from one another.<sup>22</sup>

Planters and traders used every trick in the book to try to minimize such losses. Buyers would confer privately with potential sellers, out of sight of eavesdropping domestics, and return to the premises before dawn the next day to whisk their new purchases away before anyone was the wiser. "About six o'clock one morning, I was taken suddenly from my wife," Leonard Harrod recalled decades later. "She knew no more where I had gone than the hen knows where the hawk carries her chicken." Those snatched away did what they could to escape or resist en route out of state, occasionally succeeding in overpowering their captors and darting back the way they had come. Lined up at Baltimore's rail depots and wharves, others could see no way back and cut their own throats then and there.<sup>23</sup>

The loved ones they had been forced to leave behind were no less desperate, no less traumatized by these sales. One enslaved man in Washington County hanged himself after his master sold his wife south. Parents never recovered from such separations, and children remained scarred for life. Writing in 1836, nearly fifty years after the fact, Charles Ball admitted that the terrible memory of being ripped from his Maryland mother at the age of four still played "with painful vividness upon my memory." No enslaved family in the state was spared. Frederick Douglass lost his sister, two aunts, seven first cousins, and at least five other near relatives to sales. In Maryland, such fates were facts of life. "In no state in this confederacy," one beleaguered group of activists

reported in 1826, were slaves “more subject to the painful and distressing evils of family separation, and the grievous consequences resulting from it.”<sup>24</sup>

## The Black Underground: Fugitivity before and after the Fugitive Slave Law

Vowing never to be sold south, enslaved men and women often fled north instead, turning Maryland into an epicenter of practical abolition. “I did not intend to go if I could prevent it,” recalled Isaac Mason, who took to his heels when he learned of his master’s plan to sell him to a new owner in Louisiana. Josiah Henson, who later became a leading antislavery orator and the inspiration for the character of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, escaped from his Montgomery County enslaver in 1830. Frederick Douglass made his own attempt to flee Talbot County in 1836, only to be thwarted. When in Baltimore two years later he tried again, this time making it safely to free soil by posing as a sailor and riding the rails northward toward Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup>

While most enslaved Marylanders found themselves stuck fast in bondage, “the thought of flight,” as J. W. C. Pennington, a fugitive from Carroll County, once called it, was never far from their minds. They tried to run whenever they saw an opportunity and did not normally wait for a conductor on the Underground Railroad to come looking for them. Many timed their departures for Saturdays or Sundays, knowing that news of their escape would not appear in the weekly papers until the following Friday. They typically traveled at night, hiding in marshes or woodlands during the day, lacing their tracks with pepper or snuff to thwart bloodhounds who might come sniffing behind them. Some stole boats to cross the Choptank, the Nanticoke, and the Susquehanna Rivers, or hid aboard ships bound for free states. Others stole horses or even carriages to speed their flight. Most headed for Philadelphia, York, Harrisburg, or Pittsburgh, following one of several common freedom routes through this borderland. But the distance to the Pennsylvania line was daunting, especially for people stuck in slavery on the Eastern Shore or in the state’s southern counties. Even the journey from Baltimore could take ten days on foot.<sup>26</sup>

On the roads, would-be fugitives had to run the gauntlet, dodging slave patrols and new “vigilance associations” set up across the state to round up runaways and protect the chattel principle. Anticipating that they might have to fight off pursuers, some took guns, Bowie knives, and dirks with them, determined to resist capture with force. In 1845, a constable in Washington County intercepted a group of ten fugitives near Smithsburg. When he and a posse of townspeople confronted them, “the negroes being armed with hatchets, clubs, and pistols, refused to be taken peaceably.” In the ensuing brawl, they wounded several white men, giving up only one of their number to the constable’s custody. But things did not often go so well. When a group of almost eighty Black men carrying scythe blades and other makeshift weapons marched toward the Pennsylvania line from three of Maryland’s southern counties later the same year, hundreds of well-

armed white citizens came out to stop them. After a pitched battle, all of the fugitives were dragged back to their masters, who soon sold some of them out of state.<sup>27</sup>

Clashes like these were common across Maryland in the second quarter of the century. Fugitives won some and lost others, but the departures continued. In 1844, William Chaplin, a white antislavery activist, reported that enslaved Marylanders were “escaping in shoals.” Two years later, a headline in a Hagerstown newspaper declared that “Oceans of Runaway Negroes” were now leaving Washington County for Pennsylvania, often in small family groups or with friends. Five here, fifteen there. Then seven more, then eleven. The stream never stopped, and only seemed to grow thicker and faster with time. In July 1850, census takers tallied 279 slave escapes from Maryland over the previous twelve months. As historian Barbara Fields has noted, that total was likely a substantial undercount of the number of slaves who had fled over that period. Even so, it was confirmation that Maryland was “the reluctant leader among slave states in this unsought competition.”<sup>28</sup>

The Fugitive Slave Law, enacted in September 1850, could not stop this slow-motion migration. That October, a woman and her five children escaped from Middletown in Frederick County. In November, a couple from near Easton walked out of slavery with their five children in tow. In December, a Chestertown woman left with her five offspring. On and on they came. In August 1852, a thirteen-person family fled northwestern Maryland and made it to Harrisburg. That October, more than half of one planter’s twenty slaves left his labor camp together and headed for Lancaster. More and more enslaved Marylanders were now setting out in groups, seeking safety in numbers. Toward the end of 1855, twenty-eight enslaved people fled Chestertown en masse. A year later, a group numbering twenty-seven left Cambridge together. Another fifty followed in 1857. According to historian Richard Blackett, by the mid-1850s the volume of fugitive slave escapes from Maryland had reached an all-time high.<sup>29</sup>

The state’s slaveholders spent these years in all-out crisis mode, worried that this growing exodus posed an existential threat to their livelihoods, manhood, and way of life. Each new escape was a significant financial loss, and by the 1850s fugitives were costing Maryland slaveholders about \$80,000 a year in lost assets, an immense sum equivalent to many millions of dollars today. Anxious and embittered, enslavers lashed out in all directions, convincing themselves that Maryland had been infiltrated by white “abolitionist emissaries” sent there from the free states by kingpins like Horace Greeley, the antislavery editor of the New York *Tribune*.<sup>30</sup>

Under pressure from slaveholders across Maryland, local courts began prosecuting anyone suspected of helping slaves escape. Charles Torrey, a Liberty Party activist from Massachusetts, was arrested and imprisoned in Maryland three times in the 1840s for aiding fugitives and ultimately died in the state penitentiary; in 1844, a Dorchester County court sentenced Hugh Hazlett, a thirty-one-year-old white man, to forty-four years in prison for helping seven slaves escape. Vigilante action against people like Torrey and Hazlett was on the rise as well. At one meeting in Baltimore County, slave-

holders openly threatened the lives of any “abolitionists caught in the act . . . of aiding slaves in their flight.” Many made good on their word, terrorizing neighbors and strangers they suspected of antislavery sympathies. In 1858, for instance, a band of thugs in Kent County tarred, feathered, and threatened to murder one local man simply because he subscribed to Greeley’s newspaper.<sup>31</sup>

To curb their losses, Maryland’s slaveholders routinely hired slave catchers to pursue fugitives across state lines into Pennsylvania. They did this time and again in the second quarter of the century, in open defiance of Pennsylvania’s 1826 personal liberty law. Enslavers in Maryland detested that law, which decreed that no one could be renditioned out of the state to be held as a slave, regarding it as an affront to their property rights, and in 1842 persuaded the Supreme Court of the United States to strike it down. The case, *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, turned on the actions of Edward Prigg, a Maryland lawyer turned slave catcher who had crossed into York County, Pennsylvania, to grab a woman named Margaret Morgan and carry her back to her erstwhile owner in Baltimore. It was the first fugitive slave case to reach the highest court in the land, and the justices’ ruling was unsparing. In a decision written by Joseph Story, the Supreme Court ruled that any and all state-level personal liberty laws were at odds with the federal 1793 Fugitive Slave Act and thus unconstitutional and invalid.<sup>32</sup>

Northern legislators refused to comply with the court’s decision and tried to find loopholes and workarounds to keep Maryland’s slave catchers out of their jurisdictions. Their defiance drew yelps of protest from the state’s slaveholders and their representatives in Washington, and set in motion the events leading to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, a vastly more muscular revision of the original 1793 statute. It became law on September 18, 1850, and marked a major escalation in the border war between the states. Eight days later, a Black man from Baltimore named James Hamlet became the first person arrested under its powers. Hamlet had fled that city two years earlier and was living in New York when a relative of his former enslaver arrived to drag him back. A porter in Manhattan, Hamlet was apprehended at his place of work and taken before one of the federal commissioners newly appointed under the terms of the act. Hamlet protested, but the new law rendered his testimony as a suspected fugitive inadmissible. He was handcuffed and driven to a pier and stashed on the first steamboat bound for Baltimore.<sup>33</sup>

Fugitive slave renditions like this mushroomed after 1850, and enslavers from Maryland led the charge, crossing state lines in pursuit of runaways and engaging fugitives in violent and explosive confrontations on free soil. For example, on September 11, 1851, Edward Gorsuch, a Baltimore County wheat farmer and slaveholder, arrived outside a house in Christiana, Pennsylvania, intent on dragging the two runaway slaves holed up inside back across the border. Empowered by the new Fugitive Slave Act, Gorsuch was accompanied by a deputy federal marshal and a small posse of armed men. But local opposition proved substantial. The town of Christiana was a Black

Underground stronghold, and Gorsuch found the stone house heavily fortified and its occupants—his former slaves and several other Black men and women—entrenched. What began as a tense standoff soon gave way to a full-on firefight, and Gorsuch was shot to death in a hail of gunfire. When his men retreated in panic, the runaways bolted from the house and made their escape north toward Rochester, where Frederick Douglass helped them find their way to Canada.<sup>34</sup>

Douglass later wrote approvingly of those fugitive Marylanders' courage and resolve, declaring that "If it be right for any man to resist those who would enslave them, it was right for the men of color at Christiana to resist."<sup>35</sup>

## Black Capital: The Experience of Black Freedom in Baltimore and Maryland

The Christiana fugitives received vital assistance from free Black Pennsylvanians. But Maryland's Black Underground was no less numerous, and the state's large and rapidly growing community of free people of color went to extraordinary lengths to help, hide, and protect self-liberating slaves who asked them for assistance. Each time Harriet Tubman returned to Maryland from Philadelphia to aid runaways, for instance, she relied upon a network of free Black allies on the Eastern Shore for critical support. No one was more crucial to her operations than Samuel Green, a former slave turned free Black minister, who repeatedly collaborated with Tubman to help enslaved people escape from plantations across Talbot County. When deputies finally raided Green's home in 1858, they found it stocked with train timetables, maps of northern states and of Canada, and a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—enough evidence of his role as a station agent on the Underground Railroad to earn him ten years in the state penitentiary.<sup>36</sup>

There were men and women like Samuel Green in every county and city in the state. In Hagerstown in western Maryland, for example, a crew of local free Blacks once stormed the jail to liberate the captured fugitives detained inside. Baltimore, too, was home to several leaders of the Black Underground, including Jacob Gibbs, and the city was a haven for fugitives who, in the words of Barbara Fields, "had not waited upon the grace of God, the majesty of the law, or the generosity of their owners to grant them their freedom."<sup>37</sup>

Fugitives who could not make it to free soil in Pennsylvania flocked to Baltimore because of the sheer size of the city's free Black population. Baltimore was the capital of Black America in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, boasting the largest community of free people of color anywhere in the United States. Fifteen thousand strong, according to the 1830 census, their numbers hit twenty-five thousand by 1850, about 15 percent of the city's entire population. Most were fresh from slavery, drawn to Baltimore by its thriving port, which required deep reserves of cheap labor, and by its reputation as the best place in the state, and perhaps the nation, for free Black Americans to seek economic opportunity and carve out a rich family life.<sup>38</sup>



**Table 2. African American Population of Baltimore City, 1820–1860**

	Total Population	Enslaved	Free Blacks
1820	62,738	4,357	10,326
1830	70,620	4,120	14,790
1840	102,513	3,212	17,980
1850	169,054	2,946	25,442
1860	212,418	2,218	25,680

Source: Fields, *Middle Ground*, 62.

The low-cost, flexible labor of free people of color was the backbone of Baltimore's economy. As the city surged, growing to become the second largest in the country by 1840, free Black men drove its carts, drays, hacks, coaches, and stages. They made Baltimore's nails, bricks, boots, shoes, brushes, combs, glue, cigars, and barrels. They sawed its wood, whitewashed its walls, cut its stone, blacked its shoes, butchered its meat, smithed its horses, and tanned its skins. A few owned and operated their own stores, cookshops, and oyster houses. Others ran basement grogshops or backstreet brothels. Many more worked at the shipyards as caulkers or carpenters, or as mariners on the ocean-going vessels made and maintained there. The pay packets these men took home were usually modest, so their wives also had to work, typically as cooks, domestics, laundresses, and seamstresses.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond their worksites, Black Baltimoreans constructed a vibrant and robust community. Churches served as important building blocks in this effort, and by the eve of the Civil War, the city boasted fifteen free Black meetinghouses representing six denominations. From these houses of worship emerged dozens of mutual aid societies promoting temperance, uplift, charity, and all manner of other social, intellectual, and moral improvements. The city's African Methodist Episcopal church also funded the building and operation of several free Black schools, an abiding financial commitment to the core belief, expressed by black schoolmaster William Watkins in 1836, that a "good education is the great *sine qua non* as it regards the elevation of our people." By the mid-1840s Baltimore's AME schools enrolled six hundred students. Other denominations had by then begun to follow suit, and by 1860 there were more than a dozen such schools up and running, enrolling 2,600 students across the city.<sup>40</sup>

Free Black Baltimoreans built this thriving, resilient community while living under siege. They had to claw and fight for every advantage, no matter how meager, checked at every turn by the many white residents of the city who resented their presence. Despite (or perhaps because of) their self-evident industriousness and willingness to work for low wages, their white job competitors lobbied the General Assembly in Annapolis to bar them from one occupation after another, bad-mouthing them as indolent, lazy, "more easily influenced by temptations to steal, less influenced by the desire of main-

taining an honest reputation, and . . . less fear(ful) of the operations of the law than white people.”<sup>41</sup>

Racism on these jobsites spiked each time the economy faltered and whenever European migration to the city climbed. Each time that happened, white employers and workers closed ranks. By the 1850s, Baltimore was buckling under a wave of job-busting riots on the docks, on the railroads, and everywhere else free people of color had the temerity to labor. In 1858, Black bricklayers at one city yard were assaulted by a mob of thirty men calling themselves the White Tigers who were intent, one witness said, on “driving out the colored employees, and supplanting them in their places.” The Black bricklayers had to “run for their lives—pistols, and in several instances guns being fired upon them.” The city’s free Black workers did their best to hold the line, organizing labor unions to try to boost their wages, insisting that Black foremen keep their jobs, and trying to achieve collective bargaining. But the attacks on their livelihoods were relentless, and by the eve of the Civil War various scare tactics had driven African American caulkers, butchers, carpenters, sawyers, shoemakers, and shopkeepers into retreat and out of occupations they had once dominated. “The white man [now] stands in the Black man’s shoes, or else is fast getting into them,” one approving local commentator observed.<sup>42</sup>

Black Baltimoreans felt the squeeze wherever they went, and not only at work. White thugs struck at Black churches regularly, “throwing stones and breaking the doors and windows” of the Sharp Street AME Church in west Baltimore during one service in August 1838. The attack caused panic, and many congregants inside were injured “by rushing through the doors, jumping out of the windows, &c.” City constables usually turned a blind eye to this sort of racial terrorism and instead embraced the task of enforcing restrictive ordinances that made it illegal for people of color to buy dogs, liquor, tobacco, bacon, or beef without special licenses, and that required them to observe a 10:00 P.M. nightly curfew. Some policemen did far worse, beating legally free Blacks “bloody as a butcher” or throwing them in jail on suspicion of being runaway slaves—as if the fact of their freedom was proof of their criminality. Whatever the alleged crime, the judges and juries of the city’s circuit court rarely looked favorably upon defendants of color. As one Baltimore attorney explained, they were “inclined to convict a man merely because he was black,” often sentencing those convicted of petty crimes of survival like stealing food or clothes to being transported out of state to be sold into slavery.<sup>43</sup>

The racial climate was no less toxic beyond Baltimore City. The state’s breadbasket, the Eastern Shore, was home to more than twenty thousand free Black Marylanders in the century’s second quarter. Most worked as artisans of one sort or another, or as seasonal farm hands hired on terms that resembled debt slavery or peonage to do the “heavy, disagreeable, but *indispensable*, duties of ‘laborers.’” Because most Black Codes applied statewide, these rural freedpeople lived under the same limits upon their freedom of movement and right to assembly as those in urban areas.<sup>44</sup>

This profusion of anti-Black legal restrictions was difficult to enforce, but the uncertainty, disdain, and hostility that informed them were stark and unambiguous. While white people remained a substantial majority of the state's population throughout the antebellum decades, slaveholders in particular regarded the growing number of free Black people living among them as dangerous sources of disorder, vice, and crime, and despaired that Maryland was "destined to be a free Negro state." The prospect repelled them. As Maryland Senate president Richard Thomas candidly explained in 1838, a man like him would gladly consign "his daughter to the silent tomb than see her led to the hymenial altar by the hand of the colored man." The rest of the state's enslaving class thought much the same. Beginning in the 1840s, they held one panicked convention after another to brainstorm ways to wrestle a different future into being, debating proposals to forbid further manumissions, control or re-enslave free people or color, or expel them altogether.<sup>45</sup>

## Any Practical Plan: Colonization, Opposition, and Maryland in Liberia

Plans to banish former slaves from Maryland had been on the drawing board for decades, and the state was home to some of the nation's most prominent proponents of colonization. Beginning in 1826, the Maryland Colonization Society (MCS) received a \$1,000 annual appropriation from the Annapolis legislature, an extraordinary show of governmental support for its agenda. In the wake of Nat Turner's revolt in nearby Virginia in 1830, the MCS drew new attention and interest from white Marylanders worried that the state was on its own path to racial uprising and who were thus now "favourably disposed to any practical plan to get rid of the Free Blacks." The MCS proposed to do just that, and it soon spawned several county-level subsidiaries, all of them focused on removing newly freed slaves quickly from Maryland to Africa.<sup>46</sup>

It was a Marylander, Robert Goodloe Harper, who coined the name *Liberia*, and in 1831 the MCS sent its first cohort of Black migrants there. Thirty-one made that maiden voyage from Baltimore, and 149 more followed the next year, most of them farmers and their families from Worcester County and Somerset County on the Eastern Shore. In 1834, the MCS established its own resettlement colony independent of Liberia near Cape Palmas, and over the next twenty years about a thousand more voyagers journeyed there through the port of Baltimore, searching for fresh economic opportunities and new lives free from racism.<sup>47</sup>

Looking only at the cumulative number of former slaves who boarded ships in Baltimore, however, obfuscates much more complicated and contested scenes on the docks themselves. Most Black Marylanders vigorously opposed colonization and sometimes followed neighbors who had chosen to emigrate all the way to the gangplanks of these vessels to plead with them to reconsider. Many did, and MCS officers could persuade only fifty people each year, on average, to deport themselves. Most

ships leaving Baltimore for Africa left half-empty, usually carrying more migrants from out of state than from Maryland. What's more, those who made these voyages often quickly returned, dismayed by the poor conditions they found in West Africa. In 1857, the MCS colony collapsed and had to be annexed by neighboring Liberia.<sup>48</sup>

Most Black Marylanders were naturally suspicious of any plan that had the support of white enslavers. William Watkins, the leading anti-colonization figure in the state, denounced deportation as a brazen villainy pushed by those who “design to make us miserable here, that we may emigrate to Africa *with our own consent*.” Watkins and other antislavery activists refused to participate in any scheme that tied the destruction of slavery to the removal of free people of color. They wanted ardently to build their futures within the United States and within Maryland, where most had been born, and pledged not to be “driven, like cattle, to Liberia.”<sup>49</sup>

Black opposition was never monolithic, of course, and MCS officers worked hard to cultivate enthusiasm for colonization whenever they could, especially among the most beleaguered residents of rural counties. Those opposed to deportation had to organize to resist these propaganda efforts. They did so by disrupting MCS meetings and by turning churches and other free Black gathering places in Baltimore, Cambridge, Hagerstown, and Annapolis into what historian Ira Berlin has called “beehives of anticolonizationist activity.” Whenever delegates at local and state colored conventions took up the subject of colonization, the debates were often fierce. When a handful of Black delegates spoke up in favor of a move to Liberia at one such meeting in 1852, several hundred anticolonization protestors mobilized to surround the convention site, suspicious that those delegates had been paid off by MCS agents.<sup>50</sup>

## A Refuge of Kidnappers: Maryland and the Reverse Underground Railroad

MCS agents were not the only Marylanders working to siphon off the region's surging free Black population in the second quarter of the century. At the time, Maryland was well known as a “refuge of kidnappers,” a safe haven and rich environment for bands of vicious opportunists who would prowl streets and burst into homes to snatch away anyone they thought they could sell on to interstate slave traders to carry into the Deep South. Kidnapping and human trafficking on this wholly illegal Reverse Underground Railroad carried obvious risks, both legal and physical, but demand for Black bodies in the Cotton Kingdom was such that there was a lot of money to be made selling free people from the Upper South into slavery on the Gulf Coast. “An able-bodied colored man sells in the southern market for from eight hundred to a thousand dollars,” a writer for the *Colored American* reminded readers in 1840.<sup>51</sup>

By then, Black Baltimoreans had been fighting off these vultures for decades. Because of the size of the city's free Black community, it had been a “den of man-hunters” since the early 1800s. Over the years, these kidnappers and human traffickers had grown ever more “daring in their depredations,” sometimes knocking their targets

unconscious on city streets in broad daylight, or enlisting older African Americans to lure youngsters into their clutches. By the second quarter of the century, Black boys and girls under the age of sixteen had become prime targets. Missing persons ads in the city's papers filled with their names—Priscilla Blake, aged 14, Eliza Pisco, aged 11, Jane Harris, aged 10, Henny, aged 6—a roll call for a school of lost children.<sup>52</sup>

Baltimore was a particularly well-stocked hunting ground, but kidnappers operated across the entire state, a fact often remarked upon by visitors from New England and from Europe. Richard Blackett has identified at least one gang based in Hagerstown in western Maryland. Many more operated out of safehouses on the lower reaches of the Eastern Shore, in and around Talbot County, where settlement was thin, slaveholding common, and the politics decidedly conservative. No one knew for sure how many Marylanders made their living on the Reverse Underground Railroad; there was no debate, however, as to its scale. "Kidnapping being a lucrative business it is not strange that it should be extensively practiced," a contributor to the *Colored American* wrote during one survey, but "it is difficult to estimate the extent to which illegal kidnapping is carried [out], since a large number of cases must escape detection."<sup>53</sup>

The concept of free soil meant little to these land-sharks and the most ambitious and predatory among them would launch multiday raids into southern Pennsylvania from their home bases in Maryland. One of these "beasts of prey" was Thomas McCreary, who seized Rachel Parker from the Miller farm in West Nottingham in 1851. As Lucy Maddox, his biographer, has demonstrated, McCreary was a serial kidnapper. From his base in Cecil County in northern Maryland, McCreary had led at least five prior abduction expeditions into southern Pennsylvania and had made off with Rachel's sister, Elizabeth, just two weeks earlier. He was hardly alone. People like McCreary were crouched all along Maryland's northern border throughout the 1840s, ready to dart into Pennsylvania to snatch children, solo adults, and sometimes small family groups whenever they saw an opportunity.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1850s, men and women in McCreary's line of work stepped up their operations. They took ever more free people of color and tried to pass them off as suspected fugitives, a practice made much easier by the terms of the new Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As Pauli Murray once observed, these people snatchers "cared little whether their victim was a fugitive, a freedman or a free-born person." While some ventured into Pennsylvania clutching warrants naming particular runaways, they often grabbed any person of color they thought could fit those bills and fetch a price when sold to an interstate slave dealer. Traders like Baltimore's Hope Slatter cultivated reputations as respectable businessmen who operated wholly within the law, but as historian Robert Gudmestad has demonstrated, the reality was quite different, and at one time or another every major trader seems to have dabbled in buying people they knew to have been kidnapped.<sup>55</sup>

Monsters like McCreary operated with what historian Stephen Whitman has called "virtual impunity." All too few served prison terms, and Maryland's governors frequently pardoned or commuted the sentences of the few men and women convicted of abduction, human trafficking, or enslavement. Because free people of color had no



reliable allies in state government or law enforcement, and only a small core of white activists were willing to lend them any practical aid, they had to defend themselves as best they could. So they did. They organized themselves into protection societies and neighborhood watches, staying “within doors after dark” and hollering, biting, and kicking if a stranger grabbed them. They were dogged and determined, but resistance was often futile and always dangerous. When a Black husband “clambered up to one of the windows” of a rail car to try to stop his legally free wife being sold out of state, Hope Slatter himself “knocked him down from the car, and ordered him away.”<sup>56</sup>

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Things had not always been so dark, lonely, and desperate. In the 1820s, Baltimore had been a hive of antislavery activism and radical, interracial politics. In 1824, Benjamin Lundy had moved his crusading newspaper, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, to the city from Tennessee. It was the only explicitly antislavery newspaper published in a border state that decade, and Lundy soon began churning out a mix of polemical reporting and commentary, including his trademark “Black List,” which assiduously documented slavery’s daily outrages. A year later, in 1825, a group of white city leaders in Lundy’s orbit formed the Maryland Anti-Slavery Society (MAS), a rare accomplishment in a slave state, and over the next three years it attracted about five hundred members and subscribers and spawned eleven county auxiliaries. In 1827, some of the same activists founded a sister organization, the Baltimore Society for the Protection of Free People of Color (BSP). These developments were direct responses to escalating racial oppression. But these were heady days nonetheless for the state’s antislavery activists, and by the end of the decade, Baltimore had twice hosted the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, drawing delegates from organizations in several states to the city for national assemblies and confirming its emerging reputation as “the center of the abolitionist movement.”<sup>57</sup>

By the eve of the Civil War, all that was a distant memory. The enduring influence of slavery’s special interests and the crushing weight of rising “Negrophobia” had long since driven Maryland’s white antislavery activists to the point of extinction. Having been slandered, spat at, and physically assaulted, Lundy had finally fled Baltimore for Washington, DC, in 1830, taking his newspaper with him. By then, both the MAS and BSP had folded too, undone by flagging fund-raising and by a foolhardy decision by MAS officers to put up overtly antislavery candidates in statewide elections. Those who had embraced the cause out of religious obligation were buckling under social and political pressure as well. In 1836, the Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church announced its absolute opposition to abolition, a striking turnaround for a group that had once contained several notable emancipationists. Two years later, in 1838, Maryland’s Hicksite Quakers did the same, declaring that their members should avoid becoming further entangled in the antislavery cause if they wished to remain in good standing. Stripped of their white allies, the state’s African American population

had to soldier on alone, suffering through decades of humiliation and persecution that had all the trappings of a race war unfolding in slow motion.<sup>58</sup>

A border slave state with an unusually large free Black population, Thomas McCreary's Maryland was, in Barbara Field's famous formulation, "a society divided against itself." By the time Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, those divisions were on full display. Maryland stood at a crossroads, torn between its embrace of northern mercantilism and its heritage of southern cultural affinity and agrarianism. In the state's southern and eastern counties, many Marylanders prized the protection of race slavery and considered Lincoln's antislavery politics anathema. When those voters went to the polls that November, their ballots ensured that Lincoln placed fourth in statewide returns, trailing John Breckenridge, the southern Democrat candidate, by a margin of more than eighteen to one.<sup>59</sup>

Yet most Maryland voters were more pragmatic. The long border with Pennsylvania meant that the state would be difficult to defend in the event of secession and war, something that white residents of the state's northern counties—who had been on the front lines of the fugitive crisis for decades—understood immediately. The same practical considerations produced pro-Union voter turnout in Baltimore, a city that was situated north of Washington, DC, and much closer to Philadelphia than it was to Richmond. Most civic leaders there considered secession a poor choice and worried that a war would lead to a blockade of Baltimore's port and recently extended railroad, strangling trade and endangering fortunes and jobs. While white residents across the state had little love for Lincoln, most rallied around the Unionist cause, pledging a majority of their votes (54.2 percent) to one or another of the three Unionist candidates.<sup>60</sup>

## NOTES

1. The best account of this episode, and the source for this selective summary, is Lucy Maddox, *The Parker Sisters: A Border Kidnapping* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016).
2. Thomas J. Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 79.
3. My conception of antebellum Maryland as a site of intense border conflict owes a debt to Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); R. J. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Robert H. Churchill, *The Underground Railroad: The Geography of Violence in Antebellum America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
4. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 61; Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 238; Andrew Delblanco, *The War before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 147.
5. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 411; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 23, 83.

6. Lewis Charlton, *Sketch of the Life of Mr. Lewis Charlton, and Reminiscences of Slavery* (Portland, ME: Daily Press Print, n. d.), 3, quoted in Damian Alan Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 183; Douglass, *My Bondage*, 203; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 20. Provoked by Covey, Douglass resolved to attack him. According to his often-repeated accounts of that struggle, their fight lasted for the best part of two hours, and left both men bloody and spent. From that day forward, Douglass claimed, Covey never touched him again.
7. Max Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790–1860* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 88–89.
8. Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853–1854, with Remarks on their Economy* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), 11; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 181, 234–35, 240; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 6–7, 23–4.
9. Ethan Allen Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States. In a Series of Letters Addressed to the Executive Committee of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race* (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1836), 53; John L. Carey, *Slavery in Maryland Briefly Considered* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1845), 33; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: New Press, 2007), 184.
10. Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 86; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 6–8, 47, 62; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 234–35; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 228–29. Legal bondage also collateralized enslavers' lines of credit and mortgages, and secured the Baltimore city government with a reliable source of tax revenue. For a list of slaveholders in Baltimore in 1840 and 1850, see Ralph Clayton, *Slavery, Slaveholding, and the Free Black Population of Antebellum Baltimore* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1993), 82–145. For their occupations, see Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 167.
11. Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 36–38, 129, 167–68; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 62, 83–84; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 87.
12. Douglass, *My Bondage*, 134, 141; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 72; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 82–83, 87–88. On his own first day in Baltimore, Isaac Mason was savagely beaten by two white men for passing between them on the sidewalk—not knowing that custom and law required urban slaves to “take the street to give place to their superiors.” Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 209.
13. T. Stephen Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage 1775–1865* (Baltimore: Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2007), 127–28; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Unrequited Toil: A History of United States Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 21, 29; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 116; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 199. The enslaved population of Maryland was 102,994 in 1830. In 1860, numbers stood at 87,189. For more on manumissions in Maryland see the essay in this volume by Jessica Millward.
14. Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Winfield H. Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade of the Southern States* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1904); Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 197; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 25; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 5.
15. Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 232, 165, 249, 207; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 62; Collins, *Domestic Slave Trade*, 47; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 53–54.
16. George P. C. Hussey quoted in Theodore Dwight Weld, *American Slavery As It Is; Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 76 (emphasis in origi-

- nal); Harrold, *Border War*, 10; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 116–17; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 15–17; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 14.
17. Douglass, *My Bondage*, 298; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1835; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 43; *Centreville (MD) Times and Easter-Shore Public Advertiser*, May 4, 1833; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 132, 222–23; William Calderhead, “The Role of the Professional Slave Trader in a Slave Economy: Austin Woolfolk, A Case Study,” *Civil War History* 23, no. 3 (1977), 197–98, 209. Agents made the rounds of all the county towns on the Eastern Shore. In Dorchester County alone, more than fifteen of them advertised in newspapers between 1831 and 1835, and Charles B. Clark estimated that in all “at least 40 or 50, perhaps 60 or 80, regular traders of various degree” operated there, including dozens of petty traders, some of whom were local residents. Charles B. Clark, *Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia*, 3 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1950), I: 529, 532.
  18. Andrews, *Domestic Slave Trade*, 78; Joseph Sturge, *A Visit to the United States in 1841* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1842), 31; Weld, *Slavery As It Is*, 60 (emphasis in original); Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 42–43, 46–47; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 104; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 235.
  19. Douglass, *My Bondage*, 448; Harrold, *Border War*, 10; Maddox, *Parker Sisters*, 79; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 38, 44, 51, 224; Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 79–80. William Lloyd Garrison, who lived in Baltimore in the early 1830s, prayed that slave traders should be arrested, convicted, and “sentenced to solitary confinement for life” and deserved to spend eternity in “the lowest depths” of hell. Delblanco, *War before the War*, 28–29. On the role of Baltimore (and its most famous trader, Austin Woolfolk) in the domestic slave trade prior to 1825, see Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 98–100; Calderhead, “Austin Woolfolk.” Woolfolk resented activists’ attacks on his character and reputation, especially those issuing from Benjamin Lundy, Baltimore’s crusading newspaper editor, who decried Woolfolk’s business as “barbarous, inhuman, and unchristian.” In January 1827, Woolfolk “beat and stamped upon” Lundy’s head, “in a most furious and violent manner, until pulled off by the bystanders.” Lundy sued for assault but the judge fined Woolfolk just \$1 plus court costs, and noted in his ruling that slave trading was legal and “beneficial to the state.” Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 179–80.
  20. *Baltimore Sun*, July 18, 1838; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 28–29; Clayton, *Antebellum Baltimore*, 35; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 3, 212; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 163–64. Hope Slatter sold his business to Bernard Campbell in 1848.
  21. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 159–60; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 236–37; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 24, 61, 79; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 234. Enslavers exploited slaves’ fears of sale without mercy, using the threat of it to deter misbehavior and spur productivity.
  22. E. S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America, From April 1833, to October, 1834*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1835), 2: 93; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 76, 81, 83; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 75–76. In 1815 a Maryland woman named Anna had jumped from the attic of a tavern in Washington, DC, to try to prevent her sale and the breakup of her family. “I didn’t want to go, and I jumped out of the window,” she said later, having broken her arms and shattered her spine in this apparent suicide attempt, but still “they have carried my children off with ‘em to Carolina.” Schermerhorn, *Unrequited Toil*, 151.
  23. Benjamin Drew, ed., *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves . . .* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 339; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 45–46; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 255–56; Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 16.

24. Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Dayton, 1859), 11; *Minutes of an Adjourned Session of the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race, Convened at Baltimore, on the Twenty-fifth of October 1826* (Baltimore: Benjamin Lundy, 1826), 29; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 75–76; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 176, 228, 246, 252; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 238; Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 76.
25. Isaac Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason As a Slave* (Worcester, MA, 1893), 35; Pargas, *Forced Migration*, 79–80; Churchill, *Geography of Violence*, 45. “A vicious circle developed as slaveholders sold slaves south to prevent escape and slaves escaped to prevent sale south,” explains Stanley Harrold. Harrold, *Border War*, 10.
26. James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith; or, Events in the History of James W. C. Pennington, Pastor of a Presbyterian Church, New York, Formerly a Slave in the State of Maryland, United States*, 2nd ed. (London: Charles Gilpin, 1849), 14; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 175–77; Elwood L. Bridner, “The Fugitive Slaves of Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 66 (1971), 39, 45; Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 313; Harrold, *Border War*, 139.
27. (Hagerstown) *Herald of Freedom*, May 8, 1849; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 129; Harrold, *Border War*, 14, 127, 129–31, 177.
28. *Albany Weekly Patriot*, January 8 1845; (Hagerstown) *Herald of Freedom*, September 18, 1846; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 15; Harrold, *Border War*, 103, 106, 139, 148, 153; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 128–29. Writing in January 1850, before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law that fall, a writer in the *Baltimore Sun* told city readers that “Every day but swells the number of absconding slaves from Maryland,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 7, 1850; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 347. Maryland was also a major site of capture for northbound slaves escaping from states further south, like Virginia. When thirteen enslaved people escaped from Loudoun County, Virginia, in June 1858, twelve of them were later recaptured in Maryland, seven of them following a firefight in Boonsboro, a hamlet just south of Hagerstown. Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 271.
29. Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 51, 272, 306, 314, 322.
30. *Baltimore Saturday Visiter*, July 19, 1845; Harrold, *Border War*, 139; Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 4–5, 322–24; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 39.
31. *New York Daily Tribune*, August 18, 1850; Harrold, *Border War*, 127; Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 396–97; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 185–86; Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 319, 321.
32. H. Robert Baker, *Prigg v. Pennsylvania: Slavery, the Supreme Court, and the Ambivalent Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, 390; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 178–79; Harrold, *Border War*, 77. In 1842, Maryland state legislators had narrowly failed to pass a law offering “large rewards for the detection of any person who induces or aids a slave to run away, (to) employ bailiffs to watch the arrival and departure of every steamboat and railroad car,” and other similar measures. Two years later, legislators in Annapolis succeeded in setting up a fund that paid out \$100 to anyone who could drag back to their Maryland masters any fugitives who had made it to Pennsylvania. Harrold, *Border War*, 127.
33. Blackett, *Captive’s Quest*, 3–42; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 264; Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, 504. Hamlet’s former owner, Mary Brown, had planned to trade him to slave dealers to raise cash. Ultimately, however, she sold his life and labor to members of the New York’s African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church for \$800. The AME congregation, who counted Hamlet as



- one of their own, promptly freed him and by October he had returned to New York, this time with free papers in his pocket.
34. Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). See also Delblanco, *War before the War*, 183–85, 286–88; Harrold, *Border War*, 62, 102–3, 108–10, 154–55; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 130–31.
  35. *Frederick Douglass's Paper* (Rochester, NY), September 25, 1851.
  36. Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 315–17. No other slave state had a higher proportion of free people among its Black population or anywhere near the absolute numbers of free people of color as Maryland, though the District of Columbia did. Fields, *Middle Ground*, 1–2. Over the eleven years between 1849 and 1860, Harriet Tubman made thirteen trips back to Maryland and helped dozens of enslaved people liberate themselves. Other lesser known figures, such as Richard Neal (who had escaped from Anne Arundel County), did likewise.
  37. Fields, *Middle Ground*, 34; Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom*, 129; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 180.
  38. Thomas W. Griffiths, *Annals of Baltimore* (Baltimore: William Wooddy, 1824), 292; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 62; William S. Neeley, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 67. Adam Malka, *Men of Mobtown: Policing Baltimore in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 22–23. In 1830 nine out of ten free Black Baltimoreans were born elsewhere. Jennifer Hull Dorsey, *Hirelings: African American Workers and Free Labor in Early Maryland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 58.
  39. Bettye Jane Gardner, “Free Blacks in Baltimore, 1800–1860,” PhD diss., George Washington University, 1974, 6. Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 76–77; Barbara Elizabeth Wallace, “‘Fair Daughters of Africa’: African American Women in Baltimore, 1790–1860,” PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2001, 81–135.
  40. William Watkins, *An Address Delivered before the Moral Reform Society, in Philadelphia, August 8, 1836* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1836), 13–14; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 288–89, 296, 304–5; “Condition of the Coloured Population of the City of Baltimore,” *Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine* 4 (1838), 171–75; Wallace, “Fair Daughters of Africa,” 169; Malka, *Men of Mobtown*, 162. These sacred sites served functions almost too numerous to name—place of worship, Sunday school, unemployment office, soup kitchen, and fugitive sanctuary, for instance—and were the central sites of Black community formation. Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 72–73. It was a Baltimorean, Hezekiah Grice, who founded the Black convention movement. Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 169.
  41. *Genius of Universal Emancipation* (Baltimore), January 12, 1828; T. Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 156. Wages for most Black Baltimoreans were low, barely above survival rates, and by the 1850s less than 1 percent owned any real estate. Malka, *Men of Mobtown*, 108.
  42. *Baltimore Sun*, May 18, 1858; John H. B. Latrobe, *Colonization. A Notice of Victor Hugo's Views of Slavery in the United States, in a letter from John H. B. Latrobe, of Baltimore to Thomas Suffern, of New York* (Baltimore: John D. Toy, 1851), 14; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 231–32, 241, 349–50; Malka, *Men of Mobtown*, 111, 116–21.
  43. *Baltimore Sun*, August 28, 1838, May 31, 1837, October 22, 1839; Malka, *Men of Mobtown*, 112, 153–54; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 158, 232–33, 334–35. People of color boarding northbound trains or steamboats faced ticket checks, inspections of their free papers or passes, and interrogation. William Still called Baltimore “one of the most difficult places in the South for even free colored people to get away from, much more for slaves.” Bridner, “Fugitive Slaves of Maryland,”

45. In the last two years before the Civil War, eighty-nine Black convicts were sold into term slavery on terms ranging from two years to more than sixty. Fields, *Middle Ground*, 35.
44. *Annapolis Gazette*, December 2, 1858 (emphasis in original); Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 325–27; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 192; Clark, *Eastern Shore*, I: 515; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 35; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 250.
45. *Baltimore American*, March 4, 1842; *Maryland Colonization Journal* 1 (1838), 77; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 199–200, 210–11; Malka, *Men of Mobtown*, 168–69. Slaveholder conventions held in 1858 and 1859 succeeded in lobbying the Maryland legislature to outlaw manumissions, and in 1858 lawmakers also authorized a statewide referendum in which the white population would vote on whether to enslave all free Blacks within its borders. Thanks in part to vigorous “vote no” campaign waged by Black Baltimoreans, the plan was rejected at the ballot box. Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 171, 206–8; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 375, 380.
46. *Baltimore Times*, November 5, 1851; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 249; Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 212; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 202, 355; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 128; Clark, *Eastern Shore*, I: 518. On support for colonization among Marylanders prior to 1825, see Jones, *Birthright Citizens*, 37–49. State support for colonization was renewed in 1852, despite protests from Black leaders.
47. Delblanco, *War before the War*, 230; Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 115; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 249; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 169–70, 357–59.
48. Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 126–27, 132; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters* 207; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 143–46. The state's small band of white antislavery activists were also dead set against deportation. Benjamin Lundy condemned colonization for its lack of interest in abolishing slavery. He published many Black activists' denunciations of the scheme and was instrumental in convincing a young William Lloyd Garrison to renounce his own early support for it. Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 170. For a divergent view (and a full list of emigrants to the Maryland in Liberia colony), see Richard Hall, *On Africa's Shore: A History of Maryland in Liberia, 1834–1857* (Baltimore: Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2004).
49. (Boston) *Liberator*, March 23, 1833 (emphasis in original), June 4, 1831; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 249–50; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 142–43; Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 243; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 204–6.
50. Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 204–6; Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 215–16; Jones, *Birthright Citizens*, 38–39; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 203–4.
51. (Philadelphia) *Pennsylvania Freeman*, April 20, 1854; (New York) *Colored American*, March 21, 1840; Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 293–94, 305; Clayton, *Antebellum Baltimore*, 53–54; Harrold, *Border War*, 53–54. On the Reverse Underground Railroad, see Richard Bell, *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and Their Astonishing Odyssey Home* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2019).
52. John S. Tyson, *Life of Elisha Tyson, the Philanthropist. By a Citizen of Baltimore* (Baltimore: B. Lundy, 1825), 79; *Baltimore Patriot*, July 26, 1817; Ralph Clayton, *Cash for Blood: The Baltimore to New Orleans Slave Trade* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2002), 39, 49; (New York) *Freedom's Journal*, August 15, 1828. For more on kidnappings in Baltimore see (Washington, DC) *Daily National Intelligencer*, September 26, 1817; (Philadelphia) *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, June 12, 1818; (Baltimore) *Niles Weekly Register*, December 12, 1818; *Easton Gazette*, January 11, 1819; *Easton Gazette*, July 23, 1821; (Baltimore) *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, August 9, 1822; (Baltimore) *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 26, 1826; Dorsey, *Hirelings*, 93–94; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 238–39; Wallace, “Fair Daughters of Africa,” 257; Leroy Graham,

- Baltimore: The Nineteenth-Century Black Capital* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), 60; Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 230–31; Bernard John Medairy Jr., *The Notorious Patty Cannon and Her Gang of Kidnappers on the Eastern Shore: Kidnappers, Robbers and Murderers* (Towson, MD: B. Medairy, 1995), 39–46. On kidnappers of color see *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, August 13, 1821; (Baltimore) *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 9, 1827; Richard Bell, “Counterfeit Kin: Kidnappers of Color, the Reverse Underground Railroad, and the Origins of Practical Abolition,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 2 (2018), 199–230.
53. (New York) *Colored American*, March 21, 1840; Clayton, *Antebellum Baltimore*, 45–46; E. S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America, From April 1833, to October, 1834*, 2 vols. (New York: Negro Press, 1969), 2:99–100; Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 302; Bell, *Stolen*, 47–80; Harrold, *Border War*, 53–54.
54. Jesse Torrey, *A Portraiture of Slavery in the United States, Proposing National Measures for the Education and Gradual Emancipation of the Slaves . . .*, 2nd ed. (Ballston Spa, NY: 1818), 82; Maddox, *Parker Sisters*, 32–33. For Marylanders abducting free Blacks in Pennsylvania prior to 1850 see Maddox, *Parker Sisters*, 17–18; David G. Smith, *On the Edge of Freedom: The Fugitive Slave Issue in South Central Pennsylvania, 1820–1870* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), esp. 97–104; William C. Kashatus, *Just Over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002), esp. 29–30.
55. Pauli Murray, *Proud Shoes: The Story of An American Family* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 97; Maddox, *Parker Sisters*, 17–19, 38–39; Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 73–74. For Marylanders abducting free Blacks in Pennsylvania after 1850, see Clayton, *Cash For Blood*, 38–39; Samuel May, *The Fugitive Slave Law and Its Victims*, rev. ed. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 23, 25, 121. The difference between a kidnapper and a slave catcher was often in the eye of the beholder. Blackett, *Captive's Quest*, 302–3.
56. Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 169; *Baltimore Patriot*, July 26, 1817; Daniel Drayton, *Personal Memoir of Daniel Drayton, For Four years and Four Months A Prisoner (For Charity's Sake) in Washington Jail, Including a Narrative of the Voyage and Capture of the Schooner Pearl* (Boston: Bela Marsha, 1853), 60; Schermerhorn, *Unrequited Toil*, 147; *Relf's Philadelphia Gazette*, May 22, 1822; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 240; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 309. On the Baltimore Quaker Elisha Tyson's lonely, unpopular, and dangerous crusade against kidnappers in the 1810s and the short-lived Protection Society of Maryland he founded in 1816, see Tyson, *Life of Elisha Tyson*, 82–87, 101–2, 108–10; Graham, *Black Capital*, 50–51; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 105–6; *Niles Weekly Register*, May 9, 1818.
57. Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 190, 198–99; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 179–80; Whitman, *Challenging Slavery*, 155, 120; Harrold, *Border War*, 118.
58. Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 231; Gordon E. Finnie, “The Antislavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840,” *Journal of Southern History* 35, no. 3 (1969), 324–25. At a June 1828 monthly meeting, the treasurer of the Baltimore Society for the Protection of Free People of Color reported that society funds amounted to just 37.5 cents. Regular meetings ceased soon thereafter. Baltimore Society for the Protection of Free People of Color. Minutes, 1827–1829. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
59. Harrold, *Border War*, 201–2, 204–5; Michael J. Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections, 1788–1860: The Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 170–71.
60. Fields, *Middle Ground*, 6; Delblanco, *War before the War*, 28.





# Freedom and Slavery in Antebellum Maryland: Images from MCHC's Digital Collections

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Maryland Center for History and Culture

THE ARTICLE “Border State, Border War: Fighting for Freedom and Slavery in Antebellum Maryland” by Dr. Richard Bell published in this volume of the *Maryland Historical Magazine* brings forth new historical scholarship of the fight over enslavement in Maryland before the American Civil War.

To support Dr. Bell’s article and enrich our readers’ experience with illustrations of this tumultuous time in Maryland history, we have created a portfolio of images from MCHC’s Museum and Library Collections. Each image connects to a particular part of the article and provides additional information that we hope our audience finds illuminating.

We invite you to explore these, and much more, in our Digital Collections, available at [mdhistory.org/digital-collections](http://mdhistory.org/digital-collections). This digital repository now holds over 2,400 publicly accessible items, and our staff are working to add new ones weekly.





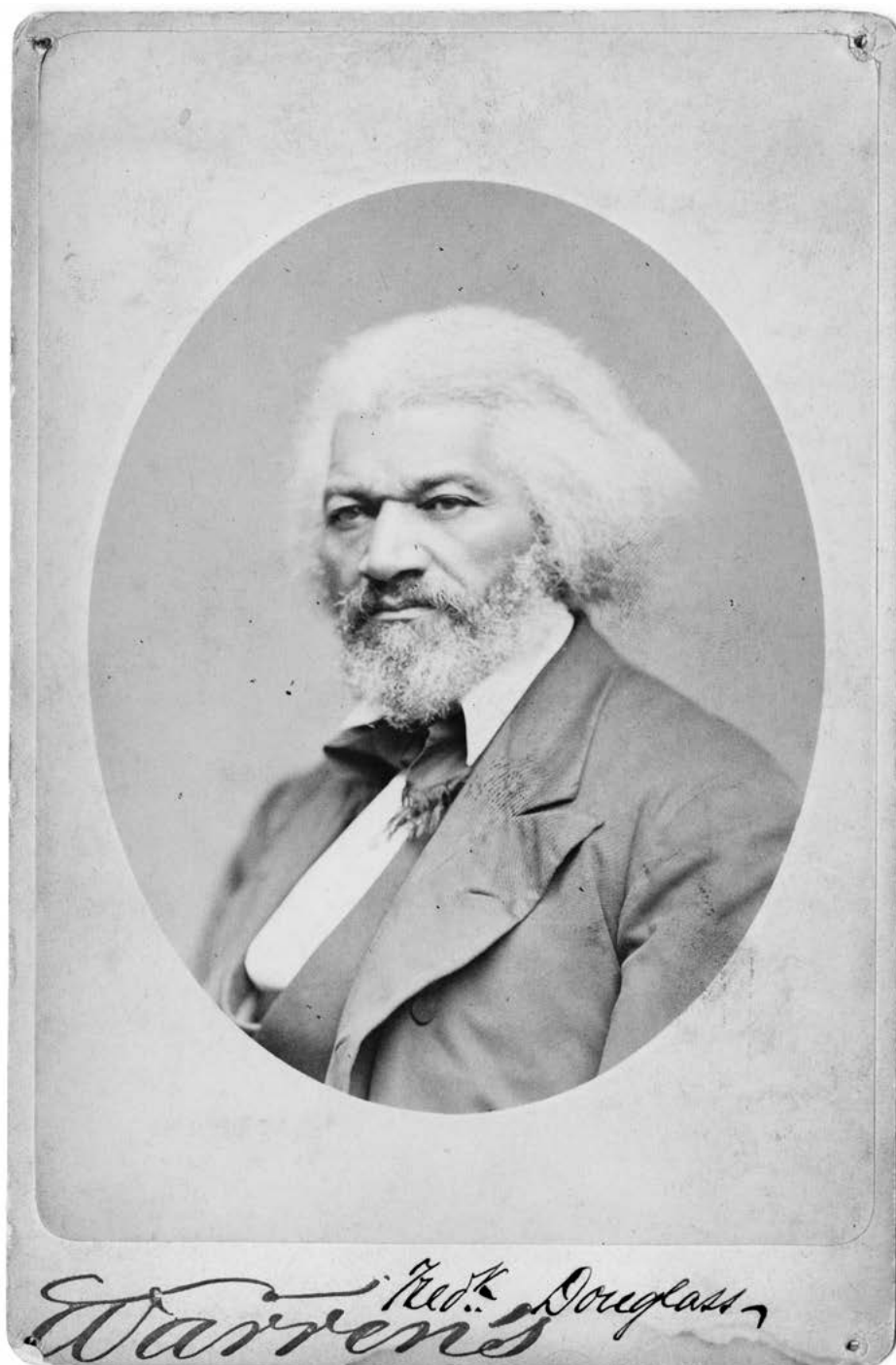


FIGURE 1. As Dr. Bell states, "In Baltimore, Douglass found himself caught between slavery and freedom, a predicament that embodied the broader contradictions of the slave experience throughout this border state."

This portrait of Frederick Douglass is a fitting starting visual for the article. Warren's Portraits, a Boston-based portrait studio, took this *carte de visite* portrait of Douglass in 1879.

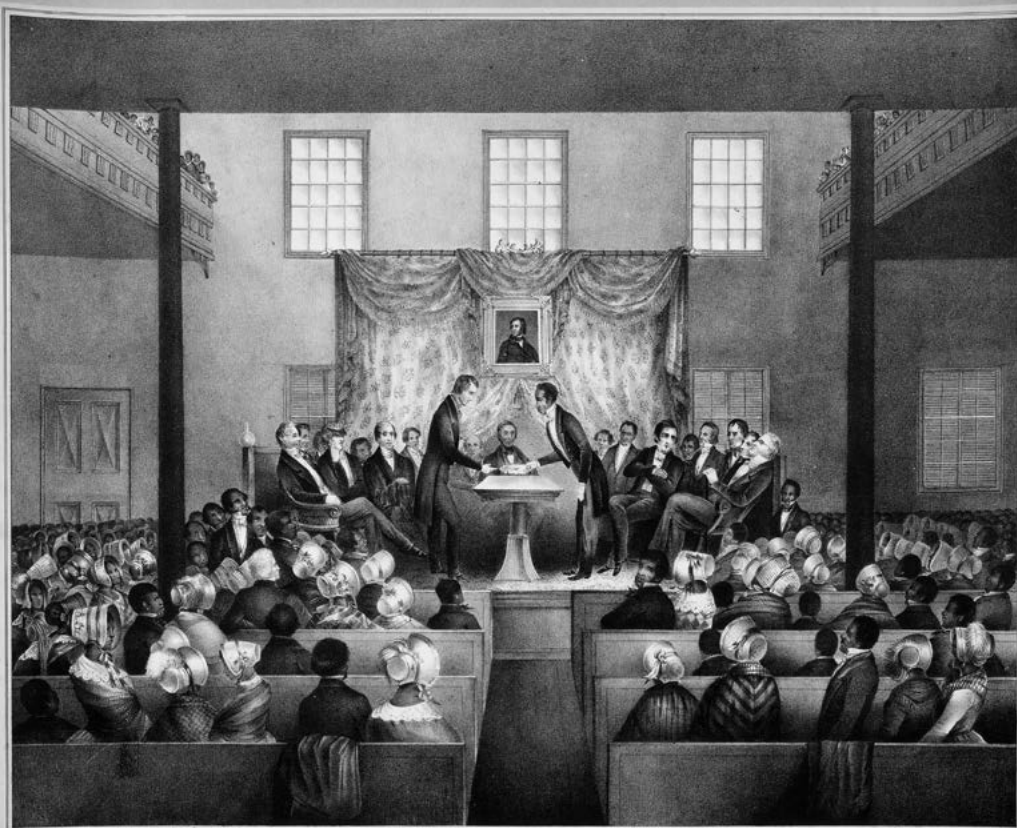
Portrait of Frederick Douglass, Warren's, Boston, 1879. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Portrait Vertical File



FIGURE 2. "Some worked in construction, ship-building, caulking, and sail-making. Many more toiled each day as porters, waiters, servants, cooks, maids, and seamstresses in hotels, restaurants, and private homes."

This form of enslavement is commonly referred to as urban slavery, and it was the most common type of enslavement for most of the 2,218 enslaved men, women, and children in Baltimore in 1860.

*The Dandy Slave: A Scene in Baltimore, Maryland, 1861*, unknown artist, Baltimore, 1861. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Baltimore City Life Museum Collection, Works on Paper Collection, CB2883



**THE PRESENTATION**

of a Gold Snuff Box to the Rev. R. J. Breckenridge D. D.

*in Bethel Church by Rev. Darius Stokes in behalf of the colored people of Baltimore as a gift of gratitude. Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1845.*

FIGURE 3. This lithograph depicts the presentation of a snuff box to the Rev. R. J. Breckenridge in Bethel Church by Rev. Darius Stokes on December 18, 1845. The congregation of Bethel, led by Reverend Stokes, thanked the Reverend Breckenridge for his efforts to prevent proposed legislation placing restrictions on free African Americans and on the rights of enslavers to manumit their slaves. This moment is indicative of the fight for freedom described in the article: "Legislators in Annapolis reflexively batted down petitions to abolish slavery gradually, even as more and more white Marylanders complained that slavery was a drag on the state's economic fortunes."

*The presentation of a gold snuff box to the Reverend R. T. Breckenridge D. D., unknown creator, 1845. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Print Collection, Large Print Collection*





FIGURE 4. "On his visit to Baltimore in 1835, Ethan Allen Andrews counted 'a dozen or more' slave dealers with offices and pens in the city."

This image, from 1910, is of one of the pens that were active in Baltimore. Opened in 1858 and operating until 1863, this building was the quarters where dealer Bernard M. Campbell imprisoned Black men, women, and children before selling them into slavery in the south. This pen was located at 224–228 Pratt Street.

Exterior of pen for enslaved people, unknown photographer, October 24, 1910. Maryland Center for History and Culture, Baltimore City Life Museum Collection, City Hall Collection, BCLM-CC2872.2



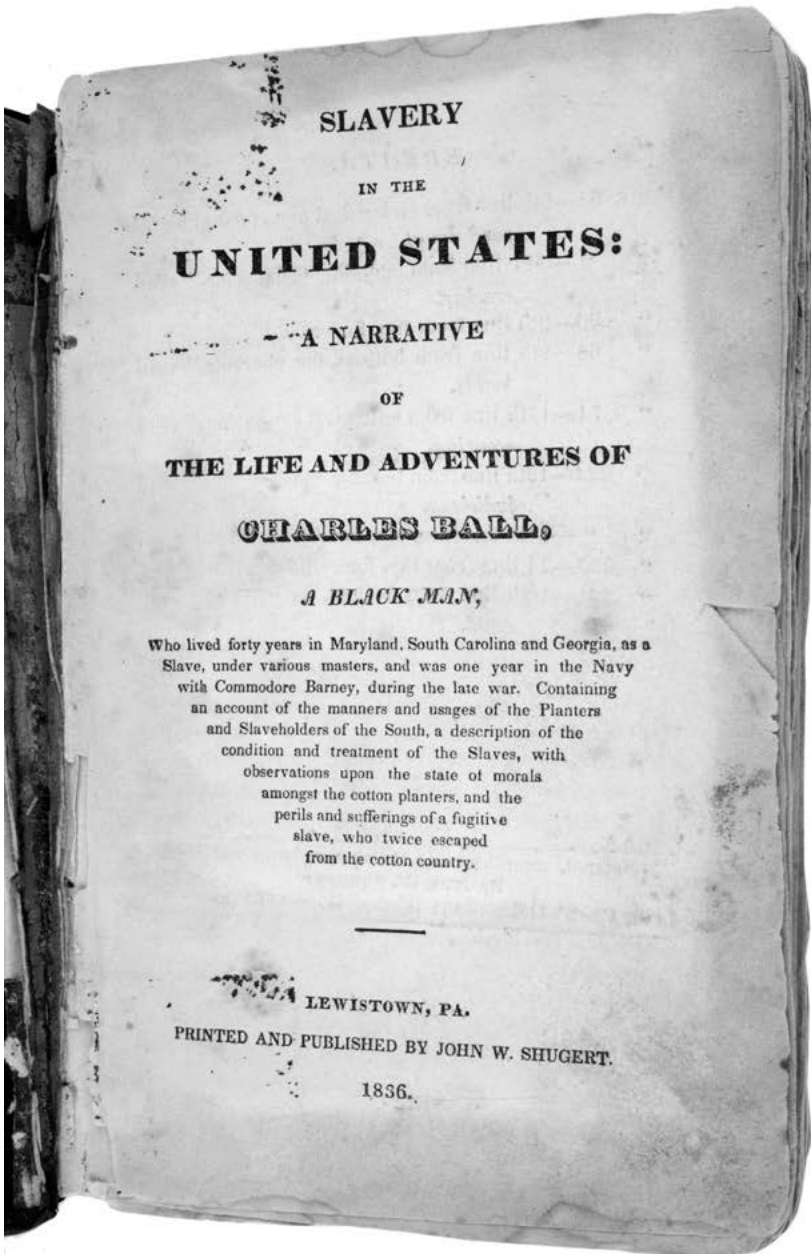


FIGURE 5. "Writing in 1836, nearly fifty years after the fact, Charles Ball admitted that the terrible memory of being ripped from his Maryland mother at the age of four still played 'with painful vividness upon my memory.'"

Charles Ball's memoir, titled *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*, tells the story of Ball's life during enslavement, including his two escapes from it. It discusses the conditions of enslavement, provides observations of the morals of enslavers and descriptions of the treatment of enslaved individuals. Interestingly, Charles Ball also served as a member of Joshua Barney's flotilla during the War of 1812.

*Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball*, Lewistown, PA, 1836. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Rare Book Collection, E444.B18



FIGURE 6. William Still's self-published book documented the stories of escapes from bondage in Maryland to freedom in Pennsylvania, where "enslaved men and women often fled . . . turning Maryland into an epicenter of practical abolition."

*Twenty-eight fugitives escaping from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, engraving by John Osler, from The underground rail road: A record of facts, authentic narratives, letters, &c., narrating the hardships, hairbreadth escapes and death struggles of the slaves in their efforts for freedom / as related by themselves and others, by William Still, Philadelphia, 1872. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Rare Book Collection, E450.S85*

# 300 Dollars

## REWARD,

For the apprehension of the following Negro Men, and lodging them in any jail, so that I get them again—or in proportion for either.

### HANSON,

Who calls himself HANSON MARSHALL, very black, about 40 years of age, 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, a stout well set fellow, the front of his head bald, teeth remarkably white, nose flat, and eyes small; *he is ruptured, and did wear a truss*; can read, and will occasionally exhort and preach. He left my farm on Elkridge, in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, in May, 1827.

### PETER,

Who calls himself PETER SNOWDEN, very black, about 23 years of age, 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, a stout fellow, with thick projecting lips, and a remarkable *Scar on the left cheek bone*, and a similar one between the thumb and finger of one of his hands, both occasioned by accidents when young. Peter left the same farm on the 22d July last, and has, no doubt, gone to Hanson, and there is reason for believing that both are now in Pennsylvania.

These servants are accustomed to plantation work, and are good hands with the scythe or axe. Their clothing were of the best Oznaburgs and fulled cloth, with strong shoes; but as they are supplied with other apparel, they will no doubt change their dress. Any intelligence of those servants, leading to their apprehension, will be handsomely rewarded, on addressing me at Baltimore.

### RICHARD DORSEY.

Baltimore, October 11, 1828.

*Printed by SAMUEL SANDS, corner of Gay and Water Streets—Baltimore.*

FIGURE 7. The path to freedom for men, women, and children who escaped bondage was not easy: "On the roads, would-be fugitives had to run the gauntlet, dodging slave patrols and new 'vigilance associations' set up across the state to round up runaways and protect the chattel principle."

Broadsides featuring rewards were placed throughout regions where those who escaped might traverse. They included details about what the individuals were wearing and where they could be going. Because these attributes could alter, broadsides also included information that those seeking freedom could not change, such as height, scars, and facial features. The broadside above is for two men, Hanson Marshall and Peter Snowden, who escaped from Anne Arundel County in 1828.

\$300 Reward for Hanson Marshall and Peter Snowden, created by Richard Dorsey, 1828. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Broadside Collection



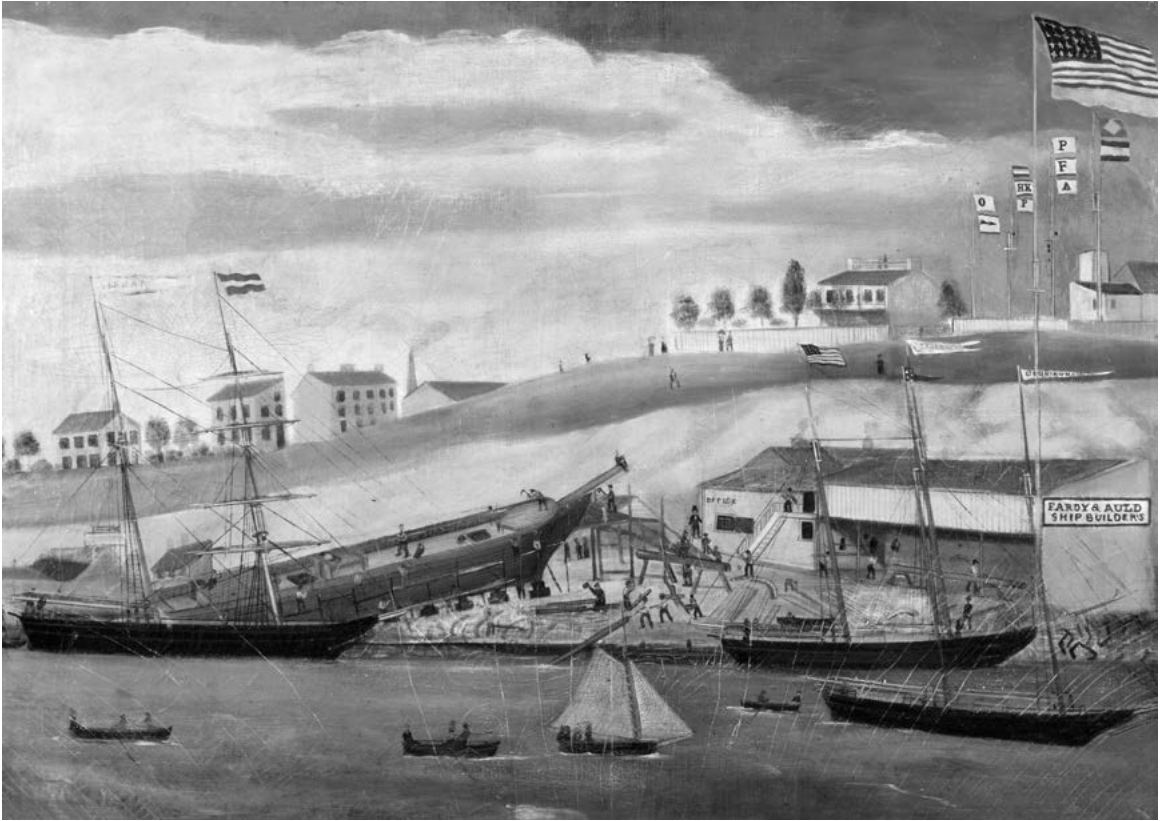


FIGURE 8. "A few owned and operated their own stores, cookshops, and oyster houses. Others ran basement grogshops or backstreet brothels. Many more worked at the shipyards as caulkers or carpenters, or as mariners on the ocean-going vessels made and maintained there."

While many enslaved men, women, and children sought freedom in the north, many also sought freedom by trying to blend in with the large free Black population of Baltimore, which was the pillar of Baltimore's economic growth. Although seen as cheap and flexible labor, free Black Baltimoreans served in a variety of industries.

The image above of Fardy and Auld's shipyard at Federal Hill features Black men working in the shipyard. Although we do not know for certain, we can assume that some may be free while others may be enslaved.

*Fardy and Auld Shipyard, Baltimore, Maryland*, oil on canvas by William Hare, 1850. Maryland Center for History and Culture, Baltimore City Life Museum Collection, BCLM-CA.866



FIGURE 9. In 1828, the Maryland Colonization Society (MCS) developed a plan to return formerly enslaved individuals to Africa. This plan, known as colonization, grew following the Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia. One of the areas where the MCS wanted to send the formerly enslaved men and women was Liberia: "It was a Marylander, Robert Goodloe Harper, who coined the name *Liberia*, and in 1831 the MCS sent its first cohort of Black migrants there."

*Maryland in Liberia*, oil on canvas by John H. B. Latrobe, 1835, shows a view of the shoreline at Cape Palmas, Liberia. Maryland Center for History and Culture, Museum Collection, 1885.31



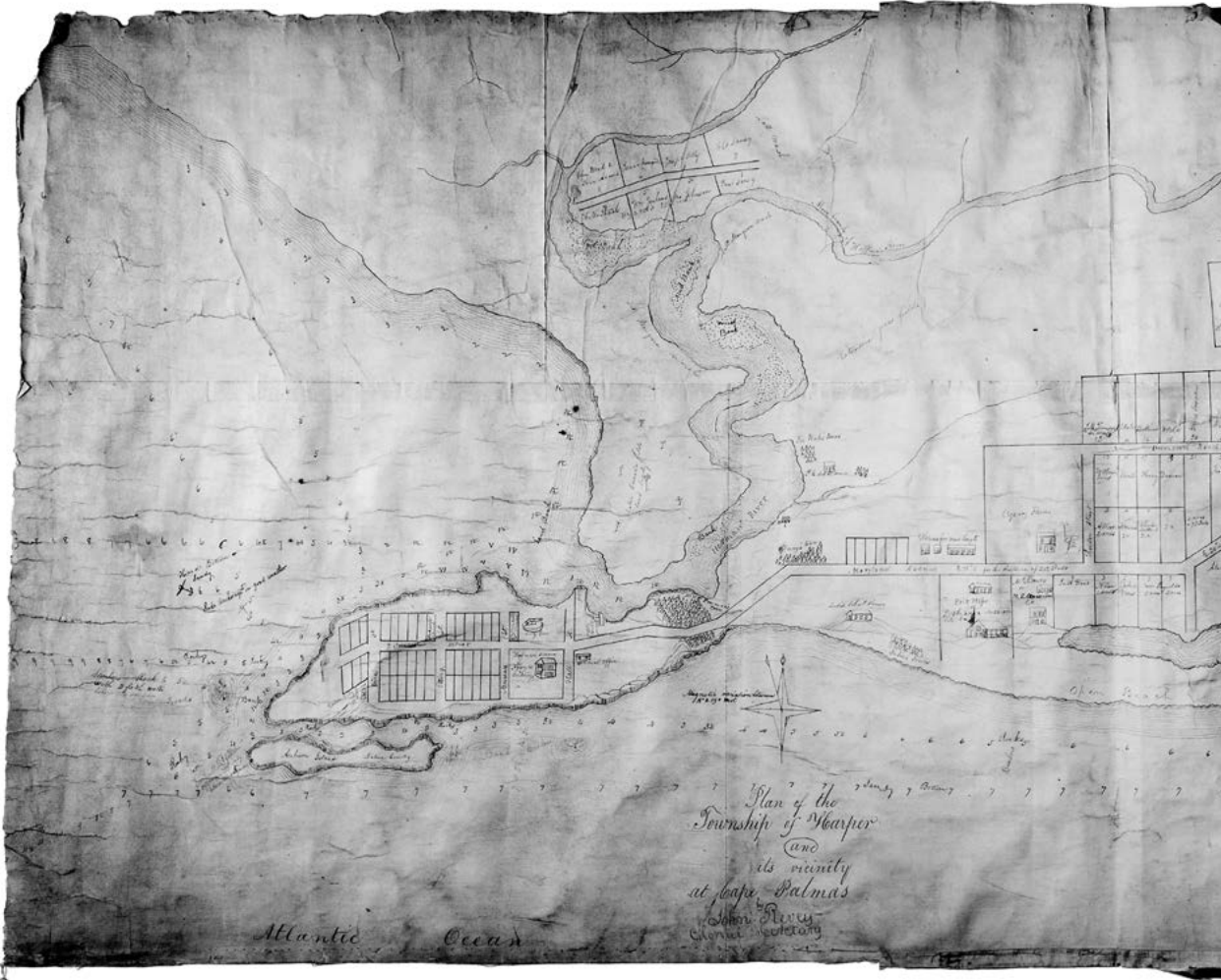


FIGURE 10 is a map of the town of Harper, Liberia. Harper is the capital of Maryland County, located on Cape Palmas. The town was named after Robert Goodloe Harper, who was a United States politician and member of the American Colonization Society.

*Plan of the Township of Harper and Its Vicinity at Cape Palmas*, Jon Revey, 1865. Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland State Colonization Society Records, MS 571

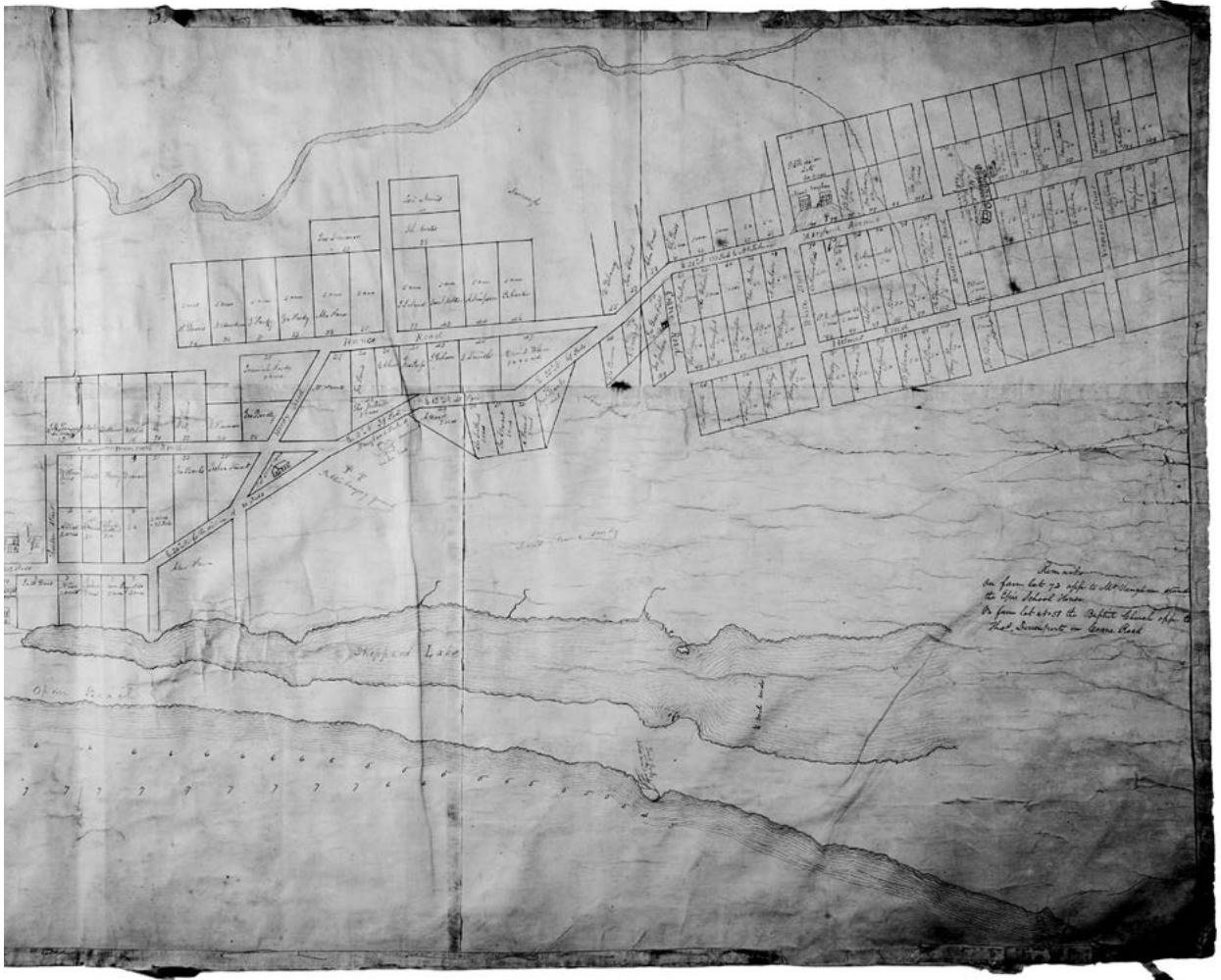




FIGURE 11. "In the state's southern and eastern counties, many Marylanders prized the protection of race slavery and considered Lincoln's antislavery politics anathema. When those voters went to the polls that November, their ballots ensured that Lincoln placed fourth in statewide returns, trailing John Breckenridge, the Southern Democrat candidate, by a margin of more than eighteen to one."

While an antislavery movement grew in Baltimore in the 1820s, by the time of the election of 1860, the antislavery movement in Maryland had dwindled due to the influence of pro-slavery interests in the state. This image features a campaign ribbon from Maryland in support of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln (1809–1865) defeated John C. Breckenridge, Stephen A. Douglas, and John Bell in the 1860 election for president. The result pushed several states to secede, sparking the Civil War.

Abraham Lincoln campaign ribbon, unknown maker, 1860. Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2021.31.1







FIGURE 1. *Rebecca Dorsey Ridgely* (1739–1812), oil on canvas by John Hesselius (1728–1778), c.1767.

Hampton National Historic Site, National Park Service, HAMP 1145



# The “Expereance” of Rebecca Ridgely: The Religious Memoir of a Maryland Gentlewoman, 1786–1798

BY TUCKER ADKINS

REBECCA DORSEY RIDGELY (1739–1812), a white gentlewoman in colonial Baltimore, Maryland, expressed the desire to be “Baptized with the Holy Gost and with fire.” In a short spiritual autobiography penned between 1786 and 1798, she lamented how neither her father’s Anglicanism nor her mother’s Quakerism supplied the spiritual solace she ached for. Despite her mother’s strained attempts to teach her the character of genuine piety, Ridgely continued many years with “But poor Sattisfaction” in matters of religion. Between her mother’s failed theological instruction and the unfeeling liturgy she found in her father’s church, she considered herself “with out a profestion.” Everything changed when she heard a Methodist preacher in 1774.<sup>1</sup>

This article tells Ridgely’s story, from her early religious journeying to her “Born again” experience at age thirty-five. It introduces readers to the specific metaphysical travails filling her little-referenced manuscript “reminiscence” and illustrates, specifically, how one elite white woman negotiated the thorny effects of rowdy revivalism. To this point, no historian of early American Methodism has devoted sufficient attention to Ridgely’s unedited, self-authored spiritual memoir. This speaks to the historiographical novelty of the reminiscence, but her colorful eight-page description of the “Mannafestation of the Love of God” is particularly significant as it brings readers unusually close to the private, stirring, and disruptive effects of born-again Protestantism just as it bloomed throughout southern British America. Her manuscript illustrates how believers viewed and embraced the hallmarks of “new birth” Christianity: affective piety, personal new birth, social combativeness, and heightened awareness of the Holy Spirit. Ridgely’s informal narrative also vividly portrays how the awakenings—especially in their early stages—could destabilize the social decorum and patriarchal authority fundamental to white gentility in places like eighteenth-century Maryland.<sup>2</sup>

Tucker Adkins received his PhD in American religious history from Florida State University in 2022. His research currently focuses on religious experience, space, and sound in the British Atlantic world. In Fall 2022, he will start his appointment as a de Vries Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in the History Department at Calvin University.

Mrs RR Experience from the time she was 10 12 16  
 10 21 30 46 as well as she can Remember  
 my father was a Church man and my mother a Quaker  
 my Sister <sup>grew</sup> up with me Both got Distress about Bap-  
 tism our not being Baptiz'd when Infants we then  
 Ask our mother why we where not Baptiz'd as  
 others was, She then told us that the water Baptism was  
 not the Baptism that would give us inheritance in heaven  
 that it was the Spiritual Baptism that we must Receive  
 that of being Baptiz'd with the Holy Gost and with  
 fire we wanted to know how we were <sup>to</sup> Gett this Baptism  
 She Never then had Experienced the Virtue of it  
 and could not Give any other information then that  
 we must trust in the Lord, this being but poor  
 Satisfaction to us, we often Spoke to her on the same  
 Subject would Distress her so at times, that she would  
 shed tears, wishing she could instruct us as well as her  
 father did her, that we might be Satisfied, we so  
 moved on untill I was married tho' I Remember I  
 used to wish I could Gett a Quaker Husband for I  
 thought they must be the people of God we was Brought  
 up more in the way of Church people then Quakers  
 my mother often Admonishing <sup>us</sup> when us when we  
 went to Church not to be like the Rest that was  
 there, to pray with our Lips and at the same time  
 our hearts be far from God this made <sup>me</sup> Bear  
 a great Cross for many in the time that I have  
 Blush'd to see all <sup>the</sup> Church in saying there  
 Responses and I not Dare to speak

FIGURE 2. The first page from the manuscript "Rebecca Ridgely Reminiscence, 1786–1798." Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Ridgely-Pue Papers, MS 0693, Box 2, Folder 3

Ridgely did not leave behind the volume of writings we see from select New Light women, such as Rhode Island's Sarah Osborn or Connecticut's Hannah Heaton, but her brief memoir nevertheless reminds us of the crucial role played by lay women during the colonial awakenings. It is true that we cannot deny the movement's early dependence upon the doctrinal, organizational, and literary contributions of celebrated leaders like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Charles Wesley. But we must also note the formative role played by upper-class women like Rebecca Ridgely, recalling that nascent awakened Protestantism represented a shifting constellation of beliefs and behaviors—both conventional and “radical”—negotiated between clergymen and laypeople. Ridgely and her account of straining to “Appear at Last Spotless and Blameless” supplies students and scholars more extended interaction with the vernacular piety and patronage that underpinned born-again revivalism in the southern colonies.<sup>3</sup>

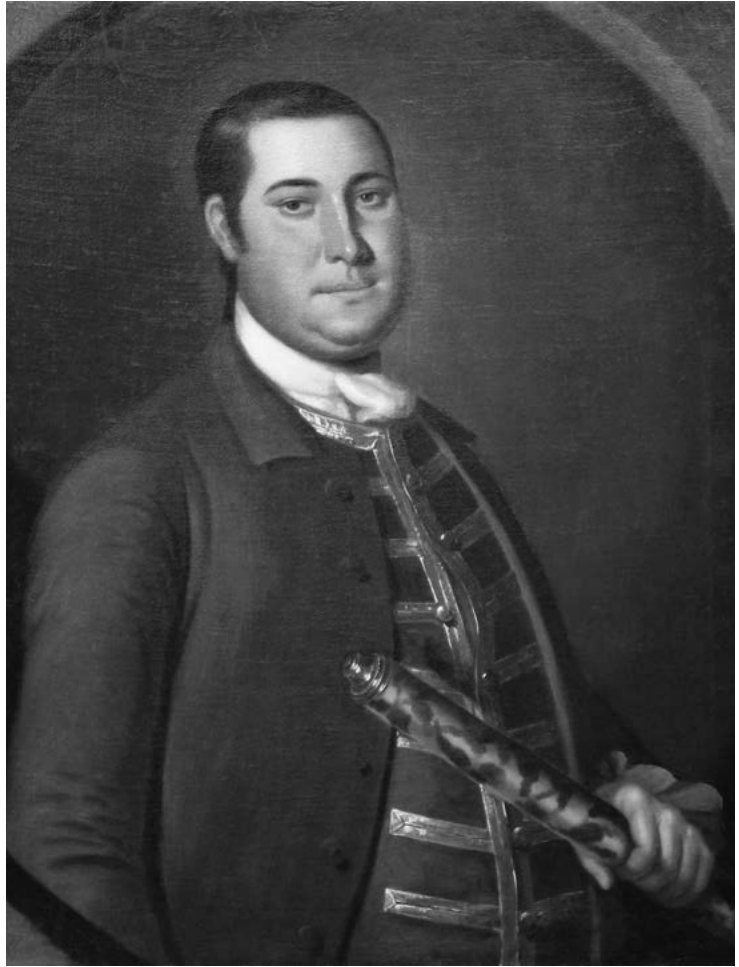
Ridgely's reminiscence depicts a white, southern gentlewoman's initiation into early American Methodism. Specifically, her narrative illustrates how she joined other awakened believers across North America and Britain in embracing a “body-centered religion,” where weeping, jumping, and clapping evidenced saving faith. With redemption physically manifesting through bodies, including Ridgely's, those bodies came to mean new things. Her new birth changed the way she viewed and comported her body as much as it changed what she believed. Promptly after receiving her made-new heart and flesh, she dissented from the prescribed duties of genteel womanhood in eighteenth-century Maryland. What follows is a detailed examination of Ridgely's startling encounter with eighteenth-century revivalism, and, with permission from the H. Furlong Baldwin Library at the Maryland Center for History and Culture, a transcript of her invaluable reminiscence.<sup>4</sup>

We know very little about Ridgely's early life. She was the daughter of Priscilla Hill and Caleb Dorsey Jr. The Dorseys were one of Anne Arundel (now Howard) County's most prominent families, known in particular for their great success in ironmaking. By the time of his death in 1772, Caleb Dorsey Jr.'s sprawling property holdings and considerable fortune in iron-forging at the Elk Ridge Furnace made him worth upwards of £10,000. His inheritance and personal commercial achievements helped finance Belmont—the massive Dorsey family estate lying just west of Baltimore. Built in 1738, the Dorsey homestead was one of colonial Maryland's finest properties, reportedly playing host to famed visitors such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Rebecca Dorsey's future husband, Captain Charles Ridgely, came from a similar social and financial background.<sup>5</sup>

The Maryland Ridgelys became one of the Chesapeake's more successful merchant and planter clans. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Charles Ridgely's father, Col. Charles Ridgely, assured the family's commercial influence through savvy trade ventures, credit lending, and land accumulation throughout Baltimore County. By 1750, the elder Ridgely possessed over 10,000 acres of Maryland land and effectively guaranteed social and financial advantage for future inheritors. Captain Charles

FIGURE 3. *Captain Charles Ridgely* (1733–1790), oil on canvas by John Hesselius (1728–1778), 1767.

Hampton National Historic Site, National Park Service, HAMP 1144



Ridgely capitalized off his father's success. The younger Ridgely's mercantile career blossomed through the 1750s and 1760s, especially during his stint as a shipmaster under the supervision of James Russell—a well-known London tobacco merchant. He greatly expanded his wealth in the early 1760s, just as he and Rebecca Dorsey married, when he along with his father and older brother John established the family-owned-and-operated Northampton Iron Works. By 1783, Charles Ridgely enslaved nearly a hundred Black individuals, operated one of the south's most profitable iron furnaces, and broke ground on Hampton Hall—a colossal, 24,000 square-foot Georgian residence and monument to the family's lofty status. Rebecca and Charles Ridgely epitomized Maryland's elite class.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the array of genteel comforts Ridgely enjoyed, we know from her reminiscence that she experienced intense spiritual "Distress" for much of her early life. Her father was a "Churchman" and her mother a "Quaquer," but it appears neither of her parents' traditions offered her much spiritual assurance. Throughout the manuscript's



first half we find that the young Ridgely agonized over baptism, worriedly wondering why she never received it and how she could secure its benefits before it was too late. This desperation to find her “inheritance in heaven” pushed her to re-explore her father and husband’s Anglican prayer book piety, her mother’s Quakerism, and even local “Baptis Methodist [and] prespreterien” meetings. None of them seemed to matter. Whether “Striving all I Could to be a Churchwoman,” or hopefully attending a nearby “Quaquer meeting,” she found little comfort in Baltimore’s Protestant marketplace. Many mornings she “would not be in Church 1 minite,” she lamented, before finding her “goodness was gone.” Other times, she would “not be seated one moment” before being “Broke all to peaces and would be made to weep.” Ridgely’s spiritual tribulations—her yearning “to be Riligious”—brought her into the region’s chaotic season of radical awakenings.<sup>7</sup>

Coming a bit later than their northern neighbors, New Light Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians loudly carried born-again religion to the southern colonies by the mid-eighteenth century. Leading awakeners like George Whitefield toured the area—including Ridgely’s native Maryland—as early as the 1730s, but the earliest examples of sustained revival came in the 1750s. Local growth of born-again Protestantism was first evident in the ministries of clergymen like Baptist Oliver Hart and Presbyterians such as Samuel Davies and James Waddell. Hart suggested in his diary that he and his Charleston flock experienced “fresh Wonders” throughout the fall of 1754. Young men and women flooded his home on a daily basis, often “Crying out” and “being melted down into Tears” from numinous convictions. Hart hoped the proliferation of weekday worship, heartfelt prayer, and authentic piety suggested “many may be Awakened.”<sup>8</sup>

While Hart, Davies, Waddell, and other New Lights successfully fostered isolated awakenings during this period, southern revivalism became an expanding, connected, and regional movement in later decades. Whitefieldian revivalism—what the South Carolina Episcopalian Penuel Bowen rebuked as “enthusiasm & fanaticism” in 1786—exploded throughout Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas by the 1760s and 1770s. Observers like Devereux Jarratt, James Manning, and Daniel Fristoe testified to the noticeable inroads made by Baptist and Methodist preachers, reporting numerous instances of mass conversions, spectral visitations, spirit possession, and inexplicable corporeal outbursts. As her reminiscence and countless other records show, Ridgely’s native home was a cradle of early southern Methodism.<sup>9</sup>

Privileged women like Ridgely played indispensable roles in sustaining the movement in Maryland and other parts of southern America. By providing food, lodging, and financial patronage for cash-strapped itinerants, elite white women were uniquely equipped as sponsors for preachers criss-crossing North America. As historian Dee Andrews has put it, early southern Methodism succeeded because of the “lifelong support of a host of women” whose financial resources consistently accommodated male leadership. The Ridgely family used their wealth to directly aid preacher Robert Straw-



FIGURE 4. Rebecca Ridgely was not the only member of the Ridgely family with close ties to Methodism. Her sister Priscilla, who married Charles Carnan Ridgely, was a devout Methodist herself. She is depicted wearing a simple attire in this portrait, which may have been an intentional gesture of her faith.



*Priscilla Dorsey Ridgely*  
(1762–1814), oil on canvas, attributed to Joseph Wright, c. 1790. Collection of the Maryland State Archives, MSA SC 1545-1209

bridge, gifting him farmland in Long Green, Baltimore County. Ridgely's endorsement of Methodist leadership was particularly evident in her relationship with Francis Asbury—America's most eminent Methodist. In an 1807 thank-you note, Asbury graciously acknowledged the generosity of his esteemed "Benefactress." Given his many "expences in Traveling," especially the horses needed to travel 5,000 miles annually, Asbury could not imagine surviving without a "Friend like Momma Ridgely."<sup>10</sup>

Most historians credit the Irish-born lay preacher Robert Strawbridge with introducing Wesleyan Methodism to much of the eighteenth-century south, including Ridgely's native Maryland. The farmer-preacher came to colonial America around 1760 and settled in Frederick County, Maryland. He travelled throughout the Chesapeake and helped cultivate Methodist communities across Maryland and Virginia in the 1760s and early 1770s. Through the financial backing, spiritual encouragement, and social legitimation of upper-crust women like Ridgely, a number of subsequent preachers followed Strawbridge's lead and witnessed a "great outpouring of the Spirit" among Marylanders. Itinerants like William Duke, John Hagerty, and Ezekiel Cooper enjoyed such marked success that by 1789 one Episcopal visitor could not help but notice that the "noise and tumult of the Methodist meetings frequently become the subject of conversation."<sup>11</sup>

Ridgely's own converting encounter with Methodism came through Thomas Webb in 1774. The one-eyed Englishman, redcoat veteran, and lay preacher was known across British North America—like many of his Methodist colleagues—for his lively and impassioned sermons. In 1773, John Wesley confirmed Webb's zealous nature when he described the preacher as "all life and fire." From Ridgely's reminiscence it appears the preacher held similar esteem in Maryland. As she decided whether or not to attend his stop in Baltimore, one of Ridgely's friends encouraged her to see Webb. "Doe go," her unnamed companion urged, "it is as good as a play to hear him."<sup>12</sup>

With her husband gone to Annapolis, Ridgely and her two sisters-in-law—Pleasance Ridgely Goodwin and Achsah Ridgely Carnan Chamier—went and heard Webb's sermon on the "Day of Salvation." Southern white men, especially those of privilege, often viewed revivalists like Webb with serious concern, fearing that women, poor people, enslaved Black workers, and Native Americans might believe preachers' claims that the singular new birth suspended entrenched social divisions. There is little doubt, then, that her husband's absence inspired Ridgely's attendance. In a homily that must have seemed personally tailored for her, the preacher implored listeners not to take for granted the Lord's patience. He "made it out that the Spirit of God would not Strive with man allways," she remembered, and "spoke so plain of the Spiritual Baptism and how we might through prayer Come to Receive that Blessing and through Neglect might Lose it." Webb's words arrived with such conviction that Ridgely "began to weep" and "fell on my knees," seeing herself as the "very person who had Neglected the Calls of God." She dropped to the ground, petitioned God for mercy, and "thought what is all the world to me if I must Lose my Soul." Webb's sermon left Pleasance and Achsah "Both Convinced" and tearful as well, Ridgely noted, "But, not So struck as I." Her "conviction" did not bring immediate resolution, however. In the subsequent days, she "wept much and prayed much But found No peace." The gentlewoman ruminated all day and all night, speculating on the state of her soul and whether she could possibly be born again. But just as she thought herself doomed, she "felt Something Come as an Arrow out of a Bow in to my heart." After nearly three decades of spiritual dread, she realized she was then "Baptized with the Holy Gost and with fire." "O may I ever Remember It," she celebrated, as the "fire of Love Burned."<sup>13</sup>

As Ridgely narrated her conviction and conversion, she contributed to a fifty-year-old literary tradition at the core of awakened religion. Since the 1730s, British and Anglo-American women had recorded their individual conversion experiences to corroborate and stimulate what they saw as a new Pentecost—the transoceanic "Work of the Lord." From the movement's budding stages throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, Ridgely's forebears regularly chronicled their conversion experiences and shared them with well-known revival leaders like George Whitefield, Charles Wesley, Howel Harris, and William McCulloch. Regardless of time, place, and station, testimonies from earlier born-again white women resembled Ridgely's and often centered around a few key points: their nominal Christian life prior to conversion, initial and protracted

conviction after hearing an awakened preacher, and eventual new birth. Whether the intended audience was public or private, born-again women commonly articulated their redemption moment in letters, testimonies, and personal diaries, and therefore developed a distinct channel for female participation.<sup>14</sup>

In her weeping, falling down, and "struck" soul, it is evident Ridgely adopted the numinous outlook and corporeal behaviors exhibited among various born-again white women across the British Atlantic world. Personal conversion, intensified spirituality, and provocative bodily exercises (such as jumping and shouting) characterized female born-again experience in the eighteenth-century, regardless of denomination. From Hebron, Connecticut, and London, England, to Cambuslang, Scotland, and Pembrokehire, Wales, we know that awakened women's redemptive encounters with the "melting Presence of God" often came with these and other unsettling effects. In 1740, the Englishwoman Sarah Middleton relayed her conversion narrative to Charles Wesley. After hearing his brother, John, preach in 1739, she was so moved she "was hardly able to stand" and "often cryed out in the agony of my Soul what must I do [to be] saved." During a particularly eventful revival near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1741, one eight-year-old girl fell under such acute convictions that she "Cryed out in Anguish for her Soul." The twenty-nine-year-old Margaret Lap, a Scottish coalminer's daughter, had similar experiences. After hearing George Whitefield and the Presbyterian revivalist William McCulloch "preach on the New birth" in Cambuslang, Scotland, she felt such spiritual assurance that she "could not tell, whither I was in the Body or out of the Body; and could not forbear crying out."<sup>15</sup>

Women undergoing the new birth often foregrounded their bodies during their spiritual experiences, and this held immediate consequences in their religious practices and social relationships. Scholars have shown how this was particularly true in early Methodism, as participating white and nonwhite women often found unique opportunities for religious freedom and leadership. In its fledgling, unstructured beginnings, Methodism was a revival movement that democratized religion in ways that cut against traditional boundaries of gender, race, and class. By privileging heightened sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, personal conversion experience, and incessant evangelism above all else, early Methodism sharply critiqued established religious and social cultures that reserved spiritual command for educated clergymen and public authority for well-to-do white men. As historian Cynthia Lysterly has written of southern Methodism, it was a movement so keen on each person's new birth that it made "every member a local missionary" and "made each a prophet."<sup>16</sup>

We find that Ridgely was one of many southern white women who embraced the movement's spiritual latitude and utilized their new-found leverage to explore what anti-awakeners long termed "Enthusiastick *Notions*." Such "Serious Methodest women," as the Georgia Baptist John Newton dubbed them, were everywhere in southern America. In a 1789 letter to the North Carolina Methodist preacher Edward Dromgoole, Sally Eastland explained how she cherished "love visets" from Jesus. When "I

hear from Him,” she wrote, “some times all my ♥ desolves in love.” Some “visets” were so powerful, Sally boasted, that her Savior left her “as it ware helpless on the ground.” Other women, such as the Mecklenburg County, Virginia, gentlewoman Sarah Jones, left behind extremely detailed accounts of their mystical experiences. In one diary entry from 1792, Sarah’s meditations became so concentrated that she began to “tremble in flames of Burning Love Spreading Sweling crushing Love.” An array of unnamed southern women did much of the same. While preaching along the Cumberland Circuit in 1795, Methodist itinerant Stith Mead joyfully reported one woman’s convictions. The “power of Heaven was present,” he told a colleague, with “Awfulness & tears” spreading throughout the congregation. Specifically, a “Modest Delicate young woman Cried out for mercy” and “Shouted about 2 hours in the most feeling manner.”<sup>17</sup>

During and after her encounter with Webb, Ridgely’s urgent pursuit of personal salvation instigated a set of intense spiritual experiences that directly challenged patriarchal expectations. In the eighteenth-century American south, elite white women like her were steeped in a culture rooted in the performance of genteel manners. Through widely read etiquette manuals like Richard Allestree’s *The Ladies Calling* (1673), southern white gentlewomen knew modest conversation, male deference, and bodily restraint defined female respectability. A virtuous woman displayed “no unhandsome earnestness or loudness,” and her speech was “sweet and charming, but not to be heard at a distance.” Ridgely’s immersion in awakened spirituality and becoming a “good old-fashioned Methodist” almost immediately resulted in her strident, open protest of the above expectations.<sup>18</sup>

As she returned from Webb’s sermon, one Dr. Goodwin chastised her for her emotive response to the Methodist preacher. Goodwin “took Notice I NEEDED,” Ridgely wrote, and proudly stated that “if he was in my Husbands place he would not Lett me go again.” This reprimand did not squelch the gentlewoman’s enthusiasm. Following Goodwin’s chiding, she decided to “jump up being of a Gay Disposition and Danced and Claptt” in protest. Webb’s words were true, she corrected, and she would “go to hear him every Night” if she so desired. Later, shortly after realizing she received baptism from the Holy Spirit, she “went praising God up stayrers and Down stayrers and every where.” Ridgely claimed she “felt the Blood Applyd” and knew that for her sake Christ had “Shed his most preshous Blood.” In the days, weeks, and years following her first convictions, she remained “Desirous of being filled with all the fullness of God.” By all accounts, the Maryland gentlewoman lived the rest of her days chasing what the Methodist itinerant Jeremiah Norman once called “true & vital Religion.” In doing so, Ridgely joined scores of Revolutionary-era awakeners skeptical of traditional authority structures and convinced of their license, as the South Carolina Baptist Edmund Botsford put it, to “think & act for your selves.”<sup>19</sup>

As Janet Moore Lindman has written of eighteenth-century New Lights, conversion “happened in the body and changed the bodily conduct of the newly saved.” In Ridge-



ly's case, corporeal expressions like weeping and falling evidenced her salvation and instilled newfound spiritual confidence. Her crying, sinking body corroborated her new birth. As we saw in her encounter with Goodwin, this also reframed her perception of social propriety. Instead of reverting to quiet docility, the freshly-convicted Ridgely defiantly "Danced and Clappt" and spoke against her anti-Methodist male critic. After witnessing her own bodily response to Webb's preaching, she came home "then knowing it was the truth"—despite the reprimands and reservations of disapproving men. Ridgely's converting induction into Maryland's born-again community redefined her self-perception and relationship to local patriarchs. According to her reminiscence, her body and spirit told her a new truth.<sup>20</sup>

In telling the story of an eighteenth-century woman's desire to be "more faithfull more Devoted," Ridgely's short reminiscence gives readers the chance to engage with the intimate spiritual ruminations of an upper-crust white woman assessing the Protestant revivals that permanently altered southern religious life. To be sure, the manuscript's memoir style, wherein the author reflected on decades-old experiences, presents historians with certain challenges regarding accuracy and memory. By detailing her conversion experience over a dozen years later, one may ask, are we coming to truthful recollection or embellished nostalgia? Such criticisms are fair, but by no means dismiss the utility of Ridgely's reminiscence. Written in her own hand and without any documented clerical interference, the memoir is distinctly tailored to its author's personal thoughts and convictions. Unlike the collaborative conversion testimonies drafted among earlier revivalist ministers and their parishioners, no evidence suggests that she and a clergyman co-drafted the manuscript, or that it was intended for print in a Methodist periodical. Encountering women's voices in this context provides us a fuller, more complicated portrait of the laypeople, beliefs, practices, and events constituting one of the most consequential Protestant movements in Anglo-American history. As difficult as it may be at times to center female perspectives in the early American awakenings, it is a labor that is nonetheless critical for researchers attempting to properly sketch the appeal and effects of the movement. Ridgely's account allows us to do just that.<sup>21</sup>

What follows is a full transcript of Ridgely's reminiscence. To maintain the spirit and flavor of the original eighteenth-century prose, I have made every effort to avoid substantial in-text editing. However, her writing includes numerous duplications, badly misspelled words, and illegible writing. In an effort to make the document as comprehensible as possible, I have provided speculative transcriptions and silently amended some words, when necessary.

I have after had a mind to write my Experience  
 But <sup>now</sup> Completed it tell this Day Feb 2: 1786  
 Lord I Desire to Renew my Covenant with the the Day I Desire  
 to be more faithfull more Devoted more given up to  
 thy most Holy will which Lord I lean to Grant for Christ  
 sake amen amen January 20: 1780 this Day I find  
 I Desire still to Continue in the way of Holiness  
 which may the Lord of his Infinite Mercy Grant for his Son  
 sake Jesus Christ amen  
 December 10: 1780 Come to the Large New Building found a  
 Desire in my Heart to be more Devoted to the Lord, then  
 I had ever Shown my self to the world to be went to prayers  
 With the family, every Friday had prayers meeting I trust  
 the Lord will bless my Weak Endeavours to his Glory be unto  
 his Name for ever January 1: 1780 I hope and trust I am in  
 way to Glory hala hala Lujah in the year 89 had many  
 trying times But allways could look through them all  
 for Heaven  
 January 6: 1792 I think this morning my Desire is towards god I have  
 kept my room for three weeks have not had one Dishyng out  
 it appear'd to throb me to think of the agony of Dying But the Lord  
 be praised, he is all sufficient in every time of Need to his faithfull  
 people, February 19: 1795 Looking over my old papers happen'd to  
 find this paper ~~now~~ think my mind is still in the same <sup>with</sup> Desires  
 of being fill'd with all the fullness of God I wish to live ever  
 in the Sunshine of his love my <sup>faith</sup> is strong and I hope to Appear  
 at Last Spolep and Blameless in his Son Christ Jesus amen amen  
 Jan 7 15: 1790 I praise God I am still Bound for  
 Heaven being in my 22 year of Age since  
 I Renew the Lord

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FIGURE 5. The last page from the manuscript "Rebecca Ridgely Reminiscence, 1786-1798." Maryland Center for History and Culture, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Ridgely-Pue Papers, MS 0693, Box 2, Folder 3

"Rebecca Ridgely Reminiscence, 1786–1798," Ridgely-Pue Papers, MS 0693, Box 2, Folder 3, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Center for History and Culture, Baltimore, MD.

[p. 1]

M<sup>rs</sup> RR Experance from the time she was 10 12 16  
18 21 30 46 as well as she can Remember

my father was a Churchman<sup>22</sup> and my mother a Quaquer<sup>23</sup>  
my Sister grew up with me Both got Distress about Bap-  
tism our not being Baptized when Infants<sup>24</sup> we then  
Ask our mother Why we where not Baptized as  
others was, She then told us that the water Baptism was  
not the Baptism that would Give us inheritance in heaven  
that it was the Spiritual Baptism that we must Receive  
that of being Baptized with the Holy Gost and with  
fire we wanted to know how we were to Gett this Baptism  
She Never then had Experienced the Virtue of it  
and Could not Give any other information then that  
we must trust in the Lord, this being But poor  
Sattisfaction to us, we often spoke to her on the Same  
Subject would Distress her so at times, that She would  
Shed tears, wishing she could instruct us as well as her  
father did her, that we might be Sattisfide, we so  
moved on untill I was maried tho I Remember I  
used to wish I Could Gett a Quaquer Husband for I  
thought they must be the people of God we was Brought  
up more in the way of Churchpeople then Quaquers  
my mother often Admonishing us when we  
Went to Church not to be Like the Rest that was  
there, to pray with our Lips and at the Same time  
our hearts be far from God, this made me Bear  
a great Cross for many is the time that I have  
Blushed to See all the Church saying there  
Responces and I not Dare to Speak

[p. 2]

tho went many mounths I Dare say in much Carelessness  
about Religion and then again Stired up But to Return  
to my being Maried the Mother in Law<sup>25</sup> was Called

a Religious woman I then thought I Should be instructed  
 In the Right way and as Soon as I Could make free with  
 her I began to Speak on these things being Determined  
 to be of the Same Riligion of my Husband Who profest  
 to be a Churchman I my self being of No profestion  
 not being Baptized Robe me of that profestion my  
 Dressing and Going to Church Robe me from being a Quaquer  
 So I was with out a profestion No more then I wanted  
 to be the Same of my Husband I ask the old Lady what I  
 Should do to be Riligious she advised me to be  
 Baptize and to Receive the Sacrament this I saw I  
 Could not do for in Baptism I Saw I must Renounce  
 the vanities of the world which was two much for me  
 I So moved on going to Church Striving all I Could to  
 be a Churchwoman But o Could not forgett the  
 Admonishons of my Dear Mother who tought me  
 not to Lett my tounge give my Heart the Lye I gott  
 me a prayer Book But still Bore the Cross Could not  
 say the Responces many times while I've been Dresing  
 to go to Church I thought I would be good to Day and that  
 I would Keep my heart Right But it was to no Purpose  
 for I would not be in Church 1 minite before I found  
 my goodness was gone I some times used to Go to Quaquer  
 meeting I then would do all that I Could to keep my  
 mind Gay and I would not be seated one moment  
     before I would be Broke all to  
             peaces and would

[p. 3]

be made to weep as if my heart would Break o how  
 Distresed I was then, aye before there was a word  
 Spoke and when I got home would think in my  
 Self if ever I was saved it must be in that Way  
 But I Sildom went however to Draw things  
 to a Conclusion I went to all preaching Baptis  
 Methodist prespreterien && at Last it So happened  
 In the year 1774 that Mr web<sup>26</sup> Came to town to  
 preach I was then with my sister Goodwin<sup>27</sup> with her first  
 Child Some Ladys being there ask me if I would  
 Go to preaching I ask who was to preach they said  
 Cap:t web o know I said I had heard him about 3 years



before and got so Displeased that I went away before his Serment was done well say one Doe go it is as good as a play to hear him, well says I I'll go then She said She would go and Gitt Ready and Call for me She did not Return, and pleasey Goodwin<sup>28</sup> and Mrs Chimere<sup>29</sup> was their with me, I then was very antious to go ask them if they would Go with me they Both agreed we went and he begun, preached on the text Now is the appointed time now is the Day of Salvation<sup>30</sup> and made it out that the Spirit of God would not Strive with man allways and that the Day of Visitation might be past and spoke so plain of the Spiritual Baptism and how we might through prayer Come to Receive that Blesing and through Neglect might Lose it

[p. 4]

O how I began to weep I saw I was the very person who had Neglected the Calls of God a Lost poor undone Creature o how I fell on my knees and pray'd to the Lord to Call me once more and how I would Run, it then was a Shame to kneel before the people But o I thought what is all the world to me if I must Lose my Soul<sup>31</sup> Mrs Chamier and Miss Goodwin was Both Convinced that Same Night and Wept But, not So struck as I was well we went to my Lodging and Doctor Goodwin<sup>32</sup> was with me at meeting and took Notice I Neeled and soon told Mr Goodwin of it he then said if he was in my Husbands place he would not Lett me go again But I then knowing it was the truth Mr web had spoke I jump up being of a Gay Disposition and Danced and Clappt my hands and said it was the truth he had spoke that Night, and that if I had that peace that he Spoke of would Give all the world, and that I would go to hear him every Night as Cap:t Ridgely was gone to annapolis and so I did and wept much and prayed much But found No peace all the time I was in town at Length Came home no peace still in great Distress no one knew it But my silf aggonizing in prayer

Night and Day one morning after I had been  
at prayers found no Relief & was miditaeng as  
I was Dresing my silf on what I had Lost

[p. 5]

and that it was Just and what I Deserved and Seemed  
to give my self up as Lost I felt Something Come as  
an Arrow out of a Bow in to my heart oh Said I  
what is this I had Scarcly said this then I found it  
was the Holy Baptism that I was then Baptized with  
the Holy Gost and with fire o may I ever Remember  
It the fire of Love Burned for o for I dont know  
How Long I went praising God up stayrs and  
Down stayrs and every where I opened the  
Bible I found there I had Gott the Law and  
profit the Love of God and my Neighbour  
that I was Born again a Child of God and an heir  
o Glory Glory be to God on High I after  
this Bore many Crosses But the one Lord was with me I had  
not Been at any preaching all this time after  
So Long a time I cant tell how Long I began to  
be I Cant tell how Resless did not feel that power  
of Love But still Remembered what the Lord had  
Done for me and trusted he would still Derect and  
keep me I wanted much to hear preaching But Could  
not after a while it So happened we Went in the  
Neck to our place there Mr Linch<sup>33</sup> was then Riligious  
and some of his family he then was not on Speaking  
terms with Capt Ridgely which Robed me of preaching  
for I was not alowed to go at first after a wile  
I went to moly Wethingtons<sup>34</sup> there I saw Mr Linch

[p. 6]

who then told me the Blessing he had Received  
But Says he you cant beleve, yes I Can  
Says I its the Same that my mother allways  
told me of and I do beleive and while he would  
be Speaking on these things the fire would  
kindle in such flaim that I was oblig'd to take my

Cloak off yett I never told him I had found the  
 same Blesing But told him that I should think  
 if he had Received that Love how Could he be at  
 Varience with his Neighbour as he was then  
 with Cap:t Ridgely he then told me that he would  
 go on his hands and knees to do him Good will  
 then I told him to Come and See him he was said he  
 afraid would not Receive him however Elin at Length  
 Came to See us and then I was permitted to see him  
 and heard preaching once more o then how  
 I was Revived But was week and Could not  
 Stand one hour only by Sight Some would  
 ask are you sure of going to heaven Now  
 if you was to Die I would tell them I was at such  
 a time But Could not then Say I was Indeed I  
 then begin to See sin in me and about me, when  
 the Preachers would be Speaking to Sinners  
 and telling them they where wounds and Bruises

[p. 7]

prutrifying Sores as I would say to my self  
 ad so am I Long strove with inbred sin I  
 thought all this sin was taken away and then  
 that Sin would Break out with Greater force  
 at Lenght the Lord Broke the Bread of Eternal Life<sup>35</sup> to me  
 and Gave me to Eat of his flesh indeed I felt the Blood  
 Applyd and knew for me Christ had Dide and that  
 he had once offerred up his Boddy and had Shed his  
 most preshous Blood And Cleansd me from all  
 unrighteousness<sup>36</sup> I got up and went a few steps when  
 I was tempted to Beleeve it was a Delution and Lost for a  
 moment that Love and paise I had found But as I walked  
 on in a nother Room I took a Bible that Lay on a side  
 Board opened to these Lines then Said he, Lo I Come in  
 to Do thy will o God he taketh away the first that he may  
 Establish the Second By the week will we are Sanctified  
 through the offering of the Boddy of Jesus Christ<sup>37</sup> once  
 for all I then Believed, and Received a much Greater  
 Mannafestation of the Love of God then I had before  
 I walked then praising God for some time seeing

I possessed all things as possessing of them not and  
 from that time the Lord has been teaching me and learning  
 me to innable me to believe to the saveing of my  
 Soul and I trust the Lord will never Leave me nor  
 forsake<sup>38</sup> for I have faith to beleive he is mine and  
 I am his through Christ amen. feb 2: 1786

[p. 8]

I have often had a mind to write my Experience  
 But Never Compleated it till this Day feb 2: 1786  
 Lord I Desire to Renew my Covenant with thee this Day I Desire  
 to be more faithfull more Devoted more given up to  
 thy most Holy will which Lord please to Grant for Christ  
 sake amen amen Jannuary 20: 1788 this Day I find  
 I Desire still to Continue In the ways of Holiness  
 Which may the Lord of his Infinite Mercy Grant for his Son  
 Sake Jesus Christ amen

December the 8: 1788 Come to the Large New Building found a  
 Desire in my Heart to be more Devoted to the Lord, then  
 I had ever Shown my self to the world to be went to prayers  
 With the family, every friday had prayer meeting I trust  
 the Lord will bless my Weak Endeavours o Glory be unto  
 His Name for ever January 1: 1790 I hope and trust I am in  
 way to Glory hala hala lujay,<sup>39</sup> in the year 89 had many  
 trying times But allways Could Look through them all  
 for power

January 6: 1792 I think this morning my Desire is towards god I have  
 Kept my Room for three weeks have not had one Distressing hour  
 it appear'd to Shaek me to think of the agony of Dieing But the Lord  
 be praised, he is all Sufficient in every time of Need to this faithfull  
 people, February 19: 1795 Looking over my old papers happened to  
 find this paper, think my mind is still in the Same way Desirous  
 of being filled with all the fullness of God I wish to Live even  
 in the Sunshine of his Love my faith is strong and I hope to Apear  
 at Last Spotless and Blameless<sup>40</sup>  
 in his Son Christ Jesus amen amen

Jany 15: 1799 I prais God I am still Bound for  
 Heaven being in my 22 year of Age Since  
 I knew the Lord



## NOTES

1. "Rebecca Ridgely Reminiscence, 1786–1798" (hereinafter RRR), 1–2, Ridgely-Pue Papers (hereafter RPP), MS 0693, Box 2, Folder 3, H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Center for History and Culture, Baltimore, MD. It should be noted that the vast majority of the reminiscence was composed in 1786, with only sparse entries coming in subsequent years. I would like to extend a hearty thanks to the Episcopal Church Foundation, whose financial support made this research possible.
2. RRR, 7. The few historians who have made use of the Ridgely reminiscence include Dee Andrews, Cynthia Lyerly, and John Wigger. See Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760–1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 99–101; Cynthia Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind, 1770–1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 77–78; and John Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 147–148. While this article avoids using the term, historians have tried to define early "evangelicalism" for decades. For just a few examples, including those that critique the term, see David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, UK: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1–20; Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), vii–xi; Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv; Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 15–16, 283; Douglas Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 8–17; Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, updated edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 131–133; and David Ceri Jones, "John Lewis and the Promotion of the International Evangelical Revival, 1735–56," in Dyfed Wyn Roberts, ed., *Revival, Renewal, and the Holy Spirit: Remembering Revivals in Wales and Beyond* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009), 15. Rather than reify the idea that there has been a fixed, transhistorical "evangelicalism," this article follows historians like Douglas Winiarski in asserting that early awakened Protestantism was most recognizable in the eighteenth century by participants' preoccupation with mystical "new birth," committed following of beloved figureheads like George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers, radical religious exercises (like shaking and shouting), and dissent from long held social expectations.
3. Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 1–7; Barbara Lacey, ed., *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth-Century New England Farm Woman* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); and RRR, 8. In his landmark study of "popular religion," David Hall argues that to properly understand Christian experience in early America we must account for ideas and practices beyond confessions of faith, church membership, and published theological writings. "Religion comprehends a range of actions and beliefs far greater than those described in a catechism or occurring within sacred space," Hall writes. It is a "loosely bounded set of symbols and motifs" adapted and interpreted by clergy and everyday people alike. See David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 3, 17–20. For more on "lived" and "popular" religion in America, see Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street:*

- Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Christianity in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); and Winiarski, *Darkness Falls*.
4. It is important to note that the bodily expressions found in Ridgely's account were not unique to Methodists, but essentially universal in early awakened Protestantism. In her study of eighteenth-century American Baptists, for example, Janet Moore Lindman notes these awakened believers also emphasized religious "corporeality" and "physicality," asserting that "belief was experienced through the body." See Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2.
  5. John W. McGrain, "The Development and Decline of Dorseys Forge," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (hereafter *MdHM*) 72, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 346. For more on Caleb Dorsey's status in colonial Maryland, see Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, "The Colonial Ancestors of Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald," *MdHM* 76, no. 4 (Dec. 1981): 373. Adjusted for present-day inflation, Caleb's worth was equivalent to £1.5 million. For details regarding Belmont, see John Martin Hammond, *Colonial Mansions of Maryland and Delaware* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1914), 166–173; Edith Rossiter Bevan, "Perry Hall: Country Seat of the Gough and Carroll Families," *MdHM* 45, no. 1 (March 1950): 34; John Williamson Palmer, "Certain Worthies and Dames of Old Maryland," *The Century Magazine* 51, no. 4 (Feb. 1986): 494–5.
  6. Charles G. Steffen, "Gentry and Bourgeois: Patterns of Merchant Investment in Baltimore County, Maryland, 1658 to 1776," *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1987): 535; Charles G. Steffen, "The Rise of the Independent Merchant in the Chesapeake: Baltimore County, 1660–1769," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 1 (June 1989): 28–30; John H. Scarff, "'Hampton,' Baltimore County, Maryland," *MdHM* 43, no. 2 (June 1948): 97–100; Charles G. Steffen, "The Pre-Industrial Iron Worker: Northampton Iron Works, 1780–1820," *Labor History* 20, no.1 (1979): 90, 94; Helen West Ridgely, *The Old Brick Churches of Maryland* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1894), 98–100; and Robert L. Alexander, *The Architecture of Baltimore: An Illustrated History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 23–25.
  7. RRR, 1–3. Quakers conceived of baptism far differently than Anglicans, and they especially disagreed over "water" and "spirit" baptism. In Matthew's gospel, John the Baptist declares the following: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Generations of Quakers like Ridgely's mother found in John's dialogue a clear demarcation between types of baptism: one of water, received by Christ, and one of the Spirit, dispensed by Christ and his Spirit to confessing believers. In this interpretation, any contemporary water baptism—especially performed upon children—was nothing more than empty ceremony. Thus, Priscilla's Quaker skepticism toward Anglican baptismal practices offers the most logical explanation for her daughter's absence from the sacrament. For the above scripture reference, as well as eighteenth-century Quaker perspectives on baptism, see Matt. 3:11 (KJV); Joseph Pike, *A Treatise Concerning Baptism and the Supper* (London, UK: Printed by J. Sowle, 1710); and Josiah Forster, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Baptism, As Held by the People call'd Quakers* (London, UK: Printed by J. Sowle, 1732).
  8. The literature concerning the awakenings' southern origins is vast. For examples, see Thomas J. Little, *The Origins of Southern Evangelicalism: Religious Revivalism in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1670–1760* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), ix–xiv;

- Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*, new edition (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 137–138, 162–164; Jewel Spangler, *Virginians Reborn: Anglican Monopoly, Evangelical Dissent, and the Rise of the Baptists in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 1–4; George Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), viii–ix, 9–17; Philip Mulder, *A Controversial Spirit: Evangelical Awakenings in the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1–8; Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xv–xvii; Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 4–11, 19–20; Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind*, 1–13; and Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 3–11. Oliver Hart, journal, Aug. 23, Aug. 29, Sept. 1, and Sept. 16, 1754, James B. Duke Library (hereafter JDL), Furman University, Greenville, SC. For perspective on Davies' influence in Virginia, see Oliver Hart to James Manning, April 27, 1761, James Manning Papers, 1761–1827 (hereafter JMP), John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI. For Waddell, see James Waddell to George Whitefield, Aug. 5, 1766, Church History Documents Collection, c.1750–1906, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, IL.
9. Penuel Bowen to Joshua Ward, Oct. 18, 1786, Penuel Bowen letterbook, 1786–1788, Cooke Family Papers, 1731–1857, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC; Devereux Jarratt, *The Life of Devereux Jarratt, Rector of Bath Parish, Dinwiddie County, Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Warner & Hanna, 1806), 95–96; William Hammet, journal, Feb. 26, 1793, William Hammet Papers, 1787–1825, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC; James Manning to Samuel Stennett, June 5, 1771, JMP; and Daniel Fristoe, diary, June 15, 1771 in Lewis Peyton Little, ed., *Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in Virginia* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1938), 242–243.
  10. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 99–101; Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind*, 94–96; John Lednum, *A History of the Rise of Methodism in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Published by the Author, 1859), 22; and Francis Asbury to Rebecca Dorsey Ridgely, March 10, 1807, RPP.
  11. John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 56–61; John Hagerty to Edward Dromgoole, March 3, 1787, Edward Dromgoole Papers, 1775–1840 (hereafter EDP), Southern Historical Collection (hereafter SHC), Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC; Thomas Dorsey to William Duke, Sept. 26, 1780, Maryland Diocesan Archives, Baltimore, MD; George Phoebus, ed., *Beams of Light on Early Methodism in America. Chiefly Drawn from the Diary . . . of the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1887), 11–16; and Lovebury Travel Journal, 1789, typescript, 1–2, West Virginia & Regional History Center, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. I am grateful to Victoria Sweatman and her help in obtaining images of the Dromgoole materials.
  12. John Wesley quoted in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Vol. VII (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1859), 6. For more on Webb's preaching career, see William H. Williams, *The Garden of American Methodism: The Delmarva Peninsula, 1769–1820* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1984), 23–26; RRR, 3.
  13. RRR, 3–5.
  14. Samuel Mason to Howell Harris, July 26, 1740, DDPr 1/56, Methodist Archives and Research Centre, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester (hereafter MARC), UK. For more on women and the genre of conversion narratives in the eighteenth-century awakenings, see

- Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–2, 67–70, 146–150; Brian Curtis Clark and Joanna Cruickshank, “Converting Mrs. Crouch: Women, Wonders and the Formation of English Methodism, 1738–1741,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65, no. 1 (Jan. 2014): 66–83; Andrew O. Winckles, “‘Excuse what difficiencies you will find’: Methodist Women and Public Space in John Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 415–429.
15. Herbert Jenkins to Howel Harris, June 25, 1741, Trevecka Letters, Calvinistic Methodist Archive, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK; Sarah Middleton to Charles Wesley, May 25, 1740, EMV/501/5, MARC; John Loring to Israel Loring, Dec. 9, 1741, Nathan Stone Papers, 1726–1832, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA; and Keith Beebe, ed., *The McCulloch Examinations of the Cambuslang Revival (1742): A Critical Edition* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2011), 1:9–11.
  16. For more on early Methodism and Anglo-American women, see Rhonda Hartweg, “All in Raptures: The Spirituality of Sarah Anderson Jones,” *Methodist History* 45, no. 3 (April 2007): 166–167; David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 91, 131, 138; Eryn M. White, “Women in the Early Methodist Societies in Wales,” *Journal of Welsh Religious History* 7 (1999): 102–107; David Ceri Jones, “‘A Glorious Work in the World’: Welsh Methodism and the International Evangelical Revival (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 2004), 239–284; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 151–157; Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind*, 11–13, 94–96; Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 99–101; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 166–178; and Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind*, vii, 9.
  17. Alexander Garden, *Regeneration and the Testimony of the Spirit* (Charleston, SC: Printed by Peter Timothy, 1740), preface; John Newton, diary, Aug. 9, 1790, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA; Sally Eastland to Edward Dromgoole, Feb. 21, 1789, EDP; Sarah Jones, diary, April 5, 1792, Special Collections, Swem Library, William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA; and Stith Mead to John Kobler, April 15, 1795, Stith Mead, letterbook, 1792–1795, Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Richmond, VA. I am grateful for Chad Sandford’s excellent transcript of the Jones diary. For more on Jones, see Sandford’s “Practicing Piety: Sarah Jones and Methodism in 1790s Virginia,” MA thesis (William & Mary, 2004); Hartweg, “All in Raptures.” I must also thank Julia Raimoni for providing valuable research assistance of the Mead materials.
  18. Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling* (Oxford, UK: n.p., 1673), 6–7; James McHenry Howard, “Ridgely Family History,” unpublished memoir (c.1894), typescript by Helen West Ridgely, Ridgely Family Papers (MS 1001), FCI-2, Folder 165, HAMP 21686, Hampton National Historic Site, National Park Service, Towson, MD. This is in line with historian Catherine Brekus’s point that one of the defining (if temporary) traits of the movement was the “unprecedented appearance of women’s voices in the churches.” See Catherine Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 26.
  19. RRR, 4–8; Jeremiah Norman, diary, Aug. 11, 1793, Stephen Beauregard Weeks Papers, 1746–1941, SHC; and Edmund Botsford, “Some Observations Reflecting General Notions of Christianity,” c.1790s, Botsford Family Papers, 1792–1974, JDL.
  20. Janet Moore Lindman, “The Baptist Body,” in Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, eds., *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 180. This point has been expanded in a more recent article on Sarah Pierpont Edwards’s account of her religious experiences, which shows how the “revivals had the potential to cre-



- ate new bodily ways of knowing that both threatened to undermine the hierarchy of gender and pointed a new conception of selfhood." See Kenneth Minkema, Catherine Brekus, and Harry Stout, "Convulsions, Leaping, and Loud Talking: The 'Experiences' of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (July 2021): 493.
21. For more on the formation of conversion narratives during the awakenings, see Hindmarsh, *Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, and Winiarski, *Darkness Falls*; RRR, 7.
  22. In eighteenth-century Maryland, "churchman" often affirmed a man's belonging to the local Anglican church.
  23. Quaker.
  24. Historically, the Church of England has embraced infant baptism. See "The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants" in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662).
  25. Rachel Howard Ridgely (d.1750).
  26. Thomas Webb (d.1796), Methodist itinerant.
  27. It is difficult to tell which sister Ridgely is mentioning here. Given the surname, it appears to be Milcah Dorsey Goodwin (d.1829). Milcah was one of her five sisters, and she became William Goodwin's second wife on March 30, 1773. They had eleven children between 1774 and 1790. At his death in 1772, her father, Caleb, bequeathed her "2,000 pounds Stirling and 1 negro woman." See John S. Goodwin, "The Goodwin Families in America," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 8, no. 2 (Oct. 1899): 109–110; Hammond, *Colonial Mansions*, 173; and Maxwell J. Dorsey, Jean Muir Dorsey, and Nannie Ball Nimmo, *The Dorsey Family: Descendants of Edward Darcy-Dorsey of Virginia and Maryland* (Urbana, IL: private printing, 1947), 159.
  28. It appears she is referencing her sister-in-law, Pleasance Ridgely Goodwin (d.1777). This would be particularly sensible as historians like Dee E. Andrews have written on Pleasance's support of Methodism. See Stella Pickett Hardy, *Colonial Families of the Southern States of America*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, MD: Southern Book Co., 1958), 442–443; Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 102.
  29. Achsah Ridgely Chamier (d.1785), another sister-in-law and supporter of the Methodist movement. See Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America*, 102, 104.
  30. See 2 Cor. 6:2.
  31. See Matt. 16:26.
  32. Unknown.
  33. Unknown.
  34. Unknown.
  35. Jn. 6:25–35.
  36. 1 Jn. 1:9.
  37. Heb. 10:9.
  38. Heb. 13:5.
  39. Probably "halle, halle, hallelujah."
  40. 2 Pet. 3:14.

# EYRE HALL FARM

NEAR CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA.

Surveyed at Request of  
W.H. Dec. Wright, Dec. 1921 & Jan. 1922.  
C.H. Sadler, Sur.

W. D. Norrington

# The Material World of Eyre Hall: Four Centuries of Chesapeake History

EDITED BY CARL R. LOUNSBURY

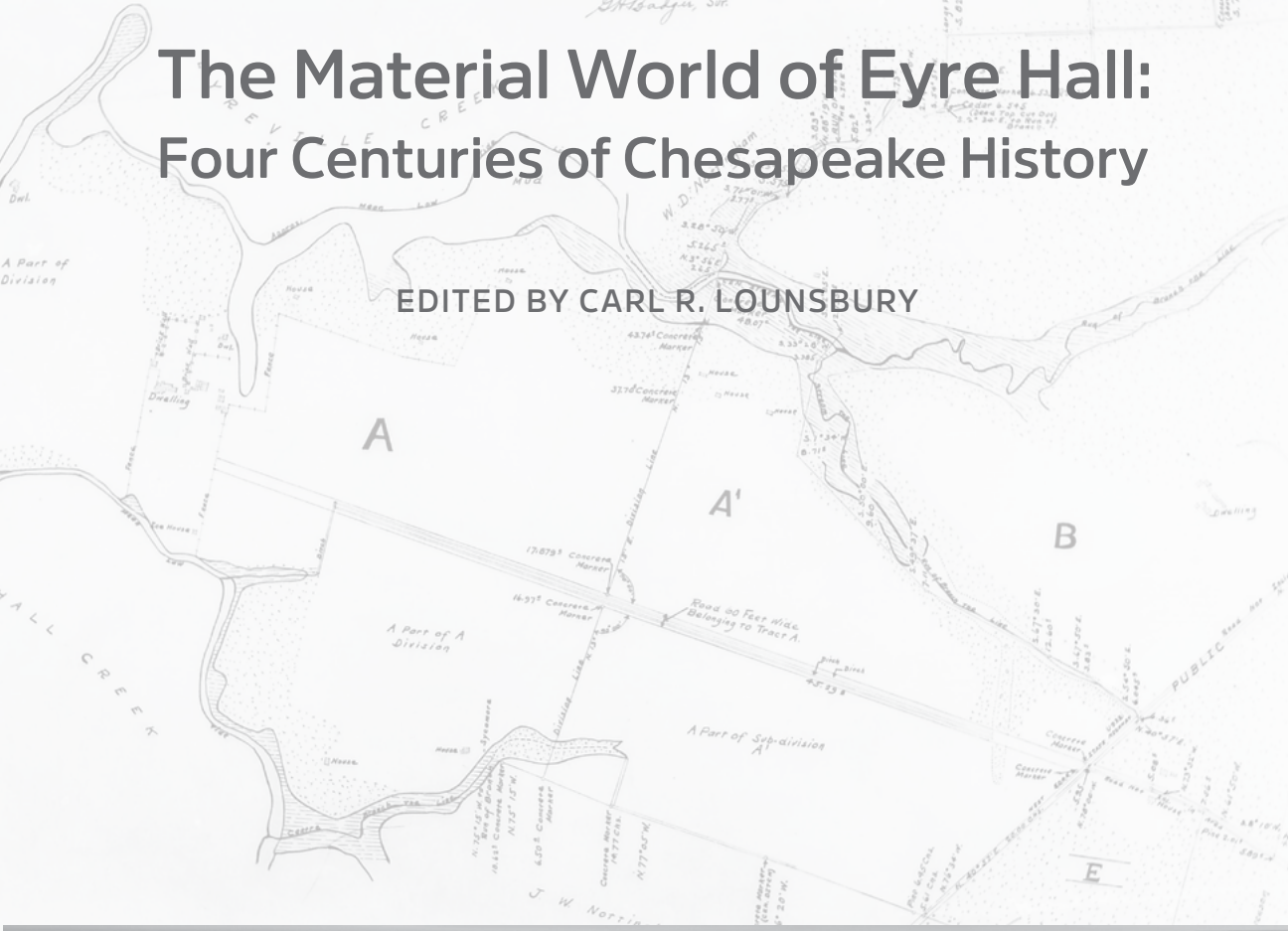






FIGURE 44. The bayside of Northampton County has many creeks that in the antebellum period contained docks and wharves such as the one owned by Peter Bowdoin at Hungars Wharf.

# Escaping Enslavement by Whaleboat, 1832

BY ALEXANDRA ROSENBERG

IN JULY 1832, 17 enslaved people and one free Black man boarded a whaleboat stolen from Northampton County resident Peter S. Bowdoin and put into action their dreams of escaping enslavement.<sup>1</sup> The getaway was cleverly conceived and executed by individuals who used their knowledge of Virginia's waterways, the maritime economy, and the material culture of the bay to hide themselves in plain sight (Fig. 44).<sup>2</sup> Their escape, however, was not without precedent. Led by Isaac, who had failed in a similar attempt two years earlier, the other 17 involved in the scheme fled from several plantations in the area, crowded into Mr. Bowdoin's whaleboat, rigged the sails stolen from Eyre Hall on Cherrystone Creek, and navigated the stolen vessel out of Hungars Creek into the Chesapeake Bay. Rounding the tip of the Eastern Shore, they sailed up the Atlantic coast and reached New York City, where they docked their vessel at White Hall slip adjoining the Battery on the East River (Fig. 45).<sup>3</sup> Its weary members sought safety and anonymity among the transient population of mariners, stevedores, and others who worked and lived in the streets and alleys of Lower Manhattan (Fig. 46).

Once alerted to the enormity of this daring escape, but already well aware of the likely destination of its participants, Northampton leaders including John Eyre hired two different slave catchers to apprehend those who had fled to freedom. The process dragged on for many months, in part due to the resistance of New York's African American community, the cholera epidemic that had ravaged the city, a court case, and the efforts of abolitionists to help these desperate individuals.<sup>4</sup>

Many of those who took the risk of sailing to freedom clearly had experience as watermen and were quite capable of navigating their small craft down the bay and up the coast. The presence of Black mariners sailing in these

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\*EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Material World of Eyre Hall: Four Centuries of Chesapeake History* was published in 2021 by the Maryland Center for History and Culture, in association with Giles Ltd. The two excerpts featured here are from Chapter 3, "The Bounty of Eyre Hall." "Escaping Enslavement by Whaleboat, 1832" was written by Alexandra Rosenberg and "Hoofprints" by Elizabeth Palms. They have been edited for length and clarity, whereas the editorial style of the book, including endnotes and image captions, was not altered. Image credits are provided at the end of the excerpts.

*The Material World of Eyre Hall* is available for purchase in our Museum Store and online.



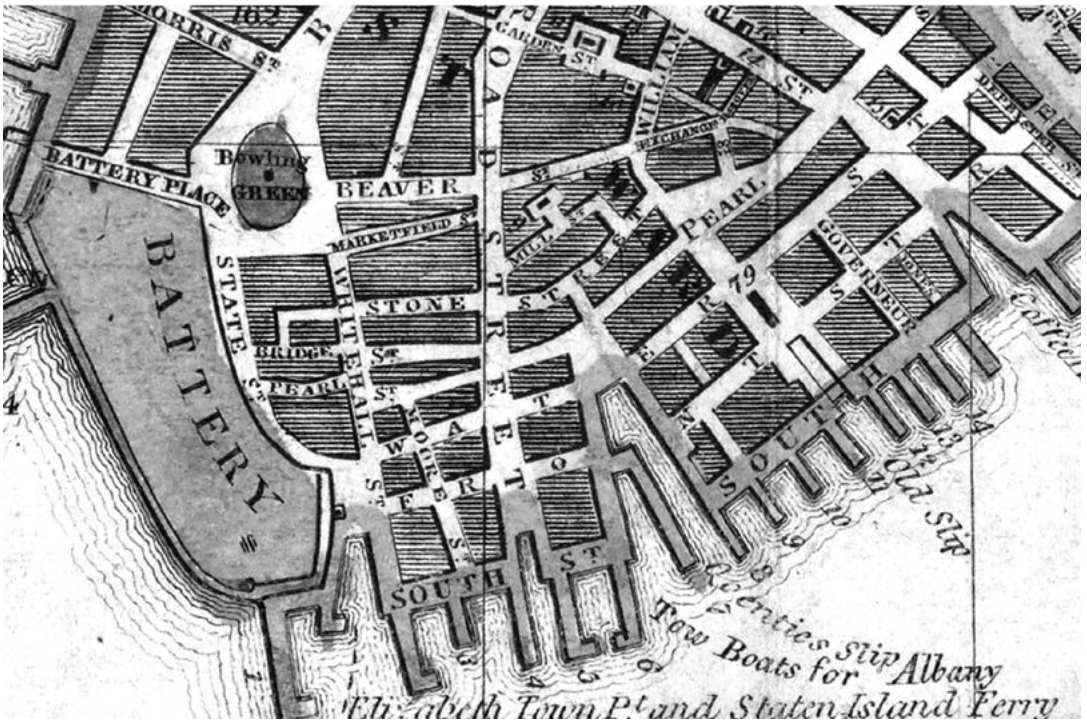


FIGURE 45. Detail of a map of New York, 1832, showing the Whitehall slip at the end of Whitehall Street next to Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan.

waters was commonplace in the colonial and antebellum periods. In the late colonial period, Peter Bowdoin's grandfather and John Eyre's father had been business partners in an extensive maritime trade. Their firm, Bowdoin, Eyre, and Smith, had entrusted a number of their bondsmen with transporting and delivering goods in the Caribbean and throughout the Chesapeake.<sup>5</sup> Severn Eyre had hired out his capable mariner, Stephen Booker, to the firm in order to transport cargo in a sloop with three other enslaved men around the bay and its major rivers in the 1770s. However, by the time of the whaleboat incident, attitudes about the free movement of the enslaved in Virginia had changed substantially.

Less than a year earlier, the state experienced the bloody uprising and suppression of Nat Turner's rebellion in Southampton County in August 1831. It was one of the largest and deadliest acts of resistance executed by enslaved laborers in the country.<sup>6</sup> The fear of further uprisings stirred white leaders to further tighten the restrictions already placed on both enslaved and free Black people. Among the petitions submitted to the Virginia legislators by Northampton County citizens in December 1831, one addressed their concern for loosely supervised Black watermen. It sought to halt the hiring out of enslaved labor to out-of-state oystermen. The residents of Northampton County who signed this petition believed that outside oystermen "devoted themselves



FIGURE 46. *South Street from Maiden Lane, New York, ca. 1827*, painting by William I. Bennett.

to the work of ‘universal emancipation,’” and that their presence in local waters would only provide free and enslaved Black people with exposure to abolitionist ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

Although the land routes taken by enslaved people to freedom are well known, the bold escape by whaleboat suggests that Virginia’s waterways provided a much different and less familiar means of escape. The Chesapeake Bay—its tributaries, marshlands, and islands—has played a major role in shaping the social and economic life of Virginia’s Eastern Shore since its earliest settlement. Among the occupations recorded in the 1860 United States Census for Northampton County, eight different jobs fell under the category of “Maritime Occupations.” These jobs included sailor, fisherman, mariner, waterman, lighthouse keeper, sea captain, and ship’s carpenter.<sup>8</sup> Although listed for free individuals, these occupations were also filled by enslaved people as well. For example, former governor Littleton Waller Tazewell noted in his accounts for his Old Plantation Creek estate that he “paid the negros for oysters clams & terrapins \$6.10” on December 14, 1851.<sup>9</sup> This entry alludes to the presence of skilled Black watermen in the antebellum period who took advantage of the natural abundance of aquatic life to make their living on the water, or to supplement their income and diet.

Both free and enslaved laborers played important roles in the water-based economic system that flourished on the Eastern Shore. So common was the presence of Black

watermen in the Chesapeake Bay that Frederick Douglass chose to flee enslavement on Maryland's Eastern Shore by water, just three years after the 1832 whaleboat escape. Douglass claimed that those who escaped by water "were less liable to be suspected as runaways; [they] hoped to be regarded as fishermen; whereas, if [they] . . . [had] take[n] the land route, [they] [w]ould [have] be[en] subjected to interruptions of almost every kind. Any one having a white face, and being so disposed, could [have] stop[ped] [them], and subject[ed] [them] to examination."<sup>10</sup>

Although the 18 who sailed for freedom from Northampton County did not leave behind written records regarding the planning and execution of their escape, Frederick Douglass did. His comments reflected the perceived advantages of choosing a maritime-based route north, rather than a more established overland route. The whaleboat escapees' decision to organize their flight when they did may have been motivated by talk they overheard among local planters and merchants concerning an effort to deport many of their free kin.

The African colonization movement arose during a period when Virginia was suffering an agricultural downturn. Many slave owners on the Eastern Shore had manumitted some of their enslaved laborers when the cost of maintaining them in servitude proved unsustainable. Scores stayed in the county and lived on the margins, no longer enslaved, but not truly free. By the 1830s, Northampton County had a large number of free Black people, which troubled many of its white citizens. In another petition submitted to the General Assembly in December 1831, nearly 100 white citizens of Northampton County sought "to remove free people of color from their county." They argued that their status as free people of color "exposes them to distrust & suspicion" and proposed several measures to curtail their disruptive presence, foremost of which was the idea "that all free persons of colour should be promptly removed from this county," and perhaps be "sent to Liberia in Africa."<sup>11</sup>

Northampton County had a free Black population living near Eastville that was sizable enough to unsettle its white residents. Jack Cortwright, one of the whaleboat crewmen who was captured in New York, denied the assertion made by slave catcher Edward R. Waddey in the New York Circuit Court that he was the property of John Eyre. He claimed instead that he was a free man, not a slave, and that his "mother was a free woman, named Susan Cortwright, who lived . . . at her own house at Eastville," and that his father was also a free man named Sailor Jim, who had worked at sea.<sup>12</sup> Jack clearly had close ties to the free Black population in Eastville, and is evidence that free Black people who made their living at sea freely commingled with its enslaved and free Black residents.

Many white residents of Northampton County saw free Blacks, like Jack and his mother, Susan, as a threat to the social order. It is possible that his enslavement after he was caught and brought back to Northampton County was a political statement made to scare free Black people into going along with the colonization movement's goals in order to maintain their freedom elsewhere, or risk being re-enslaved. Slave-



holders clearly wanted to eliminate the liminal spaces occupied by the free Blacks living in their county by proposing their complete removal and relocation to Liberia. When faced with the realization that they might be forced to move to an unfamiliar country—cut off from family and kinship ties made and maintained on the Eastern Shore—individuals like Jack might have felt very motivated to attempt such an escape.

The motives for leaving an increasingly hostile environment were strong, and the voyage to freedom by way of the bay and high seas was dramatic. Unfortunately, there is no documentation describing how those involved planned for the getaway and kept it a secret, or even giving the length of their voyage. As a result, it is impossible to know if, when, or where they stopped their boat in order to rest, replenish, and acquire food, water, and any other necessary supplies. Similarly, there is no written record of anyone who might have helped them on their quest for freedom.<sup>13</sup> Their successful arrival in New York City indicates that some of those onboard the whaleboat had experience in skilled sailing, and intimately knew the waters, winds, tides, and general geography of the bay and Atlantic coast.<sup>14</sup>

The owner of the whaleboat, Peter S. Bowdoin, owned the “ferry franchise at Hungars Wharf,” which had previously been operated by the Eyre family until the early 1770s.<sup>15</sup> It seems likely that those who purloined the vessel were familiar with its operation and, among the variety of craft that may have been associated with Bowdoin’s waterborne businesses, knew that the whaleboat best fit their requirements for size and seaworthiness. Unfortunately, it was not described in any of the court records other than its value, which was \$150. Modern scholars of later nineteenth-century New England whaling have observed a smaller vessel used for these purposes was “a double-ended, light, open boat with a length . . . between twenty-seven and thirty-one feet and a beam of slightly more than one-fifth the length. It was pulled with oars and sailed” and was designed to be operated by approximately six people.<sup>16</sup> But were these late nineteenth-century New England whaleboats related in any way to the one that was owned by Peter S. Bowdoin decades earlier in the Chesapeake?

Whaling in the Chesapeake has a history dating back to at least the late seventeenth century. Small-scale whaling enterprises played an important part in the lives of Eastern Shore residents heretofore little noticed. Eyre family records show a connection with whaling in the early eighteenth century. The 1719 inventory of Thomas Eyre III’s estate listed four different objects related to whaling: “80 lbs whale bone @ 12d pr,” “4 old Casks pr whale bone & an old Joynt,” “3 Whale Lances & 2 harpoons Iron,” and “One Whale boat & oares.”<sup>17</sup> The “whale bone” might possibly refer to baleen, which was used in corsetry. However, it might also simply refer to the bones of whales, which are most often seen in museums today as intricately decorated scrimshaw; whale bones also provided an alternative to ivory-handled products, such as dining utensils. Although nowhere near the flourishing industry it became in New England, the presence of a whaleboat, lances, harpoons, and barrels of bone suggests that some Virginia Shore residents had pursued the smaller whales that swam in the bay.

So, Peter Bowdoin's possession of a whale boat in 1832 should not be surprising. What is more difficult to discern are the boat's attributes. Some light might be shed on its form based on another such whaleboat that was involved in a theft during the Revolution. In July 1779, three enslaved laborers belonging to Isaac Smith—the old business partner of Severn Eyre and John Bowdoin—stole a whaleboat that Smith described as a large vessel “calculated for 9 oars, of the whale-boat construction, her inside painted red, and has a white bottom, her frame cedar and mulberry, and her foremast step of oak and painted red.” Valued at more than £100, it was “a very long boat.” Smith noted that the three men who stole the boat “took off one sail, but may have more,” and that it was “probable they may change the color of the paint” to mask its appearance in order to avoid detection.<sup>18</sup>

The size of Smith's stolen whaleboat seems to be most similar to descriptions of the ships used during the American Revolution to conduct raids on the Long Island sound. “Some were thirty-two feet long, and impelled by from eight to twenty oars, and would shoot ahead of an ordinary boat with great velocity, and leave their pursuers far behind.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, Smith believed that those who purloined his whaleboat were intending to use it “to plunder, the boat being well calculated for that purpose. It is supposed they lurk frequently about the straits and islands up the Bay; Hunger River, and Pocomoke, are the probable places for them to rendezvous.”<sup>20</sup> If Bowdoin owned one of these long whaleboats, then it could have accommodated the 18 individuals who stole it from his landing in 1832.

One can only speculate as to the hardships faced by the escapees while on the water; no written documents detail the conditions they faced. However, what is known is that, once the whaleboat and its passengers reached New York City, it was not long before state-appointed slave catchers began scouring the city for them. Although the escapees had successfully reached a free state, under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 slave catchers were legally permitted to cross state lines to recover the enslaved laborers. Two slave catchers were hired to conduct a search and capture those who remained in New York City. Ultimately, a total of 14 of the 18 who fled to freedom are known to have been apprehended by the two slave catchers. William S. Floyd captured five escapees and encountered a sixth during his time in the city.<sup>21</sup> Edward R. Waddey, the second slave catcher, submitted a petition to the Northampton County government in 1838, claiming that he was never reimbursed for the expenses he accumulated during his mission. In it, he listed the names of the nine escapees he had captured and those who claimed their ownership.<sup>22</sup> This document provides incredible insight into the lengths and expenses that enslavers were willing to go to in order to reclaim their bondsmen; but also attests to the extensive use made by friends of the fugitives in New York of the state's judicial system to mitigate the federal laws in the name of abolition and other subterfuge employed to protect escapees from recapture and re-enslavement.<sup>23</sup>

Fourteen of the 18 escapees were captured and brought back to Northampton County where they were publicly punished in order to discourage others from doing



Escapees	Enslavers
Jack Cortwright (born free, then enslaved)	John Eyre, Eyre Hall
Severn	John Eyre, Eyre Hall
Carter	William L. Eyre, Eyreville
George	Heirs of John E. Nottingham
Tom	Unknown
Joe	Charles B. Stockley
Michael	Abel Scott
Caleb	Polly Nottingham
Charles	George F. Wilkins
Ben	George F. Wilkins
Ben	Margaret Williams Southy
Black	George T. Outten
Isaac	Southy Spady
James "Jim"	Southy Spady
Ben	James Segar
Henry	Lucy Stratton
Southey	Ann Tyson
Ann	William Thomas

FIGURE 47. List of those who escaped on the whaleboat, July 1832.

the like (Fig. 47). Some were probably sold to people beyond the Eastern Shore. One asylum-seeker remained for a time in a New York City jail with a \$10,000 bail, where he had been placed to protect him from being captured by William S. Floyd. When returned to Northampton County, Jack Cortwright was enslaved by John Eyre after failing to have his hereditary status as a free man legally recognized in the New York Supreme Court. The fate of the remaining three escapees is unknown. They were never recorded as having returned to Northampton County, so it is possible they had cheated the odds and found their freedom.<sup>24</sup>

Four of the nine escapees listed in Edward Waddey's petition were tried at an oyer and terminer court by the Northampton County magistrates on November 9, 1833. None of the four men were charged with running away but with larceny for the theft of Peter Bowdoin's whaleboat. Caleb, enslaved to Polly Nottingham, pled not guilty.<sup>25</sup> Of the four brought before the court, Caleb was the only one who was assigned legal counsel.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Polly Nottingham valued Caleb enough to pay the \$5 required for him to have legal representation. It paid off as Caleb was the only escapee who was acquitted.<sup>27</sup>

George, enslaved to the heirs of John E. Nottingham, was accused of the same crime, and pled not guilty. George was found guilty of larceny, but the court recom-

mended and granted benefit of clergy, which was a degree of clemency for first-time offenders or those who showed contrition for their crime.<sup>28</sup> Jack Cortwright, alias Cooler, also pled not guilty, and was given benefit of clergy. The punishment for both George and Jack was to “be burnt on the left hand by the jailor according to law and moreover receive two lashes on [their] bare back[s] to be well laid at the common whipping post.”<sup>29</sup> And, as noted earlier, Jack also lost all claims of his status as a free man.

Isaac, who was enslaved to Southy Spady, found himself in troubling circumstances. He had already been granted benefit of clergy for his involvement in an unsuccessful water-based escape in 1830, and was therefore unable to receive it again. Fellow fugitive Caleb testified against him. Isaac pled not guilty to larceny, but was found guilty and sentenced “to be hanged by the neck until dead.” He was valued at \$500—the sum to be given to Southy Spady as compensation for his death.<sup>30</sup> Isaac was set to hang on January 10, 1834; however, his sentence was changed one day prior to his execution and he was sold south.<sup>31</sup> Being sold south was not a physical death sentence for Isaac, but it was a social death.<sup>32</sup>

The fate of the other ten individuals brought back to Northampton County is unknown. Like Isaac, some of them may have been ostracized and put up for sale by their enslavers. Another water-based escape occurred in 1849, where “17 likely young negro men, belonging to several persons living above Eastville, went off in one of the large sailing lighters” but were captured when their boat was forced to land near Chincoteague. Former governor Littleton Tazewell, who also owned plantations in Northampton County, speculated that the captured men would “be sent over to Norfolk for sale” and told his son that, “altho’ they can’t be kept on the Eastern Shore,” he would “have no objection to owning them, if they can be got low.”<sup>33</sup> Tazewell’s explanation of the results of this later escape suggests that fugitives from slavery were considered too much of a risk to be kept on the Eastern Shore, and had to be sold elsewhere.

Overall, this account of the stolen whaleboat emphasizes the fraught position of enslaved and free Black people living on the Virginia Eastern Shore during the early nineteenth century. In a world where one’s social status as a slave was legally defined, hereditary, and for life, the 17 men and one woman who boarded Bowdoin’s whaleboat gambled their chances for breaking that degraded fate on a daring scheme. They planned and executed their escape through careful coordination. The fugitives belonged to 13 different claimants whose homes and properties stretched from the bay-side to the seaside, and from Old Plantation Creek in the south to Hungars Creek in the north (Fig. 48). Some of them labored for families who had many enslaved Black workers—one such being that of John Eyre, who had 29 bondsmen at Eyre Hall in 1830.<sup>34</sup> Others fled from widows who may have had only one or two enslaved laborers. Yet others may have been rented out by their owners to supplement their income. Regardless, all who fled successfully kept their dangerous plans close to their chests so as not to attract unwanted attention. They overcame the restrictions placed on them

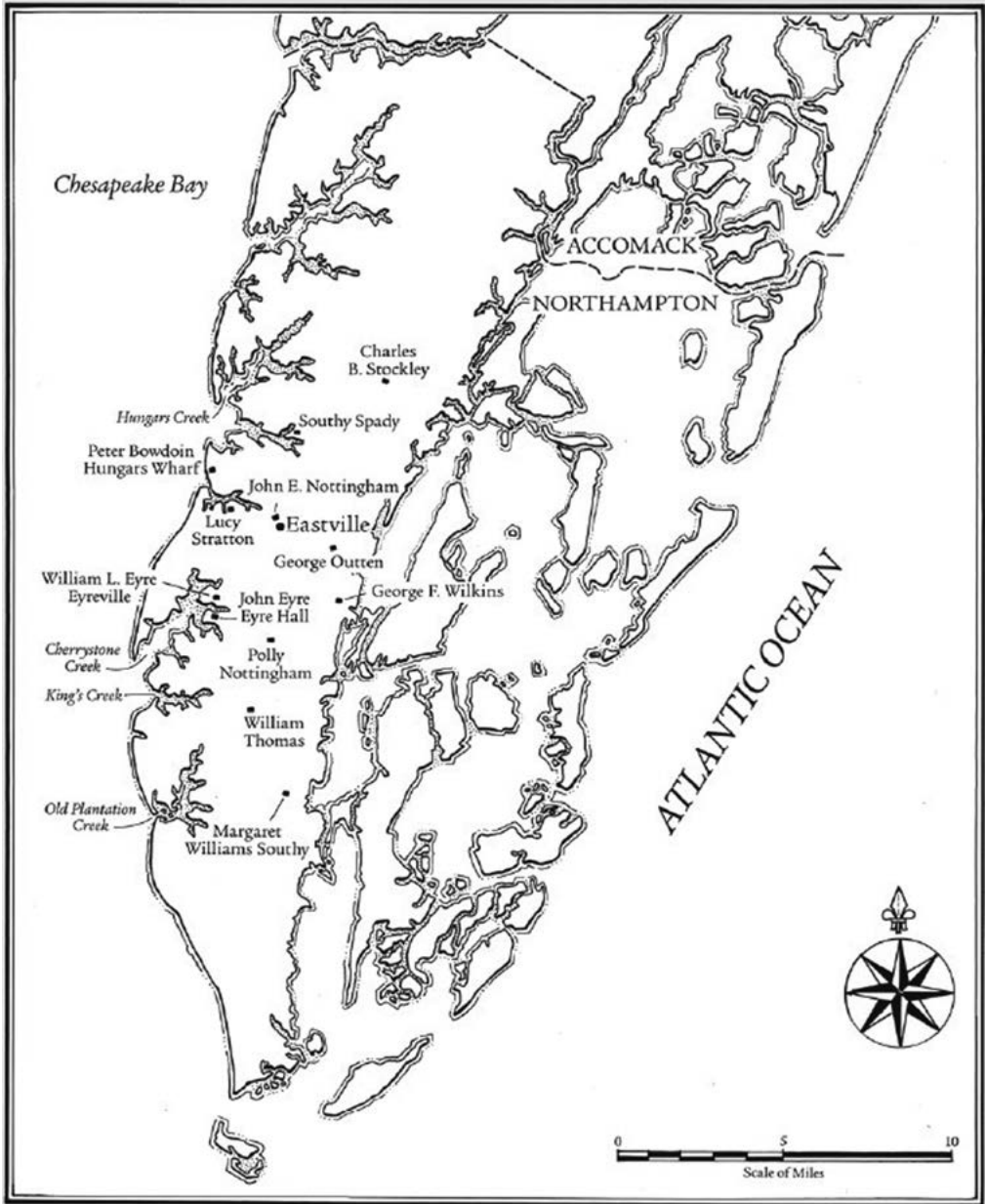


FIGURE 48. Detailed map of Northampton County showing the location of slave owners who had an enslaved person escape on Peter Bowdoin's whaleboat, July 1832.

by their enslavement by embracing what the natural landscape had to offer them—water routes to freedom. Their actions are a testament to their resourcefulness, cunning, and resilience when faced with the suffocating tensions exacerbated by the shock of Nat Turner's Rebellion of a few months earlier. Their actions speak to their desire for

freedom. Their experiences, thoughts, and feelings were not recorded; however, Frederick Douglass, who made his way to freedom in a similar way, spoke passionately of the meaning of the Chesapeake Bay to those enslaved who knew it so well:

“Our house stood within a few rods of the Chesapeake Bay, whose broad bosom was ever white with sails from every quarter of the habitable globe. Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eyes of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition. . . . The sight of these always affected me powerfully. My thoughts would compel utterance; and there, with no audience but the Almighty, I would pour out my soul’s complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the moving multitude of ships: –

‘You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom’s swift-winged angels, that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing! Alas! betwixt me and you, the turbid waters roll. Go on, go on. O that I could also go! Could I but swim! If I could fly! O, why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute! The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, save me! God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it. Get caught, or get clear, I’ll try it. I had as well die with ague as the fever. I have only one life to lose. I had as well be killed running as die standing. Only think of it; one hundred miles straight north, and I am free! Try it? Yes! God helping me, I will. It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave. I will take to the water. This very bay shall bear me into freedom.’”<sup>35</sup>

#### IMAGE CREDITS:

Fig. 44 Gordon Campbell

Figs. 45, 46 New York Public Library Digital Collections

Fig. 47 Alexandra Rosenberg

Fig. 48 Richard Britton

#### NOTES

1. “The Commonwealth of Virginia v. Ben and others, Slaves, &c., Peter S. Bowdoin Dep.,” October 4, 1832, Governor’s Office, Letters Received, John Floyd, Record Group 3, Library of Virginia, Richmond; Affidavit of William Nottingham, Sr., Northampton County, Virginia, October 4, 1832, Governor’s Office, Letters Received, John Floyd, Record Group 3, Library of Virginia, Richmond; whaleboat trial at oyer and terminer court, November 9, 1833, Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 249–52, 282; Kirk Mariner, *Slave and Free on Virginia’s Eastern Shore* (Onancock, Va.: Miona Publications, 2014), 138.
2. Edward R. Waddey, “Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia Requesting the Sum of \$1,745,” petition 11683807, January 1, 1838, Race & Slavery Petitions Project, University Libraries of University of North Carolina at Greensboro from Library of Virginia Legislative Petitions Repository; Kirk Mariner, *Free Blacks of Northampton County, Virginia 1782–1864: A List*



- from *Local Sources* (Onancock, Va.: Miona Publications, 2017); see “Jack Cartwright,” “Jack Cooler,” and “Jack Cortwright” in Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138–41; Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 249–52, 282.
3. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138.
  4. “Case of Slavery,” *New York Spectator*, November 25, 1833; Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 34–45; Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 140; “The Commonwealth of Virginia v. Ben and others, Slaves, &c.”
  5. George Reese, “The Court of Vice-Admiralty in Virginia and Some Cases of 1770–1775,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 88, no. 3 (1980): 301–37.
  6. Randolph Ferguson Scully, *Religion and the Making of Nat Turner’s Virginia: Baptist Community and Conflict, 1740–1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 1.
  7. Jersey Bell et al., “on Behalf of Fifty-eight residents of Northampton County, Va.”: “Petition to Cease Hiring-Out of Enslaved Workers to Out-of-State Oystermen,” petition 11683120, December 6, 1831, Race & Slavery Petitions Project.
  8. Eighth U.S. Census, Population Schedule (for free individuals), 1860, Northampton County, Virginia.
  9. Accounts for New Quarter, Old Plantation, December 14, 1851, Tazewell Family Papers, Box 11, Folder 8, Library of Virginia, Richmond.
  10. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 78.
  11. William Collins et al., “on Behalf of Ninety-Six Citizens of Northampton County, Va.”: “Petition to remove local free blacks to Liberia,” petition 11683101, December 6, 1831, Race & Slavery Petitions Project; “Petition to Remove Free Slaves, Northampton Co.,” *Richmond Enquirer*, November 11, 1831.
  12. “Case of Slavery,” *New York Spectator*, November 25, 1833; Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 140–141.
  13. “The Commonwealth of Virginia v. Ben and others, Slaves, &c.”; Affidavit of William Nottingham, Sr.; Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 249–52, 282; Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138.
  14. Philip D. Curtin, Grace S. Brush, and George W. Fisher, *Discovering the Chesapeake: The History of an Ecosystem* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 16–17. During the summer months, the Chesapeake Bay region experiences winds coming up from the south. These southerly winds will push any vessel with sails up the Atlantic seaboard with relative ease, provided there are no dangerous storms during this typically rainy, hot and humid hurricane season.
  15. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138.
  16. Willits D. Ansel, Walter Ansel, and Evelyn Ansel, *The Whaleboat: A Study of Design, Construction, and Use from 1850 to 2014*, 3rd ed. (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport, Inc., 2014), 1, 13.
  17. Inventory of the estate of Thomas Eyre, October 28, 1719, Northampton County Wills, etc., No. 15, 1717–1725, 73–76.
  18. *The Maryland Journal, and the Baltimore Advertiser*, July 27, 1779.
  19. Ansel, Ansel, and Ansel, *The Whaleboat*, 14, referencing David Steel, *Elements and Practices of Naval Architecture* (London: C. Whittingham, 1805), pl. 31.
  20. *The Maryland Journal, and the Baltimore Advertiser*, July 27, 1779.
  21. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138–41; Waddey, “Petition to the General Assembly.”

22. Waddey, "Petition to the General Assembly." Waddey claims to have brought back Ann, enslaved to William Thomas; Ben, enslaved to John Segar; Ben, enslaved to George Wilkins; Caleb, enslaved to Polly Nottingham; George, enslaved to the estate of John E. Nottingham; Henry, enslaved to Lucy Walton; Isaac and Jim, both enslaved to Southy Spady; and Jack Cooler, enslaved to John Eyre.
23. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 140; Waddey, "Petition to the General Assembly." Waddey made several trips to New York City while searching for the rest of the fugitives from slavery. At one point, he was even thrown in jail for his efforts.
24. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 138–41; Waddey, "Petition to the General Assembly"; "Case of Slavery," *New York Spectator*, November 25, 1833.
25. Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 249.
26. In 1792 slaves were given the right to court-appointed legal counsel, with a fee of \$5 to be paid by the master. A. L. Higginbotham, Jr. and Anne F. Jacobs, "The Law Only as an Enemy: The Legitimization of Racial Powerlessness through the Colonial and Antebellum Criminal Laws of Virginia," *North Carolina Law Review* 70, no. 4 (1992): 1011–12.
27. Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 249.
28. "Benefit of clergy originated in medieval England as a means of sparing those who had mastered the ability to read. . . . In a 1732 act the Virginia legislature extended benefit of clergy to women, blacks, and Indians . . . . Benefit of clergy was abolished for free persons in 1796 but continued to apply to slaves for certain offenses until 1848." Higginbotham and Jacobs, "The Law Only as an Enemy," 1009–11.
29. Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 250, 282.
30. Northampton County Court Order Book, No. 39, 1831–1836, 250–52.
31. Mariner, *Slave and Free*, 141.
32. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018), 5. Patterson states that "[t]he condition of slavery did not absolve or erase the prospect of death. Slavery was not a pardon; it was, peculiarly, a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness. The master was essentially a ransomer. What he bought or acquired was the slave's life, and restraints on the master's capacity wantonly to destroy his slave did not undermine his claim on that life. Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside his master, he became a social nonperson." By selling Isaac south, away from any family, friends or other kinship and social networks that he may have established for himself throughout his life, Southy Spady used his power to not give Isaac a physical death, but a social one, which was psychologically and emotionally damaging.
33. Littleton Tazewell to John Tazewell, October 5, 1849, Tazewell Family Papers, Box 9, Folder 1.
34. "John Eyre, Hungars Parish," Fifth U.S. Census, Population Schedule 1830, Northampton County, Virginia.
35. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 63–64.

## Hoofprints

BY ELIZABETH PALMS

ON JANUARY 1, 1927, Margaret Eyre Taylor dressed in her finest riding clothes and had her photograph taken mounted on one of Eyre Hall's stable of horses before she rode around the estate that she had inherited on the death of her grandfather Severn Eyre in 1914 (Fig. 55). As a young girl who came down from Baltimore to visit her grandfather in the summers when he was in residence, she may have developed a love of horses that seems to have descended in the Eyre family over many generations. Old Severn had been a judge at races in Norfolk's Campostella racetrack in earlier years and was often called upon to judge these animals at county fairs

FIGURE 55. Margaret Eyre Taylor, January 1, 1927.

in Baltimore and agricultural gatherings on the Eastern Shore such as the Keller Fair.<sup>1</sup> His father before him, William L. Eyre, was so enamored with breeding and racing thoroughbreds that his excesses in this sport of southern gentlemen landed him in a debtors' prison in Eastville before he was bailed out by his great-uncle John Eyre. John, too, was a keen horseman and breeder, but he did not let his enthusiasm get the better of his judgment as it did his spendthrift nephew's.

Horses were part of Margaret's heritage. When she walked through her grandfather's house in those early years of the twentieth century, she saw evidence of that heritage on full display. In the paneled front passage hung a series of 1753 British racing prints in their original frames (Fig. 56). Upstairs there were additional nineteenth-century horse prints testifying to the family's long interest in the sport of horse racing. She may have leafed through



FIGURE 56. The Portraiture of Mr. Witty's Bay Horse Grenadier.

Engraved and published by Henry Roberts, after a work by James Roberts, London, 1753.

William L. Eyre's studbook that recounted the breeding of some of the finest racehorses in the region. Or, her grandfather may have regaled her with the fanciful story of how one of the family horses, Morningstar, won the large silver bowl that had been in the family for two centuries and lapped champagne from it after winning the race.

Venturing outside and down the steps of the south porch, Margaret may have glimpsed a solid shaped stone that served as a mounting block for those who arrived at Eyre Hall on a horse or provided a convenient step for those climbing into a carriage or phaeton. The mounting block sits in quiet testament to the immeasurable horse traffic on the estate. It has not served its purpose in many decades—not since Margaret Eyre Taylor wandered around the grounds during those summer months in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1940, after she had made Eyre Hall her home, the stable burned, as did the great barn nearby—an event remembered by her son Furlong Baldwin as an eight-year-old boy. Horses still had a presence at Eyre Hall in those Great Depression years as they served more mundane purposes: along with the mules that were kept on the farm, they were used for plowing the fields and for pulling carts and wagons. Following the war, tractors began to replace animals, lessening the need



for work horses and mules. With that, the symbiotic relationship between the Eyre family and horses that had been so integral to their lives came to an end.

That relationship had begun three centuries earlier, when the first Eyre settled on the Eastern Shore. In the 1650s surgeon Thomas Eyre I may have depended on a horse to make his rounds among his patients by following narrow horse paths that preceded the establishment of permanent roads. The first British horses to reach North America—six mares and one stallion—did so at Jamestown in 1609. The Jamestown settler's plans to use them as work horses, riding horses, and eventually breeding horses came to naught in the 'Starving Time' of that winter, during which these seven horses instead became food. When Sir Thomas Dale arrived to take charge of the fledgling colony in 1611, he brought 17 British horses, and the Virginia Company encouraged the importation and breeding of horses to aid in getting around and working on the nascent tobacco plantations.<sup>2</sup> While the initial accumulation of horses in Virginia was gradual, "by 1649, approximately two hundred horses lived in Virginia, and by the end of the century, enough horses populated the colony to cause the authorities to no longer encourage their importation."<sup>3</sup> Horses made their Eastern Shore debut when Argall Yardley imported a horse purchased from George Ludlow of York County in 1642, and a small shipment of horses arrived from New England in 1645.<sup>4</sup> Documents from the second half of the century increasingly refer to "horse paths" and the "horse bridges," which would have been instrumental for navigating the web of creeks cutting into the Eastern Shore's topography.<sup>5</sup>

With this network of paths expanding and an increase in public infrastructure—the Virginia Assembly had ordered the first public roads on the Eastern Shore in 1657—riding horses was becoming more ingrained in Eastern Shore life.<sup>6</sup> Furthering the opportunity for horses to reach the peninsula, the General Assembly authorized the first franchise for a ferry across the Chesapeake Bay in 1705. In that year, the legislature listed a ferry route "from the Port of Northampton to the port of York" and another "from the Port of Northampton to the port of Hampton," listing the fare for both as fifteen shillings for a man and "for a man and horse thirty shillings."<sup>7</sup> In the 1740s, Littleton Eyre entered into the ferrying business with routes "from York, Hampton, and Norfolk towns," to his land on Hungars Creek and "from thence to either of the aforesaid places." Because of the importance of horses in transporting people and goods from the Eastern Shore to these towns, the same piece of legislation also authorized "the courts of the several counties wherein such ferries shall be kept" to "appoint proper boats to be kept at the said ferries, for the convenient transportation of coaches, wagons, and other wheeled carriages."<sup>8</sup>

While the early colonists brought with them this need for work animals, they also brought the English horseman's mindset and fostered what came to be known as a distinctly Virginian love of horses. Historians have long noted the growing appreciation of horsemanship among the rising gentry class of tobacco planters and merchants, and the development of breeding and racing horses as a popular pastime. They have

explored how horses were a natural component in fashioning the Virginia gentleman's identity. "Competition was a major factor shaping the character of face-to-face relationships among the colony's gentlemen," and "[i]n large part, the goal of the competition within the gentry group was to improve social position by increasing wealth." In addition, the horse itself was a visible, living asset. "Possession of one of these animals had become a social necessity," and "[o]wning even a slow-footed saddle horse made the common planter more of a man in his own eyes as well as in those of his neighbors." Riding horseback physically—and symbolically—elevated any rider above those traveling afoot.<sup>9</sup>

Naturally, men pitted their animals against one another in races to prove their skills in improving the breed as well as their own prowess in the saddle. The age-old English practice of pitting two or more running animals together in a test of speed at racecourses in Newmarket and Ascot, and the eventual founding of the Jockey Club, proclaimed racing's popularity among the gentry. Between the 1680s and 1720s, the first stallions from North Africa and the Middle East—coveted for their build, endurance, and temperament—arrived in England. Their arrival spurred a breeding frenzy, with aristocratic horsemen scrambling to have one of these three stallions cover their native English mares. This phenomenon led to a "new kind of English racehorse," and these horses "grew taller and stronger, ran faster, and became even better looking with a dish face, arched neck, and high-set flourish of a tail."<sup>10</sup> These highly esteemed horses became known and formally recognized as thoroughbreds.

Discerning horsemen in Virginia followed the exploits of these new breeds with great enthusiasm, and the Eyre Hall prints celebrated their exploits. One of the first men to import these Arabian-blooded horses into Virginia was Samuel Gist of Gould Hill plantation in Hanover County who set the trends of importing and breeding thoroughbreds in the colony around mid-century.<sup>11</sup> Gist later returned to his native England and set up in London as a tobacco importer whose customers included both Littleton and Severn Eyre. Perhaps letters between these merchants also touched on matters of the turf.

Colonists had been racing their own "Virginia horses" long before the new breed began to dominate, especially in shorter, quarter-mile straightaway races called quarter races. Usually only two horses and their riders raced in these sprints, and they often ran multiple heats.<sup>12</sup> These shorter straight paths suited the then-forested terrain of mainland Virginia, though oval racetracks were just beginning to come into fashion in England and would later become common in the racecourses that became popular in America. In these early days, quarter horse racetracks were rather ephemeral, for all that the racers and spectators required was the open space—typically near a church or courthouse.<sup>13</sup> Saturday afternoons had become the favorite time for racing at well-known tracks in Williamsburg, Surry, and Henrico as well as "on nameless country roads or convenient pastures."<sup>14</sup> The Eastern Shore was no exception. Northampton County had a reputable quarter racing track called Smith's Field laid near Hungars



FIGURE 57. *Tobacconist with Botts' Manuel and Botts' Ben* by Edward Troye, 1833.

Parish Church not far from Littleton Eyre's residence before he moved to Eyre Hall in the late 1750s. Races were customarily held at Smith's Field during the fall.<sup>15</sup> The Eyres would not have had to leave Eyre Hall to take in a race, for there was a quarter race-track on the property's flat fields, as Furlong Baldwin remembers from family lore.

Competitive races were always a rich man's game. It took money to breed and raise the best thoroughbred horses and to house, feed, and take care of these prized possessions. For some like William L. Eyre, the desire to be an important player pushed them to financial disaster. Like all gentry families, the Eyres had many enslaved African American men and boys serving as stable hands, groomsmen, and coachmen, and these people would have come to play increasingly prominent roles in caring for horses beginning in the 1820s (Fig. 57). This was the era of the studbook, American jockey clubs, and widespread American thoroughbred breeding, fostering a need for more specialized and focused care for these financially expensive creatures. Not only did enslaved and free young Black men continue to care for family horses like those of the Eyres, but they also became esteemed trainers. Though it was not uncommon for Virginia planters to ride their own horses in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century races, by

the antebellum years jockeys were overwhelmingly enslaved or free Black men and boys. Unfortunately, the surviving records from Eyre Hall and Eyreville do not indicate whether, and if so which, enslaved persons tended or perhaps even raced horses there, but this was almost undoubtedly the case.<sup>16</sup>

No matter when the Eyres or their enslaved horse handlers started racing horses themselves, the material culture of Eyre Hall is bound up in horses—they not only served as necessary draft animals that labored in the fields and transported goods to awaiting Eyre family ships at Hungars Wharf, they also pulled the carriages in which the Eyres traveled to services at Hungars Church, and they became prized possessions to test against their neighbors and all comers at Smith's Field or on impromptu courses.

The first mention of any studhorse at Eyre hall lies in John Eyre's 1798 personal property tax record, which lists one studhorse. John Eyre's stallion almost certainly stood stud at Eyre Hall, and maybe brought in a bit of extra income from covering fees, though whether or not any fellow horse owners brought their mares to breed remains a mystery. According to his tax records, John Eyre kept one studhorse at Eyre Hall until 1807, excepting two years, and over time he gradually lowered the rate of covering, perhaps indicating diminishing success in breeding his studhorse. General breeding, though, occurred during this period at Eyre Hall; indeed, one visitor to Eyreville wrote to her mother in 1852, "[T]here is a beautiful little colt at Eyre Hall . . . named Leila."<sup>17</sup>

It is John Eyre's nephew, William L. Eyre of Eyreville, who stands out as the greatest horse enthusiast in Eyre family history. Definitely striving to be an improving gentleman farmer in his adult life, William kept horses at Eyreville, where he enslaved 30 people, primarily for agricultural work, and some of these enslaved men almost certainly tended the horses. William L. Eyre had grown up in a culture and family saturated in both utilitarian and recreational horses. He had almost certainly grown up attending races into his adult life, perhaps at the Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, Washington City, or Baltimore Jockey Clubs. Though it is feasible that he did, there is no record of Eyre holding a jockey club membership in his life, but he probably at least kept up with the race results and recaps that jockey clubs published in newspapers everywhere.

One historian has observed that men like William L. Eyre ran modest breeding operations. She noted that such planters owned "a few Virginia mares and an imported English stallion or two. Less prosperous breeders enjoyed the pastime too, but their broodmares had to work on the farm as well as produce young horses."<sup>18</sup> William's efforts fit this description. In 1826 he purchased a gray mare named Betsey Springer from Thomas D. Johnson of Baltimore. Though he could not definitively prove her thoroughbred pedigree, William himself was convinced of it and declared her ten years later to be "the most celebrated mare ever on the E. Shore of Va." who was "ever put to racing in harness or under saddle."<sup>19</sup> Decades later, in 1890, the Eastern Shore's *Peninsula Enterprise* broadcast that another "Betsy Springer" would be competing in a



Fourth of July trotting race at Belle Haven racetrack, perhaps confirming Eyre's boasts that Betsey Springer had gained Eastern Shore fame.<sup>20</sup> The county's personal property tax lists in the later 1820s and 1830s document Eyre as being in possession of a small handful of studhorses.<sup>21</sup>

In 1835, the same year that Edmund Ruffin visited Eyreville, William began to keep a studbook to record the breeding of his blooded stock. Between the lines of this studbook, we see William trying to assert himself as a gentleman farmer by accumulating a handful of "blooded" horses among his estate and by associating with other horsemen of the day (Fig. 58 a and b). As his correspondence with the *Farmers' Register* indicates, Eyre was eager to share his experience with experts in the field. In 1837, he proudly wrote to the editor of the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, "I have lately gone into the rearing of such stock."<sup>22</sup>

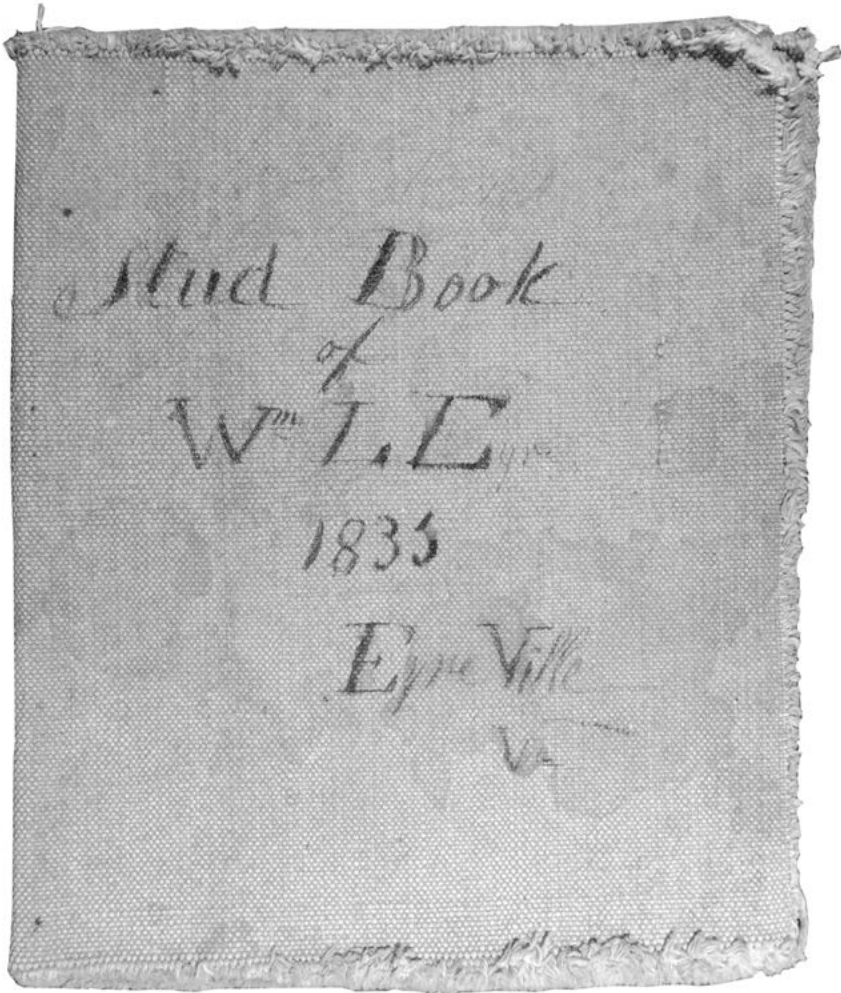


FIGURE 58a. Cover from William L. Eyre's Stud Book, Eyreville, 1835–1864. The cover is cut from a burlap flour sack.

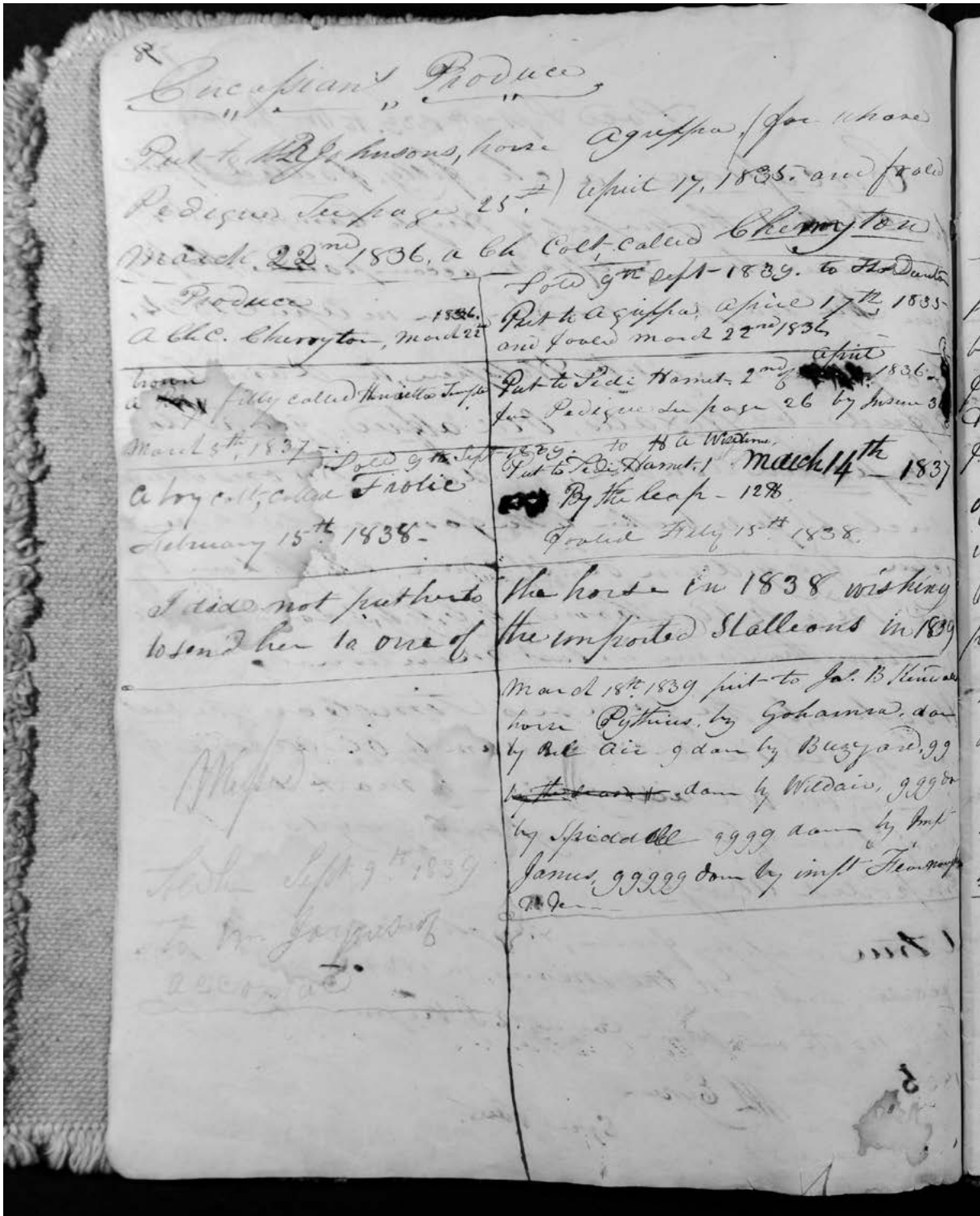


FIGURE 58b. Pages from William L. Eyre's Stud Book, Eyreville, 1835-1864.



9

Guy Moore, Betsey Springs,  
 purchased by me in Oct. 1826. from ~~John~~ John  
 of Baltimore, without any pedigree, ~~yet~~ she was  
 by Old Eclipse (when he stood in Dutchess County  
 State of New York) since, which time, I have traced  
 her pedigree, as far as given, the raise believed to  
 be full bred, altho he had no authentic pedigree,  
 from her extraordinary powers, speed, in Duquesne  
 & in every situation, I am convinced she must be  
 full bred, for a horse in mare with one drop  
 of Dunghill blood, could never have performed  
 what she has, she has been celebrated on the E. Shore of  
 Virginia for 10 years, as unrivaled in all she was ever  
 put to, Racing, in harness, or under the saddle.  
 Betsey Springs was by Old American Eclipse  
 out of Shefly by Dave. Shefly was out of a fine  
 bred Canton, Mare. Give by Imp. I learned  
 the sire of Old Shefly, to be Duquesne & Eclipse  
 pedigree see Skinner's Turf Register.  
 Put to the hook by Sam Charles for whose pedigree  
 see Skinner's Turf Register - March 14<sup>th</sup> 1836 - she  
 again took the horse every 9<sup>th</sup> day till June 4<sup>th</sup>.  
 At which time she took 2 leaps, and no count is in  
hook. Produce Sally Brown foaled the 11<sup>th</sup> of April  
 1828.

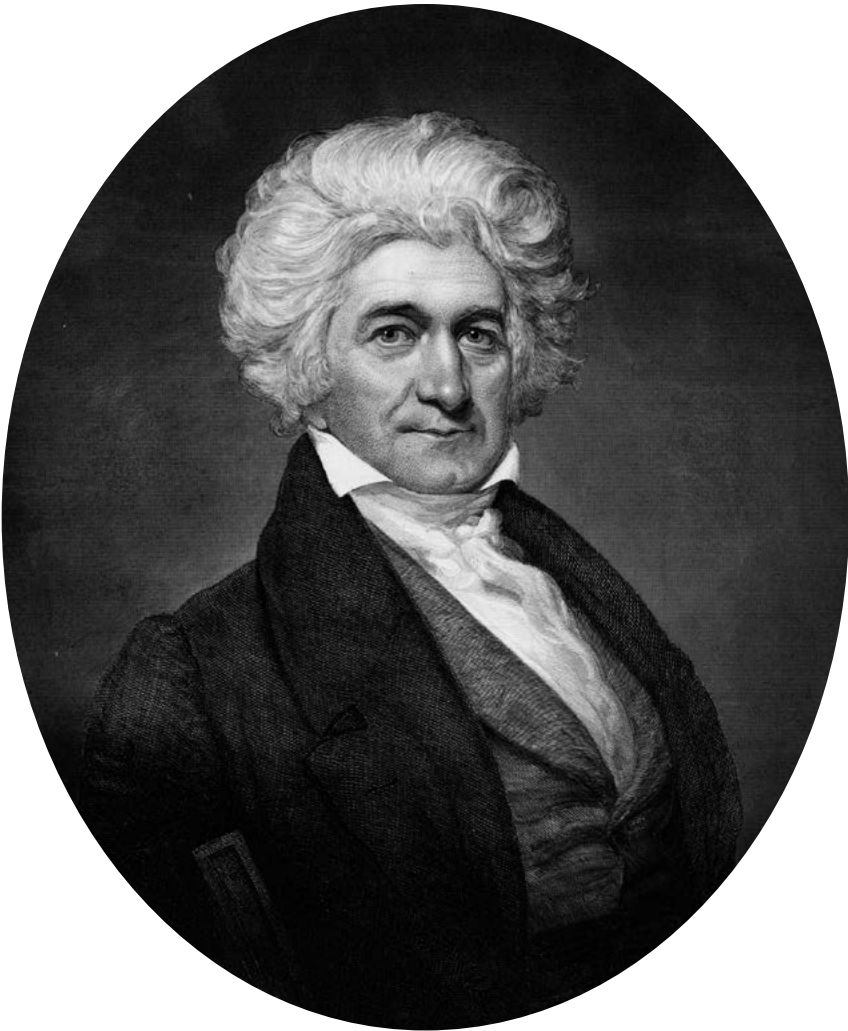


FIGURE 59. William R. Johnson, "the Napoleon of the Turf."

William meticulously recorded in the studbook his connections with influential people in the antebellum breeding and racing world. Many of the horse owners with whom he did equine business were local to the Eastern Shore, such as Thomas Henry Bayley of Mount Custis in Accomack County. However, he did become involved with some more renowned figures in the racing world, most notably William Ransom Johnson, known by his sobriquet "the Napoleon of the turf" (Fig. 59). At one time, Johnson had owned Sir Archy, one of the most celebrated racehorses of the early 1810s, many of whose progeny dominated the field for decades to come. From his Oakland plantation in Chesterfield County, Virginia, Johnson arranged races from New York to North Carolina and was keen to improve the pedigree, setting out



his stallions to breed with mares from good blood lines. Eyre got caught up in this passion and boasted to the editor of *American Turf* that among the best that had been bred at Eyreville were Cherryton in 1836 and Henrietta Temple in 1837. Siring these two horses were two of Johnson's reputed stallions, Agrippa and Sidi Hamet, both of whom had lineage that could be traced back to Sir Archy. Eyre also did business with another well-known figure in the Virginian horse network, Hugh Campbell of King and Queen County, Virginia.<sup>23</sup> He purchased a dam named Circassian from Campbell, and this mare also could trace her lineage back to one of Sir Archy's offspring.<sup>24</sup> Eyre bred Circassian with a stallion owned by another big name in mid-Atlantic racing, James Bowdoin Kendall. Kendall was originally from Northampton County himself and a descendant of Custis Kendall. Having moved to Baltimore sometime in the 1820s, Kendall became the proprietor of a local track, which came to be known as the Kendall Race Course. He even advertised for contractors to build a trackside dining room, testifying to an era when races were becoming more formally social events with longer round tracks, grandstands, and jockey clubs. Kendall often appeared in newspaper accounts of races throughout the 1830s and 1840s as he entered a great many horses in races alongside giants like William Ransom Johnson. William L. Eyre's shared Eyreville roots surely helped facilitate a business relationship with Kendall, and the association undoubtedly gave an added gleam to his studbook in his eyes.

Only one record of William L. Eyre entering a horse in a formal race survives, though he very well could have participated in others. According to the *American Turf Register*, William entered an unnamed blooded mare—she could have been Circassian, Henrietta Temple, or even the then-aging Betsey Springer—to the “Eastern Shore, Virginia, Atlantic Course” to run one-mile heats for \$200.<sup>25</sup> Who rode William's mare and the results of the race are unclear, but his fondness for the races is not in doubt.

The renowned late seventeenth-century silver “Morningstar” bowl, which now sits on the dining room table, holds pride of place in the modern narrative of horses at Eyre Hall. Though the particulars of the story are admittedly vague and the event unlikely, the fact that Eyres past and present have kept this anecdote alive in family memory is significant. By telling and retelling this story, they have and continue to participate in a tradition that historian Fairfax Harrison has called the “Equine F.F.V. [First Families of Virginia].” A horse blithely gulping champagne out of a large silver bowl is a sensational image. The Morningstar story evokes notions of high society, and some might find it strangely charming, ridiculous, or perhaps both. Just how involved the eighteenth-century Eyres were in horse racing remains elusive, but they certainly were familiar with the culture. The collection of six 1753 English racing prints by Henry Roberts that once hung in the passageway testifies to an equine state of mind. By showcasing these hand-colored prints of some of England's most esteemed thoroughbreds—with their pedigrees written in fine script in the margins—the Eyres partici-



FIGURE 60. Curtilage with the fields beyond, Eyre Hall.

pated in the greater English racing world. Merely looking around the property today, taking in the wide-open fields that border the road leading to the house, the Eyres had a perfect tract of land for quarter racing (Fig. 60). Though the hoofprints are long gone, their traces remain as visible as ever in the stories, prints, and photographs of Eyre Hall.





IMAGE CREDITS:

Fig. 55 Eyre Hall

Fig. 56 Gavin Ashworth

Fig. 57 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Paul Mellon Collection

Fig. 58 a and b Jeff Klee

Fig. 59 Library of Congress Digital Collections, Prints and Photographs

Fig. 60 Carl Lounsbury

## NOTES

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# *The* CIVIL WAR in MARYLAND *Reconsidered*

EDITED BY CHARLES W. MITCHELL AND JEAN H. BAKER

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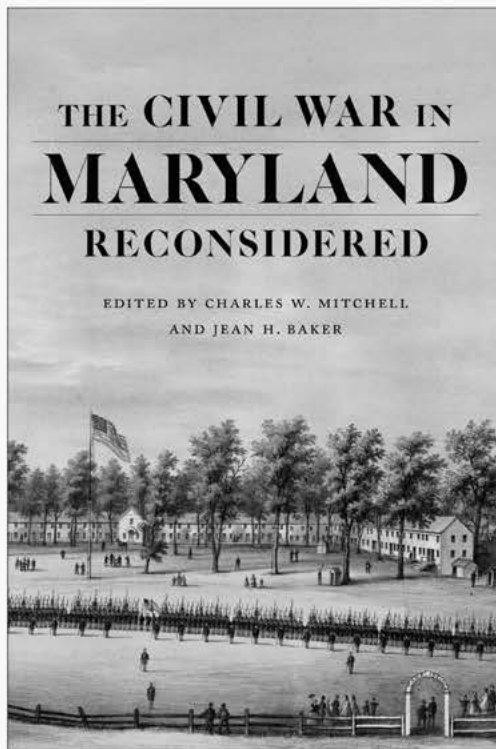
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## Book Reviews

*The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: The Life and Legacy That Shaped an American City.* By Antero Pietila. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. 317 pages. Illustrations, notes, index. Hardcover, \$28.00, e-book \$26.99.)

In *The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins*, Antero Pietila produces a compelling historical and journalistic portrait of Johns Hopkins' life and the institutions that bear his name. Since Johns Hopkins (1795–1873) burned his personal papers, Pietila and others who have tried to reproduce his life have run into the historian's greatest obstacle: no evidence. Drawing on his journalist background, Pietila crafts a narrative that is a hybrid of historical writing and something akin to a string of interesting serialized newspaper stories. *Ghosts* explores Johns Hopkins' personal and commercial relationships while he was alive, while also providing readers with a bevy of interesting anecdotes about Baltimore from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Pietila describes this as his "Baltimore Story Quilt."

The first section, "The Pragmatic Opportunist," discusses Hopkins' life, which spanned much of the nineteenth century. Pietila addresses Hopkins' humble beginnings in a Quaker community, detailing his first business (a "grocery and commission" operation that his uncle helped him start) and his roles as a major B&O stockholder and in the Civil War. During the war, Hopkins and the B&O Railroad eventually helped the Union cause, after initially declaring neutrality. Hopkins was not, however, neutral on race: he financially supported abolitionism and was a friend of Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother. Not only that, but in his will he desired that an asylum be created for African American children.

In this first section, the reader gets a feel for Pietila's method for dealing with the limited resources related directly to Johns Hopkins. Thus, rather than focus entirely on Hopkins himself, Pietila discusses a number of local issues from the era including free Blacks being kidnapped, the cholera epidemic in Baltimore, the Maryland Colonization Society, Baltimore's relationship with New Orleans in the domestic slave trade, and slave jails located near today's Harbor. Here we also meet Hope H. Slatter, at one point the city's leading slave trader.

From this section some of the complexity of Hopkins' life becomes clear. Hopkins was a shrewd, wooden, calculating businessman, yet he had a heart to help African Americans, and he did not shy away from philanthropy. Hopkins, from the records we have, does not appear to have allowed racial prejudice to shape his view of African Americans. It is also clear that Hopkins supported Lincoln's stance on the War and Reconstruction. In fact, when Hopkins died

and divided his \$7 million fortune (about \$204 million today) between creating a university and a hospital, he requested that the hospital be “nondiscriminatory.” Toward the end of this section readers meet “America’s Richest Spinster,” Mary Elizabeth Garrett, who helped open the medical school after Hopkins’ estate fell into financial problems. There is also a brief discussion related to the establishment of the Colored Orphans Asylum. The last chapter of this section discusses the common practice of doctors at Hopkins Hospital of robbing graves for cadavers on which to experiment.

In the second section, “The Racial Dynamics of Modern Baltimore,” Pietila weaves his narrative around individuals who shared linkages to Hopkins’ legacy, the hospital and university. And since both institutions are now global in scope and pillars in the academic world and medical community, the author has a good amount of thread for his quilt. This section may be most helpful for the student of early twentieth-century urban planning. In chapter six, “The Monumental City,” Pietila explores what he calls “racial rotations” of Germans and Blacks in Baltimore. He also explains the government’s involvement in residential segregation through New Deal policies, which encouraged redlining. Demographic flux and government policies would come to determine who lived near both the hospital and university. In this section, the reader also meets Chick Webb, who, Pietila explains, was known for discovering singing legend Ella Fitzgerald. Webb died at Hopkins Hospital at age thirty-four of “tuberculosis of the spine.” This section also introduces Frances Morton and the Baltimore Plan, which was designed to bring relief to urban problems such as unsanitary outhouses, which were removed.

Drawing on his time as a *Sun* reporter, Pietila discusses Baltimore’s moniker “Mobtown” in chapter eight. Interestingly, the area where organized crime headquartered most of its activity, known as The Block, was during Hopkins’ life “the heart of the financial district,” but the great fire of 1904 destroyed it. Seventy buildings that the hospital inherited from Johns Hopkins were destroyed. This section also discusses Black activism in Baltimore, particularly Baltimore CORE and the NAACP. This discussion of Black activism leads into another discussion related to police surveillance in which Donald D. Pomerleau’s tenure as police commissioner is examined. These anecdotes, while making the book a real page-turner, tell readers less about Hopkins and more about Baltimore city in the twentieth century.

In the last part of the book, “Pushing Out the Lumpenproletariat,” Pietila maps out gentrification and urban renewal, generally, and how Hopkins, known in the community as “The Plantation,” has been a part of that story. Inevitably the chapter becomes a panorama of Baltimore in the last twenty years, discussing issues well known to “Bawlmer” residents such as “the Knockers,” crooked police known for stealing drugs and money from those they arrest. There is also a brief discussion of the Black Guerilla Family, an organized crime gang. Possibly the most insightful aspect of this section is a discussion about lead poisoning and Hopkins’ connection to Kennedy Krieger, an organization responsible for a lead study that measured lead exposure in Blacks without providing them relief.



*The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins* is for the student, scholar, or Baltimore enthusiast who wants to learn more about the role Johns Hopkins institutions have had in shaping Baltimore in the twenty-first century. Pietila knows how to keep the reader interested, even though at moments it seems that he may have left out a footnote or two. One of the book's strengths is the author's ability to spotlight Baltimore's most well-known personalities, such as Kurt Schmoke (the first elected Black mayor of Baltimore), Willie L. Adams (numbers man turned entrepreneur), Warren Hart (the man who supposedly started the Black Panther Party in Baltimore but was in fact a COINTELPRO agent), M. Carey Thomas (former dean at Bryn Mawr), burlesque queen Blaze Starr (supposedly one of JFK's mistresses), and "Fat Benny"—a well-known enforcer for the mob in the 1950s. Overall, *Ghosts* excels as an introductory guide both to understanding neighborhood formation and change in twentieth-century Baltimore and as a street-level analysis of the modern city. It would make a great compliment to Pietila's own *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (2010), Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (2017), or Lawrence T. Brown's recent work, *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* (2021).

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*Eubie Blake: Rags, Rhythm, and Race.* By Richard Carlin and Ken Bloom. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 472 pages. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$35.00.)

In *Eubie Blake: Rags, Rhythm and Race*, music historians Richard Carlin and Ken Bloom provide a comprehensive and engaging account of the life of the pianist and composer, a Baltimore native who, with his partner Noble Sissle, became half of the first African American duo to have a successful show on Broadway, the musical *Shuffle Along*. The biography begins with Blake's early life in Baltimore and, in chronicling his career of almost eighty years, reveals a great deal not just about Blake but also about the world of Black musicians and composers for much of the twentieth century. Carlin and Bloom quote liberally from Blake and those who knew him, as their voices enrich the work.

The last biography of Blake appeared more than forty years ago, and Carlin and Bloom put his life and career in perspective while benefiting from abundant sources. Three accounts of Blake's life were published in the 1970s, when interest in his career was at its peak and he was still performing. Carlin and Bloom share his story and make extensive use of the Eubie Blake Papers, which were donated to the Maryland Center for History and Culture after Blake's passing in 1983. The authors are well-suited for the task. They have written other histories of American music and musical theater and, in 2017, they shared the Grammy Award for Best Album Notes for *Sissle and Blake Sing Shuffle Along*.

Blake was born in 1887 and developed an interest in music early on. Although his family was not affluent, he began taking piano lessons at age five or six. His formal education ended when he was about twelve, and as a teenager he played piano in Baltimore's brothels; Black musicians had difficulty finding work in more respectable venues. His long, thin fingers facilitated his playing, and he learned to adjust a song to a singer's vocal range. He met Sissle in the 1910s while working summers at Riverview Park. By this point, Blake had already written the "Charleston Rag" and "Troublesome Ivories."

*Shuffle Along* became the sleeper hit of 1921, and, with it, Sissle and Blake proved that a Black musical could succeed on Broadway. It ran for almost two years, with 504 performances. For many reasons, the achievement is noteworthy. Limited funds compelled them to use costumes and scenery from previous shows. The show featured Broadway's first all-Black orchestra. Also, they sought to entertain white theatergoers while forgoing much of what the audience would expect in a show with a Black cast. Characters in such shows were typically servants or minstrel-show stereotypes in overalls. While Sissle and Blake included Black dialect, Carlin and Bloom point out that *Shuffle Along* represented "a huge breakthrough in its depiction of blacks" (147). While audiences were drawn to its modern and innovative score and choreography—with "I'm Just Wild About Harry" as one of its biggest hits—the characters included politicians, business owners, and a young couple in love. In the show, Sissle and Blake conveyed to their audiences that "blacks actually thought and felt and acted the same as whites," as the authors observe (147). They also hoped to pave the way for other African American artists—"to convince the skeptical white people of this country that the Negro has a legitimate place on the stage as an entertainer . . . the same as anyone else," Blake asserted (160).

He faced challenges as his career progressed. He and Sissle had difficulty replicating the success of *Shuffle Along*, whether focusing on a revival of the show or trying to introduce something new. Blake had performed in vaudeville, but the advent of movies made vaudeville less of a draw. Ragtime music fell out of favor. Blake was often paid far less than what contracts promised and rarely received money for copyrights until his second wife, Marion, took charge of the finances. Other impediments derived from racism. In the 1930s he tried to break into radio, but NBC could not find a sponsor for a program that would showcase Black performers. He was one of the first Black composers admitted to the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) but was listed at the lowest level until Marion pressed the group to reassess him. There were additional victories. While performing in South Carolina during World War II, Blake protested when Black officers were required to sit in the back of the theater. He refused to play under such conditions, and the officers were allowed to move near the stage. The song "I'm Just Wild About Harry" gained renewed popularity in 1948, when President Truman used it in his campaign.

Carlin and Bloom note that Blake enjoyed "his most successful years as a performer during the last decade of his life," when popular interest in ragtime was resurging (341).

The two-record set *The Eighty-Six Years of Eubie Blake*, issued in 1970, earned a rave review from *Rolling Stone*. The musical revue *Eubie!* opened on Broadway in 1978 and introduced his work to a new generation. Blake attended the show's opening night in Baltimore, on the eve of his ninety-third birthday, and Cab Calloway was there to sing "Happy Birthday" to him. In 1981, two years before he passed away, Blake received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

*Eubie Blake: Rags, Rhythm and Race* is an excellent account of a talented composer and musician who was also a pioneer for Black entertainers. It is recommended to anyone interested in learning about Blake, the world of early-twentieth-century ragtime or jazz, or this important era in American history.

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*The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America*. By Lawrence T. Brown. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. 384 pages. Illustrations, etc. \$29.95.)

Baltimore city is a remarkable place. It was home to national personalities such as author Edgar Allan Poe, activist Frederick Douglass, singer Billie Holiday, athlete Babe Ruth, and poet Frances Harper among others. The city houses historic sites of national importance such as Fort McHenry National Park where Francis Scott Key was inspired to pen the lyrics to the "Star Spangled Banner." Contemporary Baltimore city is comprised of immigrants, Lumbee Indians, Blacks, whites, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and Protestants melded together in a uniquely urban space that provides a perfect microcosm of America. The microcosm was structured through *de jure* and *de facto* racially segregated housing entrenched and refined over the course of more than 100 years.

Lawrence Brown's *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* illustrates this chronic condition through the metaphor of a butterfly. Brown's book is "organized according to five steps to implement a robust racial equity approach and designed to walk the reader through the types of reflection, analysis and action needed to develop thriving Black neighborhoods" (5–6). The book cover illustrates the formation of a "black butterfly." The wings are formed from hypersegregated Black neighborhoods east to west that enclose an "L" shaped spine that traverses the city north to south. The book is organized into eight tracks/chapters that weave together the historical dustups and current political indifference and galvanize his Black Butterfly project's larger goal of acknowledging and ameliorating calcified racial, economic, and spatial discrimination.

Brown opens with the bloody attack Union troops experienced on Pratt Street on April 19, 1861. Although Maryland did not declare a position during the Civil War, the city of Baltimore housed the largest antebellum free Black population, which thrived in

the midst of Confederate sympathizing counties throughout the state. The next tracks discuss the innovative early twentieth-century racially restrictive covenants implemented in Baltimore, which provided a model that other cities adopted when seeking to combat the influx of Blacks to the industrialized North during the Great Migration. In a chapter on “ongoing historical trauma,” Brown explores the enduring legislative and economic problems Blacks endured. The final track is a call to action against maintaining and possible proliferation of hyper-segregated metropolitan areas. Here Brown provides a detailed blueprint to remedy historic and ongoing legislative indifference that could impel other black butterflies around the country to recover and equitize all urban residents. “America is racing backward in terms of progress on dismantling the white supremacist policies, practices, systems and budgets that extract both health and wealth from Black neighborhoods,” he concludes (259).

One area of concern for some scholars might be the overarching activist stance Brown takes when detailing grueling levels of injustice in all forms. His research is not a lofty exegesis but a utilitarian means to extricate principally Black Baltimoreans from hopelessly deplorable living conditions. Brown points to cycles of “whitelash” against incremental progress by Black people. “The whitelash of the war on Black neighborhoods undermined advances made during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements” (259).

Throughout *The Black Butterfly*, Brown blends statistical data from history, economics, psychology, and public health to create an empathetic understanding of spatial and cultural formation of the modern incarnation of Baltimore. Brown created a taxonomy to express the elements of the Black Butterfly. He cites the work of other scholars examining the impact race and class have on urban centers, such as Mindy Fullilove, Douglas Massey, Nancy Denton and Noliwe Rooks among others. Their research in peripheral fields adds dimension to Brown, whose academic area is public health.

*The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* is not unique in providing explicit detail about racial and class segregation in Baltimore. Harold A. McDougall’s *Black Baltimore*, Lawrence Grandpre and Dayvon Love’s *The Black Book: Reflections from the Baltimore Grassroots*, as well as Antero Pietila’s *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* all do a commendable job. Brown’s *The Black Butterfly* suggests interdisciplinary, public, and private opportunities to expand access to the American dream so that it might no longer be elusive for many and not an impossibility for all who live under the shadows of the Black Butterfly. Following Derrick Bell, he wonders, “[w]ith such a cyclical history, the question becomes whether America will ever be a nation with liberty and justice for all or whether racism is a permanent feature of American social and political life” (260). This is the condition Brown seeks to heal through a contentious, measured plan of action informed by the past while preparing an equitable future for all urban residents.

Ida Jones  
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*The Silent Shore: The Lynching of Matthew Williams and the Politics of Racism in the Free State.* By Charles L. Chavis Jr. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. 288 pages. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth. \$29.95.)

In December 1931, someone shot to death D. J. Elliott, the white owner of a lumberyard in the small city of Salisbury on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Suspicion immediately fell upon Matthew Williams, a twenty-three-year-old African American employee at the lumberyard, despite the absence of eyewitness testimony, the fact that Williams also suffered serious gunshot wounds, and reports of tension between Elliott's son and the two shooting victims. Within hours, a mob of local white people abducted Williams from his hospital bed, stabbed him, dragged him through the center of Salisbury, hanged him in front of the Wicomico County Courthouse, then burned his body as a crowd of one thousand people looked on. Rather than intervene to stop the violence, Salisbury police officers directed traffic away from the grisly spectacle. Even though the lynching took place on public streets before numerous witnesses, the white men of the Wicomico County grand jury determined three months later that "there is absolutely no evidence that can remotely connect anyone with the instigation or perpetration of the murder of Matthew Williams" (179).

In *The Silent Shore*, Charles L. Chavis Jr. reconstructs the lynching, identifies many of the perpetrators, and explores the code of silence that protected the lynchers from prosecution. Chavis also takes pains to restore the individuality and humanity of Matthew Williams and to document the cultural erasure of Salisbury's Black community as another aspect of anti-Black violence in Maryland. Joining other scholars, Chavis explains lynching as a device to terrorize and subjugate Black people. Going beyond the arguments of some historians, Chavis broadens the definition of lynching to include police violence that extends to the current moment. Lynching in this view is the most violent expression of a broader historical pattern of trauma and psychological violence against Black communities in which American government at all levels is complicit. Salisbury officials helped lynch Matthew Williams, the legal system ignored Black witnesses to the crime, and years later, public officials destroyed historic Black Salisbury neighborhoods to build new highways.

The presidential ambitions of Maryland Governor Albert C. Ritchie provided the key to unlock the facts and significance of the Salisbury lynching conspiracy. Ritchie was an unusual southern Democratic governor in that he courted Black voters, openly opposed the powerful 1920s' Ku Klux Klan, and denounced lynching. Yet he was enough of a southern Democrat to prioritize states' rights and therefore opposed national anti-lynching legislation. The lynching of Matthew Williams threatened to upset Ritchie's bid for the 1932 Democratic presidential nomination and challenged his ability as a chief executive to control racial violence in his state. Ritchie ordered Maryland's attorney general, Preston Lane, and Baltimore police to investigate the lynching on the Eastern Shore. The official state investigation met resistance from Salisbury's white community.

Ritchie thereupon arranged for a secret Pinkerton National Detective Agency operative to go undercover in Salisbury. That agent's reports helped Chavis to get inside the lynching conspiracy.

Historians of lynching and racial violence are in debt to Chavis for uncovering the secret Pinkerton reports to the attorney general, which were unprocessed in the Maryland State Archives. Patsy Johnson, a white boxer, had taken up residence in Salisbury and cultivated relationships with the white sporting crowd, including participants and witnesses to the lynching of Matthew Williams. Johnson's confidential reports led Chavis to conclude that the lynchers were well known in Salisbury and their brutal acts were endorsed by their white neighbors. This remarkable source revealed that the county sheriff, Salisbury police chief, and the city's fire chief all participated in the lynching. Johnson's undercover work also revealed that the lynching of Matthew Williams was not an aberration on the Eastern Shore, but the culmination of white rage that followed several earlier foiled attempts to lynch Black men. The racist urge to suppress and terrorize African Americans was widespread throughout the white power structure and the white working class in the depths of the depression. Several working-class white men "led" the mob but were supported and protected by top officials. Johnson's persistent questioning revealed, however, that some working-class whites were willing to confide in a fellow white member of the sporting class and break the code of silence. A small number of Black and white witnesses identified members of the mob to the grand jury. Prodded by the presiding judge, the grand jury ignored their testimony and reinforced the code of violence and silent affirmation of it that underlay white supremacy. Similarly, Ritchie chose to keep Patsy Johnson's investigation secret. Still, the Pinkerton reports and Chavis' diligence in discovering them help historians to understand the mechanics of organized racial violence in the lynching era of the early twentieth century.

Although Chavis builds his study on extensive research, he looks beyond a scholarly audience to a broader public. For Marylanders and other concerned readers, Chavis presents a disturbing indictment of the Free State. Racial violence was not limited to the Deep South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, nor have attempts to silence Black voices and weaken Black communities ceased in Maryland.

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*The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered.* Edited by Charles W. Mitchell and Jean H. Baker. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. 352 pages. Notes and index. Cloth, \$45.00.)

Before I began teaching Civil War history in Maryland, I'll admit that I never thought too much about the war's impact on the state. Maryland came to mind a few times: when Lincoln bypassed Baltimore on his inaugural tour, the Pratt Street Riot in April 1861,

*Ex Parte Merryman*, and the battle of Antietam. It was almost as though Maryland's war stopped in 1862. As time passed, however, I came to appreciate the ways that Maryland's wartime years were so unusual: as a slave state that remained in the Union; as a place that could be considered both invaded and occupied, depending on one's allegiances; as a state that enacted its own emancipation, yet became a bastion of Jim Crow; and as a place where statues and markers often told only one side of a deeply contested struggle. And I became increasingly frustrated at the relative dearth of scholarship about this fascinating place. Charles W. Mitchell and Jean H. Baker's edited volume, *The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered*, goes a long way to alleviating my frustrations.

Edited collections are not always argument-driven, but Baker and Mitchell's Introduction makes a clear case for challenging the Lost Cause interpretation of Maryland as a secessionist state kept in the Union only by force. Instead, they frame the Pratt Street riot, the Merryman case, and even the arrest of Maryland's pro-Confederate legislators as "not dispositive events forcing the state into support for the Union, but rather as occasional overreaches of federal power that did not affect the state's allegiance" (5). Baker and Mitchell may overstate the degree to which Lost Cause historiography lingered in scholarly work, but it is hard to argue with its popular endurance, given that *Maryland, My Maryland* remained the state song until its repeal in July 2021.

This volume works to counter older narratives through its very structure, which is roughly chronological, and dominated by Unionist stories. It opens with three pieces about slavery, resistance, and free Blacks in Maryland (by Richard Bell, Jessica Millward, and Martha Jones), then three that deal with political conflicts over secession and civil liberties (by Mitchell, Frank Towers, and Frank J. Williams). Timothy J. Orr, Brian Matthew Jordan, and Thomas G. Clemens explore various facets of soldiers' experiences from recruitment to fighting and to death. Jonathan White writes about Maryland's 1864 Constitution, which emancipated Maryland slaves, while Robert W. Schoeberlein focuses on various women's relief and fundraising efforts in the state. To its credit, the volume closes with Sharita Jacobs-Thompson's work on Reconstruction, and Robert J. Cook's look at the ways that the Lost Cause first took hold and was then challenged in the state. This collection primarily consists of political and military history, and much of it treads familiar ground, though crisply and concisely. Baltimore is heavily represented, not surprisingly because of the importance of the 1861 riot and its aftermath, but also because it seems to encapsulate the state's overall conflicts in microcosm.

A few essays stand out as especially fresh and informative, either in approach or content. Richard Bell's "Border State, Border War: Fighting for Freedom and Slavery in Antebellum Maryland" draws analogies between violent captures of Black people (both free and freedom-seeking) along the Pennsylvania/Maryland line and other, better-known border conflicts like that between Missouri and Kansas. He also explains how the fading of white anti-slavery activism and support between the 1820s (which featured both the Maryland Anti-Slavery Society and the Baltimore Society for the Protection of Free People of Color) and the 1840s made possible the rise of the "reverse underground railroad" in the 1850s. Timothy J. Orr's "The Fighting Sons of 'My Maryland': The

Recruitment of Union Regiments in Baltimore, 1861–1865” does more than outline the mechanics of enlistment. By showing that the city contributed more than its share of soldiers, he makes a compelling case that “Baltimore’s role in the nation’s four-year quest for manpower may have outweighed the significance of the impulsive four-week period in the spring of 1861 when the city’s treasonous whims were at their worst” (162). Orr does an especially good job detailing the struggles to enlist African American men whom so-called loyal masters claimed as slaves, an issue that also comes up in Jonathan White’s essay about emancipation and the 1864 Constitution.

Brian Matthew Jordan is the most methodologically innovative of the collection’s authors, as he brings the techniques of sensory history to bear on the aftermath of the battle of Antietam. In “What I Witnessed Would Only Make You Sick: Union Soldiers Confront the Dead at Antietam,” Jordan reminds readers that the actual experience of the battle and the days that followed—the stench, the carnage—was even more shocking than Alexander Gardner’s famous photographs. If Jordan takes a fresh approach, Sharita Jacobs-Thompson’s “The Failed Promise of Reconstruction” uncovers a little-known period in Maryland history. Because Maryland never seceded, it never came under the auspices of Reconstruction. But that did not mean that equality came for Maryland’s African Americans. To the contrary, she shows that Maryland whites, both conservative Unionist and pro-Confederate, came together in opposition to the Republican Party, racial equality, and Black men voting. While many African Americans in the former Confederacy could look back on the Reconstruction years as a time of Black political power and office-holding, Marylanders could not.

For many people, the test of a new book is whether it leads them to revise their syllabi. I can assure you that several essays from this excellent collection will be making an appearance in my classes starting next semester.

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