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Resistance to Slavery in Maryland

Strategies for Freedom

Special History Study

NATIONAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

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Resistance to Slavery in Maryland: Strategies for Freedom

Special History Study

Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, Ph.D.

Based on Research Contributed by
T. Stephen Whitman, Ph.D.

NATIONAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

Prepared for
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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On the Cover: "The Fugitive's Song," 1845. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-7823

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FOREWORD

Public Law 105-203, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998, directs the National Park Service (NPS) to commemorate, honor, and interpret the history of the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad—the resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, through the end of the Civil War—refers to the efforts of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage. Wherever slavery existed, there were efforts to escape, at first, to maroon communities in rugged terrain away from settled areas, and later across state and international borders. While most began and completed their journeys unassisted, each subsequent decade in which slavery was legal in the United States saw an increase in active efforts to assist escape. The decision to assist a freedom seeker may have been spontaneous. However, in some places, particularly after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Underground Railroad was deliberate and organized. Freedom seekers went in many directions—Canada, Mexico, Indian Territory, the West, Caribbean Islands and Europe.

A key to understanding this important movement in American History is an examination of its roots in the areas where people were enslaved. In the following report, Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, PhD, examines strategies for freedom in Maryland. This resistance to slavery in Maryland provides a window into these clandestine acts.

This report had its origins as a more focused study of resistance to slavery at the Hampton Plantation in Baltimore County, Maryland (now a National Historic Site). Research for this original study was conducted by T. Stephen Whitman, PhD. The Hampton project eventually evolved into this larger, statewide study, but some of Dr. Whitman's research has been incorporated into this report. We gratefully acknowledge his contribution, as well as the work of Tara Morrison, who at that time was the National Park Service's Northeast Regional Manager of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

The Organization of American Historians (OAH) facilitated this project, through a cooperative agreement with the NPS. The collaboration between the NPS and the OAH has been particularly fruitful in bringing cultural resource management and historical scholarship together. We would like to give special thanks to Susan Ferentinos, the Public History Manager for the OAH, who managed the project on behalf of the organization.

Sheri Jackson
Northeast Region Manager
National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The state of Maryland holds a unique position in American History and within the resistance movement among enslaved and free Blacks before the Civil War. Two of the nation's most famous escapees, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, were enslaved in, and fled from, the state. Furthermore, several of the narratives collected by William Still contain rich resources recounting escapes from Maryland. In addition to these well-known figures and episodes in Maryland history, broad general themes as well as individual stories provide an understanding of the various forms of resistance evident in the state. As a general overview of resistance to slavery in Maryland, this report incorporates a broad discussion of Maryland's position as a slave-holding state with one of the largest populations of free Blacks in the United States.

Resistance to slavery is presented herein using the research strategies outlined by the National Park Service for the reinterpretation of the Underground Railroad. Rather than limiting the Underground Railroad to 30 or 35 years of assisted escapes, current interpretation situates the movement as one form of resistance within a continuum of strategies for freedom. As it is historically defined, the Underground Railroad began as a loose network of Black and White abolitionists formed in the 1830s as a result of the sustained actions of self-liberators and abolitionists' efforts to assist them. The National Park Service (NPS) expanded the definition of the Underground Railroad beyond the original nineteenth-century meaning. The retrospective and widely encompassing use of the term by NPS now includes "incidents which have all the characteristics of

Underground Railroad activity, but which occurred earlier."[1] The NPS's expanded definition of the Underground Railroad as a movement toward freedom includes every freedom seeker "who made the difficult and dangerous journey out of bondage" and countless others, both enslaved and free, Black and White, men and women,

> who offered food, directions, secrecy to runaways on the route to freedom; the occasional brave soul who made repeated trips into the South to guide slaves to the North...and a secret network of fugitive slaves, free Blacks and whites of conscience who organized themselves to assist and protect the fleeing slaves.[2]

The NPS has shifted the focus away from the brief 35-year history of the literal definition to help the nation understand the Underground Railroad as just one avenue of escape within an arsenal of freedom strategies as the enslaved "made a way out of no way." This expanded definition literally considers "every attempt the enslaved made to escape from the 1600s to 1865" as part of this larger Underground Railroad Movement.[3] In the *Underground Railroad*, the official handbook of NPS, historian C. Peter Ripley defines the Underground Railroad Movement as "the movement of African-American slaves escaping out of the South and the allies who assisted them in their search for freedom."[4]

Throughout this text, to differentiate between the Underground Railroad as commonly understood and the Underground Railroad as broadly defined by NPS, I refer to the Underground Railroad Movement which includes unassisted escapes and events occurring during the long 200-year period leading up to the 1830s. Where I use the term the Underground Railroad, I am referring to the historic definition of escapes, either assisted or not, that originated after 1830

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[1]National Register, History and Education, National Park Service, *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 2000), 2.

[2] C. Peter Ripley, The Underground Railroad, *The Underground Railroad* (US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998), 45-75.

[3] Bertram Herbert, "National Park Service, National Historic Landmark Underground Railroad Archeological Initiative," January 6, 1997.

[4] Ripley, The Underground Railroad, 45-75.

where seekers of freedom either used known routes or accepted aid from abolitionists and others once they crossed into the free states.[5]

As the numerous laws discussed in Chapter Two reveal, freedom-seeking behavior presented a constant reality evident from the first years of the formation of the Maryland province and includes the legacy of facilitated escapes. This study, therefore, presents more than two centuries of strategies for freedom used by people of color to escape slavery as well as the men and women, Black and White, who sought to render aid and assistance. The behavior of these two centuries can be termed the Underground Railroad Movement. Within this context, the formal years of the historical Underground Railroad, 1830 to 1865, form a fraction of the total number of years that Blacks employed multiple strategies to resist and escape slavery. This report categorizes an array of resistance strategies.

In attempting to create a world of their own, the enslaved prevailed against attempts to dehumanize them. The law often presents the individual as an abstraction with lives, experiences, and hopes and dreams of liberty among freedom seekers diminished and encapsulated into the term fugitive slave. Chapter Two reviews the multiple laws—the legal arm of slavery that sought to terrorize, intimidate, and threaten escapees from slavery. The strategies used by the province, the colony, and later the state of Maryland make it clear that ever escalating measures were not enough to stop Blacks from fleeing slavery.

Chapter Three addresses revolts and rebellions; although Maryland is not known to have had any major occurrences. Yet, this important topic is addressed herein as a crucial strategy for freedom among Maryland escapees which requires additional research. Noted historian Herbert Aptheker identifies numerous revolts in Maryland. His criteria for identifying and categorizing revolts and insurrections are: "a minimum of 10 slaves involved; freedom as the apparent aim of the disaffected slaves; contemporary references labeling the event as an

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[5] Cheryl LaRoche, *Landscapes of Freedom: Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad*, PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2004.

uprising, plot, insurrection, or the equivalent of these terms."[6] This study places revolts and rebellions, which almost always included the involvement of freedom seekers willing to use violence, as a strategy for freedom. Revolts and rebellions, therefore, fit within the redefinition of the Underground Railroad Movement as mandated by the NPS.

Chapter Four juxtaposes colonization schemes designed to essentially deport free people of color in order to remove their unwanted influence from the world of slavery with emigration strategies proposed by early Black Nationalists such as Paul Cuffee and Martin Delaney. Although the ultimate aim of both groups was removal to Africa, the motivations within and among the groups sat in opposition to one another. For many Black emigrationists, true freedom could only be had beyond the shores of the colonies and later, beyond the United States. Chapter Five, therefore, presents multiple examples of resistance through flight in the province, colony, and state of Maryland. This Chapter interprets the narratives and experiences of escape within the expanded definition of the Underground Railroad Movement.

Chapter Six begins the work of identifying self-purchase as an important, if not often overlooked, route to freedom. Many of the most prominent men and women in American History purchased their freedom. For them, freedom became not only a complicated act of self-possession but also represented the antithesis of slavery, evidence of the freeing power of one's own labors.

In order to investigate freedom-seeking strategies in times of war, Chapter Seven examines the three major wars fought by the colonies and the United States. In each of the wars, African Americans realized war's potential to ensure their freedom. Finally, Chapter Eight discusses freedom-seeking strategies within the historic period of the traditional Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad merely named and added a level of organizational structure to existing strategies of freedom and escapes, superimposed a loose network of assistance

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[6] Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts in the United States 1526-1860* (New York: International Publishers, 1943, 1993), 7.

over those escapes, and brought together a broad coalition of committed citizens across the nation willing to defy the government within those efforts.

African Americans challenged the entire framework of slave society resorting to all manner of strategies to physically escape slavery: rebellion, emigration, self-purchase, and allying with enemies in time of war. These strategies have their most visible expression in the myriad of laws designed to control freedom-seeking behavior, in fugitive slave advertisements, in jail and penitentiary records, and in narratives and personal accounts. The enslaved could and did resist slavery by refusing to acknowledge the system's legitimacy by escaping and assuming their rights as free people. Or one could choose from the options offered by law and custom, by working toward manumission or self-purchase, by petitioning a court for freedom, or, after the abolition of slavery, seeking and receiving gubernatorial pardons. These strategies were not mutually exclusive, and with the exception of those who took up arms against whites and were captured, choosing one path did not foreclose other options.

Data on runaways are too ambiguous to measure precisely the volume of escapes by enslaved individuals or the shifting numbers over time, but in the most comprehensive work on the subject, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger estimate that at least 50,000 slaves across the entire South ran away annually by 1860.[7] This study of resistance in Maryland, however, does not attempt to calculate the numbers of men and women who sought to escape slavery in either Maryland or across the United States. Troubling inconsistencies, which have never been adequately reconciled, exist among official estimates, abolitionist and Underground Railroad narratives, figures reported from Canada, and estimates of numbers of escapees outside the United States.[8] Relying on newspaper advertisements, a source emblematic of flight and resistance, further confuses the

[7] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 279-282.

[8] See Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 484-496.

matter. Such advertisements provide minimal figures and represent overt efforts among the most persistent and wealthy of enslavers who were more than likely seeking to capture the most valuable or valued escapees. Rampant among freedom-seekers' strategies are repeated escape attempts which complicate statistical analysis. Accurate enumeration of escapes, successful or attempted, should remain a topic of additional research. Although poisoning and murder of the enslaver were definite resistance strategies, these topics have not been explored in depth within this study.[9]

[9]See for example, Douglas B. Chambers, "The Murder of Old Master Madison in 1732: A Local Event in Atlantic Perspective," *The Maryland Historian* 28 (2003): 4-46.

CHAPTER TWO

FUGITIVE SLAVE CLAUSES, LEGISLATION, AND LAWS

In his influential work, *In the Matter of Color,* Leon Higginbotham presents the major laws that impacted the existence of the enslaved throughout the Colonial Era. He did not include Maryland in his study. However, he did note that the dispassionate language of the law is dehumanizing. All of the colonies developed laws that attempted to establish and maintain dominance over African captives within American society. This Chapter reconsiders the laws pertaining to escape from slavery by presenting, to the extent possible, almost all the laws in one place, under one heading. From this vantage point, it becomes clear that flight from slavery was a persistent and consistent form of resistance and strategy for freedom among Maryland's enslaved population and a constant problem for those who attempted to legislate freedom-seeking behavior.

Although the historical record is slanted toward the history of slavery, the history of escape from slavery has an equally long and enduring record. Maryland was the third colony to legalize slavery by 1663. The state followed the lead of Massachusetts, which was the first colony to recognize slavery as a legal institution 1641. The subject of "fleeing from service" has an equally long history and first appears in the colonial record in 1629—five years prior to the introduction of slavery into the Maryland colony in 1634.[10] The demand for labor in the tobacco fields of the Chesapeake region led to the importation of an increasing number of indentured workers as well as African captives. "The first Black indentured servant may have arrived with the voyage of the *Ark* and the

[10]Hilary Beckles, "From Land to Sea: Runaway Barbados Slaves and Servants, 1630-1700" in *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World*, ed. Gad Heuman (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1986), 84.

Dove."[11] At least two people of African descent were on board. Therefore, the Black presence in Maryland began with the founding of the colony. One of the first colonists, Father Andrew White, an English Catholic priest, was accompanied by Mathias de Sousa a "Black servant." For the early African inhabitants of the colony, indentured servitude was the precursor to slavery. As early as 1639, Maryland was already legislating harsh treatment for runaways. The colony passed the most severe law of its kind at the time declaring that a servant convicted of running away could be executed.[12] In 1640, the English colonies began passing punitive laws to discourage any of the enslaved population and indentured servants from escaping servitude. These laws were also designed to discourage sympathizers from sheltering escapees. By July 1640, John Punch had been captured in Maryland and returned to slavery in Virginia "for the time of his natural life."[13] Because Blacks escaping slavery often found refuge with Native Americans, Maryland also attempted to regulate that path to freedom. In 1669, the state offered a match coat to any Indian who would return a fugitive slave. However, the Indians seemed to sympathize with the plight of the escapees, seldom returning them to slavery.[14]

Fugitive Slave Clauses, Legislation and Laws

Twentieth-century orator and civil rights advocate William Pickens once remarked "the first abolitionist was the runaway slave."[15] Demonstrating their

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[11] Hilary Beckles, "From Land to Sea."

[12] Hilary Beckles, "From Land to Sea", 84.

[13] Marion Gleason McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves-1619-1865* (Boston, 1891; New York: Bergman Publishers, 1969); Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed. *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro Vol. IV* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968).

[14] C. W. A. David , "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and its Antecedents" *The Journal of Negro History* 9 (1924): 18-25.

[15] A.H. Gordon, "The Struggle for Physical Freedom," *The Journal of Negro History* 13 (1928): 22-35.

willingness to take risks in the face of terrible odds, it was the behavior of runaway slaves that lent constant stimulus to a proliferation of fugitive slave laws.[16] Although 1793 is generally cited as marking the first fugitive slave law, the United States has a much longer history in its attempts to control freedom-seeking behavior through legislation. Prior to the more familiar federal enactments, it fell to individual states or other governing bodies to attempt to legislate behavior that had become troubling enough to warrant legal action.

In 1642, Governor Calvert bargained with a ship master for 13 slaves at St. Mary's.[17] These importations rose in tandem with laws that attempted to quell the rising problem of escapes from slavery. The foundation for future fugitive slave laws can be traced to 1643, 150 years before the federal government began enacting fugitive slave laws. A fugitive slave clause was inserted in the Articles of Confederation of the New England Confederation providing for the return of the fugitive upon the certificate of one magistrate in the jurisdiction out of which the said servant fled with no provisions for a trial by jury.[18] Under the Articles a simple statement of certification from any government magistrate would be sufficient to convict a suspected runaway.[19]

By mid-century, a Virginia law fined all persons who entertained or entered covenants with runaways. Virginia had already authorized the establishment of a colonial militia to track down runaways by 1657, and by 1661, the state statute legally recognized slavery with passage of a fugitive slave law.[20] Three years later,

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[16] A.H. Gordon, "The Struggle for Physical Freedom," 22-35.

[17] George F. Bragg, *Men of Maryland* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1914). Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, http://209.85.165.104/u/docsouth?q=cache:nFVrrljYRmEJ:docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bragg/bragg.html+daniel+coker&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=7&ie=UTF-8.

[18] "Fugitive Slave Laws" http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:TCmquw0i06gJ:www.1911encyclopedia.org/Fugitive_slave_laws+maryland+slaves+escaping+to+northwest+territory&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=1.

[19] Charles M. Christian, *Black Saga: The African American Experience, A Chronology* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1999).

Maryland officially sanctioned slavery by law for the lifetime of the enslaved population already located in the colony as well as for all African captives subsequently brought into the colony, effectively closing most avenues to freedom. A year earlier, Maryland set the stage by declaring that Black servitude was usually perpetual and for life.[21]

For a time, baptism into Christianity was sought as a way out of slavery. In 1671, therefore, an act was passed entitled "an act for Encouraging the Importation of Negroes and Slaves," which declared that baptism, or conversion, should not be understood to grant manumission in any way to "slaves or to their issue, who had become or should become Christians, or who had been or should be baptized, either before or after their importation to Maryland, any opinion to the contrary notwithstanding."[22] In 1676, the Maryland legislature passed "An Act Relating to Servants and Slaves" which was enacted to prevent escapes from slavery, and which referred to a previous

> Act Provided against Servants Runawayes made in the yeare one thousand Six hundred & fifty. And another Act made in the yeare one thousand six hundred and Sixty two and alsoe another Act made in the yeare one thousand Six hundred and Sixty Six which said three Acts having hitherto proved ineffectuall in Regard they doe not Sufficiently provide an Encouragement for such person or persons Inhabitants within this Province as shall Seize such Runnawayes Servants by this Act deemed Runanaways[.] Therefore for the better Discovery Seizing and apprehending of Such Runnawayes Bee it Enacted...That...noe Servant or Servants whatsoever within this Province whither by Indenture or according to the Custome of the Countrey or hired for wages shall travel by Land or water tenn miles from the house of his her or their Master or mistrisse or dame without a noate..."[23]

Black women and men who could produce neither pass nor proof of freedom were presumed to be runaways, and could be sold if no one claimed them.[24]

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[20] McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves*; Catterall, *Judicial Cases*, 355.

[21] Christian, *Black Saga.*

[22] McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves*, 9

[23] Archives of Maryland Online, "An Act Relating to Servants and Slaves," Maryland State Archives, Vol. 00002, p. 0523.

Many of Maryland's early statutes sought to discourage free people, Black and White, from assisting escapees in their quest for freedom. As a harbinger of laws to come, the statute also sought to elicit aid for those same free men and women in recapturing anyone who did flee. One provision of the Act specified that anyone found to "entice, transport, carry, or privately convey" any enslaved worker out of the Province would be subject to treble damages and costs. Acts passed in 1692 and 1699 repeated this provision.[25]

By 1715, Maryland passed legislation giving sheriffs unrestrained power over the imprisonment of suspected "runaway slaves and the fees associated with their capture and disposition." In the act passed during the May session of that year "A lien on the body of the prisoner guaranteed the reward to the capturer and imprisonment fees to the sheriff." A large number of sheriffs realized that it was in their best interest to apprehend and then imprison many "colored persons who might be detained for a longer period than six months, whether the person [is] free or slave." If the prison term was prolonged, the fees swelled to nearly the value placed on the prisoner. When that occurred, the enslaver might be unable or unwilling to redeem the enslaved prisoner. In this instance, the authorized sheriff's sale could easily work to the advantage of an associate working in collusion with the sheriff. It was not until December 22, 1792, 77 years later and almost 10 years after the end of the American Revolution, that the Maryland general assembly passed an act "to restrain the ill-practices of sheriffs, and to direct their conduct respecting runaways."[26]

The state again addressed the problem of escapes from slavery in the 1720s when the legislature addressed the problems of enslaved workers fleeing to maroon communities, settlements of escaped captives, located on the fringes on the Western Shore and in the marshlands of the Eastern Shore. This was followed

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[24] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 2, 523-528; National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application, The Maryland State House, July 2006.

[25] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 34, 731-733; NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[26] Christian, *Black Saga*, 30.

by "An Act to prevent the tumultuous Meetings, and other Irregularities of Negroes and other Slaves," passed in 1723, which provided that outlying slaves who refused to surrender and resisted apprehension could be killed. The act made no provision for compensation for the enslaver; although a later act passed in 1751 did address the situation. That year, the state expanded its efforts to control freedom-seeking behavior and movement of slaves through "An Act for the more effectual Punishment of Negroes and other Slaves." Any of the enslaved population found guilty of a list of offenses including running away could, upon complaint by any individual "injured" by the offender, be whipped, cropped on the ears, or branded on the cheek with the letter "R." By 1753 legislation focused less on abettors to directly address escapees. Acknowledging the problems of water escapes, the provision called for the master of any vessel with a keel greater than 17 feet to take an oath not to conceal or knowingly carry any enslaved person out of the province. If anyone seeking freedom was found either aboard or concealed on the vessel the ship master was liable to pay 20 shillings for every hour the individual was on board the ship plus any other expenses incurred.[27]

During the years prior to the Revolution, slavery was an accepted institution in all colonies. Severe physical punishments for Blacks who attempted to escape were accompanied by increasingly severe monetary penalties for anyone, Black or White, assisting escapees. Servitude awaited Blacks unable to pay the imposed penalties. In addition to these major areas of concern plaguing early colonists and lawmakers, particular attention was directed to attempted escapes by ship throughout the colonies.[28] By the end of the American Revolutionary War in 1783, between 50,000 and 100,000 of the enslaved population had heeded the cause of liberty espoused by our founding fathers and escaped captivity by their enslavers. Between 1784 and 1786, after the Articles of Confederation went into effect, seven of the eight treaties with Indian nations carried clauses for the return of

[27] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 34, 731-733; Vol 46, 618-621; Vol 50, 284-285; NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[28] NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

fugitive slaves as the sphere of efforts to curb escapes widened. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 incorporated the principle of the exclusion of slavery as it simultaneously provided for the return of fugitive slaves.[29]

Untold thousands also gained a measure of autonomy within slavery. As slaveholders noted, it became prudent to improve the conditions of the slaves, lest no slaves remain.[30] With the majority of Northern states instituting some form of gradual manumission and with the growth of the free Black population committed to helping fellow Blacks escape bondage, coupled with new forms of transportation that escapees, such as Frederick Douglass, could use to flee Maryland more rapidly than ever before, the legislature crafted more stringent regulations with greater frequency in its efforts to control runaways.

After 1790, slaveholders began to regain the ground lost during the War, hedging manumission laws with new restrictions and passing legislation hostile to free people of color, who were seen as a "demoralizing" influence on slaves. Legislation passed in 1796 set penalties for any free person of color who sold or gave his or her certificate of freedom in order to help escapees pass as free persons. By 1800, in the words of one contemporary, "the emancipation fume has long evaporated, and not a word is now said about it." Most Whites had quickly come to view freedom for people of color as a failed experiment, and free Blacks themselves as a "subversive element" in a resurgent slave society. The strength with which such views were propounded goes far to explain why a man like General Charles Ridgely, despite his prominence as a three-time governor of Maryland, waited until after his death to free the people he enslaved. Unable to turn to their own newly formed government for freedom, with legislatures and elected officials, from Presidents on down willingly condoning slaveholding, anyone seeking freedom was again left with few strategies for freedom—self-purchase if they had amassed the wherewithal to free themselves, manumission, or flight.

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[29] David , "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793."

[30] Quoted in Philip Schwarz, *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. Press, 1988), 187.

The country expanded through territorial acquisitions, in tandem with the geographic range of legislation seeking to quell the quest for freedom. Although runaways frequently escaped from one colony to another, the growth of antislavery sentiment and the acquisition of western territory, necessitated adoption of a uniform method for the return of fugitive slaves. Article VI of the Ordinance of 1787 for the Northwest Territory provided that in the case of any person escaping "from labor or service" into the Northwest Territory and who was "lawfully claimed in any one of the original states, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid." Such an agreement was necessary to persuade the slave-holding states to union and to ensure that the new federal government did not inadvertently undermine slavery by appearing to endorse equality for free people of color. The growing numbers of free Blacks, made possible in part by the strictures of the post-Revolutionary war economy, made it clear for all to see, they could be capable, successful, productive citizens once released from the bonds of slavery. Many, such as Richard Allen, also expressed sympathy for, and solidarity with, their enslaved brethren. Such a message constituted a potential threat to the maintenance of control over enslaved workers and free Blacks were increasingly viewed as a dangerous problem. At the very least, African Americans had to be excluded from the militias, whose peace-keeping duties prominently featured the suppression of slave insurrections.

Chesapeake congressmen did see the necessity for federal action in the matter of interstate slave flight. The Constitution required states to cooperate with each other in restoring fugitive slaves, but did not mandate congressional attention. Stung by the flight of escapees to Pennsylvania, and by the perceived unwillingness of that state's authorities to cooperate fully in the rendition of fugitives, representatives of Maryland and Virginia took the lead in securing passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

On February 12, 1793, Congress passed the first federal law which made it a crime to harbor an escaped slave or to interfere with the slave's capture or arrest.

The Fugitive Slave Clause in the Constitution, strengthened provisions for apprehending, securing, and transmitting a fugitive to the state or territory making a claim. It further provided that anyone rescuing or setting free a fugitive who had been recaptured would, on conviction, be fined an amount not exceeding 500 dollars and imprisoned for not longer than one year.[31]

As early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, individual dissatisfaction with the law of 1793 began to take the form of systematic assistance rendered to freedom seekers escaping from the South to Canada or New England. To compensate for the strong opposition to the law in the northern states, personal liberty laws were passed to hamper officials in the execution of the law. The Supreme Court of the United States in the case of *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* in 1842 decided that state authorities could not be forced to act in fugitive slave cases. National authorities, however, were mandated to carry out the national law, which was followed by legislation in Massachusetts (1843), Vermont (1843), Pennsylvania (1847), and Rhode Island (1848), forbidding state officials to help enforce the law and refusing the use of state jails for fugitive slaves.

Maryland residents in particular had long been disgruntled with their neighbors across the Mason-Dixon line. In 1798, only five years after enactment of the first federal fugitive slave law, the state legislature complained in a resolution about the "great loss and inconvenience" that arose from slaves "absconding...into Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New-Jersey," where they were "concealed and protected by the citizens thereof."[32] A few years later Eastern Shore Congressman Joseph Nicholson demanded a special committee to look into the "harbouring" of slaves, buttressing his case with constituent letters from Chestertown that claimed that neighboring states put "every possible obstruction in way of recovery...warrants for a breach of the peace [have been] taken out against the

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[31] David , "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793."

[32] Laws of Maryland, 1798, Resolution no. 43.

masters, and they have been obliged to give up their property to redeem themselves from jails." One writer estimated that 60 slaves had "made off" in the past month from his part of Kent County.[33]

In 1802, seeking to aid the enslaver, the Maryland state legislature required sheriffs who had custody of a runaway to place advertisements with detailed descriptions in newspapers published in Washington, DC, and Baltimore and Easton, Maryland, within 15 days of capturing the escapee. As the enslaved continued their relentless quest for freedom, the assembly found it necessary to enact increasingly stronger penalties. Legislation passed in 1819 set a maximum term of six years in the penitentiary in Baltimore for any free person White or Black, who "enticed, persuaded, or assisted," or knowingly harbored, any runaway slave.[34]

But the numbers of escapees did not decline. The Maryland house of delegates fired off five more resolutions castigating Pennsylvania residents' aid to runaways between 1816 and 1822, and then fell silent after Pennsylvania passed a personal liberty law in 1826 that gave people claimed as fugitives access to legal due process, a right not granted by the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. Maryland residents viewed the personal liberty law as an inappropriate assertion of state's rights and a boldfaced denial of constitutional and congressional authority respecting fugitives. Pennsylvania residents saw the issue as one of providing protection to free people of color against kidnappers; they enacted their law in the wake of an upsurge in violent seizures of free Blacks in 1825.[35]

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[33] "Mr. Nicholson's Motion, referred to a committee in the House of Reps, on January 22, 1801," pamphlet (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society).

[34] For a general account of antislavery in the Upper South see Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1974), 79-107. For Virginia, see Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800-1802* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1993). Quotation is from David Meade, c. 1799, from Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion*, 15; Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 34, 731-733; Vol 46, 618-621; Vol 50, 284-285; Vol 559, 50-51, Vol 637, 92, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[35] Laws of Maryland, 1816, Resolution no. 68; 1817, Resolution no. 43; 1820, Resolution no. 28; 1821, Resolution no. 53; 1822, Resolution no. 58; Julie Winch, "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 111 (1987) 1-25; Paul Finkelman, "Prigg

Doubts about the constitutionality of Pennsylvania's law produced a test case in 1842 surrounding the actions of Edward Prigg. This Maryland resident forcibly removed Margaret Morgan, a Black woman who claimed to be legally free, from her home in York, Pennsylvania, and taken her back to Maryland. The United States Supreme Court upheld Prigg's behavior and overturned his conviction for kidnapping and assault by a Pennsylvania court. Under the Fugitive Slave Clause of the Constitution, slaveholders could act on their own initiative in recapturing runaways and need not rely on state officials, according to Justice Joseph Story's opinion. The Court also struck down Pennsylvania's Personal Liberty Law of 1826 as improperly impeding citizens from reclaiming their slave property. Discouraged by the consequences of the decision, Maryland-born Black abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward was determined to move to Kingston in Upper Canada.[36]

Although the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 is most often cited, it must noted that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was the second in a trilogy of federal fugitive slave laws. In addition, an imaginary line was drawn at 36 degrees, 30 minutes north latitude, and any portions of the Louisiana Territory lying north of the compromise line would be free; however, the act provided that fugitive slaves "escaping into any... state or territory of the United States...may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labour or service"—furthermore "slavery and involuntary servitude ... in the punishment of crimes" was not prohibited even in the free territories.[37]

Further acknowledging the difficulty of reclaiming escapees, Maryland began regulating escapes by sea. Perhaps giving a glimpse of the diasporic nature of resistance to slavery, the legislature passed in 1824 "An act to prohibit the

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v. Pennsylvania and Northern State Courts: Anti-Slavery Use of a Pro-Slavery Decision," *Civil War History* 25 (1979): 5-35.

[36] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labors in the United States, Canada & England* (London: John Snow, 1855; reprint ed. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., Inc., 1970).

[37] Historical Document, "The Missouri Compromise," *Africans in America*, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h511.html.

transportation of absconding slaves to Hayti, or elsewhere." Masters of sailing vessels had to receive a certificate of freedom authenticated by a county court official plus a second certificate from the clerk of the county court with jurisdiction over the port of clearance. An owner who believed that a vessel had transported "any Negro or mulatto" out of the state without complying with the statute could institute a civil suit. In 1838, the legislature imposed similar requirements on railroads and steamboats—two growing segments of the intra- and interstate commerce.[38]

Maryland again found it necessary to attempt to strengthen its own legislation. In 1828, the state passed a supplementary act that added a sentence of 39 lashes for any enslaved person found guilty of assisting escapees. Having learned from an ineffectual 1806 statute that offered payment of six dollars to anyone who captured an escapee, the Assembly "from experience...ascertained the sum is insufficient to give that impetus to the apprehension." As a result, the Assembly increased the payment to 30 dollars.[39]

By 1829, slave conspiracies had been plotted in several states of the Union, and excited the serious attention of most southern states. The rise of militant abolitionism in the United States can be traced to three distinct events occurring between 1829 and 1832: publication of David Walker's 1829, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, publication of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, and Nat Turner's insurrection.[40] Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion sent shock waves across the growing nation. Counterbalancing the rise of militant abolitionism between 1829 and 1832, the Maryland legislature passed an extensive statute in 1831 aimed specifically at controlling the free Black population but made no specific reference to runaways. Perhaps Walker's widely

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[38] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 629, 69, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[39] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 210, 130-131, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[40] Bruce Rosen "Abolition and Colonization: The Years of Conflict, 1829-1834," in Alexa Benson Henderson and Janice Sumler-Edmond, eds. *Freedom's Odyssey: African American History Essays from Phylon* (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University Press, 1999), 109-126.

circulated inflammatory *Appeal,* which called for slaves to rise up against their masters, and the growing antislavery literature being circulated led to the legislature passing a supplementary act making it illegal to circulate, make, print, or engrave any material of an inflammatory character that might excite discontent or provoke insurrection among the state's African-American population.[41]

Although earlier legislation had made it legal to kill escapees, by 1839 the situation grew increasingly extreme. "An act to provide for the recapture of fugitive Slaves" now made escape from slavery a felony. The governor was required to demand the return of any escapee from Washington, DC, or any state to which he or she had fled. Sheriffs of the county or city from which the escapee had fled were directed to sell the individual to the highest bidder who was legally bound to remove the escapee from the state.[42]

Less formal measures were also adopted in an attempt to thwart freedom-seekers' escapes. In 1848, slaveholders from Maryland met to adopt measures to thwart runaway slaves. It was believed that more slaves escaped to the North through Maryland than through any other state. For example, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that "in Cecil County, slaves are running away in droves." Moved by a "singular spirit" more than eighty escapees fled in a single group from Charles County. Despite its efforts, Maryland had to enact even more severe penalties against free men and women of color as well as freedom seekers. Rather than a maximum of six years imprisonment, in 1849 the penalty for attempted escape grew to a minimum of six years, and not to exceed 15; the sanctioned number of lashes was also increased to 40, but ultimately the number to be administered was at the discretion of the court.[43]

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[41] Archives of Maryland Online Vol 14, 556-557, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[42] Christian, *Black Saga*, 140; Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 613, 373-374, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House.

[43] Archives of Maryland Online, Vol 613, 373-374, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House; Christian, *Black Saga*, 140.

Apparent Northern support for the nascent Underground Railroad and slave rescuers fed into an increasingly prevalent Southern view that Northern society, despite the disclaimers of many politicians and newspaper editors, harbored aggressive intentions against the South and slavery. In this atmosphere, Northern acknowledgments of slavery's constitutionally protected status failed to assuage Southern doubts. Southerners demanded tangible proofs of Northern willingness to sustain slavery. For congressmen from Maryland and Virginia, one important test lay in securing laws that would compel the cooperation of Northern states and municipal authorities in the return of runaways.[44] As had happened with the admission of Missouri and Maine into the Union, revealing just how deeply the actions of self-emancipators influenced the very formation of the country, slaveholders decided that stricter federal legislation was called for, and demanded a new Fugitive Slave Act as part of the negotiations surrounding the admission of California into the Union as a free state in 1850.

Leading the charge for a new law were the border senators Thomas Pratt of Maryland and James Mason of Virginia. They urged the creation of a network of federal commissioners empowered to assess slaveholders' claims to runaways, under rules that virtually guaranteed the rendition of the suspected fugitive. Claimants could introduce evidence to demonstrate ownership, but Blacks would have no access to the writ of habeas corpus to challenge their being held captive and no opportunity to cross-examine witnesses or produce testimony on their own behalf. Cases would be decided not by juries, but by a commissioner acting alone. The most gallingly aspect of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was that federal marshals would have the power to deputize citizens as posse members to recover runaways, with fines of up to 1,000 dollars for Northerners who refused to cooperate.

By the time the infamous Fugitive Slave Law was passed as part of the Compromise of 1850, the country had been unsuccessfully struggling to control,

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[44] William Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, especially 93-95, 502-507.

if not vanquish, freedom-seeking behavior for longer than two centuries. In recognition of the ineffectiveness of the law of 1793 and 1820 and a host of state laws, the last in the series of fugitive slave laws sought to strengthen and build upon existing law. The 1850 Law provided federal jurisdiction over runaway slaves, the prompt return of slaves to slave owners, and denied fugitive slaves trial by jury and the right to testify on their own behalf. Any White person who attempted to help a slave escape became subject to a fine and/or imprisonment. In addition, the federal commissioner who awarded an escaped slave to his owner received a fee of 10 dollars; if the commissioner did not return the slave, he received five dollars. As a law weighted completely in favor of the enslaver, it required "citizens and federal officers to become diligent slave catchers" although resistance was widespread.[45]

In the Act of 1793, Article IV of the United States Constitution, Section 2, Clause 3, Article VI of the Ordinance for the Northwest Territory, and the Fugitive Slave Act in the Compromise of 1850, all of which address the return of fugitives, the term slave is never used.[46] The Acts of 1793 and 1850 have been described as the most flagrant unconstitutional acts passed by Congress and enforced by the United States' court system.[47] Black abolitionist William Wells Brown observed that the law "was justly condemned by good men of all countries, as the most atrocious enactment ever passed by any legislative body. The four hundred thousand free colored residents in the non-slave-holding states were liable at any time to be seized under this law and carried into servitude."[48] Brown notes, "intense excitement was created in every section of the

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[45] Christian, *Black Saga,* 149.

[46] Steve Mount, "The Fugitive Slave Act" in "Constitutional Topic: Martial Law." *USConstitution.net.* Nov 30, 2001. http://www.usconstitution.net/consttop_mlaw.html.

[47] Christian, *Black Saga,* 72.

[48] William Wells Brown *The Rising Son; or, The Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race* (Boston: A.G. Brown & Co., 1874; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 331-332.

free states where any considerable number of colored persons resided."[49] Thousands of African Americans hurriedly left homes and jobs for refuge in Canada or at least in Northern locales distant from the Mason-Dixon line or the Ohio River, where capture and enslavement were easiest. Columbia, Pennsylvania, less than one day's walk from Maryland, lost half of its Black population in the 1850s, much of it between 1850 and 1851.

By 1854, Douglass was publicly advocating violence to prevent enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, insisting that federal marshals should be considered as kidnappers who had "forfeited their right to live."[50] Such increasing militancy of both free and enslaved African Americans within the Chesapeake foreshadowed events to come. If William Parker and other Blacks who escaped from slavery in the Chesapeake did not cause the Civil War, reactions to their resistance surely diminished prospects for peaceful resolution of intersectional disputes, and helped prod slaveholders toward secession. Each legislative blow had been met with an equally forceful counteraction by freedom seekers as the government struggled to maintain both the Union and an enslaved workforce in its grasp. It was the slaveholder's rebellion that finally loosened the vise grip of slavery. Thousands escaped slavery each day during the Civil War. On March 13, 1862, the federal government forbade the return of fugitive slaves by all Union army officers thereby annulling the fugitive slave laws. On June 28, 1864, Congress finally passed legislation repealing the fugitive slave laws passed by the United States' Congress in 1793, 1820, and 1850. More than two centuries of legislation were ineffective against the determined African American quest for freedom.

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[49] Brown, *Rising Son*, 332.

[50] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 257.

CHAPTER THREE

REVOLTS AND INSURRECTIONS

No revolts or insurrections in Maryland are identified by their leaders or instigators, as was the case for Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner; nor was the state named for conspiracies, such as the New York revolts of 1712 and 1742. The majority of the amorphous, leaderless uprisings in Maryland were not well-documented. In addition, they were difficult to reconstruct and therefore poorly understood. Herbert Aptheker, in his valuable book, *Negro Slave Revolts*, was not overstating the case when he observed, "that discontent and rebelliousness were not only exceedingly common, but indeed, characteristic of American Negro slaves."[51] Although he questioned Aptheker's methodology, Kenneth Stampp nevertheless argued above all, *Negro Slave Revolts*, "shows how persistent the *fear* of rebellion was among white southerners and how frequently panics drove them to near hysteria."[52] As Aptheker observes, revolts form one manifestation of the discontent of the enslaved workers, and revolt was merely one method by which the slaves hoped to obtain their liberty. Among the other methods, "flight was one of the most important. Self purchase, manumission, enlistment and faithful service in the armed forces of the nation were other methods whereby [Blacks] at times gained their freedom, and lastly, agitation and political movement against slavery." Maryland residents, Henry Highland Garnet, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass were among the agitators.[53]

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[51]Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 374.

[52] Kenneth Stampp, "Rebels and Sambos," in *American Negro Slavery: A Modern Reader*, eds. Allen Weinstein, Frank Otto Gatell, and David Saroshon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 229.

Across many of the slave states, widespread fear of insurrection existed even during this early period before the American Revolution, and the fear continued until the Civil War ended. According to Aptheker, there were at least 18 revolts in Maryland which began in the 1680s, and continued through 1688, 1705, 1738, 1739, 1805, 1814, 1817, and 1830, and occurred throughout the United States in 1831, 1835, 1840, 1845, 1855, and 1856; the only revolt recorded in 1857 occurred in Maryland, with widespread revolts occurring in 1860 and 1861.[54] As Harry Wish correctly observes, "The genealogy of revolt extends much further back than the organized efforts of anti-slavery advocates."[55] These revolts are an important component of the Underground Railroad Movement.

In 1739, at least 200 insurgent conspirators led a systematic revolt in Prince George's County. This revolt was a prototype of the conspiracies of Prosser and Vesey aimed at overthrowing the slave system itself and establishing a "Negro" state. According to Aptheker, careful planning and organization with a considerable period of preparation marked this type of revolt. The aim of establishing the "Negro" state revealed careful planning and a calculation of the numbers of reliable and trusted insurgents.[56]

Conspiracies were constantly rumored, uncovered, betrayed, and thwarted. In 1740, Maryland courts received depositions from several African Americans in Prince George's County "relating to a most wicked and dangerous Conspiracy having been formed by them to destroy his Majesty's Subjects within the Province, and to possess themselves of the whole Country." In 1753, the state again had to

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[53] Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts*, 15-16.

[54] Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts*, 71-72.

[55] Harry Wish, "American Slave Insurrections Before 1861." *Journal of Negro* History XXII (1937): 229-320; reprinted in *Black Protest: History, Documents, and Analyses 1619 to the Present*, Joanne Grant, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 40-41.

[56] Marion D. De B. Kilson, "Towards Freedom: An Analysis of Slave Revolts in the United States," in Alexa Benson Henderson and Janice Sumler-Edmond, eds. *Freedom's Odyssey: African American History Essays from Phylon* (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University Press, 1999), 63-76.

cope with "a conspiracy among Blacks to kill whites." As Vincent Harding notes, this fight was for Black possession of "the whole Country."[57]

Blacks closely followed the outbreak of the French and Indian War, hoping that the "French will give them their freedom." Frederick County, Maryland, reported insurrectionary movements among slaves after French soldiers and their Ohio Valley Indian allies routed General Edward Braddock in 1755. These stirrings for liberty, occurring 20 years before the American Revolution, suggest that Black people had deep seated desires for freedom derived independently of the political conflicts of the 1770s. [58]

On the eve of the American Revolution in late April 1775, a delegation of Maryland slaveholders visited Royal Governor Sir Robert Eden and pressured him into issuing arms and ammunition to guard against rumored insurrections and stop any slave uprisings. Reluctantly acquiescing, the Governor feared their reactions "were only going to accelerate the evil they dreaded from their servants and slaves." Eden supplied 400 stands of arms to four counties. By August, a Maryland minister complained that "our Negroes" have been holding nightly meetings with mariners and others "all for the glorious purpose of enticing them to cut their masters' throats while they are asleep." Later that fall, an alarmed Dorchester County Committee of Inspection reported, "The insolence of the Negroes in this county is come to such a height, that we are under a necessity of disarming them which we affected on Saturday last. We took about eighty guns, some bayonets, swords, etc."[59]

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[57] Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 285-307, 318-326 cited in Harding, *There is a River*, 35-36.; Mark J. Stegmeier, "Maryland's Fear of Insurrection at the Time of Braddock's Defeat," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71 (1976):467-484; quotations, 468, 483 cited in Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, viii.

[58] Philip Schwarz, *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 262, 323; Parramore, Southampton County 175-179; Stegmeier, "Maryland Fear of Insurrection," 467-483.

[59] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 21; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1961), 14; Peter H. Wood, "The Dream Deferred": Black Freedom Struggles on the Eve of White Independence" in *In Resistance: Studies*

Renewed fears of slave insurrections also shaped the environment. The diasporic nature of the fear of insurrection crystallized around the revolution in Santo Domingue. Beginning in 1791, this successful slave rebellion against the French, which became universally known as the Haitian revolution, sent shock waves around all of the slave societies in the Atlantic world. Fears heightened with the discovery of Gabriel's rebellion in 1800 in Richmond. "Much of the fear was in reaction to revolts in the West Indies." There were countless reports of White fear, especially in Southern areas, of the actual export of revolution from Haiti.

By 1791 the insurrection began showing its influence in Maryland. Blacks from the South spoke about scenes of San Domingue long after the rebellion was over. The influence of these refugees was still active as late as 1831 in the lives and memories of the people of Baltimore. The revolutionary philosophy of the eighteenth century, coupled with the influence of the Haitian revolution, were formidably felt in the United States well into the first quarter of the nineteenth century, so much so that all subsequent insurrections, even as late as 1831 were traced directly or indirectly to those emboldening forces.[60]

"During the War of 1812, there were not many cases of open rebellion among the slaves; nevertheless, many Negros endeavored to obtain their freedom by joining the American Army or by going over to the British." But again in 1816, one year after the end of the war, there were simultaneous outbreaks in Virginia and South Carolina.[61] "Uprising and revolts varied significantly in degree of planning, size of endeavor, and number of persons involved...Slave outbreaks were frequent around Baltimore...."[62] On April 17, 1817, "as many as two hundred slaves attacked whites with sticks in St. Mary's County Maryland. Police moved

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in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History, ed. Gary Y. Okihiro (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 166-187.

[60] Joseph Cephas Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States 1800-1865* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc, 2004), 45.

[61] *The Virginia Herald*, August 23, 1816, cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 73-74.

[62] Christian, *Black Saga*, 82.

in to calm the crowds. Abolitionists and free Blacks blamed the slaves' unrest on plans by the American Colonization Society to exile slaves to Africa."[63]

The rise of militant abolitionism in the United States can be traced to three distinct events occurring between 1829 and 1832: publication of David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*; publication of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, and Turner's insurrection.[64] The mood throughout the slaveholding states in 1831, the year of Turner's rebellion in Southampton, Virginia, was one of unusual uneasiness, "consequent upon the apprehended uprisings of the Negroes." In early October, "there was an insurrection among slaves on the Eastern Shore in Maryland where a Dr. Bain and his family were murdered, and an attack made on Seaford.[65]

News of the Turner rebellion in Southside, Virginia, produced a three-beat reaction. Fear of insurrection appeared briefly, in the form of rumors of a rising by Baltimore Blacks, but soon subsided.[66] Then, antislavery advocates, perhaps joined by those anxious about revolt, petitioned the legislature for enactment of a gradual emancipation plan. Finally, legislators redirected these sentiments into assaults on the state's free Blacks, fashioning statutes that encouraged publicly funded colonization as well as involuntary deportation of African Americans.

Later in the year, Maryland, following the lead of Louisiana and other slaveholding states, "asked the War Department to send military force to allay the apprehensions and fears" of the White population.[67] After Turner's rebellion, laws with increasing severity of punishment were passed. A free Black coming

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[63] Christian, *Black Saga*, 88.

[64] Bruce Rosen, "Abolition and Colonization: The Years of Conflict, 1829-1834," in Alexa Benson Henderson and Janice Sumler-Edmond, eds. *Freedom's Odyssey: African American History Essays from Phylon* (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University Press, 1999), 109-126.

[65] *The Liberator*, October 6, 1831, cited in Joseph Cephas Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States 1800-1865* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc, 2004), 173-174.

[66] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 191-192.

[67] "Domestic Disturbances," *Senate Documents*, 57, Congress, Session 2, No. 209, 56 cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 171.

into the state, after 10 days, was fined 50 dollars per week for every week he remained, one half of the money going to his informant. Any person who harbored a free Black, thus coming into the state, after four days, was fined 20 dollars per day. Any free Black, a resident of the state on going out of the state, should he remain longer than 30 days, without permission, would be deemed a non-resident, and subject to all the conditions which applied to other free Blacks entering the state for the first time. But, in order to encourage colonization, any Black could come or go at will between Maryland and Liberia, West Africa.[68]

In a bold gesture in July 1845, as many as 75 enslaved men from three counties in Maryland armed themselves with loaded bludgeons, a pistol, scythe blades, swords, clubs, and butcher knives as they marched six abreast to freedom toward the Pennsylvania state line. As they left Charles County, their leader, Mark Caesar, a powerful man with sword in hand, along with Bill Wheeler were "prime movers and instigators in the late Negro insurrection."[69] Traveling in triumph, gathering more enslaved men from neighboring St. Mary's County and Prince George's County as they went, the leader demanded they fight back. The *Maryland Journal* reported the men "were seen within two miles" of Rockville, Maryland, on Frederick Road. Openly, they made their way Northward "in great haste" rather than in stealth. The insurrectionists had to be fired on before they would surrender. They were finally surrounded by a group of Whites called the Montgomery Volunteers near Rockville, 50 miles short of the Pennsylvania state line. The bloody encounter left many of the rebels dead; 31 were recaptured, although several did manage to escape, some got as far as Westminister, Carroll County, on the Pennsylvania border. The men were seized and jailed under the

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[68] George F. Bragg, "Men of Maryland," 38. Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:X26OtD1t4TQJ:docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bragg/bragg.xml+Dr.+Martin+R.+Delaney+gives+Coker+the+credit+for+originating+the+plan+followed+later+by+Garrison+in+the+Abolition+Movement.&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us.

[69] "Port Tobacco Courthouse," NPS, NURNF.

presumption that they had escaped slavery. Most were sold out of state by their enslavers.

News of the uprising frightened White Maryland residents in Charles, St. Mary's, and Prince George's Counties.[70] The *Maryland Journal* observed, "This is the most daring movement which has ever come under our observation." Never before had an armed group of enslaved men taken a "public road in open day, within 2 miles of a County town, and in a thickly settled neighborhood." As a result, Charles County sought "to confine the slaves within proper limits, and to keep them free from those influences which poison their minds and tend to render them dissatisfied with their condition."[71]

Caesar was tried and acquitted of charges of insurrection only to be retried as a free man and accused of "abetting slaves in making their escape from their masters." He was found guilty and sentenced to 40 years in the penitentiary where he died of consumption.[72] Wheeler proved to be more elusive, but was eventually brought to trial. He was sentenced to death by hanging but a recently passed law meant that he was imprisoned for life instead. After four months in the county jail, Wheeler escaped and a reward of 100 dollars was offered for his arrest.[73]

Ten years later, general excitement prevailed over alleged uprisings. At the time, various citizens asked that resolutions be adopted requiring slaveholders keep their servants at home. By 1855 the co-mingling of fear and reality again led

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[70] "Charles County Court," *Port Tobacco Times*, Aug 28, 1845; "Yesterday Morning Early," *Maryland Journal* July 9, 1845; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*; "Port Tobacco Courthouse," NPS, NURNF; Christian, *Black Saga*, 136.

[71] "Yesterday Morning Early," *Maryland Journal* July 9, 1845, NPS, NURNF.

[72] "Charles County Court," *Port Tobacco Times*, Nov 6, 1845, "Port Tobacco Courthouse," NPS, NURNF.

[73] "Port Tobacco Courthouse," NPS, NURNF.

to rumors of slave insurrections in Dorchester, Talbot, and Prince George's Counties, although they did not materialize.[74]

Although there were comparatively fewer insurrections during the latter half of the 1840s, enslaved Blacks had by no means given up the idea of obtaining their freedom. They simply changed tactics for awhile, and found other methods. "For, the desire for freedom was in the mind of nearly every enslaved person. Liberty was the subject of the dreams and visions of enslaved preachers...it was the object of their prayers. The plaintive songs of the enslaved race were full of thoughts of freedom."[75] General excitement prevailed over alleged uprisings during 1855. At the time, various citizens asked that resolutions be adopted requiring slaveholders keep their servants at home. By that time the comingling of fear and reality again led to rumors of slave insurrections in Dorchester, Talbot, and Prince George's Counties, although they did not materialize.[76]

Although the news of Turner brought panic, intensified reactions to John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry surpassed all previous reactions over insurrections in Maryland. For days, newspapers focused on little else other than the Harper's Ferry incident. Large patrols were called out everywhere. In response to general fears of a concerted uprising among the enslaved in Maryland and Virginia, a martial atmosphere prevailed.[77]

During the first year of the Civil War there were insurrections and frequent rumors of intended outbreaks in various sections of the Confederacy. However, the federal government was intent on proving to the South that it was a "white man's war" and that powerful politicians in Washington, DC, as well as the military field commanders would not tolerate any uprisings on the part of the

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[74] Brackett, *The Negro in Maryland*, 97 cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 188.

[75] Brown, *Rising Son.*

[76] Brackett, *The Negro in Maryland*, 97 cited in Joseph Cephas Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States 1800-1865* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc, 2004), 188.

[77] Ibid, 40-41 cited in Jeffrey R. Brackett, *The Negro in Maryland* (Baltimore 1889), 93-99, 202-203.

enslaved. A letter from General Benjamin Franklin Butler, written in 1861 to the executive of the state of Maryland while he was stationed in Annapolis, Maryland, acknowledged apprehension on the part of Whites of an insurrection of Blacks in that neighborhood. Butler expressed how anxious he was to convince all classes of persons that there would be no interference with the laws of the state.[78]

He further expressed his willingness to promptly and effectively suppress any insurrections against the state of Maryland. Thomas H. Hicks, Governor of the state at that time, reassured Butler that he had already instructed the sheriff of Anne Arundel county to act and that the citizens of the county were fully able to cope. About one month later, Maryland was again alarmed by the discovery of plots among the enslaved Black workers for a general uprising.[79] Later that year, General George McClellan found it necessary to instruct officers under his command in Baltimore to ensure that they suppressed all insurrection attempts by Blacks promptly and effectively. These unusual precautions against any possibility of an outbreak were clear indications that the enslaved population was seizing every opportunity to hasten their own liberation and redeem themselves from bondage whether these plots were realized or not.[80]

African Americans were never satisfied with their condition in slavery; they were "ever ready to attempt any possible means" to effect emancipation. When insurrections failed, Blacks resorted to flight and made their escape to the free states of the North and to Canada. While freedom seekers' frequent attempts at liberation often were not realized, they were not discouraged and at every favorable opportunity some were ready to try again. There was also sufficient success attending their efforts, in secretly forming conspiracies, to keep the South in constant dread of the presence of slaves and free Blacks. Looking back over

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[78] Charles Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States*, 96, cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 203.

[79] From *The Liberator*, May 31, 1861 cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 203.

[80] *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Series I, II, 662, cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 204.

the long history of slavery, Booker T. Washington observed that the South—during the whole period of slavery—lived in fear and constant expectancy of the great insurrection, which never came.[81]

> The Negro like all other men loved freedom, the spark could not be extinguished in his breast by severe laws and reigns of terror. When once a Negro had made up his mind to lead an uprising, he was fully aware of the fact that in case of defeat, it meant sure and sudden death. There were some who felt that if any man, would be free, he himself should strike the first blow. There were Blacks who were not afraid of death, if in dying they might be instrumental in hastening the day of deliverance.[82]

[81] Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, I, 178 as cited in Carroll, *Slave*, 213.

[82] Carroll, *Slave Insurrections*, 213.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLONIZATION AND EMIGRATION

The complex and intertwined subject of colonization and emigration defies straightforward analysis. For different reasons, and at different times, support for the movements waxed and waned within and between the races. Blacks and Whites saw colonization and emigration to Africa as both problem and solution.[83] Colonizationists offered Blacks deportation and expatriation where the emigrationists envisioned reclamation and self-governance. Simply stated, colonization involved influential White Americans, slaveholders, and Christians, who favored a mass transfer of free people of color from the United States to Africa. In contrast, emigrationists saw emigration as a solution to the racist policies of the United States combined with an opportunity for freedom and autonomy. As a form of controlled and voluntary flight on the part of African American emigrationists or disguised deportation on the part of colonizationists, both schemes advocated flight from America and fit into the broader Underground Railroad Movement.

The original name, the "American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color" explicitly identifies the organization's primary mission. Although not all were attracted to the idea for similar purposes, most slaveholders felt free Blacks, particularly the more educated and successful among them, were a threat to the system of slavery. Successful free people of color were an affront to the system as they refuted notions of Black inferiority which were used to build White supremacy and justify slavery.

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[83]Jane H. and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (New York: Atheneum, 1974); Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, The *Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Free Antebellum Communities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

White antislavery churchmen looked to gain what Dorothy Sterling calls a "double humanitarian benefit" in colonization. In their view, slaveholders would consider willingly manumitting their enslaved Black workers if they could be shipped out of the country. Conversely, American Black colonists could be trained as missionaries to Christianize Africa.[84] In this atmosphere Whites began to talk more openly about removing free Blacks. The idea had been present since the publication of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* in the 1780s. Black emigrationists also viewed Africa not only as a site of liberation and autonomy for the country's enslaved population but also as an opportunity to spread Christianity.

Paul Cuffee, a prosperous self-taught free Black merchant, became a dedicated colonizationist. Cuffee gave voice to his motivations, "I have for some years had it on my mind to make a voyage to Sierra Leone, feeling a real desire that the inhabitants of Africa might become an enlightened people, in the true light of Christianity. As I am of the African race I feel myself interested in them." He had been a seaman since he was 16 years old, eventually acquiring his own vessel. Acting on his beliefs, in the fall of 1810 Cuffee set sail on the first of two voyages to the British African colony of Sierra Leone, which had been organized by former slaves. Carrying tools, as well as bibles and Quaker religious writings, Cuffee travelled aboard his favorite ship, *The Traveller*. His favorable impression of the colony made him a strong supporter of African colonization for Blacks. In 1815, after the end of the War of 1812, he, at his own expense, transported nine families comprising 38 individuals on his second trip to the West African colony.[85] Since many public officials at the time believed the solution of "the Negro problem" was to ship all free Blacks to Africa, they were more than willing to cooperate with Cuffee who "seemed to be offering to do the job for them."[86]

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[84] Dorothy Sterling, ed., *Speak Out in Thunder Tones: Letters and Other Writings by Black Northerners, 1787-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 23.

[85] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1999), 97-98.

[86] Sterling, *Speak Out*, 16-17.

Major politicians, such as Speaker of the House, Henry Clay, General Andrew Jackson, and Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington among others, first met in December 1816 to form the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color, later known as the American Colonization Society.[87] These men turned to Cuffee for advice; by then he had already completed his two successful voyages to Sierra Leone. Cuffee voiced his approval of their plans, "I much approve of a vessel being sent, as thou has mentioned." In a letter Cuffee wrote two days later to wealthy emigrationist, Philadelphia sailmaker, and Black abolitionist James Forten, Cuffee described the actions of the Colonization Society as, "the concern that rests at the seat of government for the welfare of the people of color."[88]

In reality, however, White dismay over the presence of free Blacks combined with renewed fears of slave insurrection stoked by Black aid to the recent British invasion and involvement in the War of 1812 led to the founding of the Colonization Society. The society raised funds to encourage the voluntary emigration of free Blacks, as Vincent Harding described them, "those thorns in the side of slavery" from the United States to Sierra Leone and West Africa, as well as to other locations.[89] In Maryland, prime movers of the colonization campaign included attorney Francis Scott Key and former Congressman Robert Goodloe Harper. Harper pled the case for colonization in a lengthy public letter to Elias Caldwell, secretary of the national organization in 1817[90] although Jacob C. Greenough, an early antagonist of Colonization had been quite active in Maryland affairs as early as 1815.

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[87] Sterling, *Speak Out*, 66.

[88] A letter from Paul Cuffee to Samuel J. Mills, January 6, 1817; A letter from Paul Cuffee to James Forten, January 8, 1817 cited in Sterling, *Speak Out*, 23-24.

[89] Harding, *There is a River*, 66.

[90] See "A Letter from General Harper, of Maryland, to Elias B. Caldwell, Esquire, Secretary of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color, in the United States with Their Own Consent" (Baltimore, 1817). The letter is reprinted in Eric Robert Papenfuse, *The Evils of Necessity: Robert Goodloe Harper and the Moral Dilemma of Slavery* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997). Papenfuse provides a sensitive analysis of Harper's evolving views on slavery from the 1780s to his death in 1825.

Congressman Harper assumed that those weighing the merits of colonization would naturally "be first struck by its tendency to confer a benefit on ourselves, by ridding us of a population for the most part idle and useless, and too often vicious and mischievous."[91,92] In contrast to such sentiments stood Denmark Vesey. In 1800, Vesey won a 1,500-dollar lottery prize, with which he purchased his freedom and opened a carpentry shop.[93] Vesey became a wealthy, skilled, much respected free Black carpenter in Charleston where his insurrection would later come to epitomize the need for the deportation schemes of the Colonization Society. By 1817, he had amassed several thousand dollars in savings, probably making him one of the wealthiest African-American men in the city. On at least one occasion, Vesey, who embodied the type of person the society sought to eliminate, had been approached and offered a chance to return to Africa. Vesey, however, shared the sentiments of many free people of color who declared, "We will never separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population of this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering and of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied advantages for a season."[94]

On April 7, 1817, that same year as many as 200 enslaved Black workers attacked Whites with sticks in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Police moved in to calm the crowds. Abolitionists and free Blacks blamed the enslaveds' discontent on "plans by the American Colonization Society to exile slaves to Africa."[95] Although not all Blacks were opposed to colonization and emigration, highlighting the complexity of viewpoints over this issue among African Americans delineates the various arguments. African Methodist Episcopalian Bishop Richard Allen spoke

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[91] "Letter from General Harper," 6-7.

[92] "Letter from General Harper," 6-7.

[93] Denmark Vesey, AfricaWithin.com, http://www.africawithin.com/bios/denmark_vesey.htm.

[94] Harding, *There is a River*, 66.

[95] Christian, *Black Saga*, 88.

warmly in favor of colonization in Africa and initially approved of Colonization Society plans.[96] Maryland's Coker endorsed colonization in 1820 out of a desire to evangelize Africans, a need to leave White prejudice behind, and a drive to fashion a self-conscious identity as African. As had been the case with Cuffee five years earlier, Coker eventually decided to go to Liberia as a colonist and missionary in 1820. The palpable worsening of conditions for free people of color in Baltimore surely played its part. Coker remained in West Africa as a missionary and finally died in Sierra Leone in 1846. For him, the path of testimony against slavery led back to the land of his father's ancestors. But for most free people of color, colonization came to look more and more like White-imposed deportation—one that they were determined to resist.

Harper despaired equally of Whites accepting Blacks in society, or of Blacks meriting such acceptance.[97] Unyielding White rejection would retard whatever progress ex-slaves might make, providing fresh fuel for the fires of White prejudice. Speaking as a slaveholder, Harper sketched a gloomy picture of free Black vice and disorder provoking otherwise hard-working and loyal slaves into flight, theft, and resistance to masters. Untroubled by depicting free Blacks as unable to shed the bad habits of slavery and then labeling free persons of color as spreading those same behaviors among slaves, Harper insisted that free Blacks would be to blame if future slave misdeeds provoked masters "to a severity, which would not otherwise be thought necessary."[98] As the presence of Black workers, slave or free, also inspired contempt for hard work among "the class of free whites who ought to labour," and who instead, "saw labour as a badge of slavery," Harper concluded that free Blacks were "injurious to all."[99]

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[96] Sterling, *Speak Out*, 25.

[97] "Letter from General Harper," 8-9.

[98] "Letter from General Harper," 9-11.

[99] "Letter from General Harper," 8, 13-14.

Colonization would remedy all these ills. Free Blacks would escape White prejudice and slaves would be secured from corrupting influences and resulting harsher treatment by masters. More Whites would migrate into the slave states and all Whites would work harder. While their indeterminate status could disrupt American society, free Blacks colonized to Africa would flourish, removed from interracial struggle. Harper's views resonated with the political community of Maryland. In its 1817 to 1818 session, the legislature unanimously endorsed in principle the colonization of free Blacks to Africa. [100]

Throughout this time period, free Blacks were perceived as a considerable threat by enslavers. The problem was particularly acute in Baltimore, a city in the anomalous position of existing within a slave state while simultaneously containing the largest population of free people of color in the country before the Civil War. Free people of color stood up to mounting pressures for their colonization to Africa, pressures generated by resentment of Black autonomy and fear of slave insurrection displaced onto free African Americans. Colonizationists ultimately failed to persuade many Blacks in the Chesapeake to embark for Africa, due in no small measure to African Americans forestalling attempts to cajole or coerce relocation. The handful of Blacks who did embrace migration outside the United States, whether to West Africa, Haiti, or Canada, also sought to build independent communities on their own terms, not those of the Colonization Society.[101]

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[100] See George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York, 1971), 3-22; Gordon Finnie, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (1969): 324, for more embracing discussions of colonization.

[101] The standard institutional history of the American Colonization Society remains P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1961). For Black views and actions on colonization, see Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1975) and Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1988). For an excellent recent treatment focusing of free Blacks in the northern states, see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1997), 177-202.

By 1819, African Americans had grown deeply suspicious of colonization plans and of leaders who supported them. Blacks in Philadelphia viewed colonization as forced deportation of free Blacks in order to strengthen the grip of slavery. Soon after the visit of Reverend Findley, one of the original founders of the society, 3,000 Black men—almost the entire African-American male population of Philadelphia—crowded into Richard Allen's church proclaiming, "WE WON'T GO!" Forten, who had chaired the meeting, was forced to write to Cuffee,

> I must mention to you that the whole continent seems to be agitated concerning colonizing the people of color. Indeed, the people here were very much frightened at first. They were afraid that all the free people would be compelled to go, particularly in the Southern states. We had a large meeting of males at the Rev. R. Allen's church...Three thousand attended and there was not one soul that was in favor of going to Africa. They think that the slaveholders want to get rid of them so as to make their property more secure.[102]

For his part, Forten thought it prudent "to remain silent as the people here, both White and color, are decided against the measure." His opinion differed from the majority. He believed Blacks "will never become a people until they come out from amongst the White. But as the majority is decidedly against me, I am determined to remain silent....."[103] The death of Cuffee nine months later ended that particular dream of Black-led emigration, although Martin Delany, Theodore Holly, and in the twentieth century, Marcus Garvey would all follow in his footsteps.

Colonization enjoyed one more burst of activity when Benjamin Lundy relocated his newspaper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation,* to Baltimore. The first issue appeared on July 4, 1825; Lundy, a onetime tanner, would expound tirelessly on slavery and freedom until moving on again in late 1830. He promoted schools and craft training for free Blacks, acted as an agent for the colonization of freed people to Haiti, and touted plans for gradual emancipation via self-purchase. Combining relentless attacks on the kidnapping of free Blacks with ceaseless agitation against the domestic slave trade, Lundy held up to contempt both slave dealers and those who sold to them. Finally, he editorialized for Baltimore attorney

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[102] A Letter from James Forten to Paul Cuffee, January 25, 1817 cited in Sterling, *Speak Out*, 26.

[103] A Letter from James Forten to Paul Cuffee, January 25, 1817 cited in Sterling, *Speak Out*, 26.

Daniel Raymond's antislavery candidacies for the Maryland legislature in 1825 and 1826.[104] The *Genius* regularly exhorted against slaveholding as unchristian and immoral, and printed poetry evoking the sorrows of bondage. Lundy never wearied of portraying slavery as a blight on American republicanism and a consequent cause of mockery by Europeans.

By the early 1830s, Raymond and Lundy had both left Maryland, and colonization had fallen firmly under the sway of men who wanted to deport free Blacks to protect and preserve slavery. As a colonization agent in Maryland wearily noted, "the society has always had more room for emigrants than was filled in their vessels...." When agents went out to "collect" Blacks who had been persuaded to emigrate, they "invariably found that...the enemies of colonization...have filled the minds of those who proposed to emigrate, with the doctrines of abolitionists...that by leaving the United States, the colored people impair their chance of 'getting their rights.'"[105] In one dramatic incident, Black men boarded a ship about to embark from Baltimore harbor and persuaded half of the Africa-bound passengers to remain in America after all.

That they did so can be credited in no small measure to the words and deeds of Baltimore's leading anti-colonization figure, William S. Watkins.[106] Born free around 1800, and educated by Coker in the African school at Sharp Street, Watkins succeeded Coker as master of the African school upon the latter's departure for Liberia. Watkins not only conducted a day school, but also associated with Frederick Douglass in his journalistic and antislavery work.

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[104] See Merton Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Struggle for Negro Freedom* (Urbana, IL: U. of Illinois Press, 1966), 45-58, 85, 88-94, and 162.

[105] "Report of the Committee on Colored Population," Maryland House of Delegates, quotation from John H. Latrobe, President, Maryland Colonization Society (Annapolis, 1840).

[106] This account of Watkins draws on Graham, *Baltimore...Black Capital*, 93-127; Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 220-224; Bettye Gardner, "William Watkins: Antebellum Black Teacher and Anti-slavery Writer" *Negro History Bulletin* 39 (1976): 623-625; and "Opposition to Emigration: A Selected Letter of William Watkins (The Colored Baltimorean)," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982) 155-158.

When Lundy arrived in Baltimore in 1825, the two men struck up an acquaintance and Watkins began writing for the *Genius of Universal Emancipation.* Watkins's first piece was a printed speech celebrating Haitian independence, which he interpreted as proof of Black capacity for self-rule. Signing himself as *A Colored Baltimorean*, Watkins' often passionate denunciations of colonization won the commendation of David Walker in his famous *Appeal to Colored Citizens of the World* in 1829.[107]

Garrison first encountered Watkins while serving as Lundy's assistant editor in 1829 to 1830, and credited Watkins and another Black Baltimore resident, Jacob Greener, with opening his eyes to the iniquities of colonization and the desirability of free people of color to remain in America. It was Walker, however, who led the early assault on colonization.[108] Watkins was straightforward and uncompromising in his denunciation of the movement, "...the most inveterate, the most formidable, the deadliest enemy of the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the colored population of the United States, is that system of African colonization which ...is perpetuated...beneath the dignity of a magnanimous and Christian people...." Watkins wanted no part of a system that both expatriated Blacks and sought to make them a stranger in their own land.[109]

For Watkins, as later for Garrison, free Black departures strengthened the institution of slavery and contributed to the further degradation of those who stayed in the United States. Watkins called for Blacks to "die in Maryland under the pressure of unrighteous and cruel laws" rather than be "driven, like cattle...to

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[107] David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of America* (Hill and Wang, 1969), 4-5, quoted in Graham, *Baltimore, Black Capital*, 108.

[108] William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: or an impartial exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles & Purposes of the American Colonization Society* (Boston, 1832), 55-56; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 212. For letters from Watkins to Garrison, see C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (Chapel Hill: U. North Carolina Press, 1991), Vol 3, 92-102.

[109] William Watkins, "The Evils of Colonization," in *Autographs of Freedom Vol. II*, ed. Julia Griffiths (Auburn, NY: Alden, Beardsley & Co., 1854; Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), 198-200.

Liberia."[110] Refusing to capitulate to the notion that White prejudice made emigration the only hope for Black liberty, Watkins asked, "Why should we abandon our firesides and everything associated with the dear name of *home*...for the enjoyment of liberty...surrounded by circumstances which diminish its intrinsic value?" Blacks who supported colonization or who meekly acquiesced in White denigration of African Americans as criminal or insurrectionary also became targets for Watkins's tart pen. Critiquing an apologetic public letter from ministers of Black churches during the anti-abolition controversies of 1835, Watkins scornfully noted that, "It is time enough...to make...disclaimers...when we are charged with some crime other than that of our colour."[111]

The 1830 census counted more than 50,000 free Blacks, about one third of all African Americans in the state, four times the proportion of 1790. The rise in free Black numbers and proportion within the Black population alarmed Whites, but the fact that Maryland Whites outnumbered Blacks two to one depressed fears of Black insurrection. Fear of insurrection appeared briefly, in the form of rumors of a rising by Baltimore Blacks, but soon subsided.[112] Then, antislavery advocates, perhaps joined by those anxious about revolt, petitioned the legislature for enactment of a gradual emancipation plan. Finally, legislators redirected these sentiments into assaults on the state's free Blacks, fashioning statutes that encouraged publicly funded colonization as well as involuntary deportation of African Americans.

A special committee of the Maryland House of Delegates, chaired by Henry Brawner quickly brushed aside the abolitionist petitions and instead concentrated on the question of how to remove free Blacks. "It is not...a question of whether the coloured population of this state is injurious to her prosperity," Brawner's report intoned, "her situation...has long since forced this conviction upon the most careless observer...." The report extended by then customary comparisons of a

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[110] *The Liberator*, June 4, 1831.

[111] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, Nov 27, 1829; second quote from Gardner, "Opposition to Emigration," 155-158.

[112] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 191-192.

languishing Maryland and an economically vibrant Pennsylvania to intrastate examples, "the comparison within [Maryland's] limits, between counties largely infected with this evil, and those where it exists in a slight degree...bring us to the same result." [113]

The legislature accepted Brawner's package. Energetic promotion of colonization, restrictions on future manumissions, and new laws aimed at pushing existing free Blacks out of the state aimed to reverse longstanding growth in the number of free Blacks. The state appropriated 20,000 dollars per year for a 10-year period to fund removals of free Blacks or slaves emancipated on condition of sailing to Africa. The legislature also made it more difficult for free people of color to remain in Maryland, to enter the state from elsewhere, or to re-enter the state if they left to find seasonal employment. By the close of the 1830s, Maryland had also widened the scope of laws that re-enslaved free Blacks by condemning debtors, vagrants, and criminals to be sold into servitude. [114]

At the legislative session in 1831 to 1832, "Maryland passed a law providing that the governor and council appoint a board of managers consisting of three persons, who "shall be members of the Maryland Colonization Society, whose duty it shall be to remove from the State of Maryland, the people of color who are now free, and such as shall hereafter become so, to the colony of Liberia in Africa, or to some other place beyond the limits of the State." The state also forbade the introduction of "slaves either for residence, or sale; and prohibited the immigration of free Negroes into the State.[115]

In the 1840s, lean times briefly resuscitated public discussion of gradual emancipation. Joseph Snodgrass's, *Baltimore Saturday Visiter*, in addition to publishing the work of Samuel Janney, a Loudoun County, Virginia, Quaker and antislavery advocate, defended free people of color against stereotyping as an

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[113] "Report of the Committee on Grievances and Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates relative to the Colored Population of Maryland", Henry Brawner, Chair, (Annapolis, 1832).

[114] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 191-195.

[115] *Laws of Maryland*, 1831-1832, c. 281 as cited in Carroll, *Slave Insurrections*, 167.

improvident and criminal race. While it is difficult to measure the popularity of this periodical, Snodgrass attracted the attention of the Maryland House of Delegates, which considered denouncing the magazine as "incendiary" in 1846.[116]

A perhaps more typical emancipationist of the 1840s was John L. Carey, an essayist and unsuccessful candidate for the House of Delegates, who urged Maryland residents to combine emancipation and colonization of freed people.[117] Carey dwelt on themes familiar to residents of the Chesapeake since the 1790s, evoking pictures of blooming free labor areas and blighted slave districts, while viewing with alarm the dangers of civil strife inherent in the presence of free but legally unequal Blacks in a White-led society. For him, emancipation without colonization was a proven failure, as supposedly demonstrated by the depressed condition of free Blacks in Pennsylvania and points further north. Carey's one new contribution to this formula was an attempt to redirect antipathy to free Blacks against slavery. Inverting the usual proslavery claim that keeping Blacks in bondage was the only alternative to being swamped by freedpeople, Carey argued that "so long as slavery remains a prominent institution...[it] has the effect of protecting the class of free negroes...from the competition...of White labor." His perspective invoked shades of Raymond that ending slavery might also end the "curse" of a free Black population.[118]

The state of Maryland was finally persuaded to pledge to colonization as the state policy, and authorized an appropriation of monies to pay expenses for Black volunteers willing to go to Africa. Many manumissions were given with the expressed condition that, in a reasonable time, the person set free should leave Maryland for Africa. In 1843, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, in Charles County, Maryland, brought a number of slaves enslaved by him to Baltimore, and

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[116] See Stanley Harrold, *Abolitionists and the South: 1831-1861* (Lexington, KY: U. Press of Kentucky, 1995), 28-29, 41-42.

[117] John L. Carey, "Some Thoughts concerning Domestic Slavery in a Letter to ------" (Baltimore, 1838) and "Slavery in Maryland Briefly Considered" (Baltimore, 1845).

[118] Carey, "Slavery Briefly Considered," 37.

presented them for confirmation in St. James' First African Church. The late Bishop William Rollinson Whittingham administered the rite then immediately gave them their freedom on the condition that they leave the country for Africa at once, which was done.[119]

As emigration coexisted with colonization, the locations for emigration expanded; Liberia, Haiti, Jamaica, and South America all became potential sites for autonomous Black-led governments, "a new nation where [Blacks] would be sovereign."[120] Interest in emigration re-emerged in the late 1840s. Maryland's Henry Highland Garnet eventually chose to permanently emigrate to Jamaica. During the 1840s, however, the thought of emigration had been strictly taboo to Garnet. By January 1849, he was publicly embracing emigration as a legitimate avenue to wealth and power. He willingly accepted the work of the American Colonization Society insofar as it benefited Africa.

For many Black Maryland residents in the 1850s, emigration appeared to be the only real political choice left to free Blacks. Discussion of colonization before 1852 had been mostly a White concern, although there had been several Black colonization societies. In the end, however, few Maryland Blacks embraced colonization. The vast majority of free Blacks in Maryland and elsewhere refused to emigrate, despite the deteriorating racial climate prompted, in part, by the rise in the number of slave rebellions and runaways.[121]But countervailing pressures from other African Americans often outweighed efforts toward either colonization

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[119] Bragg, *Men of Maryland*, 13.

[120] Howard H. Bell, "The Negro Emigration Movement, 1849-1854: A Phase of Negro Nationalism." *The Phylon Quarterly* 20 (1959):132-142.

[121] Sharon Harley, "African Americans," Maryland History and Culture Bibliography, Maryland Humanities Council,http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:FJpGDsdWOqAJ:www.mdhc.org/resources/search_essays.htm%3Fessay1%3D28%26essay2%3Dhist%26essay3%3D2%26search3.x%3D12%26search3.y%3D3+maryland+Blacks+and+colonization&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=1.

or emigration; on the whole, "the overwhelming majority of free Negroes in Maryland...remained stridently opposed to relocation efforts." [122]

As a result of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, Samuel Ringgold Ward, another of Maryland's most famous self-emancipated Black residents, emigrated to Canada. In the end, he moved on to Jamaica where he died shortly before the beginning of the American Civil War.[123] As late as 1851, Delany continued his opposition to emigration, still clinging to the belief that African Americans should not be lured away to foreign lands beyond the bounds of the United States, including Canada. By spring 1852, however, Delany, too, came forward with a fully developed plan for a Black empire in the Caribbean. Eventually, Delany would become one the nation's leading Black nationalists.[124]

By 1852, Maryland Blacks were examining the problem of emigration at the state convention in Baltimore. Some Black Baltimore residents thought the outcome of the convention had been rigged. Some residents felt the convention delegates had been selected in such a way that the decisions reached would not reflect the opinion of the colored people generally but only that of a group already looking to Africa. The pressure on the convention became so great that several representatives chose not to return on the second day and by the third, the president had to be replaced.

Given the increasing restrictions on the mobility and employment opportunities available to free Blacks since the early nineteenth century, the convention addressed the possibility of emigration to Liberia. In the end, the convention did take a stand for emigration to Liberia. Between 1849 and 1853 this phase of the emigration movement reached its apex. During this period, Blacks

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[122] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 220.

[123] Bell, "The Negro Emigration Movement, 1849-1854."

[124] *The North Star*, March 2, 1849 cited in Bell "The Negro Emigration Movement," 134; Martin Delany, "The Condition, Elevation, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered" in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 69-88.

were motivated by a strong desire to seek freedom that rid them of second-class citizenship. These emigrationists exhibited Black nationalism and refused to accept plans presented by Whites for emigration or colonization of Blacks. They did, however, encourage emigration and establishment of new homes and governments under the leadership and control of Blacks.[125]

Still facing mounting opposition in 1854 from those who chose to stay and fight for their rights at home, the emigrationists called for a national convention to meet in Cleveland, OH. Anyone opposed to emigrating from the United States was not invited. Supporters of the American Colonization Society were also warned that they would not be welcomed. The convention organizers, postponing emigration plans to distant places, were only interested in developing plans for emigrating to Canada, the West Indies, or Central America—"areas close enough to encourage run-away slaves to seek safety in their midst."[126] From this vantage point, later emigrationists directly addressed their concerns for freedom seekers as they expanded the diasporic, international dimensions to the Underground Railroad Movement.

White supporters of colonization repeatedly calculated the comparative benefits of slave labor and free labor societies, and urged that slavery proved disadvantageous for most Whites. The focus on benefiting Whites, as expressed by all the major colonizationists of the Chesapeake, was precisely what appealed to its adherents, and correspondingly, what made it threatening to slaveholders of large groups. Slaveholding politicians did not welcome such discussions, clearly fearing that many voters might reach the same conclusions. Accordingly, they looked for ways to stifle all forms of opposition, both before and after the rise of immediatist abolitionism in the Northern states.

As William Freehling noted, colonization did not seem like a wildly impractical scheme to nineteenth-century Americans. In the 1830s, the United

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[125] *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*, July 27, 28, 29, 1852 cited in Bell, "The Negro Emigration Movement, 1849-1854," 137.

[126] Bell, "The Negro Emigration Movement, 1849-1854," 140.

States forcibly removed 30,000 to 50,000 Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws from Southern states to the Indian Territory—today's Oklahoma. Perhaps colonization of Blacks, to Africa, Haiti, or somewhere in Central America would be equally achievable.[127] Nonslaveholding Whites and even some slaveholders might rally to its cause. Colonization, therefore, had to be sternly opposed by defenders of slavery.

In Maryland, some slaveholders endorsed colonization to defuse outright emancipationist sentiment from the largely free labor counties of the state's northern tier. Of course, colonization cannot be comprehended solely in terms of debates among Whites about the fate of Blacks. One key reason for colonization's apparent impracticality was resolute and organized Black opposition to its program of deportation. For Blacks in the Chesapeake, resistance to slavery in the years prior to 1815 had been characterized chiefly by efforts at self-liberation via manumission, flight, or rebellion. While these challenges to slavery continued in the decades after 1815, they were augmented by the creation of self-sustaining communities of free people of color.

Among their more notable feats were endurance and even growth, in spite of colonizationist pressures. For Garnet, the thrust of the freedom movement had to come out of the Americas. He took an optimistic view of the prospects for Black America in this hemisphere. Understanding both the contradictions and the realities of emigration, Garnet, nevertheless, envisioned an upcoming time when people of color would play a major role in determining the future within and beyond the United States. For African Americans, the entire emigration question had its roots in the search for autonomy and self-governance within their continual quest for freedom. Emigration and colonization, therefore, were important components of the Underground Railroad Movement.

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[127] See William Freehling, *The Reintegration of American History*, 138-157.

Chapter Five

Seeking Freedom In and Out of Maryland

This Chapter reviews stories and narratives of escapes that were outside the historical Underground Railroad because they occurred earlier or they were unassisted escapes not included in the classic Underground Railroad genre. The details of the stories, rather than glorified in the annals of the Underground Railroad, were recorded in the penitentiary or probate records of the state, in narratives and petitions. The stories also reveal one of the most overlooked aspects of the Underground Railroad Movement—the assistance of Blacks, both free and enslaved, in escape efforts. The historical record is skewed toward Quakers and other diarists with a strong writing tradition to the diminishment of the efforts of most African-American involvement. In addition to finding narratives in easily accessible forms—books, novels, diaries—many of the stories of African American connections must be excavated from various records and sources and then pieced together.

Long before the 1830s, as John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger discuss, flight from slavery was the single most common act of slave resistance, aside from day-to-day resistance (e.g., withholding work, disobeying orders, or feigning illness). The number of ultimately successful escapees was not large enough to threaten the existence of slavery, or even significantly reduce the enslaved population. But the frequency of running away, with the associated costs of lost production and expenses of recapture, could influence slaveholders' assessments of profit potential derived from using enslaved workers. Such costs can be analyzed as another indicator of the magnitude of the problem plaguing enslavers and the extent of Black resistance to slavery. Where the costs of using such laborers fell only a small margin below those of waged labor, as with any non-tobacco growing

county in Maryland, escapees could change the calculations and shake enslavers' commitment to the institution.

Not all challenges to enslavement took the form of confrontation with enslavers. The decades between 1730 and 1770 witnessed the formation of Black families and communities within the world of the free Black community, as well as plantation slavery. These institutions bespoke of the enslaveds' determination to carve out cultural spaces that could be both islands of refuge from the slaveholders' world and strong points from which to venture into that world in search of freedom.[128]

The search for and concern with loved ones figured heavily in much of the enslaveds' quest for freedom. Several of the incidents involving free Blacks who were convicted of helping family members in their efforts to escape bondage would not have been counted among Underground Railroad escapes. Many freedom seekers remained in the South in close proximity to family and loved ones. Although self-liberators made their escape from all areas of the state, Baltimore and Annapolis, Maryland, were often the destinations where escapees could get lost in the anonymity of the city.[129]

Maryland's Landscape of Slavery and Freedom

Slavery was not consistent nationally, regionally, or even on a statewide basis. Maryland, a border state, known as "the middle temperament" and "the middle ground," was no exception. Almost from its inception, Maryland held a bifurcated position when it came to slavery. In effect, there were two Marylands—one founded upon and supported by slavery and the other based

[128]The following discussion relies principally on Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 498-557; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 109-141; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 317-420; and Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Slave Community* (Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1997).

[129] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

upon free labor.[130] This dichotomy would be reflected later in Maryland's position in the Union—a slave state that remained in and fought for the Union. Maryland's Eastern Shore consisted of a combination of the two facets of the state, with an agricultural base largely producing cereal crops. With a population that consisted of slightly more than 20% enslaved Black workers, the region was less reliant on slavery than southern Maryland, but contained a greater percentage of enslaved workers than the northern section of the state. By 1850 Maryland held a singular distinction among states that used enslaved labor. None of these slaveholding states approached Maryland in the size of its free African-American population.[131] Further exhibiting the bifurcated nature of the state, by the time of the Civil War, Maryland was the northernmost slaveholding state, with the Southern Maryland counties continuing to hold state's highest concentration of enslaved African-American workers.[132]

By 1790, southern Maryland included the highest number of enslaved workers in Maryland. Of 50,000 enslaved Blacks, one half resided in Calvert, St. Mary's, and Charles Counties—the three southernmost counties on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Forty-four percent of the enslaved Black worker population in the agricultural counties in southern Maryland—Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, Montgomery, and St. Mary's—were primarily devoted to tobacco production. The northern Maryland counties—Alleghany, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, and Washington—were overwhelmingly White. These counties generally relied on free labor with enslaved workers constituting less than 5% of the population.[133] However, slavery did exist in the region, in Monrovia, Emmitsburg, Liberty, Fredericktown, and Catoctin. Two of

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[130] Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 6.

[131] "Mount Clare," NPS, NURNF.

[132] "Port Tobacco Courthouse," NPS, NURNF.

[133] "Mount Clare," NPS, NURNF.

the most active slave markets were located in Frederick County, one in New Market, the other in Licksville.

One source of determination to protect slavery lay to the west; Maryland residents had a small backcountry in modern day Frederick, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett Counties that had yet to be fully exploited by slaveholders. Well into the 1820s those western counties would witness a steady influx of Whites who used enslaved workers to clear land and plant crops. These Maryland counties saw their enslaved populations more than double between 1790 and 1820, compared with a slight decline in their numbers in the remainder of the state.

Whatever the attractions of western Maryland for slaveholders, African Americans in many Maryland counties could plausibly contemplate escaping to freedom, and both they and slaveholders knew it. The proximity to Pennsylvania offered an opportunity for many to seek freedom. The short distance from free territory created heavy traffic of escapees in Frederick, Carroll, Washington, and Baltimore Counties.[134] Little wonder, then, that far more slaveholders in Maryland than in Virginia allowed enslaved workers to purchase freedom or induced them to earn it through delayed manumissions contingent on a term of faithful service pending liberation.

Simultaneously granting and withholding freedom, slaveholders living near the Pennsylvania border often cashed out an investment in slavery by selling Blacks as indentured servants to Pennsylvania farmers and craftsmen. This practice, noted in the early nineteenth century as particularly popular among Delaware slaveholders, allowed Pennsylvania purchasers the use of enslaved adult laborers for several years at prices well below waged labor. Enslaved workers had a stake in cooperating with such arrangements because their relocation to Pennsylvania constituted a stronger legal guarantee of freedom than reliance on an informal,

[134] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 25.

often hollow, promise of eventual manumission.[135] Maryland bordered the free state of Pennsylvania which offered protection to freedom seekers while presenting Maryland slaveholders with the particularly troubling problem of persistent escapes from slavery.[136]

Although Baltimore contained less than one third of Maryland's free Black population, the city nevertheless housed the largest urban Black population in the nation, which greatly outnumbered the city's enslaved population.[137] Between 1773 and 1819 approximately 20% of the freedom seekers in the Maryland area escaped to Baltimore as compared with 7% that went to Pennsylvania.[138] The city experienced explosive growth of its free African-American community from a few hundred in 1790 to more than 10,000 by 1820 to an excess of 20,000 by the 1850s. The city's large free Black population allowed many who escaped slavery to simply melt into anonymity in neighborhoods such as Fells' Point and Federal Hill.

By 1860, Baltimore had the largest concentration of Blacks of any southern city, but most of them were free people of color. Jerry Carter, for example, who fled Hampton twice, was recaptured in 1814 in Washington County and one year later in Harford County. He had headed west and then east, but not north. Carter acknowledged Charles Ridgely as his enslaver.[139] Well into the nineteenth century,

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[135] For discussion of interstate slave "indentures" see "Report of the Committee Appointed in the Senate of Pennsylvania to investigate the cause of an Increased Number of Slaves being returned for that Commonwealth, by the Census of 1830, over that of 1820," (Harrisburg, 1833), 3-6.

[136]Sharon Harley, "African Americans" Maryland," History and Culture Bibliography, Maryland Humanities Council
http://www.mdhc.org/resources/search_essays.htm?essay1=28&essay2=hist&essay3=2&search3.x=12&search3.y=3.

[137] Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: The New Press, 1974), 54, 181, 228.

[138] "Mount Clare," NPS, NURNF.

[139] See the *Torchlight* of Hagerstown, MD, June, 1814, for a sheriff's advertisement of Carter as an admitted Ridgely runaway. The Ridgely ledgers record a payment in 1814 for retrieving Carter from the Harford County jail in Bel Air.

escapees from everywhere in Maryland were advertised as seeking not Pennsylvania, but Baltimore, as both a destination and as a starting point en route to liberation. Between 1810 and 1820, almost five times as many slaveholders advertised runaways as headed for Baltimore and its burgeoning free Black community than for Pennsylvania.[140]

Narratives of Escapes, Both Attempted and Realized

Before the closing of the slave trade in 1808, some enslaved workers came directly from Africa and retained their cultural awareness of their homeland. The narrative of Job, Son of Solomon, reveals the diasporic nature of the early Black presence in colonial Maryland. Born in Africa, Job or Hyuba, set down the details of his kidnapping by slave traders in February 1730 in *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job*. Upon arrival in North America, he was sent to Annapolis, Maryland, where he was enslaved for two years. As a child and young man, Job enjoyed elite status in the kingdom of Futa, Africa. His father, known as the High Priest of Boonda, studied the Koran and taught Arabic. Job's name in his country reflected the lineage of which he was a part, Hyuba, Boon Salumena, Boon Hibrahema or Job, Son of Solomon, Son of Abraham; Jallo was his family name.

However, he was betrayed while on a trading mission for his father and sold into slavery. He endured its trials for two years after landing in Annapolis and being delivered to Vachell Denton, factor to London merchant William Hunt. Denton in turn sold Job to one Mr. Tolsey in Kent Island, Maryland, who put him to work in making tobacco; but his enslaver was "soon convinced that Job had never been used to such Labour." As Job grew weary of the work and the cruel treatment, he resolved to attempt escape. "Accordingly, he travelled thro' the Woods, till he came to the County of Kent, upon Delaware Bay, now esteemed Part of Pensilvania; altho' it is properly a Part of Maryland."

[140] See Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 69-71.

In the beginning of 1731,

> There [was] a Law in force, throughout the Colonies of Virginia, Maryland, Pensilvania, &c. as far as Boston in New England, viz. That any Negroe, or white Servant who is not known in the County, or has no Pass, may be secured by any Person, and kept in the common Gaol, till the Master of such Servant shall fetch him.

Therefore, Job being able to give no account of himself after his escape and being unable to speak English was put in prison. After writing the words "Allah and Mahommed," his captors deduced that he was "Mahometan" or Muslim. After a period of Job's stay in jail, an elderly Black man who was enslaved in the neighborhood was able to communicate with Job. The man spoke the "Jalloff" (i.e., Wolof) language, which Job also understood.

After some explanation, Job was eventually returned to his enslaver, who vowed to allow him to pray and to generally reduce the severity of his treatment. Job, being literate, finally wrote to his father detailing his misfortunes in the hope that his father could free him from slavery in Maryland. After the letter changed hands numerous occasions, it was at last read by Mr. Oglethorpe who arranged to purchase Job as well as passage to England. In March, 1733, they set sail from Annapolis on the *William*, Captain George Uriel Commander and returned to England. Ultimately, Job managed to return to his home and to freedom in Africa in 1734.[141] His story illuminates the diasporic nature of slavery and freedom in Maryland and provides insight into an early pathway to family, home and freedom. Job's narrative of escape and return to the land of his birth is part of the cannon of the larger Underground Railroad Movement.

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[141] Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job the Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa; Who was a Slave About Two Years in Maryland; and Afterwards Being Brought to England, was Set Free, and Sent to His Native Land in the Year 1734* (London: Printed for R. Ford, 1734), 14, 19-22, 24. Electronic Version, Documenting the American South, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bluett/menu.html.

Although Job's story is unusual, manumission undertaken by friends or the enslaver, particularly at the time of his or her death, or by groups who raised the purchase price for fugitives to ensure their liberty was one path to freedom. After the Revolutionary War, opponents to slavery aimed to ease legislative restrictions on private acts of manumission. In Virginia, for example, *ad hoc* manumissions lacked legal standing; slaves could only legally be freed with the approval of the governor and his council.

Maryland testators gained the right to manumit in 1790. The state retained age limits on manumission, lest slaveholders dump elderly persons who might then become public charges; no one older than 45 could be freed. Only Delaware banned out-of-state slave sales, and no Chesapeake state adopted a gradual emancipation law.[142] The historical moment in which public authority favored manumission was a brief one in the Chesapeake; virtually all the significant measures passed between 1782 and 1790. At no point, even in the immediate afterglow of the Revolution, did state-mandated gradual emancipation attract widespread support in Maryland. By 1808, the Maryland legislature did pass a law that facilitated manumission, however, children whose parents had gained freedom from slavery were to remain captive unless specifically freed by their enslaver.[143]

The death of the enslaver exposed the enslaved population to not only uncertainty, but also fear and apprehension. Financial insolvency, family hatred, violence, disputes among legatees, and most importantly, fear of being sold to distant lands or remanded to slave traders inhabited and agitated the mind of the enslaved. As recorded in deeds and wills, individual Maryland residents often enticed their enslaved work force to remain loyal by holding out freedom or

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[142] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 29-32; Williams, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware*, 141-176; Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 10-11, 67; Maryland actually lowered the upper age limit for manumission from 50 to 45 in 1796. See *Laws of Maryland*, 1796, ch. 67.

[143] Christian, *Black Saga*, 80.

manumission for thousands of enslaved African Americans. Several members of Tubman's family believed the will of their enslaver, Edward Brodess, provided for their freedom upon his death. Henry, Harriet's brother lamented, "he promised us, that if we would only be faithful, he would leave us all to be free ...but he left us all slaves."[144]

Maryland lifted the ban against manumitting enslaved individuals by will in 1790. If not freed at the death of the enslaver, enslaved workers were often manumitted by term or delayed manumission, meaning there were to be freed at a future specified date. A little more than one half of all manumissions registered in Maryland prior to 1832 were delayed manumissions.[145] In most cases, however, if freedom came at all, it came at the end of the enslaved's most productive years. Widow of Charles Carroll, Barrister, Margaret Carroll's will also provided for a term of service for her beneficiaries: "To Henry Brice and Tench Tilghman, my Executors: All my [N]egroes and slaves, in trust that they will set them all free in such ages, and on such terms as they deem best under all circumstances, having a view to a provision for he comfortable support of the aged and infirm."[146] One youth, "my Negro boy Tom," was singled out in her will to be given to Charles Ross with a specific time period for his delayed manumission "till the boy arrives to thirty one years old, when he shall be free."[147] Although delayed manumissions and self-purchase agreements led to freedom for tens of thousands of Black Maryland residents from the 1780s onward, none of the Ridgelys of Hampton within their lifetimes manumitted more than one or two individuals.

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[144] Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 74.

[145] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 40.

[146] Baltimore County Register of Wills, Book 10, Folio 297, "Mount Clare," NPS, NURNF.

[147] *Ibid.*

At Hampton, Charles Carnan Ridgely reversed a long established pattern of enslaving ever larger numbers of African Americans. He mandated the gradual manumission and dispersion of more than 300 people in his 1829 will. In the meantime, however, enslavement continued for the workers who were dispersed among Ridgely's heirs. The men were to be freed at 28, the women at 25. How many of the 300 were ever freed remains unclear.

There were moments of uncertainty after Charles Carnan Ridgely died as to the future of the enslaved population when two of Carnan's sons-in-law challenged the will, petitioning the court to sell all the enslaved workers and divide the proceeds among the heirs. This, plus knowledge of delayed rather than outright manumissions, may have been the catalyst for 13 escapes from Hampton during August 1829. One was from the farm, and 12 were from the forges. Each group headed south to the city of Baltimore where all were recaptured and detained in the Baltimore jail.[148] Although the limited possibilities of manumission resulting from Charles Carnan Ridgely's passing were welcomed by many enslaved at Hampton, it is highly possible that most escaped because they harbored doubts whether they would ever be free. Continuing in their repeated quests for freedom, Sam Howard and Lloyd Russell, two of the 12 who worked at the forge, would escape again the following year. Another enslaved worker of Charles Carnan Ridgely, identified in the jail docket as simply Jacob, also fled in 1830 although he was recaptured and subsequently delivered to his master James Howard.[149]

The Maryland state archives contains multicounty volumes of freedom records with entries dating from 1806 to 1869, making it clear that manumission was a cheaper alternative to self-purchase and less dangerous than escape as a

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[148] Administration Account for 1829, Ridgely Papers, microfilm M-4697.

[149] David Taft Terry Jr, "Ridgely Compound of Hampton, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland," *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland*, Archives of Maryland Electronic Publication. http://mdslavery.net/html/casestudies/fifrh.html.

relief from bondage.[150] Patience, forbearance, hope, and most importantly, trust were the primary requirements on the part of the enslaved. Because Maryland neither abolished slavery as its neighbors further north had done nor limited private manumissions as had the states to the south, Maryland experienced a high rate of manumissions.[151]

Often the death of the slaveholder introduced instability and uncertainty in the lives of enslaved workers. Insolvency and family disagreements could bring disaster. If manumission had not been part of the enslaver's planned legacy, then death of slaveholders also presented a different, self-liberating opportunity to seek freedom. In 1827, when the administrator of Joseph Gunthrow's property finally arrived to inventory the estate, he discovered that one of the enslaved females was absent. After a thorough and diligent search, he learned that she had "absconded and run away." As was often the case when the enslaver died, she had taken advantage of the confusion, breakdown of discipline, grief or conflict among the family, or communication failures. Because of her timing, the administrator concluded she had too great a head start and therefore should not be considered as part of the inventory of the estate. He wrote her off as a total loss.[152]

Ten days after Charles Carroll of Carrollton quietly died in November 1832, an heir, Charles Carroll of Homewood arrived threatening to use force to back up his demands on the estate. In the ensuing widespread, rapid, and chaotic breakdown of order, the new supervisor quickly lost control of the situation. Among other problems, the enslaved workers were "running at large." Some were lying out, others escaped together. Andrew and Moses, for example, told others that this was their chance to make a break for freedom, although few were

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[150] Maryland State Archives Online.

[151] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 6.

[152] Baltimore City Register of Wills (Petitions), Petition of Simon Guthrow to the Orphans Court of Baltimore County, July 25, 1827, reel M-11,025, SC, MSA cited in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 20-21.

willing to go to that extreme. However, John did decide to join the two. The three left for nearby Homewood plantation where they hid out in the cabin quarters as they began to formulate their next plans. Within two weeks the three had been apprehended. Andrew was jailed; Moses and John promised to reform themselves if allowed to return. No sooner had they done so, Moses fled again. This time he was jailed after his capture. Reflecting the fate of many a recalcitrant enslaved worker, both Andrew and Moses were sold at auction. News of their sale among the remaining enslaved workers was used as an example to get control of the turmoil, although successful escapees could hold out hope.[153] Ever vigilant for an expedient opportunity to escape slavery, African Americans exploited slaveholders' lapses and the breeches in slavery's fortifications.

Repeated Escape Attempts

In the first half of the eighteenth century when the indenture system was still in operation and the color line had not yet ossified, several Blacks made their escape in the company of White indentured servants. In the spring of 1754, a Black man from Annapolis, for example, joined two white "convict servants." Demonstrating the danger and perilous nature of the alliance, the three men joined together to rescue another person of color as well as a White man, murder a sea captain, and then make their way toward freedom in the captain's small boat.[154]

Eighty-four individuals named in runaway slave advertisements between 1745 and 1790 were the subject of 181 advertisements. Virtually all represented at least two escape attempts and several fled three times or more. During this

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[153] Baltimore City Register of Wills (Petitions), Deposition of Walter Browne, January 21 and 22, 1833, [filed February 11, 1833], with Petition of Charles Carroll of Homewood et al. to the Orphans Court, December 31, 1832, reel M-11,025, SC, MSA cited in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 18.

[154] "Eighteenth Century Slaves as Advertised by Their Masters," *Journal of Negro History* 1 (1916):163-216 cited in Harding, *There is a River*, 37.

period, it is difficult to determine whether enslavers made it a practice to spend their advertising money on habitual escapees or whether most escapees made multiple attempts. As the new nation formed, advertisements for escapees advertised in Maryland newspapers revealed the soaring nature of the problem after the Revolutionary War years.

Charles Ball was born into slavery in Maryland near the end of the eighteenth century, the son of a kidnapped African. When he was close to 30 years old, he was sold away from his wife and children in Maryland to work on the cotton plantations of Georgia, a young colony that had repealed its ban on slavery in 1750 and become one of the harshest slave colonies. Ball escaped twice before finally settling in Pennsylvania, where he wrote an anonymous narrative entitled *Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave.*

Although escape to Pennsylvania held obvious advantages, Baltimore also held allure. As a young boy, Hamilton began escaping from the Maryland plantation where he had been enslaved and headed for Annapolis or Baltimore. He had a promise of emancipation at some future date, but by the time he turned 18 in 1846, he had already escaped a number of times, only to be found "in some House Occupied by free negroes, hiding out with other slaves, or frolicking in the city." He had been arrested on two occasions and held in Slatter's jail in Baltimore. On different instances, the overseer, the enslaver himself, and the plantation manager all had travelled to "fetch the runaway." Apparently, Hamilton was among a number from that plantation who ran away to Annapolis or Baltimore. Another young man from a farm in Anne Arundel County made his way to Baltimore on three separate occasions. He was arrested, jailed, and returned each time; he was never punished, however. Although he was warned that he would be sold if he continued, he ignored the threat. Another enslaver commented of a youth he held in bondage, the "Negro is well acquainted with

the road to Baltimore & your petitioner believes that it will be utterly impossible to keep the said [N]egro at work on the farm.[155]

A woman named Bet or Betty from Hampton, described in an advertisement, was captured and jailed in Belair, Harford County, after a prolonged struggle. Betty, a girl of 16, first fled in the summer of 1814. She eluded her captors a second time, and "was taken up...near Peach Bottom," a few miles inside the Pennsylvania border. Although "afterwards made her escape." She stopped near "the Peach Bottom and York road...and was afterwards seen passing the Brogue tavern toward York." It was thought that Betty was "accustomed to live in a town," and that she would be found in "York, Columbia, Marietta, or Lancaster." In May of 1815, her escape attempts failed. She was captured in Lancaster, where she had been jailed as a runaway and admitted being enslaved by Charles Ridgely.[156]

Betty's naming of Charles Ridgely possibly reflected a view that returning to Hampton was her only viable choice. Had she possessed a bit more knowledge of Pennsylvania law, she might have acted differently. In Maryland, as Betty no doubt had learned during her jail time in Belair, suspected runaways were advertised under procedures mandated by state law, and then sold to the highest bidder if no one came forward to claim them.[157] A runaway could offer up or withhold an owner's name and location, and thereby have some influence over his or her fate. But continued slavery would be part of the future.

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[155] Anne Arundel County Register of Wills (Petitions and Orders) 1860-1874, 63-64, Petition James Wilson to the Orphans Court, November 5, 1861, reel #CR 63, 128-2, MSA; Anne Arundel County Register of Wills (Petitions and Orders) 1851-1860, 194-195, Petition of Dennis Claude Jr to the Orphans Court, April 3, 1855, reel #CR 63, 128-1, MSA; Anne Arundel County Register of Wills (Petitions and Orders) 1840-1851, 323-325, Petition of William H. Bird to the Orphans Court, December 11, 1849, reel #CR 63,127-132 MSA cited in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 126-127.

[156] See the *Baltimore American*, August 1814, and *Lancaster Journal*, February 17, 1815 for the runaway ads. The Ridgely ledger notes Caple's payment of the 50 dollar reward for Betty on May 29, 1815.

[157] State law specified that county sheriffs advertise runaways in the *Baltimore American*, the *Easton Star*, and the *National Intelligencer* of Washington, DC, for at least three weeks; most also placed ads in their local newspaper. See the Hagerstown *Maryland Herald*, June 15, 1814, for an example, re Jerry Carter, a runaway from General Ridgely.

Freedom seekers made their escape from all areas of the state, most particularly from Annapolis and Baltimore. Some like J.W.C. Pennington were able to plan a bit in advance and prepare the small bundle of clothing, food, and other essentials so ubiquitous in the stereotype icon used for runaway slave newspaper advertisements. Others fled, hoping to escape oppression for a day, a week, or with good fortune, forever. Presaging nineteenth century patterns, slaves with craft skills or knowledge of the roads and waterways were more likely to command the courage and self-confidence to flee their enslavers; carpenters, smiths, wagoners, and especially boatmen appeared far more often in runaway advertisements than their numbers would predict, as the Ridgelys and their managers at Northampton Furnace would discover.[158] Frederick Douglass is perhaps among the most famous of those freedom seekers who made more than one attempt to escape slavery. Known for his more famous escape by train from Baltimore, and for the subsequent help he received from black abolitionist, David Ruggles, Douglass's first escape attempt was a major failure.

Douglass had been enslaved by the Lloyd family on Maryland's Eastern Shore. When, after "the many resolutions and prayers I have made, in behalf of freedom," he found that he was on "this first day of the year 1836, still a slave, still wandering in the depths of spirit-devouring thralldom." In his first month of being hired out to Captain Thomas Auld and his second year of enslavement by the kind and gentlemanly William Freeland, he "was earnestly considering and advising plans for gaining that freedom, which, when I was but a mere child, I had ascertained to be the natural and inborn right of every member of the human family." Douglass continued, "I hated slavery, always, and the desire for freedom only needed a favorable breeze, to fan it into a blaze, at any moment. The thought of only being a creature of the *present* and the *past*, troubled me, and I longed to have a *future* -- a future with hope in it."

Therefore he took a vow that the year should not end "without witnessing an earnest attempt" to gain his liberty. He, along with two companions, began to

[158] Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 341-342, 349.

plan their escape. Over time, he "succeeded in winning to my (what slaveholders would call wicked) scheme, a company of five young men, the very flower of the neighborhood, each one of whom would have commanded one thousand dollars in the home market," and 1,500 dollars in New Orleans, Louisiana. Douglass induced Henry Harris, John Harris, brother to Henry, Sandy Jenkins, Charles Roberts, and Henry Bailey to escape.

> I was the youngest, but one, of the party. I had, however, the advantage of them all, in experience, and in a knowledge of letters. This gave me great influence over them. Perhaps not one of them, left to himself, would have dreamed of escape as a possible thing. Not one of them was self-moved in the matter. They all wanted to be free; but the serious thought of running away, had not entered into their minds, until I won them to the undertaking. They all were tolerably well off -- for slaves -- and had dim hopes of being set free, some day, by their masters. If any one is to blame for disturbing the quiet of the slaves and slave-masters of the neighborhood of St. Michael's, *I am the man.*

Their weekly Sunday night "meetings must have resembled, on a small scale, the meetings of revolutionary conspirators, in their primary condition. We were plotting against our (so called) lawful rulers...." Of the logistics, Douglass noted,

> We all had vague and indistinct notions of the geography of the country... No man can tell the intense agony which is felt by the slave, when wavering on the point of making his escape. All that he has is at stake; and even that which he has not, is at stake, also. The life which he has, may be lost, and the liberty which he seeks, may not be gained.

Douglass's anticipated escape was uncomplicated. "The plan of escape which I recommended, and to which my comrades assented, was to take a large canoe, owned by Mr. Hamilton, and, on the Saturday night previous to the Easter holidays, launch out into the Chesapeake bay," where the group might be "regarded as fishermen, in the service of a master," and "paddle for its head -- a distance of seventy miles with all our might. Our course, on reaching this point, was, to turn the canoe adrift, and bend our steps toward the north star, till we reached a free state." The week before the intended start Douglass "wrote a pass for each of our party, giving them permission to visit Baltimore, during the Easter holidays."[159] When the morning finally arrived to execute their escape plan,

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[159] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 286. University of Virginia Library, Electronic Edition. http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-

Douglass was understandably full of tumult and anxiety about the possible outcomes and the consequences.

> The reader will please to bear in mind, that, in a slave state, an unsuccessful runaway is not only subjected to cruel torture, and sold away to the far south, but he is frequently execrated by the other slaves. He is charged with making the condition of the other slaves intolerable, by laying them all under the suspicion of their masters -- subjecting them to greater vigilance, and imposing greater limitations on their privileges.

In the end, the plan met with betrayal. Treachery and disloyalty were not uncommon fates for conspirators. Both Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser were ultimately betrayed by one of their co-conspirators. Upon discovery, Douglass and his four companions were bound together and taken to the Easton jail. Ultimately, Douglass was sent to Baltimore to live with Hugh Auld—the enslaver from whom he finally did accomplish, with the help of his future wife, Anna Murray, his more famous solitary escape in 1838.[160] Repeated escape attempts, such as those by Douglass, were common. His first attempt would have been all but forgotten, allowed to lie fallow in the sheriff's record book had he not achieved success on the Underground Railroad and then written about his second attempt and his subsequent life.

Unsuccessful Escape Attempts

In 1755, when Sam departed from Prince George's County, he managed to take away with him, "one Cotton Coat lined with blue, one red waistcoat and Breeches, one blue Silk coat, one light Cloth Coat, some five shirts, and one or two good Hats." Although many bondsmen came out of slavery with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, clearly Sam understood that proper clothing was one badge of freedom that helped ensure a successful escape.[161]

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new2?id=DouMybo.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=21&division=div2.

[160] Ibid, 303.

Many dreams of liberation, however, went unfulfilled for the majority of escapees who tried to make their way to freedom. Even living in a border state such as Maryland, did not ensure success. Most who lived in the Chesapeake region more than likely had experiences that mirrored Willis Burgess's, who had been hired out by an estate. Burgess headed northwest into Baltimore County when he escaped from his employer in Anne Arundel County in 1836. Moving swiftly along as he traveled to Hanover, he turned toward his Pennsylvania destination in York. Later that night, he was captured and held in the Baltimore city jail. After this episode, the executor of the estate that had hired Burgess out decided it was "most prudent" to sell him, and within a few days he was placed on the auction block. Sixteen-year-old Nathaniel met a similar fate although he made it further on his quest for freedom than Burgess. As Nathanial approached the Pennsylvania line in mid-July 1858, he was overtaken by a slave catcher. As had been the case with Burgess, his pursuit of freedom had lasted fewer than 24 hours. Another 16-year-old, William Henry Thomas, whose term of enslavement was to end when he was 33, was arrested in Harford County after leaving Baltimore in an attempt to make his way to "a free state." Yet another teenager, Melichoir Moore made an unsuccessful attempt to flee Harford County on his way to Pennsylvania. His attempt failed; he never made it to his destination and was ordered sold.[162]

Historical documents frequently chronicle unsuccessful escape attempts. Runaway advertisements in effect announce the incident of escape, and sheriff's records often capture the arrest. Escapes that were neither advertised nor thwarted are far more difficult to trace. With none of the glory of successfully

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[161] Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1981), 37.

[162] Anne Arundel County Register of Wills (Petitions and Orders) 1820-40, 515-16, Petition of Charles R. Stewart to the Orphans Court, July 26, 1836, reel #CR 63, 127-1, SC, MSA; Baltimore County Register of Wills (Petitions and Orders, Carville S. Stansbury vs. Negro Nathaniel, July 14, 1858, reel M-11,020, SC, MSA; Baltimore City Register of Wills (Petitions), Estate of William Inloes, Orphans Court of Baltimore City, August 26, 1856, reel M-11,026, SC, MSA; Baltimore City Register of Wills (Petitions), Amos Spencer vs. Melichoir Moore, Orphans Court of Baltimore City, June 27, 1860, reel M-11,026, SC, MSA; Order of the Court, June 28, 1860 cited in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 116.

arriving at the intended destination, with no one to aid and guide them, and with full awareness of the outcomes that await them, unsuccessful freedom seekers often suffered multiple consequences and frequently an even greater loss of freedom.

Examples of Assisted Escapes

Punishment proscribed for abettors in early Maryland laws makes it clear that offering assistance to anyone escaping slavery had a long history in Maryland well before the historic Underground Railroad. Quaker involvement also predated the period of the historic Underground Railroad. In Maryland, Quakers such as Elisha Tyson lent money to help enslaved Black workers buy freedom, provided assistance to runaways, and helped found an abolition society in Maryland that urged the legislature to take up the subject of gradual emancipation. Aiding Black individuals seeking freedom constituted a major activity of the "Maryland Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of poor negroes and others unlawfully held in bondage." The Society could claim as many as 250 members in the 1790s, preponderantly merchants and professionals from Baltimore and its environs.[163] Others preferred working alone or in small networks. Isaac Wilson, of Havre de Grace, and William Worthington, who lived near Conowingo in Harford County, ferried Black people across the Susquehanna river. Nicholas Smith, a cooper living west of Baltimore in the 1840s, hid slaves in the barrels that he made and carried his concealed cargo north in his freight wagon.[164]

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[163] The Society was founded in 1789. See Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 28, for an occupational breakdown of the Society's original members. See Gordon Finnie, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (1969): 322-325, for a discussion of the Society.

[164] *Washington Post*, February 20, 2001; Ellen Nibali, *Woodlawn, Franklin, and Hebbville*, (n.p., 1977), 36, 42, 48.

Flight presented problems for multiple generations of Ridgelys at Hampton. The family's record books and a variety of other sources including newspaper advertisements, sheriff's committal notices, court petitions, and plantation documents contain examples of enslaved African Americans fleeing Hampton. Over the years, approximately 100 people attempted to escape from various family and business locations. Given that none of the people escaping enslavement at Hampton appear to have received any assistance and the several of the escapes occurred outside the historic Underground Railroad period, resistance to slavery at Hampton has not been included within the Underground Railroad genre.

In the 1760s, Colonel Charles Ridgely and his son, also named Charles advertised for a dozen runaways from the ironworks they developed at Northhampton Furnace and its associated forges. Between 1760 and 1774, the Ridgelys placed advertisements in the *Pennsylvania Gazette.* In the summer of 1765, a few months after Captain Charles Ridgely had purchased him in September, Dick, a "country born Negro Man...about 25 years of Age" escaped from Northhampton Iron Works. Dick's escape was the first recorded among approximately 100 escapees who tried to liberate themselves from slavery at the hands of the Ridgely family.[165]

Many of Charles Carnan's son, John Ridgely's first purchases, and those hired from other plantations, had local connections through John's dealing with neighbors, family, and acquaintances. So the more recent additions to the enslaved population in 1829 and the early 1830s were probably no strangers to Baltimore County. A few of them wasted no time and fled, seemingly, at the first opportunity. "Argalus" or "Argabus" escaped mere weeks after being purchased in March 1830. He was bought, ran away, recaptured, and sold within a two-month

[165] *Maryland Gazette*, Annapolis, August 8, 1765, reprinted in Lathan Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790, Volume 2: Maryland* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 60.

span.[166] Connier Argalis (otherwise known as Thomas Connier) absconded but was captured and jailed in Baltimore during April 1830. Another man, Isaac, suspected of having made his way to Pennsylvania by 1831, was sought by John Ridgely. Benjamin Allen, a third example, fled in 1833. This may be the same Benjamin purchased by John Ridgely from a Baltimore City seller in September 1829 as an 18-year-old. Ridgely also managed to recover Benjamin Allen from a Baltimore city slave jail later in 1833. "George," who had been purchased in 1832 from William Wilmer also succeeded in escaping and was marked "gone" in plantation records by 1837.[167]

Some Ridgely hands could learn about the wider world, affording advantages that help explain runaway rates from Hampton. Charles Carnan Ridgely owned or invested in a host of enterprises besides Hampton farm and Northampton Furnace, including other farms, manufacturing concerns, and a mercantile partnership in Baltimore. African Americans from Hampton frequently drove wagonloads of goods and supplies from place to place. In the process they mixed with other teamsters, White and Black, who functioned like today's truck drivers. Some of those wagoners, in the days before railroads and canals, brought grain, iron, flax, wool, and other products to Baltimore from its hinterlands, including southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. Mobility itself could be a springboard; Richardson fled "while he was bringing horses from Worton Creek," a Ridgely farm south and east of Baltimore.[168]

Charles Carnan Ridgely regarded runaways and the charges incurred in recapturing them as a cost of doing business. Slave flight was a matter to be dealt with through sober judgment and careful calculation. He often spent 100 dollars

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[166] John Ridgely Ledger, 1829-1835, Ridgely Papers, MS. 691, microfilm reel 19, Md. Historical Society.

[167] David Taft Terry Jr, "Ridgely Compound of Hampton, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland," *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland*, Archives of Maryland Electronic Publication. http://mdslavery.net/html/casestudies/fifrh.html.

[168] See *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Commercial Advertiser*, November, 1795.

or more to recapture escapees, and frequently succeeded in doing so. The sums laid out in jail fees, affidavits, and traveling expenses for slavecatchers reveal the daunting lengths to which enslavers were willing to go in attempting to recapture escapees and the extent of the effort focused on hunting down and recapturing them. If successful escapes were achieved at all, it was against such odds. Charles, an enslaved iron worker, left Hampton Furnace in the winter of 1815. He was "seen on the old York road, near the Pennsylvania line, where Bob, who went off with him, was taken up." Charles may have "crossed the Susquehanna" because he had been seen heading east and "enquiring the way to McCall's Ferry," located a few miles north of the Maryland line. McCall's Ferry was one of a dozen or so that crossed the Susquehanna between the Maryland line and Harrisburg. Despite Ridgley's vigorous pursuit and aggressive strategies, Charles did make good on his bid for freedom and was not recaptured. The Ridgely ledgers make no mention of rewards and expenses paid for "taking up" Charles.[169]

John Ridgely, who also aggressively pursued runaways, punished at least one fugitive he caught perhaps selling him "south." Charles Brown also fled from Ridgeley's Hampton during the Christmas holiday, 1834. He was apprehended and jailed on December 30, 1834, in Baltimore. On January 3, 1835, Ridgeley sold Charles, "a slave for life," to a Tennessee-based buyer for 350 dollars. Brown was released from jail one month later to J.S. Skinner.[170]

During the 1840s, 10 enslaved men and one enslaved woman fled John Ridgely's Hampton. The eight for whom ages are known were in their teens or twenties. Davy Jones, John Kyle, Elick, and Rebecca Posey were teenagers; John Hawkins was about twenty, and Henry Jones "about 25."[171] Eighteen-year-old

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[169] Charles C. Ridgely/Ridgely Lux Co. Ledger, 1808-1825, G. Howard White Collection, microfilm reel 4690.

[170] David Taft Terry Jr, "Ridgely Compound of Hampton, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland," *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland*, Archives of Maryland Electronic Publication. http://mdslavery.net/html/casestudies/fifrh.html.

[171] See the *Baltimore Sun* advertisements of April 4, 1846 for Kyle and Davy Jones, August 26, 1852 for Rebecca Posey, April 1, 1853 for Henry Jones, and May 5, 1858 of Elick. The *Sun* ad for John

Daniel fled in 1840, having been with Ridgely only three years. Another, Henry was also "gone" by 1840. Jim Frisby ran in 1844, but was recovered the following year. John Kyle and Davy Jones ran from Hampton together in 1846. The two do not appear in extant jail dockets for the state of Maryland, and apparently do not appear again in plantation records.[172] Only George Cain and "Milly's Aleck" or "Elick" appear to have been returned.

Between 1844 and 1845, three more slaves are presumed to have fled according to different plantation record sources. Dick Matthews, John Patterson, and John Hawkins mentioned earlier. The latter, Hawkins, who fled in February 1845, John Ridgely and his agents, including son, Charles were still pursuing him by the 1850s. In fact, under the authority of the 1850 Federal Fugitive Slave Act, the Ridgelys sought John Hawkins in Pennsylvania. Two other long-time Hampton slaves also fled during the 1850s, but are not known to have been recovered. Fifteen-year-old Rebecca Posey absconded in 1852. The following year, 25-year-old Henry Jones did likewise. There is no evidence that either was caught or returned to Hampton.

In a dramatic and emotional episode, eight enslaved blacks attempted a group escape from Hampton in 1853. Unlike the group of 12 men enslaved at the forge who attempted flight in 1829 after Charles Caran's death, both women and men of different ages comprised the 1853 group. Perhaps, they had formed bonds at Hampton, and were attempting to leave together. They were caught, jailed and returned to John Ridgely. Aleck, who had grown up at Hampton with other kinfolk, including his mother, Milly, ran in 1858, while long-time house servant Lucy Jackson's son Henry, ran in 1861.[173] "Aleck" or "Elick" appears to be the

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Hawkins on January 23, 1845 described him as "about twenty-five"; however, John Ridgely's 1852 power of attorney to have Hawkins seized and returned from Pennsylvania described him as "about twenty-eight", i.e, age twenty or twenty-one when he ran away. None of the slaves was described as having a spouse in the runaway advertisement, nor does any evidence from the slave lists in the Ridgely records suggest so.

[172] David Taft Terry Jr, "Ridgely Compound of Hampton, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland," *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland*, Archives of Maryland Electronic Publication. http://mdslavery.net/html/casestudies/fifrh.html.

same person who attempted to escape in the mid-1840s. Hampton would see no major surge of escape attempts until the war years of 1861 to 1864.

Women and Families

Constituting a majority of Baltimore's African American population after 1810, free people of color were deeply involved in aiding escapees or providing other aid. They were able to offer shelter or whatever else might be needed. Tubman used the city as a departure point on her trips back to the Eastern Shore, or as an interim location before continuing on her escape route. In September 1856, for example, she "brought out" from Baltimore two children and a young woman, Tilly, whose fiancé had previously escaped.[174]

The actions of Tubman and her charge, Tilly, bring up a complicated point. Between 1747 and 1790, 80% of Baltimore escapees were young males and 75% were between the ages of 15 and 34. Women such as Tubman and Tilly represented a maximum of 20% to 30% of the people escaping slavery in Baltimore.[175] Tubman is unique in several ways. After one aborted escape attempt with her two brothers on September 17, 1849, she finally escaped alone, with no assistance, two weeks later.[176] For a woman, this is rare. As the experience of Douglass and countless other escapees attest, making a successful getaway against insurmountable odds is a major accomplishment.

Concern for family was uppermost on the minds of women, as well as men, who escaped slavery, and escapees used various schemes and plans to free groups of people. Robert Williams, an enslaved collier, was thought to have fled to his

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[173] David Taft Terry Jr, "Ridgely Compound of Hampton, Towson, Baltimore County, Maryland," *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland*, Archives of Maryland Electronic Publication. http://mdslavery.net/html/casestudies/fifrh.html.
[174] Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 131.

[175] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*.

[176] Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 80.

wife, a cook at the Fountain Tavern Inn in the city of Baltimore.[177] One free black husband was able to convince an elderly woman in Maryland who was enslaving his family to sell his wife and two children to him. He signed a contract for the purchase but the woman died a short time later. By then he was on his way to Pennsylvania or New Jersey. His wife "Annette Ranaway and carried with her the two children," noted the administrator of the estate. Bitterly he added that the husband "never complied with the contract," nor was that ever his intention. The administrator finally concluded that there was no possibility the mother and children would ever be returned.[178]

The men involved—husbands, fathers, family men—were imprisoned for their efforts to rescue their families from slavery. Wives, mothers, and children often accompanied their male counterparts, occasionally escaped alone, as was the case with Tubman, or received outside assistance. The details of their stories, rather than glorified in the annals of the Underground Railroad Movement, were recorded in the penitentiary or probate records of the state.

The family of Black abolitionist and Underground Railroad Chronicler, William Still, for example, had important connections to Maryland. Still's father, Levin Steel, made his way out of slavery on the Eastern Shore by purchasing his freedom and then changing his name to Still to protect his wife Sidney, who had escaped from slavery in Maryland. After her initial escape attempt failed, she was captured and returned to her enslaver. She made a second successful escape attempt and fled with her two of their four children (her two daughters). Illness of one of the children forced her to leave one daughter behind with farmers. After making her way to her husband in New Jersey, she changed her name to Charity. With a mother who had escaped slavery with her children, her son

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[177] *Baltimore American*, May, 1818.

[178] Baltimore City Register of Wills (Petitions), Petition of Henry Hall to the Orphans Court of Baltimore County, May 29, 1835, reel M-11,025, SC, MSA cited in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 118.

William, the youngest of 14 subsequent children, would have had first hand knowledge of how destructive slavery was for the Black family.[179]

The Institutional Freedom of the Black Church

The decades between the close of the Revolution and the War of 1812 witnessed both the emancipation of thousands of African Americans in the Chesapeake and the creation of Black Christian communities springing from conversions to evangelical sects, especially the Methodists and Baptists. When White evangelicals pulled back from their religious challenge to slavery and demanded Black subordination in biracial churches, Blacks took matters into their own hands and formed the first African American–led churches and congregations, bulwarks that would help the Black community to survive the post-1815 hardening of proslavery sentiment in the region. In addition to Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, Tubman, and J.W.C. Pennington, Maryland produced at least two outstanding churchmen, both of whom had been enslaved. The first, Daniel Coker was born in Frederick County, Maryland, during the latter part of the eighteenth century. He escaped to New York and shortly thereafter came in contact with Bishop Francis Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In course of time, Bishop Asbury ordained him. After spending some time in New York, Coker came to Baltimore. Although born to a White mother and an enslaved Black father, due to the circumstances of his birth, under Maryland law he was considered a slave. When he escaped to New York, he evaded slave hunters and being returned into slavery by discarding the name Isaac Wright and assumed the name Daniel Coker. He was secreted in Baltimore until friends had raised sufficient money to purchase his freedom. It was Coker who encouraged a

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[179] William Still, *Tthe Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872; Salem, NH: Ayer Co., Inc., 1992)); reprint ed. "William Still," The William Still Foundation Inc., http://www.undergroundrr.com/stillbiofr.html.

number of persons to withdraw from Sharp Street Church, and under his direction, organized the Bethel African Church in Baltimore. In 1793, Black Methodists leased a building on Sharp Street near the Baltimore harbor for their own use. By 1802, they owned the building and lot, and led by blacksmiths Jacob Gilliard and Richard Russell, had established an independent congregation that retained its formal affiliation with the White-dominated Methodist Episcopal Church. [180]

In 1811, Coker became the first official pastor of Bethel. He taught school in connection with Sharp Street Church where he conducted a large, flourishing day school for free Blacks in Baltimore. By 1815, Coker and other Black Methodists had become thoroughly frustrated by continued refusals of ordination to Black ministers and White demands for segregation and subordination of Black members. In May of 1815, Coker along with Nicholas Gilliard, Stephen Hill, Don Carlos Hall, George Douglass, and David Brister formed the African Methodist Bethel Society and set about the business of creating their own church. Within two years Bethel had 600 members.[181]

Coker came together with Richard Allen, Maryland's second great Black churchman, in 1816, combining Bethel African Church with Bethel of Philadelphia to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the most important institutions in African American history. Coker was elected first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church immediately after its formation.[182] The next day, however, he declined the election paving the way for Allen's election to the same office.

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[180] See Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 129-135; Andrews, *The Methodists*, 150-152; and Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*, 179.

[181] On the foundation of African churches, in addition to Graham and Phillips, see Daniel A. Payne, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN, 1891); Will B. Gravely, "Rise of African Churches in America (1786-1822)," *Journal of Religious Thought* 14 (1984): 315-332; Albert J. Raboteau, "Richard Allen and the African Church Movement," in August Meier and Leon Litwack, eds., *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*, (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1988).

Allen first joined a group of Methodists in Fell's Point—Baltimore's harbor area in 1785—and had taken part as an observer at the 1784 Methodist conference in that city. After purchasing his freedom in Maryland, Allen eventually settled in Philadelphia, where his preaching helped bring Blacks into Methodist congregations and religion classes, including many ex-slaves who had left Delaware or Maryland[183] and implicating the Black church in the Underground Railroad Movement from the early days of its formation.

In Maryland, Blacks formed a substantial part of the Methodist movement from the beginning. English missionary Thomas Rankin estimated in 1774 that 500 Blacks belonged to Methodist societies, about 25% of the colony's total. By the 1780s, itinerants were meeting with Black classes in Dorchester County, on the Calvert County circuit, and in Prince George's County. There, William Colbert encountered a Black congregation operating its own meetinghouse, near today's Oxon Hill, who praised by him as "very numerous and very orderly.[184]

The growth of the Black church remains the single most remarkable social phenomenon of African-American life in the post-Revolutionary era. In the 1770s, Baptist and Methodist itinerants had preached to handfuls of Black congregants—mostly in isolated rural meetings on the Delmarva peninsula. By 1816, literally tens of thousands of Blacks had formed congregations, built churches, conducted Sunday school classes, and licensed their own exhorters and preachers. The African Methodist Episcopal church would go on to become a formidable foe of slavery. Many of its congregants were former slaves, many of whom had either escaped slavery or purchased their freedom. Numerous members of the church had an

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[182] George F. Bragg, "Men of Maryland," 38. Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:X26OtD1t4TQJ:docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bragg/bragg.xml+Dr.+Martin+R.+Delaney+gives+Coker+the+credit+for+originating+the+plan+followed+later+by+Garrison+in+the+Abolition+Movement.&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us.

[183] Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (Philadelphia, 1833), 13-15.

[184] Andrews, *The Methodists*, 137-138.

immediate concern about aiding their enslaved brethren as they had siblings, parents, and children still held in bondage.[185]

Gubernatorial Pardons

The Maryland state archives contain statistics on slavery in a register, which lists who was enslaved as of November 1, 1864, when the state constitution abolished slavery in Maryland. Hoping that the federal government would compensate former slaveholders, the General Assembly in 1867 authorized the compilation of records establishing the enslaver and the worth he attached to each enslaved person. The Governor appointed a commissioner of slave statistics for each county. Former slaveholders furnished the commissioner with descriptive information listing the names of every person still held in bondage as of the ratification of the Constitution. Some were held in penitentiaries for aiding escapees.[186]

At least 19 of such individuals convicted in county courts eventually received gubernatorial pardon. The group consisted of two women and 17 men; three enslaved individuals and 16 free persons—at least five free Blacks and four Whites. The tragic story of Abraham Brogden and the account of Joseph Boley bring concern for family into focus and reveal the willingness of their wives to risk escape. It was not unusual for women, rather than escape alone frequently to be accompanied by husband, children, and other family members. Rarely is there an opportunity to see the expression of humanity within the often brutal system of slavery practiced in the United States. The trial and subsequent pardon of Abraham Brogden, a free Black laborer who lived in Baltimore reveals humanistic

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[185] LaRoche, On the Edge of Freedom.

[186] Louise J. Hienton, "Searching for Ancestors Who Were Slaves: An Index to the Freedom Records of Prince George's County, Maryland," Maryland State Archives. http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/stagser/s1400/s1411/html/summary.html.

expression on the part of this husband struggling to maintain his intact family, his friends and neighbors, and the Governor.

Brogden's wife, Cinderella, was about to be sold to satisfy the debts of her enslaver, George Worthington of Anne Arundel County. When Cinderella fled, Worthington's overseer advertised her disappearance in the *Baltimore Sun*, stating that "she has a husband living in Baltimore by the name of Abram Brogden, who is supposed to have taken her away from home."[187] Before the advertisement appeared in the newspaper, however, Cinderella Brogden had been captured, imprisoned in Baltimore, returned to her Worthington eight days later, and subsequently sold out of state.[188]

Abraham Brogden was found guilty in April 1849 of enticing his wife away from her owner and received a sentence of four years in the penitentiary. A penitentiary employee, writing later in support of Brodgen's appeal for a pardon, stated that "The Officer from Anne Arundel who delivered [Brogden] into [the penitentiary] and that there was strong talk in Annapolis at that time, of interceding with the late Governor for his pardon."[189] Governor Enoch Louis Lowe received petitions signed by more than 115 individuals by the time Brogden was halfway through his term of imprisonment. Thomas D. Marriott, a friend of the Brogden family, was one of Brogden's strongest supporters. Marriott explained that Brogden had acted because his wife

> was about to be sold (under execution) for her master's debts...Few can be found who do not look upon his attempt to save his wife from a sale to some far distant parts as an offense not deserving of the full penalty of the law...The crime was endeavoring to set his wife, at Liberty! Not that instigated by fanaticism, but one produced by feelings entirely different from those by which fanatics and political abolitionists are amazed.[190]

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[187] *Baltimore Sun*, December 23, 1848. Maryland State house nomination

[188] Baltimore City and County Jail (Runaway Docket), #1268, MSA C 2064-2, Maryland State House nomination.

[189] Secretary of State (Pardon Papers), 1851, Box 48, Folder 28, MSA S 1031-10.

[190] Ibid.

Numerous supporters argued that the two years he had already served was sufficient punishment. Governor Lowe granted Brogden a pardon on May 23, 1851, and he was released from prison the following day—but not before his wife had died.[191] In a similar case, Joseph Boley, another free Black resident of Anne Arundel County, was sentenced in November 1863 to two six-year terms in the penitentiary for persuading his enslaved wife and four daughters to run away from their enslaver, Joseph Benson. Boley's neighbor, Joshua Hawkins, wrote a petition requesting a pardon for Boley, which was granted by Governor Augustus W. Bradford on July 29, 1865.[192]

James Harris, another father and husband, farmed in Allegany County after he obtained his freedom upon the death of his enslaver after paying off his freedom papers. He worked an extra year beyond that to satisfy one of the heirs. Harris was sentenced for aiding his own children escape bondage. On August 13, 1863, he joined his wife, daughter, and other enslaved members of his family on a stage coach bound for Cumberland, Maryland, and Uniontown, Pennsylvania. For that crime, the Allegany County Circuit Court sentenced him to serve six years and six months in the penitentiary. After several petitions and a local newspaper story, Governor Bradford pardoned him on December 20, 1864.[193]

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[191] Secretary of State (Pardon Papers), May 23, 1851, Folder 121, MSA S 1108-2; Maryland Penitentiary (Prisoners Record), 4241, MSA S 275-2, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House, 8.

[192] Anne Arundel County Circuit Court (Docket) MSA C65, State of Maryland v Joseph Boley, Presentments #8, 11, 12, 13 & 14, pp. 314-317, 1863/10, MSA C 65-24; Governor (Proceedings), July 28, 1865 (#2), MSA S 1072-5; Secretary of State (Pardon Docket), #294, p. 41, #295, MSA S 1110-1; Secretary of State (Pardon Papers), #295, Box 61, Folder 5, MSA S 1031-23; Secretary of State (Pardon Papers), Box 61, Folder 4, MSA S 1031-23; and Secretary of State (Pardon Record), p. 452, July 29, 1865, MSA S 1108-2, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House, 8.

[193] Allegany County Circuit Court (Court Papers), State of Maryland v. James Harris, Filed: Oct. 15/63 (1863), Box 49, MSA T 1784-51; Governor (Miscellaneous Papers), Box 86, Folder 3, MSA S 1274; Governor (Proceedings), p. 255, November 28, 1864, MSA S 1072-5; Maryland Penitentiary (Commitments), #5881, MSA S 270-3; Maryland Penitentiary (Prisoners Record), #5881, MSA S 275-2; Secretary of State (Pardon Record), p. 427, MSA S 1108-2; and Secretary of State (Pardon Docket) MSA S1110, February 6, 1864, Record No. 222, pp. 30-1, MSA S 1110-1, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House, 9.

It should be noted that Boley and Harris continued to be incarcerated for the crime of assisting escapees after slavery itself had been abolished in Maryland. In the spring of 1865, Governor Bradford requested a list of all people held in the penitentiary who had been convicted of aiding runaways in their efforts to escape bondage. The penitentiary board supplied him with eight names, including Boley's. Jacob Coates, also named on the list, had been enslaved by a Georgia carpenter. Coates had been arrested and convicted in the middle of the Civil War in December 1863—almost one year after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. For aiding the escape of several slaves who were traveling along the Potomac River in a stolen boat, perhaps trying to reach Washington, DC, to join the Union army, Coates received an 11 years and six-months sentence. In August 1865, the Freedman's Bureau declared the continued holding of Coates and two others unjust imprisonment.

In November, Governor Bradford pardoned Coates along with Caleb Day a freeman who pled guilty and received a sentence of six years and six months for enticing slaves to leave their master. Day had personally written to the Governor on his own behalf stating that the Governor was "probably aware that at that time the soldiers in the service of the United States were scattered throughout the State of Maryland, everywhere enticing slaves to leave their masters." He further stated that the "General Government was thus setting the example; her soldiers were teaching Blacks that they had a right to be free. Is it then surprising that I was found in the company of a few of my own color on their way to Washington—the 'Canada' of the United States?"[194]

In his defense, Day went on to argue that "Slavery itself is a crime: now, I would ask, what does it avoid to keep me here incarcerated?...I pray that your excellency will take into consideration my case, and exercise the clemency invested in your office." At the same time the Governor

[194] Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the District of Columbia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1055 Roll 21, "Miscellaneous Report and Lists," http://freedmensbureau.com/washingtondc/outrages2.htm.

pardoned Day, he also granted clemency to Joseph Bowers, convicted in Allegany County in November 1861 of helping Henry Stanton escape from his enslaver, Elizabeth O'Neal. Bower's eight-years and six-months sentence began in December of that year; he received his gubernatorial pardon in May 1865.[195]

The Last Days of Slavery

As Commander and Chief of the Army and Navy, Abraham Lincoln issued the executive order abolishing slavery in January 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation freed all those enslaved in the rebellious Confederate states that had not already returned to Union control. Proclamation first affected only those slaves that had already escaped to the Union side, but as the Union armies conquered the south, thousands of slaves were freed each day until nearly all (estimated at 4 million) were free by the summer of 1865. The Proclamation did not affect Maryland's enslaved population, or those of Delaware, West Virginia, or Missouri. Abolition of slavery in the border states required separate state action. On October 13, 1864, Maryland residents voted to abolish slavery as part of their new state constitution more than one year and a half after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued.

The jail sentences of Boley, Harris, Coates, and Day, among others, poignantly and graphically demonstrate the lingering effects of slavery. The strategies for freedom went beyond the opening of the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the abolition of slavery in the state of Maryland. These strategies of freedom encompassed every year and every avenue to freedom including gubernatorial pardons.

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[195] Secretary of State (Pardon Record), p. 443, MSA S 1108-2, NPS/NURNF, Maryland State House, 8.

CHAPTER SIX

SELF-PURCHASE

Slavery and freedom were entwined in a tangled, incoherent relationship in the Chesapeake. Substantial numbers of African Americans followed two paths to freedom less radical than outright escape—manumission and self-purchase. Manumission as a freedom strategy, particularly relative to the colonization and emigration movements, has been discussed elsewhere in this report. Unlike physical escapes from slavery, freedom derived through manumission and self-purchase were at the caprice of the enslaver and dependent upon the wherewithal of the enslaved. Self-purchases in tandem with hoped for manumissions were unobtrusive, rarely spectacular, and less physically threatening to the enslaver than flight, rebellion, or day-to-day resistance. Manumission involved trust, patience, and perhaps financial resources on the part of the enslaved population. Purchasing oneself required great perseverance, a deliberate, cool courage, financial savvy, a marketable skill, resourcefulness, organization, and time and money management skills. At times, a network of friends made freedom possible.[196]

In examples of manumissions further to the west of Maryland, for example in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, members of whole families of manumitted former captives often compensated their former enslaver in total, or in part, collectively migrating out of slavery and settling whole communities together. Laws regulated against free people of color remaining in several of the slave states, requiring payment of bonds, as well as removal from the state, within 30 days. After essentially forcing emancipated Blacks out of slave holding states, erratically enforced laws required the newly freed to again post bonds insuring they would not

[196]Aptheker, *To Be Free: A Volume of Studies in Afro-American History Dealing with Pre-Civil War Times, the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1948, 1991).

become an economic burden to northern states into which they migrated. Freed men and women were usually expected to pay the bonds, typically 500 dollars.[197]

Michael Nicholls' study of manumissions in Norfolk, Williamsburg, Petersburg, Richmond, Frederick, and Alexandria, Virginia, between 1782 and 1810 found that at least one in five urban manumissions were explicit self-purchases or featured payments to a slaveholder by a free person of color. More than one third of manumissions registered in the Norfolk area between 1790 and 1820 were self-purchases according to historian Tommy Bogger. An early study of Petersburg revealed similar patterns. About one fourth of approximately 12,000 manumissions examined in early national Maryland record payments to the manumitter; virtually none show ex-slaves receiving goods or money. A similar pattern existed in Delaware as well.[198] Within the topics of self-purchase and manumission, the hidden added financial burdens levied against migrating freed men and women must be addressed. Again, manumissions in many instances fell within complex financial agreements between enslavers and freedom seekers.[199] Because Maryland was a slaveholding state, fees assessed against free Blacks entering the state were not applicable. The combined topic of manumissions and self-purchases deserves much closer scrutiny.

As the most passive form of emancipation, manumission stood in contrast to self-purchase and in opposition to flight. Frequently, manumissions were not the simple acts of altruistic kindness on the part of kindly or concerned masters as they have been commonly understood. Outright unconditional manumissions where the enslaved was set free with no stipulations or complications appear to have been

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[197] LaRoche, "On the Edge of Freedom."

[198] Michael Nicholls, "Strangers Setting Among Us: The Sources and Challenges of the Urban Free Black Population in Early Virginia" *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 108 (2000: 164-165; Tommy L. Bogger, in *Free Blacks in Norfolk, Virginia, 1790 - 1860: The Darker Side of Freedom* (Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1996), 2, 11; Luther P. Jackson, "Manumission in Certain Virginia Cities," *Journal of Negro History* 15 (1930) 278-314; Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 97; Williams, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware*, 82.

[199] LaRoche, "On the Edge of Freedom."

rather rare. The enslaver often attached financial requirements or placed time delays on manumission at the time of death. When money changed hands in manumissions it more commonly passed from Blacks to Whites, as payments for purchasing oneself made many manumissions closer to self-purchase agreements. Four conditions were required for the transaction to occur: the enslaver had to express a willingness to allow self-purchasers to enter into an agreement; there had to be the possibility that the enslaved person could actually earn and retain the agreed upon amount; the enslaver would act in good faith in receiving and accepting the money and in return present the required papers of manumission; and lastly, the possibility of legal manumission had to exist.[200]

Narratives and other documents clarify aspects of the processes required for self-purchasers in Maryland. Enslaved men and women took advantage of opportunities to earn money in the region's changing economy and opportunities to buy oneself out of slavery during downturns in the domestic slave trade. Self purchases occurred despite an act of the Maryland General Assembly during its April 1787 session, stating "any person who shall permit and authorize any slave belonging to him or herself, &c. to go at large or hire himself, within this state, shall incur the penalty of five pounds (thirteen and one-third dollars) current money per month, except ten days at harvest." The intent of the law was to prohibit enslaved workers from earning money and amassing enough resources to purchase both goods and their freedom as a result of African Americans being hired out. In the face of such laws, thousands of Blacks used self-purchase as a strategy for freedom within the Underground Railroad Movement. Frequently the skilled enslaved population wielded sufficient earning power to both remunerate their enslavers and save toward self-emancipation.

Such arrangements did, however, pose a threat to the slave system. The ability on the part of enslaved African Americans to accumulate capital and manage their affairs in a responsible, business-like manner refuted much of the rhetoric of inferiority that justified slavery. Hiring out of enslaved workers or allowing them to

[200] Aptheker, *To Be Free*, 31.

drive their own bargains and requiring only the payment by them of a fixed-weekly sum, or allowing them to retain gratuities and tips, rewarding "wages" for particularly excellent work, or providing "overwork" pay for extra hours of labor or production above quotas, as was the tendency at Ridgely's Northampton Furnace, were all common practices that allowed enslaved workers to accumulate enough funds to emancipate themselves through self-purchase agreements.[201]

The workings of manumission by self-purchase or via term slavery could contribute to changes in Black work patterns as well. Those seeking to buy themselves or family members often performed Herculean labors to scrape together money. Once clear of debts and installment payments surrounding self-purchase, a freed man could subsist on fewer hours of labor than previously undertaken. No doubt some people had wrested freedom from masters after years of unusually heavy and prolonged physical labor could justifiably redirect some of their activities away from accumulation when the opportunity offered.[202] Freed from strenuous manual labor, Richard Allen, for example, was able to devote his time and energy to preaching once he purchased his freedom.

Systematic studies are required to determine the numbers of African Americans who became free in this manner. Up to 1826, at least 281 Blacks obtained their freedom by entering into self-purchase arrangements. African Americans often purchased the freedom of relatives and friends as well, further complicating assessment of the numbers involved. In Maryland, Blacks emancipated relatives, in Kent and Baltimore Counties. Substantial numbers of self-purchasers gained their

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[201] Ridgely ledgers and Northampton Furnace account books; Ibid.

[202] For southern attitudes toward free Black labor after the Civil War, see James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 111-156. For Cuba, see Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1985). For a good overview also see Scott, "Exploring the Meaning of Freedom: Post-emancipation Societies in Comparative Perspective", *Hispanic American Historical Review* 68 (1988) 407-428. For Pennsylvania, see Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 219-227. Graham Hodges' *Root and Branch*, covers this subject for New York and New Jersey, and Joanne Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery* discusses White reaction to gradual abolition in southern New England. For White assessments of free Blacks in Maryland, see Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 140-166. George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York, 1971) remains a valuable overview of this question.

freedom in such a manner in Anne Arundel, Frederick, Harford, Dorchester, Queen Anne, and Talbot Counties as well.[203]

William Still, father of the Underground Railroad, had intimate knowledge of the hardships and demands of self-purchase. Not only had his father liberated himself by paying slavery's ransom, Still's brother also purchased his liberty and that of his wife and three children for a total of 5,500 dollars. He was able to accomplish this feat after three years of hard work and by delivering addresses throughout New England, New York, and Pennsylvania.[204]

At a young age, Fanny Jackson, born in Washington, DC, in 1837, was purchased by her devoted aunt, Sarah Orr. Jackson made good on her aunt's investment by becoming a principal of Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth, holding the highest educational appointment of any Black woman in the nation at the time. Jackson went on to marry Levi Jenkins Coppin of Frederickstown, Maryland, who would later be elected African Methodist Episcopal Bishop of South Africa.[205] Coppin State University in Baltimore is named in honor of this former slave liberated through self-purchase by a relative.

In Maryland, Quakers like Elisha Tyson lent money to help slaves buy freedom, provided assistance to runaways, and helped found an abolition society in Maryland that urged its legislature to take up the subject of gradual emancipation. Aiding Black individuals seeking freedom also constituted a major activity of the "Maryland Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of poor [N]egroes and others unlawfully held in bondage." With some 250 members in the 1790s, the group was comprised of preponderantly merchants and professionals

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[203] Ibid.

[204] Charles H. Nichols, *Many Thousand Gone: The Ex-Slaves' Account of Their Bondage and Freedom* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963); Peter Still, *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed.*

[205] Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 281-283.

from Baltimore and its environs.[206] Slaves lacked legal standing to sue or be sued, but they could petition a court to recognize that they were wrongfully held as slaves and entitled to free status.

Benjamin Lundy was enthusiastic about slaves buying freedom on an installment plan. Money paid for overtime work could purchase the right to labor for one's own benefit during a portion of the work week; a slave initially allowed to work for himself just one day of the week could become free in seven and half years. Such a scheme would "ensure the punctual performance" of the slave's tasks while acquiring equity in himself, but more importantly, "he will enter into society with habits of industry and temperance, which are calculated to render him a valued citizen." If the slave failed to amass enough money to buy himself out, "he is scarcely entitled to the enjoyment of civil liberty."[207]

Moral misgivings concerning slaveholding did not preclude the slaveholder from realizing economic gain in seeking relief from slavery. Moral concerns combined with economic factors were the impetus for some self-purchase arrangements. Stokeley Sturgis, a White farmer living near Dover, Delaware, converted to Methodism in the early 1780s, stirred by the preaching of Freeborn Garrettson, a redoubtable early Methodist itinerant who had freed his own slaves in 1775. Shortly after encountering Garrettson, Sturgis decided to free himself from the sin of slaveholding. He accordingly offered two young, thrifty, industrious brothers he enslaved the chance to purchase their freedom. Within five years Sturgis had received the agreed upon price and the two freed men had migrated northward toward Philadelphia to find work and make lives for themselves.

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[206] The Society was founded in 1789. See Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 28, for an occupational breakdown of the Society's original members. See Gordon Finnie, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (1969): 322-325, for a discussion of the Society.

[207] Baltimore, *Genius of Universal Emancipation* I (1825).

Born into slavery in Philadelphia in 1760, Allen, the younger of the two liberated brothers would go on to become a founder and first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In a brief autobiography written just before his death in 1831, Allen recalled having been sold to Sturgis along with his mother and several siblings, probably around 1768. According to Allen, a few years later, after Sturgis became embroiled in financial difficulties, he sold Allen's mother and three brothers and sisters to a planter in Kent County, Maryland, in 1776.[208] In January 1780, a 20-year-old Allen and his remaining brother arranged to purchase their liberty for "sixty pounds in gold and silver or two thousand Continental dollars," to be paid in five annual installments beginning in 1781. Allen worried constantly about being sold before he could fulfill the agreement until the brothers' strenuous labors paid for their liberation. Amidst post-war depreciation in value and purchasing power of continental currency, paying 2,000 dollars each, Allen ransomed both his own and his brother's freedom of body and soul from Sturgis. It had taken Allen five years, paying in installments, to amass the money, the bulk of which came from his earnings as a wagon driver during the Revolutionary War.[209] The remainder he earned by sawing cordwood and making bricks.[210]

Allen was one among several celebrated people in African-American history who realized their dream of emancipation through self-purchase. Henry Highland Garnet's sister-in-law purchased her way to freedom as did one of J.W.C. Pennington's brothers. Other seminal leaders, such as Absalom Jones, Andrew Bryan, Denmark Vesey, and Fanny J. Coppin, were ransomed from slavery.

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[208] Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Right Reverend Richard Allen* (Philadelphia, 1833), 5-10; Gary Nash, "New Light on Richard Allen: The Early Years of Freedom" *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (1989): 332-340.

[209] Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen. To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793: With an Address to the People of Colour in the United States* (Philadelphia: Martin & Boden, Printers, 1833). Electronic Edition.

[210] LaRoche, "On the Edge of Freedom."

At times, Blacks were able to raise the ransom money by public appeals and lecture tours. Appearing throughout the North and Midwest, Noah Davis, a Fredericksburg, Virginia, shoemaker first succeeded in buying himself and then embarked on a mission to liberate his wife and five children. He accomplished this through 12 years of hard labor at his craft in addition to speaking appearances at public gatherings in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.

As Maryland's Josiah Henson discovered, such arrangements could be perilous with the numerous pitfalls. After agreeing to terms and struggling to accumulate all or part of the purchase price, the enslaved Black worker often suffered the torture of seeing the precious earnings stolen by the enslaver, the agreement wholly denied or disavowed, and the extra labor come to nothing. It often happened that the hard work and cherished hope of years turned to dust with the death of the enslaver, or the slaveholder sold the would-be self-purchaser prior to fulfilling the agreement.[211] Within the system of slavery, the slave had no rights that the slaveholder was bound to respect. The lack of accountability left self-purchasers with little recourse once they had been cheated or the terms of the agreement changed. Little wonder then that flight became a viable alternative once self-purchase arrangements went wrong.

After Henson traveled from Kentucky back to Maryland, he approached Isaac Riley, his enslaver in Montgomery County about purchasing his freedom. Henson, enslaved in Kentucky at the time, worked for Amos Riley, Isaac's brother. Throughout Henson's travels back to Maryland to meet with Riley, he preached to White Methodist congregations, raising money along the way. Riley was open to the terms of purchase, agreeing that Henson could purchase himself for 450 dollars. Upon returning to Kentucky, however, Henson discovered that Riley had acted dishonorably and had deceived him, swindling him out of 350 dollars and leaving him enslaved. "I consoled myself at well as I could . . . resolved to trust in God, and never despair."[212] He also went back to Kentucky, devised a

[211] Aptheker, *To Be Free*, 32.

plan and escaped with his wife and children.[213] The irony in the situation is that the slave was more trustworthy than the master.

Similar to Henson, many slaves eschewed years of waiting and hoping and appropriated freedom by fleeing enslavers and avoiding recapture. Escapees swelled the Black populations not only of free-state cities and towns such as New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Harrisburg, but also the major towns of the Chesapeake, including Baltimore, Wilmington, Richmond, and Norfolk. By 1815, free people of color had constructed large communities in a region of the new republic that nonetheless remained firmly under the direction and control of slaveholders.[214]

On August 8, 1827, Anthony Chase, enslaved by a Baltimore widow, escaped from the man to whom he had been hired out. After the slaveholder failed to honor promises made to him concerning his liberation, Chase wrote a letter to Jeremiah Hoffman which contained a detailed explanation and a personal declaration of his feelings:

> I know that you will be astonished and surprised when you becom acquainted with the unexspected course that I am now about to take, a step that I never had the most distant Idea of takeing, but what can a man do who has his hands bound and his feet fettered[?] He will certainly try to get them loosened by fair and Honorable means and if not so he will ceartainly get them loosened in any way that he may think the most adviseable. I hope Sir that you will not think that I had any faoult to find of you or your family no sir I have none and I could of lived with you all the days of my life if my conditions could

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[212] http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/henson49hp.html.

[213] Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada As Narrated by Himself.* Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henson49/henson49.html.

[214] For the origins of the southern free Black population, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), 15-51. City and state studies in the Chesapeake include Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1996); William H. Williams, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996); Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1997); T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington, KY: U. Press of Kentucky, 1997); James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U. Press, 1997); Michael Nicholls, "Passing Through This Troublesome World: Free Blacks in the Early Southside," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1984); Tommy L. Bogger, *Free Blacks in Norfolk, Virginia 1790-1860:The Darker Side of Freedom* (Charlottesville: U. Press of Virginia, 1997).

have been in any way bettered which I intreated with my mistress to do but it was all in vain[.] She would not consent to any thing that would melorate my condition in any shape of measure So I shall go to sea in the first vessel that may ofer an opportunity and as soon as I can acumulate a sum of money suficent I will Remit it to my mistress to prove to her and to [the] world that I dont mean to be dishonest but wish to pay her every cent that I think my servaces is worth[.] I have served her 11 years faithfully and think it hard that I offered $5.00 what I was valued at 4 years ago and also to pay 4 per cent until the whole sum was payed which I believe I could of done in 2 years and a half or 3 years at any rate but now as I have to Runaway like a criminal[.] I will pay her when I can...Though I am truly sorry that I must leave you in this situation that I do...I [have] taken the Last months wages to defray my exspenses but that money and the five dollars that you lent me the day before I left you I shall ceartainly Return before I ship for the sea. I dont suppose that I shall ever be forgiven for this act but I hope to find forgiveness in that world that is to com. I dont take this step mearly because I wish to be free but because I want to do justice to myself and to others and also to procure a liveing for a family a thing that my mistress would not let me do though I humblely Requested her to let me do so[.]

Before I was married I was Promised my freedom then after find this Peace of writeing whish you will find incloesed I was then confident that I was free at Mr Williams Death, and so I married... I must no beg your forgiveness and at the same time pray to god for your helth and happyness as well as that of your family.[215]

Friends, abolitionists, and concerned supporters often raised funds for purchases, which was the manner in which Maryland escapees and Underground Railroad stalwarts Frederick Douglass and J.W.C. Pennington finally obtained their legal freedom. British abolitionists began the negotiations for the purchase of Douglass's liberty near the time Douglass announced his intention to return to the United States from England in spite of Hugh Auld's claim of ownership and threat to re-enslave him. After agreeing upon a sum, Quaker Anna Richardson and her sister-in-law Ellen Richardson took steps to raise the purchase price and arranged with American abolitionists to handle the details of the negotiations.[216] Douglass described the rationale for his return to the United States and the mechanisms of the agreement in a letter in his defense to Henry Wright:

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[215] Anthony Chase to Jeremiah Hoffman, Chatsworth House [Baltimore], August 8, 1827, in Robert S. Starobin, ed., *Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves* (New York: M. Weiner, 1988), 120. http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:DMRTIrV2-agJ:caho-test.cc.columbia.edu/dbq/11023.html+anthony+chase+fugitive+slave&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=2.

[216] John W. Blassingame, ed. *The Frederick Douglass Papers Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol 1, 1841-46* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 481-482.

> I am in England, my family are in the United States. My sphere of usefulness is in the United States; my public and domestic duties are there; and there it seems my duty to go. But I am *legally* the property of Thomas Auld, and if I go to the United States, (no matter to what part, for there is no City of Refuge there, no spot sacred to freedom there,) Thomas Auld, *aided by the American Government*, can seize, bind and fetter, and drag me from my family, feed his cruel revenge upon me, and doom me to unending slavery. In view of this simple statement of facts, a few friends, desirous of seeing me released from the terrible liability, and to relieve my wife and children from the painful trepidation, consequent upon the liability, and to place me on an equal footing of safety with all other anti-slavery lecturers in the United States, and to enhance my usefulness by enlarging the field of my labors in the United States, have nobly and generously paid Hugh Auld, the agent of Thomas Auld, £150—in consideration of which, Hugh Auld (acting as his agent) and the Government of the United States agree, that I shall be free from all further liability.
>
> These, dear friend, are the facts of the whole transaction. The principle here acted on by my friends, and that upon which I shall act in receiving the manumission papers, I deem quite defensible.[217]

Hugh Auld filed Douglass's manumission papers in Baltimore County on December 5, 1846.

Frequently, those who had escaped slavery years before were imperiled of being reclaimed by their enslaver, particularly after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. J.W.C. Pennington finally obtained his legal freedom though financial contributions by friends toward the purchase. Although he had become a well-known speaker and writer, his status was still that of a fugitive slave, subject to return to bondage. He could only secure legal freedom by emigrating to Canada or England, or as Pennington ultimately did, by arranging a self-purchase and that of his father and two brothers with the executor of his oppressor's estate in 1851, 24 years after his escape thereby rendering "the children of my oppressor some pecuniary aid."[218]

Self-purchase, migration, and manumission concerned both captives and enslavers until the time of the Civil War. Toward the end of slavery, after John

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[217] ASL. Frederick Douglass to Henry C. Wright, 22 St. Ann's Square, Manchester (England), December 22, 1846 in Philip S. Foner, ed. *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 50.

[218] 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" in Arna Bontemps, *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 93-267.

Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the problem of migrating free Blacks was perceived as acute by northern as well as southern states. The Pennsylvania state legislature, for example, considered several proposals in early 1863 designed to prevent Blacks from settling in the state. Whether financial penalties were also considered is unclear.[219] By the start of the Civil War, one enterprising self-purchaser regretted his investment, lamenting to a soldier that if he had known the Union troops were coming, "I'd a saved my money."[220]

The concepts and mechanisms of self-purchase and the relationship between manumission and self-purchase have been poorly researched. This complicated path to freedom involved relying on compensated, yet enslaved, labor to purchase freedom. No accurate figures exist providing a clear understanding or the extent of this freedom strategy. Self-purchase existed in tandem with day-to-day resistance, suicide, self-mutilation, conspiracy, rebellion, poisoning of masters, killing overseers, and escape from slavery. Fighting for freedom in three major wars was also a proactive strategy of self-liberation within the Underground Railroad Movement.

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[219] C. Ripley, ed. *Black Abolitionist's Papers Vol. V* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), footnote 10, 204.

[220] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 92.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FREEDOM-SEEKING ACTIVITIES DURING TIMES OF WAR

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

In 1770, the so-called Boston Massacre occurred, in which Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave, was among the first to give his life in defense of American liberty. As Crispus Attucks of Massachusetts and several other African-American men and women demonstrated, African Americans appropriated revolutionary concepts; when colonial Americans marched and sang to praise liberty, or fought to defend it, some of the voices in the crowds and fingers on the triggers were those of Black people. Patriots, aided by French soldiers, squared off against British soldiers and their Loyalist supporters. Both sides soon were searching hard for more manpower, and sought to draw the enslaved population to their banners.

Efforts to combat slaveholders sprang up even before fighting commenced in the Revolution itself. As James Madison reported in November, 1774, "If American and Britain should come to an hostile rupture, an insurrection among the slaves may and will be promoted...in one of our counties lately a few of those unhappy wretches met together and chose a leader who was to conduct them when the British Troops should arrive."[221] In the spring of 1775, similar murmurs of a Black rising came from Maryland's Eastern Shore. In Dorchester County, a grand jury learned that a disaffected wheelwright, John Simmons, believed that, "the gentlemen were intending to make us all fight for their lands and [N]egress." Simmons had then alarmingly speculated that "damn them if I had a few more White people to join me I could get all the [N]egroes in the county to back us, and they would do more good in the night than the White people could do in the day." In the fall of the same year, the county's Committee of Inspection ordered a sweep

[221]See Merton Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U. Press, 1990), 29.

through slave quarters that netted more than 80 guns, swords, and other weapons.[222] Slaves were applying the American rhetoric of resistance to tyranny to their own situation. Runaways knew that the danger of recapture and remission to a master by slave patrols, courts, and jails on the Eastern Shore was less than it had been before the war.[223]

Fears of Black men with weapons in their hands became real in Virginia when the Royal Governor, Lord John Murray Dunmore, threatened in May 1775 to arm slaves who helped him suppress Americans who challenged his authority. Enslaved African Americans had initiated contact with Dunmore one month earlier, coming to his residence to offer their services should fighting erupt. After Dunmore fled Williamsburg in June, hundreds of Blacks joined him as he tried to maintain a military base in and around Norfolk. In November, Dunmore formally issued a proclamation affecting his threat to make soldiers and free men of slaves.

Maryland's Royal Governor Robert Eden reported that revolutionary leaders attempted to cut off correspondence with Virginia, to prevent slaves from learning of Dunmore's offer.[224] Despite this opposition, nearly 1,000 men enlisted in Dunmore's "Ethiopian Regiment" wearing uniforms that bore the slogan "Liberty to Slaves." Though women and noncombatants were not promised freedom, many also flocked to Dunmore's camp as well. [225] Word of his plan spread far beyond the Chesapeake, by December a Philadelphia newspaper reported a clash between a "gentlewoman" and a Black man who refused to yield the sidewalk to her. When she reprimanded him, he jeered, "Stay you d[amne]d White bitch 'till Lord Dunmore and his Black regiment come, and then we will see who is to take the wall." By 1776, enslavers as far west as Frederick County, Maryland, reported

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[222] See Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 147-148.

[223] Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension*, 226.

[224] See Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 383-386; Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension*, 148.

[225] See Holton, "Rebel Against Rebel." 182-183; Quarles, "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," 502-504.

fugitives seeking to reach Dunmore. In still-troubled Dorchester County, three slaves were hung, drawn, and quartered for killing a White person in a failed attempt to get to British forces.[226]

Dunmore harried his opponents in the Chesapeake until August, 1776, when he sailed for New York with several hundred Blacks who had survived combat and a smallpox epidemic. Ex-slaves from the Chesapeake continued to fight for the British as partisans and raiders. Dunmore's use of slaves to defeat rebellion never gained unconditional approval in British war planning, however. The British aimed to restore the colonies to their former role as loyal and submissive producers of tropical staples and consumers of British manufactures; emancipation was not their primary goal. Fomenting slave insurrection might defeat the Americans, but would surely also destroy the plantation economy that made the southern colonies so valuable a possession. Accordingly, the British sought to obtain the maximum military and propaganda value from Black allies with the minimum disruption, offering freedom selectively, but only to men fleeing masters in rebellion. No general emancipation was contemplated; Dunmore himself freed none of the slaves he owned.[227]

This selective policy did compel Maryland, Virginia, and other slave-filled colonial states to commit more men to maintaining control of slaves and fewer to fighting the British than would otherwise have been the case. But it may also have dampened the response of Blacks to British freedom proclamations. Still, many slaves raced to them as liberators; escape and insurrection attempts rose dramatically whenever English colors appeared in the Chesapeake. Maryland's Council of Safety ordered militia companies to keep watch and guard "in the most

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[226] For the Philadelphia incident, Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom; The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1988), 45. For Maryland runaways, see Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension*, 184-188.

[227] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 106-122, 192-193.

proper places" to prevent anyone escaping slavery from boarding the British ships of war.[228]

For several weeks in the summer of 1777, the Chesapeake became the central seat of the war as General Howe sailed his army up the Bay, as a prelude to taking over Philadelphia. Keeping his warships and troop transports well out in the middle of the Bay to avoid shoal waters, Howe at first attracted relatively few Blacks escaping slavery. Once the fleet reached the mouth of the Patuxent, where the Bay narrows however, enslaved Blacks on the shore could reach Howe more readily. Local militias in Maryland turned out to prevent Blacks from fleeing to Howe, intercepting canoes and skiffs, and burning unsecured small boats. Maryland officials complained that in addition to the lure of the British fleet and army, they had to contend with privateers who trailed in Howe's wake, making forays into the tidal rivers and taking on board Blacks who streamed to them as they escaped slavery from the interior. Many of the escapees did not find the relief they sought and were resold into slavery in the West Indies. Those who broke through the picket lines advanced with Howe to Philadelphia, where the British formed Black pioneer companies to construct defenses, clean the streets, and remove public nuisances during the occupation of the city.[229]

The next invasion of the Chesapeake came in 1779. France had entered the war in 1778, and the threat of attacks on British islands in the Caribbean swung the focus of efforts in America southward to Georgia and South Carolina. A raiding expedition entered the Bay to seize food, supplies, and horses, and to divert possible reinforcements to American troops in South Carolina. Residents of Salisbury, Maryland, reported Blacks embarking on British boats that had come 20 miles up the Wicomico River. The resident further reported that he was convinced "all our most valuable Negroes will runaway." The appearance of British ships off

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[228] *Journal of the Council of Safety* 25 (1776); Archives of Maryland., XI, 511, 517 cited in Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 124.

[229] Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 145-148.

St. Mary's County on Maryland's lower western shore likewise led Blacks who were enslaved along the waterways to escape. Colonel Richard Barnes expressed similar concerns, observing that "greatest part of them" would take flight if given the chance. At least four African Americans ran away from Captain Charles Ridgely's Northampton Furnace in the war years. A 25-year-old named Penny seemed well aware of the possibility of using both sides to his purpose. In 1778, Penny proposed "to [en]list and try to get to the English" forces operating in the Chesapeake.[230] Whether or not Penny gained permanent freedom by joining American forces and then switching sides, he did not appear again in the Ridgely's accounts. Moved by such dire predictions and warnings, the council of Maryland advised the lower house to pass special legislation protecting legal title and property rights of slaveholders from whom freedom seekers had escaped. The frequency with which the enslaved population was fleeing necessitated such legislation because of "the Facility with which they abandon the Service of their Masters who live on the Waters."[231]

At the end of 1780, yet another British force appeared at the Virginia capes, this time led by Benedict Arnold, a few months after his defection to the British. Meanwhile, renewed naval raids struck hard at the tidewater plantations. In April 1781, when a British sloop of war anchored in the Potomac near Mount Vernon, 17 of George Washington's enslaved workforce at least temporarily obtained their freedom by rowing out to the ship. Despite entreaties from Lund Washington, a cousin of the General's then managing the estate, none of the 14 men and three women returned. In Maryland, barges with Black crews worked up the Patuxent to Benedict and Lower Marlboro, looting the town and aiding anyone escaping

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[230] Advertisement of Captain Charles Ridgely for Penny, May 26, 1778, *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, reprinted in Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790, Volume 2: Maryland* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 205-206, also the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Commercial Advertiser*, May, 1778.

[231] Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 116-117, 152-153.

slavery from the surrounding countryside. Similar attacks repeatedly hit Dorchester, Somerset, and Worcester Counties on the Eastern Shore.[232]

At sea, some slave pilots gained freedom; Caesar Tarrant steered the Virginia Navy sloop *Patriot* for four years until it sank in 1781.[233] Black men like Tarrant who enlisted in the state navies of Maryland or Virginia fought both to free themselves from slavery and to prevent Britain from "enslaving" Anglo-American rebels, to use the patriotic rhetoric of the day. Ironically, no small part of navy duty consisted of patrolling rivers and harbors to prevent other Blacks from fleeing to the British. For Blacks as well as Whites, the Revolutionary War could be a civil war. African-American soldiers fighting in Maryland and Virginia regiments in Washington's Continental Army took part in battles at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth in 1777 and 1778, where they may well have clashed with veterans of Dunmore's Ethiopians.[234]

In May 1781, Lord Cornwallis brought his army north into Virginia, ranging inland to Petersburg, Richmond, and Albemarle courthouse before taking up a position at Yorktown in early August. Large numbers of Black Virginia residents joined Cornwallis, despite efforts by slaveholders to "refugee" their chattels by taking them upcountry. General Henry Clinton, Cornwallis's superior, thought "thousands of poor Blacks" were with him, where they found work as servants of officers, digging trenches for the army's defense, maintaining latrines, slaughtering cattle, and cooking. And, according to Lafayette, Blacks proved skillful at impressing horses, "Nothing but a treaty of alliance with the Negroes can find us dragoon horses...it is by this means the enemy have so formidable a Cavalry," he wrote to George Washington.[235]

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[232] Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (Columbia, MO: U. of Missouri Press, 1997), 21-29.

[233] See Kaplans, *Negro Presence*, 60.

[234] See Jackson, "Virginia Negro Soldiers," 273.

[235] Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 140-147.

As the siege tightened, Cornwallis could no longer feed his camp followers, and in early October, he expelled them from his lines, leading to the re-enslavement of those captured by American forces. After the British surrender, conditions became even more chaotic. Some were returned to slavery with former masters, including three or four of the runaways from Mount Vernon. Others were peremptorily seized as spoils of war by American soldiers. Still others made their way to British ships in the Bay, exploiting a loophole in the articles of capitulation that provided for the return of American property in the hands of the British garrison, but said nothing about navy vessels.

Yet another path to avoiding re-enslavement lay in joining the French army under Count Rochambeau; many French officers and men were keen to protect Blacks who came within their lines. Both at Yorktown and as the French army marched northward back to New York in 1782, its ranks proved a magnet for Blacks seeking another chance to find freedom in the turmoil of the Revolution, as runaway advertisements from Baltimore and Annapolis masters testify.[236] The American Revolution opened the floodgates for large groups of men and women to escape within the ever present, ever operational Underground Railroad Movement.

During the Revolution, some "Tories" freed Blacks to ally them with the British. Quakers were harassed as well for failing to fight, and for refusing to support the war financially which helped prompt them to manumit their slaves in protest. Both the Quakers and their bondsmen knew that Patriot governments spent little effort in securing the return of runaways from "disloyal" masters. The sporadic presence of the British made a difference, too, in destabilizing slavery and perhaps pushing ambivalent slaveholders toward manumission as a way to forestall flight. In several Maryland Eastern Shore counties, the first waves of Quaker liberations, mostly prospective promises of future freedom, neatly coincided with

[236] Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 160-161; Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*, 63.

the presence of British forces around Philadelphia in 1777 to 1778 or at the bottom of the Bay in 1780 to 1781.[237]

The Revolutionary War revealed exactly how dependent this region was on slave labor. Prior to the Revolution, tobacco grown in the Chesapeake area accounted for nearly half of Britain's trade with the colonies. During the war, however, at least 20,000 enslaved Blacks were lost to British invaders who promised them freedom if they enlisted on their side. Consequently, the post-war decrease in enslaved labor contributed significantly to a major slump in tobacco exports. One historian noted, this "drastic decline of tobacco exports to Britain marked the most sweeping change in American commerce that occurred immediately after the war." The postwar shortage of enslaved laborers took its toll on almost every staple crop in the South.[238]

By late 1782, British and American negotiators in Paris signed preliminary articles of peace, committing the British not to carry away Blacks claimed by the Americans. The Treaty stipulated that escaped and captured slaves would be returned to their owners.[239] Slaveholders from Maryland and elsewhere congregated in British-held New York, "seizing upon their slaves in the streets...or even dragging them from their beds." But British General Guy Carleton refused to render up African Americans who had joined the British before the signing of the articles on November 30, 1782, "fill[ing] us with joy and gratitude" according to one Black fugitive.[240] When the British evacuated New York in 1783, Blacks from the Chesapeake joined a larger stream of loyalists who departed with the British army and fleet for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where some of their descendants still

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[237] Manumissions in several Maryland counties exhibit this pattern, including Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot.

[238] Christian, *Black Saga*, 43.

[239] Christian, *Black Saga, 57.*

[240] Boston King, quoted in James W. St.G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*, (New York: Africana Publishing Company and Dalhousie, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University Press, 1976), 10-11.

live. In all, some 15,000 former slaves left America on British ships leaving New York, Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA, or eastern Florida.[241] As part of the larger Underground Railroad Movement, this mini-diaspora would take African Americans to Canada, England, and even to Hesse and Brunswick with German soldiers, as well as to the British freed men's colony of Sierra Leone.

The freed slaves who sailed with the British evacuation fleets made up only a fraction of the total losses to American slaveholders during the Revolution. Contemporaries estimated that as many as 50,000 Blacks had joined or been captured by the British, or about one in 10 slaves in the former colonies.[242] Captain Ridgely, if his four advertised runaways were his only losses, did comparatively well.

These departures, while catastrophic for some slaveholders, clearly did not destroy the reality of slavery in the Chesapeake. Indeed, the sequestering of slaves to the backcountry facilitated the institution's penetration of the Piedmont, the Shenandoah Valley, and Maryland's western counties and shored up White political support for slavery by creating new constituencies of slave owners and hirers. Likewise, the port of Baltimore, safely removed from scenes of combat, yet relatively close to theaters of action in the lower Chesapeake, became a major supply base for American forces. The resulting boom drew hundreds of slaves to the town as laborers, as well as to places like Hampton, where the Ridgely's furnace and forges literally went full blast during the war. At an individual level, of course, the Revolution dramatically changed the lives of Blacks who seized their freedom.[243]

Not all Blacks pursued freedom by supporting the British, of course. As many as 5,000 African Americans fought for the American Revolution, serving in Continental Army regiments as militia men and as sailors in the American and state navies. Thousands more, like counterparts with British forces, performed military

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[241] See Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 172-180; Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 174-179.

[242] Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 376.

[243] Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 376; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 119.

labor, piloted ships, guided troops, and operated as spies or messengers. Many of those who bore arms were free people of color who enlisted or were drafted into a military unit. Other free Blacks accepted bounties from White draftees and served as substitutes for them.

For enslaved African Americans, military service could offer the prospect of freedom. Some northern colonies accepted Black recruits on the condition that military service would convey freedom. Others, like Maryland, accepted free Black soldiers, some of whom were ex-slaves freed by their enslavers and then offered to the army in lieu of their former owners being drafted. Still other slaves labored in support of the Revolution as publicly owned workers, either bought from the masters or impressed into service in much the same manner used to obtain foodstuffs or horses for the revolutionary cause. Virginia made extensive use of public slaves as military laborers, and Maryland in 1781, actually impressed slaves into its armed forces, compensating masters for their loss, but making no promises of freedom to Blacks thus drafted.[244] Finally, some slaves, particularly those confiscated from loyalist masters, found themselves offered up as enlistment bonuses to White soldiers, particularly toward the end of the eight-year war, as disillusionment with the long conflict made securing replacements for state regiments ever more difficult. In sum, most Blacks aided the Revolution by hefting axes or spades rather than shouldering muskets and by driving supply wagons rather than mounting cavalry horses.

One enduring lesson from the American Revolution forward was that liberty and equality were two separate quests. For another two centuries, African Americans would discover that liberty and freedom did not automatically guarantee equality. In Nova Scotia, the British made good on their promise of freedom but Thomas Peters complained that he and other Pioneers and free Blacks did not receive their promised allotment of land, and once they arrived in Nova Scotia,

[244] See Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension*, 241.

faced militant opposition and racial intolerance from local Canadian White laborers.[245]

After the war, political leaders in the Chesapeake re-examined whether to continue the African slave trade. Opponents had long warned that it discouraged the immigration of poor Whites and retarded economic development.[246] The importing of African captives had been on the wane since the 1760s, perhaps because of stagnating European demand for slave-grown tobacco. Thus, though slaveholders in the Chesapeake had lost thousands of slaves during the war, they were far from certain that they needed to restore importations. Revolutionary devotion to protecting property rights could thus harmonize protection of slavery as it existed with an abandonment of the trade that had created it. Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*, written in the early 1780s, evince a deep fear of Black insurrection juxtaposed with a wish for slavery's ultimate demise over the very long run. Eliminating the slave trade would certainly diminish Black to White ratios and thus reduce the chances of a successful Black rebellion, and might be the impetus toward the gradual withering away of slavery itself. The upshot of these concerns was that Virginia ended the importation of slaves in 1778, Maryland in 1783, and Delaware in 1787. Limiting the exportation of slaves or slavery altogether was another matter.

When Congress debated abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1807, Chesapeake legislators supported the concept, but many of them opposed freeing illegally imported slaves and objected to moral denunciations of slave buyers and sellers.[247] This carefully qualified opposition to slave importing allowed owners to bring in slaves acquired by inheritance or marriage. Residents of other states could bring slaves into Maryland for labor, so long as they promised not to sell them in the

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[245] John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815" *The Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973) :253-270.

[246] *Maryland Gazette*, July 9, 30, 1767, August 20, 1767, and September 10, 1767, quoted in Duncan MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U. Press, 1974), 31-40.

[247] Matthew E. Mason, "Slavery Overshadowed: Congress Debates Prohibiting the Atlantic Slave Trade to the United States, 1806-1807," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (2000): 59-82.

state. When refugees from the Haitian Revolution began arriving in Maryland ports in the early 1790s, legislators quickly authorized them to bring in their enslaved workers. Cases not covered by these broad exemptions could be addressed through private bills allowing slave imports; legislators passed more than 400 such acts in Maryland between 1800 and 1860.[248]

Planters also had to confront a new threat to slavery—the first to come from within Anglo-American society in the Chesapeake. Even before the end of the Revolutionary War, slaveholders faced the rise of Black and White antislavery sentiment, expressed in religious, political, libertarian, and economic terms. In the Chesapeake, post-revolutionary struggles generated less clear outcomes. Masters rebounded from the stagnant markets for tobacco by raising new crops in the Piedmont or on the Eastern Shore, and by utilizing surplus agricultural workers in crafts and manufacturing or as casual laborers in the cities and towns that grew up in response to such diversification. Slavery regained a firm economic foundation, especially when new settlements in the Southwest began to provide reliable markets for surplus slaves from the 1790s onward in advance of a post-1815 hardening of proslavery sentiment in the region.

However, the rhetoric of liberty was deeply engrained into the psyche of African Americans. Freedom, both gradual and outright, forever changed the nature of slavery in the northern states. As a result of the war and Patriot libertarian ideals, Vermont took the lead in abolishing slavery and became the first colonial territory to do so in 1777. Pennsylvania made provision for gradual emancipation in 1780. In Massachusetts in 1783, Quaco Walker won his freedom in the case of *Commonwealth v. Jennison,* which also abolished slavery in the commonwealth by virtue of the Declaration of Rights of 1780. Gradual emancipation undertaken by New Hampshire in 1783, Connecticut and Rhode Island a year later, and New York

[248] See Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 11.

freed no one immediately. Further south, Virginia emancipated slaves who fought with the patriots of the Continental Army.[249]

The War of 1812

By the War of 1812, the British had already proven themselves during the American Revolution to be true to their word in emancipating enslaved African Americans who fought for the British. British war ships blockaded American ports and promised freedom. During this time, Blacks were still held in bondage in most northern states because of the stipulations and restrictions in gradual emancipation acts. Sir Guy Carlton stated it would be a breach of faith not to honor their promise of liberty to the African Americans who had staked their freedom on the British word.[250]As they had in the Revolution 40 years earlier, British warships patrolled the Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812, looking to enslaved Blacks for support and offering liberty in return.

The Chesapeake Bay region bore the brunt of the British invasion. Commanded by Admiral John Warren and Colonel Sydney Beckwith, the British fleet and army appeared in the Bay along the Maryland shore in the spring and summer of 1813. As before, disrupting American war-making capacity rather than destroying plantation society characterized British objectives. Under orders to give no "encouragement to any disposition by the Negroes to rise against their Masters," the expedition was nonetheless "at liberty...to take them away with you" and "to enlist them in any of the Black Corps." As they had done during the American Revolution, slaveholders often sent enslaved African Americans across the mountains to thwart any longings for liberty. Those who failed to take careful precautions experienced a large number of desertions. Ignoring the ambivalence of

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[249] Christian, *Black Saga.*

[250] John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815" *The Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973): 253-270.

British policy, many freedom seekers set out to join advancing troops. With British ships anchored in the Bay, escapees appropriated their enslaver's canoes and small boats, using them to make their way to British war ships.[251]

A British occupation of Point Lookout, at the southern tip of Maryland's Western Shore soon attracted hundreds of runaways in the summer of 1813. Blacks familiar with the Bay volunteered as pilots, and helped conduct raids up the rivers, destroying houses, seizing cattle, and providing a path to freedom for opportunistic slaves.[252] It is estimated that about 15% of all seamen in the navy during the War of 1812 were Black.[253] Charles Ball, an ex-slave living near the Patuxent River, noted in his memoirs that Blacks often initiated contact with the British, rowing to their ships by night to propose and coordinate mass escapes. In one such incident, nearly 100 Blacks eluded pursuit and gained haven with the British. Ball joined a party of Americans who subsequently came on board, under a flag of truce, to try to persuade the runaways to return to their mistress, a Mrs. Wilson. But Ball's efforts were unavailing. None of the Blacks agreed, "Their heads were full of notions of liberty and happiness in some of the West India islands."[254]

Residents of Maryland and Virginia buttressed persuasion with precautions aimed at forestalling the ever-constant problem of slave flight. As in the Revolutionary War, militia companies and watermen tried to interpose themselves between Blacks and their British deliverers, with mixed success. A slave patrol near Lynnhaven Bay dispersed slaves camped in a remote spot waiting for a chance to join the British by attacking the Blacks, killing six.

Slaveholders also tried to discourage Blacks from eloping by insinuating that the British would resell them into slavery in the West Indies. But slaves, like their fathers and mothers of the revolutionary era, refused to be deterred by such claims.

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[251] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 28.

[252] Franklin and Schweninger *Runaway Slaves*, 27-30.

[253] Christian, *Black Saga*, 83.

[254] Quoted from George, "Mirage of Freedom," 432-433.

In fact, the "notions of liberty" in the "West India islands" entertained by Mrs. Wilson's ex-slaves were not as visionary as Charles Ball's narrative suggests; the British were indeed eager to settle free Blacks in colonies that needed agricultural workers. Ball himself was invited to join the runaways, who would be sent to Trinidad, a recently acquired British possession.[255]

In April 1814, Admiral Alexander Cochrane signaled more aggressive intentions by openly welcoming slaves to his ships, "All persons who may be disposed to migrate from the United States, will with their families, be received on board of His Majesty's ships...." In anticipation of taking the offensive in the Chesapeake, Cochrane recruited Black soldiers from those who rallied to him, using Tangier Island in the lower Bay as a base and training camp. By summer, a corps of colonial marines had sprung into life, composed of 200 ex-slaves and 300 soldiers from the regular army. These freed men fought with the British in several major battles in the Chesapeake, including the campaigns against Washington, DC, and Baltimore.

When British forces routed superior numbers of American troops at the Battle of Bladensburg, on August 24, 1814, the Black marines performed with "their accustomed zeal and bravery" according to official reports, also taking part in the brief British occupation and burning of the national capital. General Robert Ross quickly withdrew his troops, fearing that Americans would organize a counterattack. As his men pulled back on August 26, Blacks sought to join the British ranks, promising to serve as soldiers or sailors, if freed—offers which Ross rebuffed as he hastened back to the protection of his ships.

In fact, American militia units allowed Ross to retreat unhindered, immobilized by fear of slave uprisings that had also compromised the capital's defense. As Ross was marching eastward, General Tobias Stansbury of Baltimore County took his Maryland regiment in the opposite direction, to quell a rumored insurrection in Georgetown. Some regiments all but dissolved in the wake of the defeat at Bladensburg, as citizen-soldiers dashed to their homes to guard against the

[255] See George, "Mirage of Freedom," 433.

apprehension that Blacks "would take advantage of the absence of the men to insult the females." Earlier, Virginia militias had been slow to muster in defense of Washington due to concerns about slave rebellion. Though these fears proved baseless, they had played their part in rendering the Chesapeake all but defenseless.[256]

If Black responses to British offers of liberty in the War of 1812 matched the patterns of the Revolutionary War, corresponding chances for distinction and freedom by serving in the American cause were far fewer. The Militia Act of 1790 had limited service in state militias to White men, evincing slaveholders' objections to people of color acquiring military training and handling guns. In contrast to the British, American defenders of the Chesapeake's cities followed suit; in Baltimore, General Samuel Smith used Blacks as laborers to entrench and fortify the city, but he did not arm them.

African Americans still contributed to the defense of the Chesapeake, as sailors. Commodore Joshua Barney's fleet of gunboats destroyed by the British in the Washington campaign had its share of Black seamen and gunners. Some of those men manned batteries at forts that protected Fort McHenry and were instrumental in it withstanding the British bombardment of September 13 and 14. Inside the Fort's walls, a runaway slave met his fate that night. William Williams, escaped from a tobacco plantation in Prince George's County, enlisted as a volunteer in a United States Army infantry regiment that subsequently saw action at Fort McHenry. A cannonball took off Williams's leg and he died at the end of 1814 in a Baltimore hospital.

At about the same time, British and American negotiators agreed to the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. Paralleling the close of the Revolutionary War, the British navy honored promises of freedom to Black allies by transporting them out of the United States. After a temporary stay in Bermuda, Blacks who had fought in the Colonial Marines took ship for Trinidad, where they founded a community

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[256] See John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776-1815," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973): 253-270. Quote of Tobias Stansbury in George, "Mirage of Freedom," 440.

that still endures, known today as the "Merikens," and are esteemed for their hard-working independence.[257] Approximately 2,000 to 3,000 Black civilians embarked for Nova Scotia, where unlike their predecessors of the revolutionary era, they successfully rooted themselves, forming settlements in places such as Preston and Hammond's Plains.[258]

Peace in 1815 ended a virtual second war of independence for the United States. For African Americans, the final departure of British soldiers in 1815 represented the closing of one route to freedom, while the old Southwest opened a new passage, not only to freedom in the Northwest Territory but also to a much expanded world of plantation slavery in the cotton kingdom. Blacks had already appropriated what would become the Northwest Territory as a place of freedom, by escaping slavery and finding refuge there prior to the American Revolution. As frontier lands opened for settlement, free Blacks, perhaps encouraged by the antislavery provisions of the Northwest Ordinance, joined Whites in migration to the Territory, as part of the ever expanding geography of the Underground Railroad Movement.

The Civil War Period

After two wars in which African American quests for freedom played a pivotal role, the Civil War represented the first direct opportunity for Blacks to fight for their own freedom. A deeply divided Chesapeake would become a prime battleground of the resulting war as secessionists took part of Virginia out of the Union. Maryland, Delaware, and the western third of Virginia, perhaps already recognizing slavery's impending doom, stayed with the Union. Further demonstrating the bifurcated nature of the state, "A clash between pro-South civilians and Union troops in Maryland's largest city resulted in what is

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[257] See John McNish Weiss, "The Corps of Colonial Marines 1814-16: A Summary," *Immigrants and Minorities* 15 (1996): 80-90.

[258] Grant, "Black Immigrants," 269-270.

commonly accepted to be the first bloodshed of the Civil War. Secessionist sympathy was strong in Baltimore, a border state metropolis."[259]

At the inception of the Civil War, there were "21,000 free Black and 77,000 slave men of military age" living in the border states. Maryland alone had more than 31,000, many of whom, as fugitives inside Union lines, had disposed themselves within easy reach of federal recruiters. Arrival of the federal army further deepened the determination among the enslaved population to seek freedom whenever and wherever they could. "Rumors of insurrections made their appearance with the first federal troops."[260]

The first specific instance of area slaves escaping during the Civil War was noted in the diary of Catherine Barbara Broun, wife of Edwin Conway Broun, Middleburg postmaster and storekeeper. "Servants are running off from all parts of the country," she wrote on April 30, 1862, as Union forces were occupying the town and countryside. "Poor things they think they are going to their friends [the Union forces] how disappointed they will be but we want them to go out and try them." Her next day's entry appeared to blame the exodus on "the emancipation bill," not Lincoln's but one of many forwarded by Union abolitionists. Broun wrote of "great dissatisfaction" with the bill, but she failed to say who was dissatisfied.[261]

Northern soldiers objected to slavecatchers who pursued fugitives into army camps, taunting them and forcibly preventing recaptures. By early 1862, Congress responded, amending the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 to bar soldiers from aiding in the recapture of fugitives from disloyal masters. In addition, the First Confiscation Act allowed commanders to employ fugitives whose masters had used them to

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[259]"Baltimore Riot, April 19, 1861" http://www.civilwarhome.com/baltimoreriot.htm.

[260] Fields, 92, footnote 7.

[261] Eugene Scheel, "For Some Slaves, Path to Freedom Was Far From Clear-Cut," Sunday, January 5, 2003; Page LZ03, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8416-2003Jan3.html. Posted at "Race and History News and Views." http://www.raceandhistory.com/cgi-bin/forum/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/1218.

support the Confederacy. Later in 1862, a second Confiscation Act declared outright that fugitives of persons supporting the rebellion were free, regardless of the ex-slave's employment.[262] Slaves quickly learned that asserting one had run from a disloyal slaveholder could be a pass to freedom within the Army of the Potomac's lines. A bitterly worded protest from the Maryland General Assembly failed to alter these new policies.[263]

Commanders seeking to turn the flood of runaways to military advantage and unconditional Unionists frankly hoping to speed slavery to its death joined forces to urge that the War Department begin recruiting Black men in Maryland. Many eligible and willing Black hands waited in readiness to join the military struggle. Union Army General Robert C. Schenck had assembled 4,000 Black men to work on fortifications in Baltimore as the Confederates began the invasion that ended at Gettysburg. Loath to discharge these men when their work was complete, Schenck secured the War Department's permission to raise a Black regiment. Colonel William Birney, son of prominent abolitionist James G. Birney, was assigned to Schenck to take charge of recruiting. Both Schenck and Birney knew, and others were soon to find, that recruitment of Black men meant the impending end of slavery in Maryland.[264] Several Maryland Regiments were raised in Baltimore with many United States Colored Troops draft and training centers set up at Camp Birney in Baltimore for eager new recruits.

In order to protect escaped slaves that had fled to his camp in Newport News, Virginia, Union Major General Benjamin F. Butler invoked property law. He reasoned that if the Confederacy was going to refer to slaves as property he could seize them as property contraband of war. It meant that when runaway

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[262] The First Confiscation Act passed in August 1861; the ban on returning fugitive slaves took effect in March, 1862; the Second Confiscation Act became law in July 1862.

[263] Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 90-130, emphasizes Black agency in achieving emancipation in Maryland. For an account that stresses White political activity, see Charles Lewis Wagandt, *The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1964), passim.

[264] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom.*

slaves flooded into Union camps, they were put to work. Although this particular group was not fighting on the front lines, these individuals nevertheless were instrumental in war-time operations including building fortifications, maintaining railroads, and mining coal.[265]

As time passed and Union casualties grew, Blacks were granted the right to serve in the Union Army. In Maryland, six Black regiments were formed, amassing more than 8,700 men. These regiments played major roles in the Union's battle plans—including the 36th United States Colored Infantry's guarding of the Confederate Prison at Point Lookout, Maryland, and later in the war, its disabling of Confederate torpedoes in the lower Chesapeake. More than 180,000 Black men served in the Union army, and 18,000 served in the Union Navy.[266]

On September 25, 1861, the Secretary of the Navy authorized the enlistment of enslaved African Americans to fight in the Civil War almost two years before the army opened its ranks. The Union had no policy barring Blacks from Naval service, in part because of critical manpower shortages. "Fill up the crews with contrabands obtained from Major-General Dix, as there is not an available sailor in the North" advised Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles on August 5, 1862, to Commodore Charles Wilkes, Commander of the James River Flotilla.[267] Because Blacks were not allowed to enlist in the army, and a large number of African Americans had experience as seamen, many rushed to enlist. Blacks served in various ranks, including officers and participated in some of the great battles of the Civil War. However, they were also confined to duties as servants, cooks, or powder boys. By 1862, approximately 200,000 Blacks had served in the Union

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[265] Anton Bulík, "Civil War, Chesapeake Bay," http://www.studentske.sk/anglictina/U.S.Civil_War__Chesapeak_Bay.doc.

[266] Anton Bulík, "Civil War, Chesapeake Bay," http://www.studentske.sk/anglictina/U.S.Civil_War__Chesapeak_Bay.doc.

[267] "A Forgotten Milestone: Blacks in the Union Navy," Vicksburg, National Military Park, National Park Service. http://www.nps.gov/archive/vick/visctr/sitebltn/a_forgot.htm.

Army and Navy, 178,000 in the United States Colored Troops and 30,000 in the Navy. Blacks could be promoted to regular seaman ranks, and by the end of the war, 30,000 African Americans comprised one fourth of the total of 118,000 enlistees who had served in the navy—a proportion higher than in the army. As many as 2.2 million soldiers fought for the Union Army with African Americans representing roughly 10%.[268]

President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, declaring that "all persons held as slaves" in regions under Confederate control were to be "forever free." The proclamation, under consideration since July 1862, had been issued September 22, 1862, five days after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam. The document specified that if rebelling states returned to the Union, their slaves would not be freed. The proclamation did not apply to the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, "the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia," five tidewater Virginia counties, and the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth. Those areas were then under Union control. The decree encouraged more than 400,000 slaves to flee their masters and seek refuge in areas held by Union forces. Even before Proclamation Day, as January 1 would later be termed by many area African Americans, more than 100,000 slaves had fled the Confederacy.

Unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors, African Americans in the Chesapeake who allied with outsiders in the Civil War won not only personal freedom but also the total destruction of chattel slavery, forming regiments of United States Colored Troops that helped to overwhelm the Confederacy in the war's final two years. Maryland raised about 10,000 Black troops and Virginia raised more than 5,000. If we include soldiers from Delaware and Washington, DC, members of northern Black regiments who were ex-fugitives or free migrants from Maryland or Virginia, and sailors from the shores of the Bay, the total number of Black freedom fighters from the Chesapeake in all likelihood exceeded 20,000, a

[268] "A Forgotten Milestone."

respectable contribution to the approximately 200,000 African Americans who served the Union nationwide.[269]

Despite all manner of obstacles thrown in their way, slaves contrived ways to chip away at their bondage, with free Blacks often assisting them in their incessant whittling. Appropriating horses and carts from their owners, paddling their way to naval vessels patrolling the rivers, playing Maryland against Virginia and both against Washington, DC, escapees put everyone on notice that there would be no relief from the fugitive problem. Governor Bradford, who generally exerted himself on behalf of wealthy slave owners, announced the limits of his power in the matter in January 1863. In response to a slave owner's request that he use the state militia to recover slaves escaping to the military hospital at Point Lookout, Bradford gave a characteristically verbose but uncharacteristically pointed response. He was not, he said

> inclined to a course that to many might appear not less ridiculous than impracticable, of calling upon the militia of the State to compel the army of the nation, engaged in this war for national salvation, to disregard the laws established for its government, and abide by those prescribed by our Code.

For their part, commanders seeking to hold the army to the laws established for its government foundered on a hopeless tangle of rules, any one of which might be confounded by the next fugitive to appear.[270]

Brigadier General Henry H. Lockwood, commanding a brigade near Point Lookout, attempted define the situation out in the spring of 1863. Governor Bradford asked Lockwood to surrender some slaves as fugitives from justice who escaped before the local sheriff could sell them to discharge their owners' indebtedness. Refusing the governor's request, Lockwood argued, "The slaves in question...were fugitives not from justice but from service or labor, and thus protected from surrender by the 1862 article of war."[271]

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[269] Ira Berlin, et al, *The Destruction of Slavery*, 68, 339; Jordan, *Black Confederates*, 267.

[270] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 120, footnote 72.

[271] Ibid, footnote 73.

In April, Lockwood composed a contradictory and exception-filled circular embracing his understanding of the army's fugitive policy that only served to further confuse the situation. "In June the sheriff of Prince George's County informed Governor Bradford helplessly that slaves were leaving the county in large crowds and resisting recapture with armed force, while authorities in the District of Columbia arrested and imprisoned members of the posses he called out to stop them."[272]

Recruitment of free Blacks into the army began in Maryland in July 1863. Recruitment from the enslaved population from October 1863 onward sounded the death knell of slavery; some 10,000 Black Maryland residents would join the United States Colored Troops. African-American men from 73 Indiana counties served in the Union Army during the Civil War. The majority formed a battalion of the 28th Regiment. "The 28th USCT is of special interest because over half the numbers were recruited from Ellicott Mills, Maryland, near the location of John Brown's farmhouse headquarters."[273]

Many thousands of Blacks liberated themselves in every part of Maryland by fleeing to Union lines, where they worked for the army or signed up as soldiers and fought for the destruction of slavery. Others took advantage of the chaos of war to run away to Baltimore, Washington, or northern cities where they lived as free Blacks until war-time legislation formally emancipated them. In one such incident, George Humphreys ran away from John Ridgely of Hampton in order to join the Union army in 1864. But Humphreys either was refused enlistment or deserted, because he was "taken up" and returned to Hampton in June of that year. Like the majority of Maryland's enslaved workforce, he only gained freedom with the passage of emancipation legislation.[274]

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[272] Ibid, footnote 74.

[273] "Allies for Freedom" http://www.alliesforfreedom.org/Convention.pdf.

[274] John Ridgely to his wife, June 23, 1864, Ridgely Papers, microfilm roll M4452.

Union-held areas of the Chesapeake were exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation, as part of Lincoln's strategy to keep border slave states loyal, while attacking slavery in the Confederacy itself. Washington, DC, a hotbed of proslavery sentiment in its prewar local politics, first saw the end of slavery with federal legislation mandating compensated emancipation enacted on April 16, 1862, five months before Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln and antislavery republicans, citing constitutional authority for the Congress to govern Washington, DC, seized an opportunity to end slavery through compensation that they hoped would achieve several goals. As a war measure, the law sent a clear signal to slaves in Virginia, encouraging them to cease aiding the Confederacy through their labor, and flee if they could to Washington, DC. Since the outbreak of the war, Black people had been pouring into Washington, DC, from both Virginia and Maryland, hoping to escape masters. Captured runaways along with slaves suspected of plotting an escape were placed in the Washington, DC, jail by slaveholders. Union troops, few of whom were out-and-out abolitionists, nonetheless balked at assisting masters and their slavecatchers in recovering fugitives. Meanwhile, northern citizens fired off petitions to congressmen, protesting the use of federal troops and facilities to take and hold fugitive slaves in the midst of a war to suppress a rebellion by those slaves' masters.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865 were the great watershed events in this process, preceded and accompanied by a welter of federal laws that struck blows at the Confederacy by offering liberty to slaves who fled disloyal masters, or who joined the United States Army, regardless of their master's politics. For abolitionists, the new laws represented an important symbolic victory, wherein Congress for the first time freed those held in captivity. Finally, by promising compensation only to loyal slave owners, the law shored up support for the Union and curbed covert aid to the Confederacy. But slaveholders tried to evade the new law by removing Blacks to Maryland; several hundred slaves from Washington, DC, were placed in the Baltimore jail in 1862, for example. In the meantime, Lincoln

tried unsuccessfully to attract support in Maryland and Delaware for compensated emancipation.[275] African Americans in loyal areas of the Chesapeake refused to be left in slavery as contemplated by the Emancipation Proclamation, and a new state constitution bowed to this reality by acknowledging Black freedom in Maryland.

Barbara Jeanne Fields assessment of the destruction of slavery in Maryland reveals the magnitude of the effects of the enslaved population.

> The destruction of slavery arose from more than the sheer numbers of defectors, devastating though the defections were. At its foundation, the collapse was a moral and political phenomenon, arising from the slaves' daily more vivid perception that their owners were no longer sovereign. Slaves and their owners together learned the relationship between power and authority. Having lost the first, owners could no longer lay claim to the second.[276]

By seizing opportunities provided by the need to defeat the rebellion, Maryland's African Americans had slowly gained the upper hand in their own struggle for freedom. The creation of new oases of free territory in Washington, DC, and within Union lines facilitated the successful transfer of their labor to the Union armies, including military service, drained slavery of its stranglehold on the nation, and ultimately wrung a reluctant acknowledgment of Black freedom, if not Black political rights, from White voters.

Freedom seekers both enslaved and free, could be proud of the victory for the Union cause, which meant the adoption of constitutional amendments that forever ended slavery, made African Americans citizens, assured them of equal protection under the laws, and gave Black men the right to vote. It did not mean that Whites in the Chesapeake would immediately give their assent to these principles, either in ex-Confederate Virginia or in Maryland, Delaware, or West Virginia. If chattel slavery ended in 1865, another century would pass before most African Americans

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[275] Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Thavolia Glymph, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1985), 159-167; William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington, KY: U. Press of Kentucky, 1997), 33-57; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 17.

[276] Fields, 127.

in the Chesapeake could begin to enjoy anything approaching equal legal and political rights.

But the troubled history of Reconstruction and the ensuing era of racism and segregation should not cause us to lose sight of the remarkable developments of the preceding century. In 1770, slavery thrived throughout Britain's mainland American colonies, nowhere more so than in its cradle—the Chesapeake. The ensuing Revolutionary War showed just how intractable slave society could be; slaveholding patriots withstood the combined onslaughts of British military might and an array of opportunistic attempts by enslaved people to shed their chains.

The Revolution did prove to represent more than just a momentary upsurge in deep-abiding Black resistance to slavery. The creation of the American republic also provoked an across the board re-examination of slavery's profitability and morality in a freedom-cherishing country. While Whites in the Chesapeake largely resolved these questions with a conservative reaffirmation of the *status quo*, slaves refused to accept the outcome. Blacks redoubled their efforts to liberate themselves, scrutinizing new options like manumission, self-purchase, and flight to free northern states, and availing themselves as well, when opportunity offered, of older strategies like open rebellion, with or without the assistance of external allies. In the process, new African American communities of freed people arose. Their determination to persist in living as free people, however cramped by discriminatory laws and customs, came to constitute yet another challenge to slavery in the Chesapeake.

So by the Civil War's end, Maryland's Harriet Tubman had served as a spy for the Union Army, and Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnett recruited soldiers for the United States Colored Troops. Frances Watkins Harper, in addition to lending her pen, prose, and poetry to the cause of liberation, went south to teach in the newly established freed men's schools.

Slavery was officially abolished in Maryland on November 1, 1864, with the ratification of the 1864 Maryland Constitution, although the recognized end came to different regions at different times. Even after the Civil War, fear of

reprisals remained. Although rebellion was no longer a threat, perhaps, in recognition of the monstrous wrong slavery had wrought, fear of the possibility of revenge lingered.[277] Consistently, in every quarter and every historical phase, from the landing of the first ship and the inception of slavery to the last moments of the Civil War, enslaved African Americans escaped with such force and frequency to influence a host of laws and legislation designed to stem the relentless flow of escapes. They pursued every course that led to freedom within the Underground Railroad Movement. Against this backdrop, the historic period of the Underground Railroad emerges as a mere 35-year period within a longer than 230-year quest for freedom.

[277] Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HISTORIC PERIOD OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

After two centuries of escapes—both group and individual, insurrections, rebellions, self-purchases, manumissions, violent resistance, even murder, in efforts to gain freedom—the African-American liberation struggle entered into the loosely organized phase of the historic Underground Railroad. As one of the country's greatest resistance movements, the Underground Railroad is a story of determined struggles for freedom on the part of freedom seekers and those who aided them, both Black and White, women and men. The historic period of the Underground Railroad developed as opposition to slavery became more organized, laws became ever more codified, and moral outrage became increasingly troublesome. Abolitionists, Black and White, as well as ordinary citizens inside the United States and beyond, recognized the injustice and inherent moral evil of enslaving African Americans long before the United States federal government would act to end the practice.

Through two wars with a third looming on the horizon, Blacks fought in the military, siding with whoever seemed more likely to grant the freedom and liberty the country espoused. The mechanisms of escape shifted from solitary, singular escapes to include more groups and families attempting to free themselves from bondage. Individual flight, such as that of J.W.C. Pennington or Harriet Tubman, which were undertaken as single-minded acts, were transformed during the period of the traditional Underground Railroad. As fugitive slave legislation grew harsher, the citizenry, Black and White, became more and more willing to defy the law and the Constitution by offering assistance to self-liberators.

Moreover, growing awareness that African Americans were seeking and finding White allies from outside the region inflamed political and cultural relations with border states and their northern neighbors, especially Pennsylvania. There,

White assistance to fleeing Blacks, coupled with official unwillingness to cooperate in the recapture of those who had taken refuge in the state dated to the 1780s. For almost as long, Maryland residents had been irritated and even outraged, as voiced in legislative resolutions and governors' letters to Pennsylvania counterparts. As Governor in 1818, and again in 1822 as a private citizen, Charles Ridgeley conveyed Maryland's protests regarding Pennsylvania residents' aid to slaves. [278]

Data from William Still's lists of people seeking aid from his Vigilance Committee in Philadelphia in the 1850s confirm the impression that proximity to Pennsylvania and facing a comparatively short time in peril on the road affected runaway volume. Nearly one half the Black former Maryland residents he spoke with were from the northern region, about three times the proportion its share of the Black population would have predicted. Less than one tenth came from the southern region, where nearly six tenths of the enslaved lived.[279] The Eastern Shore, birthplace of Tubman and Frederick Douglass, offers yet another pattern. Still met no fewer than 83 men, women, and children from Dorchester County, where most of Tubman's kinfolk lived, and from whence most of her rescue journeys began. For the other Eastern Shore counties, distance from Pennsylvania again operated to regulate the volume of escapes. One in 10 of Still's Maryland interviewees had fled from Kent County, 20 to 30 miles south of the state line. Their numbers exceeded those from the five more southerly counties on the Shore taken together (i.e., the rest of the region excluding Dorchester).[280]

Maryland's geography helped the Underground Railroad run well. As a relatively small state with hot summers and cold winters, Maryland contained three

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[278] *Laws of Maryland*, Resolutions, 1798-7, 1816-68, 1817-43, 1820-28, 1821-53, and 1822-58. For an example of Pennsylvania opinion rejecting such petitions, see the *York Recorder*, York, PA, February 5, 1823.

[279] Still identified 357 Maryland fugitives by county of origin; 158 were from the northern region, only 31 from southern Maryland.

[280] Caroline, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Somerset, and Worcester Counties were the starting points for 33 fugitives on Still's lists. Still listed an unspecified "Eastern Shore" location for another 17 fugitives from Maryland.

distinct geographic regions, the Eastern Shore; the central region, which is part of the Piedmont in the eastern United States; and the western section interlaced with the Appalachian Mountains. Escape routes spanned each region of the state. The major feature of the Eastern Shore, the Chesapeake Bay, offered numerous opportunities, through escape by boats, skiffs, and canoes, to travel northward to Pennsylvania. Proximity of the Eastern Shore to Delaware also impacted the patterns of escape.[281]

The complete Underground Railroad history of Maryland could fill volumes. Rather than focusing on routes, this Chapter uses the experiences of a few of the major African-American freedom seekers to convey a larger story. Between 1830 and 1865, the period of the historic Underground Railroad, the cornerstones of which were the offer of assistance to an increasing number of self-emancipators, literary expression in the form narratives of escape, and the writings of abolitionists, which helped memorialize this phase.

Throughout this period, however, it must be remembered that unassisted individual and group escapes continued as evidenced by the scores of runaway slave advertisements in newspapers and narratives that tell the stories that lay outside the domain of the often self-proclaimed Underground Railroad genre largely constructed by operatives and narrators. Each part of the country had a different part to play in confronting the injustices of both slavery and the law through the Underground Railroad. River towns, border states, and free Black communities functioned differently from northern urban centers in New England or along Canadian/United States borders. Only the purpose remained uniform—providing a refuge from slavery or a conduit to freedom.

With but a few known exceptions, abolitionists and their organizations for assisting escapees from slavery did not—indeed, could not—reach into the southern slave states and pull Blacks out. "While many sympathized with the slave in his chains, and freely wept over his destiny, or gave money to help buy his

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[281] William J. Switala, *Underground Railroad in Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004).

freedom, but few could be found who were willing to take the risk of going into the South, and standing face to face with Slavery, in order to conduct a panting slave to freedom," wrote Underground Railroad chronicler, Still. "The undertaking was too fearful to think of in most cases."[282] How enslaved people reached the stations of the northern Underground Railroad was the work of the southern Underground Railroad. "It is clear," noted John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger in *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, "some runaways had a network of Black friends and loved ones from whom they could expect assistance."[283] Furthermore, though beyond the scope of this particular study, it has been largely conceded that what we are calling the southern Underground Railroad was much older, dating to the seventeenth century in all probability and is now considered part of the Underground Railroad Movement.[284] Indeed, Douglass claimed in a letter to Wilbur Siebert, "My connection with the Underground Railroad began long before I left the South, and was continued as long as slavery continued...."[285]

Maryland had three broad Underground Railroad regions, eastern, central, and western. The eastern network included Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Somerset, and Worcester Counties in addition to St.

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[282] William Still, *The Underground Railroad.*

[283] In many ways, *Runaway Slaves* represents the state of the field in terms of the types of resources necessary for understanding flight from slavery. The authors search out Southwide patterns and trends for fugitive activity and contexts. Our study, however, attempts the opposite, in a sense. We argue that a perspective too broad potentially neglects important nuances unique to the various southern settings. Maryland was not Georgia (or even Virginia, in several important ways). Though Runaway Slaves makes use of valuable Maryland resources – including a substantial amount from MSA's holding – the broader thesis diverges in some ways from the direction we take here. Still, it is a valuable study, and informs a great deal of out thinking on fugitives and larger Black communities. See: John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 68.

[284] For prenineteenth century flight, see: Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford, 1972); Lathan A. Windley, compiler, Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790s, vol. II, "Maryland" (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983).

[285] Douglass cited in Charles L. Blockson, *The Underground Railroad: First-Person Narratives of Escapes to Freedom in the North* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987), 97.

Marys, Charles, Prince Georges, Calvert, Anne Arundle, Howard, and part of Baltimore County in southern and northeastern Maryland.

Two cities, Baltimore and Wilmington, were the stepping stones to Philadelphia. Free Blacks generally, urban ones in particular, comprised the bedrock support network for runaways. Baltimore was a major hub on the Underground Railroad. The city and county accounted for the largest number of stories of escapes in Still's book. The large population of free Blacks in the city had a tremendous impact on the rate of escape among enslaved Blacks.[286] Many escapees among the enslaved found refuge in vessels sailing from the ports of Baltimore, as well as Annapolis, while others were transported in small boats on the Chesapeake Bay into the Susquehanna River and then delivered to waiting conductors in Pennsylvania.[287]

If an escapee had kinfolk in nearby big cities (enslaved or free), pursuers presumed their complicity. Furthermore, the cities of the upper south, particularly larger cities, offered perhaps the safest place for the influence of Northern abolitionists to engage those on the run, and for connections between the lines of the southern Underground Railroad and the northern Underground Railroad. It is believed, for example, that free Black female street vendors in Baltimore acted as "agents," directing would-be passengers to people in Philadelphia, New York, and elsewhere.[288] In this and other ways, activities that transpired in Maryland can be seen as feeding the northern Underground Railroad, which could only pick up "passengers" once they had reached Pennsylvania, escorting them to New York, New England, or Canada.

The central route covered Montgomery County, Frederick, Carroll, and parts of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Harford Counties. Numerous routes connected into Pennsylvania. From these points freedom seekers were channeled

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[286] Switala, *The Underground Railroad in...Maryland.*

[287] Blockson, *The Underground Railroad.*

[288] Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1898), 151.

into Franklin, Adams, and York Counties in Pennsylvania. Montgomery County was a key Maryland connector within these important routes. Twenty-one-year-old Alfred Homer escaped from Rockville; John Brown escaped from a farm near Frederick's Mill, and James Henry Thompson managed to flee from Johnsonville.[289] From the county, escapees made their way to the docks of Washington, DC, where Jacob Bigelow manned a route that went from Washington to Philadelphia via water. By the 1830s, free Blacks had formed self-protection and refugee societies in Columbia, Maryland, and in Pennsylvania in Lancaster County in York and Gettysburg. These societies received escapees and actively worked to thwart slave catchers and other agents seeking to do the bidding for slaveholders.[290]

The western route involved two counties, Washington and Allegany. There appears to have been a steady stream of escapees going from Frederick to Franklin County in Pennsylvania. There were more than likely five different routes leaving Washington County and linking to one of the escape routes into Pennsylvania.[291] What is more, Maryland residents—particularly Black Maryland residents—could and did act independently in helping those on the run. Douglass's account of his escape from Baltimore demonstrates this clearly; he would not have gotten out without the complicity and willful participation of others, enslaved and free. None of his co-conspirators were White abolitionists in the traditional sense of the term. In fact, Douglass states, Black abolitionist, "Mr. Ruggles was the first officer on the underground railroad with whom I met after coming north, and was indeed the only one with whom I had anything to do, till I became such an officer myself."[292] Tubman escaped alone in 1849 by

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[289] Still, *The Underground Railroad.*

[290] Charles Blockson, *The Underground Railroad: First-Person Narratives of Escapes to Freedom in the North* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987).

[291] Switala, *The Underground Railroad in...Maryland.*

[292] Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 205. For an excellent treatment of Douglass's early life and his Baltimore social network, including the idea of flight and community

following the North Star and walking to Pennsylvania where she made contact with Black abolitionist, Still and members of the Anti-Slavery Society.

Maryland is well known for major figures involved with the Underground Railroad. Tubman, Douglass, Maria Weems, and Hezekiah Grice are among the most recognized. As the frequent reprinting of Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* or Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* testifies, narratives of the Underground Railroad have enjoyed an enduring tradition within the literary cannon. Harriet Beecher Stowe drew liberally on slave narratives and Underground Railroad themes in her enormously popular *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852. One of the novel's climactic moments features a pitched battle in which fugitive George Harris and White allies drive off slave catchers, allowing Harris and his family to reach Canada. In addition, Josiah Henson, a Maryland-born slave who escaped from Kentucky to Canada, gained notoriety as a supposed model for Stowe's title character.[293]

Henson, born in Charles County, Maryland, in 1789, was enslaved by Isaac Riley. Henson lived for a time in Montgomery County before being shipped with his family to Riley's brother in Kentucky. Several years later, Henson returned to Maryland, earning 275 dollars on the way by preaching to help buy his freedom. Isaac Riley told him he had not earned enough and sent him back to Kentucky. After learning that he had been cheated and duped by Riley in the self-purchase transaction, Henson returned to his family and convinced his wife to escape slavery with him. They crossed the Ohio River and using the Underground Railroad reached Canada successfully. Henson continued his journeys in Canada where he founded Dawn, a settlement for former slaves. Josiah Henson was directly implicated in the Underground Railroad. He admitted,

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participation, see Dickson J. Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass: the Maryland Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), especially chapter nine, "Preparation for Freedom."

[293] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly*, first published, 1851-1852. Also see *Josiah Henson: Truth Stranger than Fiction: Father Henson's Story of His Own Life* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1858).

> I was glad to help such of my old friends as had the spirit to make the attempt to free themselves; and I made more than one trip...to Maryland and Kentucky, with the expectation, in which I was not disappointed, that some might be enabled to follow in my footsteps. I knew the route pretty well, and had much greater facilities for travelling than when I came out of that Egypt for the first time.[294]

By the 1830s and 1840s, Chesapeake slaveholders had fended off the British twice and had weathered Gabriel's conspiracy and Nat Turner's Rebellion. They had silenced or driven out religious antislavery advocates. They had articulated a proslavery Christianity that legitimated "master-slave relations" as a familial relationship of unequal power that marginalized colonizationists. Perhaps the struggles to thwart these challenges caused slaveholders to miscalculate the threat posed by African Americans escaping slavery and the handful of Whites who aided them. Whatever the cause, proslavery advocates in the Chesapeake would relentlessly pursue the issue in a manner that heightened controversy between the North and the South.

The Work of African Americans on the Underground Railroad

By 1840 free Blacks had gathered in stable rural communities at critical junctures along the border states, in urban centers, and in alleyways, and formed and built activist Black institutions such as churches, schools, and Masonic halls.[295] Abolitionists were also at the height of their activities, and were ready to offer assistance and encouragement to all who would take the risk of freedom. So there came into existence a systematic, interracial, cooperative method of aiding runaway slaves known as the Underground Railroad.[296] The chief chronicler of the organized Underground Railroad, Black abolitionist Still of Philadelphia, documents more than 60 cases of Blacks from Baltimore city and county who reached him and were shepherded from Pennsylvania to points further north.

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[294] Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson*, 65.

[295] LaRoche, "On the Edge of Freedom."

[296] Carroll, *Slave*, 182; Siebert, *The Underground Railroad*, 25.

Few who helped runaways kept detailed records; their deeds were crimes carrying stiff fines or jail sentences, so many conductors never created records of their work. Passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 led many, like Daniel Gibbons and Robert Purvis, to destroy what documentation they had amassed.[297] The most complete surviving accounts are those created by two Philadelphia-based vigilance committees, the first operating from 1837 to around 1844, the second from 1852 to the outbreak of the Civil War.[298] Each group's list shows about two persons per week, or 100 per year, receiving help on average.

In addition, Underground Railroad conductors, station masters, and their descendants offered informal estimates to historians of the Underground Railroad like Still and Smedley in the 1870s and 1880s. Daniel Gibbons of Lancaster County may have assisted 1,000 Black people over a 25-year span ending in 1850 when he destroyed his records; he died in 1852. William Whipper of Columbia, Maryland, remembered helping hundreds who crossed the Susquehanna River there in a four-year period preceding 1850. Thomas Garrett, of Delaware, who did keep a list, told a friend that he had aided some 2,300 runaways over a 40-year span.[299]

It is worth noting that a profile of the typical freedom seeker lends further support to the idea that fear of sale, kidnapping, and merciless brutality were among "push" factors inducing flight. A large majority of those who departed were young adult males, age 15 to 30; disproportionate numbers of them lived or

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[297] See Brubaker, "Underground Railroad"; Joseph Borome, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia", *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 92 (1968): 320-351.

[298] Robert Purvis and Jacob C. White, leaders of Philadelphia's free Black community, were the fostering spirits of the first committee, according to Borome, "The Vigilant Committee" and William Still and the White abolitionist, J. Miller McKim, of the 1850s group.

[299] Still, *Underground Railroad*, lists a total of 818 persons assisted. Historian Charles Blockson argues that Still and McKim may have assisted as many as 300 people per year. See "The Underground Railroad: The Quaker Connection", *For Emancipation and Education: Some Black and Quaker Efforts, 1680-1800* (Philadelphia: Germantown Historical Society and Awbury Arboretum Association, 1997), 38. For Gibbons, see Brubaker, "Underground Railroad"; Smedley, *Underground Railroad in Chester County*. For Garrett, letter to Samuel May, Jr, November 24, 1863, Boston Public Library; cited in William C. Kashatus, *Just Over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad* (West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society, 2002), 66.

worked in urban areas and possessed craft skills.[300] In this respect, the age and sex distribution of runaways, young, single males who generally had fewer ties to the region they left, and whose skills gave them a greater chance of succeeding economically, predominated.

Unlike the solitary escapes undertaken by men, women usually escaped in pairs and groups, particularly family groups, although there were numerous instances of individual escapes by women. Women frequently received outside assistance. One of Tubman's first rescue journeys took her to Baltimore to lead a sister and her family out of slavery.[301] In addition, William and Ellen Craft, an African-American couple from the deep South whose getaway featured the very light-skinned wife passing as a White man accompanied by her husband in the role of Black "valet," made their way through Baltimore successfully as well in 1848. However, rural routes proved safer and more attractive, especially on the Eastern Shore, where members of Delaware's large Quaker community, working in concert with free Blacks, sustained an involvement in providing sanctuary to fugitives until the end of slavery in 1865.[302]

Generally, women comprised as much as 30% of the population escaping slavery.[303] Given the statistical overemphasis on men, it is ironic that a woman—Harriet Tubman—endures as the greatest icon of the historic Underground Railroad period. Her efforts are most instructive. As was the case with Tubman, concern for family remained foremost on the minds of escapees, women and men. Tubman's first "solemn resolution" upon escaping from slavery on the Eastern Shore and leaving her home and her family was that they should be free.

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[300] There is a thorough discussion of runaway demographics in *Runaway Slaves*, 209-233.

[301] Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman* (Washington, DC, 1943), 57. Regarding the propensity of runaways to seek cities, see Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 124-148.

[302] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 203-231; William and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* (1860, reprint, New York, 1969); Still, *Underground Railroad*, 368-377.

[303] Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, "Coerced But Not Subdued: Gendered Resistance of Women Escaping Slavery" in *Gendered Resistance*, Mary Frederickson and Delores Walters, ed. Manuscript on file with the author.

Tubman's quest was to deliver her family from bondage and see them comfortably settled in the North. Indeed, on one of her last rescues on the Underground Railroad in 1857 this ingenious woman used an old horse fitted a straw collar, rigged a foot board and a sitting board to an axle to which she had attached a pair of old chaise wheels to bring her 70-year-old parents out of Maryland. Tubman returned to the Eastern Shore in an unsuccessful bid to rescue her sister and her two children. Out of that failed venture, she did manage to help a group of 39 escape in the fall. Surely, as was her custom, women and children would have been among the group. For all of her triumphs, however, Tubman's sister would die in slavery and her children, Angerine and Ben, would remain enslaved despite Tubman spending a total of 10 years attempting their rescue.[304]

Rivaling Tubman in notoriety, Douglass ranks as the most distinguished of the "Men of Maryland."[305] Born into slavery in Tuckahoe, Maryland, as Frederick Bailey, Douglass's moment of awakening to the possibility of achieving freedom came in a fistfight with Edward Covey, an Eastern Shore "slavebreaker" to whom the recalcitrant Douglass had been hired out as a teenager. On his second escape attempt, Douglass made his way out of Baltimore by train. Using a self-devised escape plan, Douglass was aided by his future wife, Anna Murray, a free Black woman. As was often true, Douglass negotiated the most difficult and dangerous portion of his escape alone. Once he arrived in New York City, he came under the studied eye of David Ruggles who arranged to send him on to New Bedford. In a uniquely historic moment, two of Maryland's most illustrious former slaves and three of the nation's most powerful Black abolitionists came together for Douglass's marriage to Murray. David Ruggles arranged for

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[304] Kate Clifford Larson, *Harriet Tubman: Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004) cited in LaRoche, "Coerced But Not Subdued."

[305] George F. Bragg, "Men of Maryland," 38.

Maryland freedom-seeker James Pennington to perform the marriage ceremony.[306]

Douglass's accomplishments are too well-known to require a complete retelling herein. Suffice it to say that his life and his writings resonate with all the themes that Black abolitionists used to win White allies in the fight against slavery. As orator, biographer, editor, and novelist, Douglass tapped every conceivable avenue to launch attacks against slavery. Little wonder that his narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, first published in 1845, helped to popularize what would become a new genre in American literature.

Douglass recalled his boyhood fascination with literacy, his determination to learn to read, and his treasuring of a tattered copy of *The Columbian Orator*, a popular compendium of spread eagle speeches about freedom, independence, and duty. In criticizing the nation's widespread denial of both literacy and education to the enslaved population, Douglass was quick to recognize the importance of literacy and education in the service of freedom. He indicted slaveholders as hypocrites claiming but not deserving the name of Christian, with portrayals of slaveholders as violent, profane, and often drunken men, cloaked in the outward but empty performance of religious duties and rituals. From the time of his escape from Baltimore in 1838, no Black American enjoyed greater visibility than Douglass.[307]

Another Black Baltimorean from a rather different background joined Douglass in winning recognition for antislavery productions. Orphaned at the age of three in 1828, Frances Ellen Watkins was raised and schooled by her uncle, William Watkins, who tutored her in a demanding curriculum of Latin, Greek, philosophy, Bible studies, and mathematics. Her uncle, Black conductor, William Watkins ran an important station of the Underground Railroad from his Baltimore

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[306] Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape From Bondage, and His Complete History* (1892; New York: Bonanza Books, 1962).

[307] William McFeely's, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), is the best biography. Douglass wrote no fewer than three versions of his autobiography; *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Boston, 1845) was the first.

home. Above all else, Watkins strove to inculcate the art of eloquence. His niece Frances became his most successful pupil and his son William J. Watkins also became a notable Black abolitionist living and working in Boston.[308]

Frances Ellen Watkins, like her uncle, aspired to a career in teaching, and held a position in York, Pennsylvania, in the early 1850s, where she was drawn into the work of aiding fugitive slaves. In 1854, Watkins launched herself onto the abolitionist lecture circuit, coincident with the publication of a volume of poetry. She denounced kidnappers of free Blacks, urged support for boycotting slave-made goods in favor of "free produce," and read her poems. Her most striking work included the "Slave Auction," in which she drew on her own feelings as an orphan to evoke the anxiety and emotional loss of slave children sold apart from their parents. In "The Fugitive's Wife," an enslaved woman at once laments her husband's absence as she celebrates his escape from slavery. Finally, in "Bury Me in a Free Land," Watkins took inspiration from the life of her uncle William Watkins, who died in self-chosen exile in Canada rather than remain in America's slaveholding society. Like Douglass, she framed her critique of slavery in religious terms, and tied it tightly to opposition to the metaphorical "slavery to drink" situating her oeuvre as temperance poetry. Watkins would live not only to see the end of slavery, but would re-enter the public sphere after the death of husband, and as F.E.W. Harper would battle for women's rights in the late nineteenth century, and publish a novel about the Black adjustment to emancipation, *Iola Leroy*.[309]

Samuel Ringgold Ward ranks among other prominent men and women of Maryland who were able to escape the multiple constraints of slavery. Demonstrating the full and productive life that could be had once the shackles of slavery were released from the mind as well as the body, Ward became an author and minister. He had been born into slavery in 1817 and his mother escaped from

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[308] Melba Joyce Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E. W. Harper 1825-1911* (Detroit: Wayne St. U. Press, 1994). See also Still, *Underground Railroad*, 755-781.

[309] Joyce, *Discarded Legacy*, passim.

Maryland's Eastern Shore to New Jersey with him in 1820. The family later moved to New York and Ward eventually moved on.

During one of the most exciting periods in his life, after the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, Ward returned to Syracuse after one of his lecture tours, finding "great excitement prevailed with respect to the efforts of slave captors in securing a certain fugitive confined in the jail, and returning him to slavery." Ward was one of those involved in the "Jerry Rescue." He was among those who stormed the jail, secured the escapee, and rushed him to Canada. Several of the leaders were arrested, including Gerrit Smith, and it was thought advisable for Ward himself to flee into Canada where he escaped fully expecting to return soon after the commotion had subsided. He remained there for two years, however, and concerned himself with the improvement of the condition of his people there.

After two years residence he exposed the condition of his people during a trip to Europe. In April 1853, Ward prepared to set sail for England "at the risk of being apprehended by the United States' authorities for a breach of their execrable republican Fugitive Slave Law." Since the laws of slavery were structured for perpetual bondage, "the child follows the condition of the mother." Based on his birth to "fugitive slave" parents 36 years earlier, Ward's freedom was in constant peril.[310] The arm of slavery was long, the pursuit of the enslaver often relentless. He remained in England for two years, lecturing and preaching, achieving both fame and fortune.[311]

Henry Highland Garnet, arguably one of the most fiery militant thinkers of his time, used the Phoenix Society in his youth to train as a public speaker. Garnet had been a mere nine-years-old when a group of 11 including his parents,

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[310] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (London: John Snow, 1855), 8. Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/wards/ward.html.

[311] George F. Bragg, DD, *Men of Maryland 1863-1940* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1914), 114. Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bragg/bragg.html.

relatives, and sister escaped slavery in Kent County on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1824. When the young Garnet grew exhausted and could no longer keep up he was carried on the backs of the more able. Eventually the family made their way to famed White abolitionist Thomas Garrett who put them onto the Underground Railroad. Garnet forgot neither the 1824 escape nor the subsequent family hardships stemming from attempts by slave catchers to recapture his parents and sister.

While at Troy, NY—"a natural way station of the eastern route of the underground railroad"—he claimed to have harbored and assisted hundreds of runaways. Further demonstrating his commitment to freedom, Garnet adopted a teenaged girl who had fled slavery in Washington, DC. He took his adopted daughter, Stella Weems, with him and his family during his travels through the British Isles in 1850. Garnet, therefore, was involved with the same Weems family that Black abolitionist Charles B. Ray aided when he came to the assistance of Anna Marie Weems, one of the more celebrated of Maryland's Underground Railroad cases. She escaped from Montgomery County in 1855 by disguising her sex and using several male aliases in order to escape her plight and acquire freedom.[312]

Garnet, who had aided Weems's sister, was a powerful advocate for the rights of the enslaved. His address to a Buffalo convention of free people of color in 1843 stirred intense controversy when he challenged slaves to see Denmark Vesey and other rebels as exemplars, and closed with a ringing cry, "Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance!"[313] Garnet's sentiments portended a shift in abolitionists' attitudes regarding enslaved people, toward a fuller embrace of the idea that enslaved workers could and would assist in achieving their own freedom.

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[312] Still, *Underground Railroad*, 177.

[313] Ofari, *Let Your Motto be Resistance*, 144-153.

J.W.C. Pennington, born in Washington County, was yet another freedom seeker from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where he had been taught the blacksmith's trade. Frisbie Tilghman, reminding Pennington's father that he was "the master of his tongue as well as his time," whipped him mercilessly. To Pennington's horror, he not only witnessed his father Bazil's ordeal, but had been close enough to hear and count each stroke of the lash. Subsequent to this occasion, his oppressor turned on Pennington for some imagined infraction cursed and beat him with a cane about the shoulders, arms, and legs. Pennington's mother was unfortunate enough to have witnessed the beating of her son.

This incident was to forever change Pennington. As an honorable man, Pennington

> had always aimed to be trustworthy; and feeling a high degree of mechanical pride, I had aimed to do my work with dispatch and skill, my Blacksmith's pride and taste was one thing that had reconciled me so long to remain a slave. I sought to distinguish myself in the finer branches of the business by invention and finish.

The constant intimidation and humiliation of his family led Pennington to plan his escape. Similar to Frederick Douglass's narrative, Pennington described the multiple anxieties that accosted most seekers of freedom.

> I distinctly remember the two great difficulties that stood in the way of my flight: I had a father and mother whom I dearly loved,—I had also six sisters and four brothers on the plantation. The question was, shall I hide my purpose from them? moreover, how will my flight affect them when I am gone? Will they not be suspected? Will not the whole family be sold off as a disaffected family, as is generally the case when one of its members flies? But a still more trying question was, how can I expect to succeed, I have no knowledge of distance or direction. I know that Pennsylvania is a free state, but I know not where its soil begins, or where that of Maryland ends? Indeed, at this time there was no safety in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or New York, for a fugitive, except in lurking-places, or under the care of judicious friends, who could be entrusted not only with liberty, but also with life itself... And then when I considered the difficulties of the way—the reward that would be offered—the human blood-hounds that would be set upon my track—the weariness—the hunger—the gloomy thought, of not only losing all one's friends in one day, but of having to seek and to make new friends in a strange world. But, as I have said, the hour was come, and the man must act, or for ever be a slave.[314]

[314] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom.*

At 2 pm on a Sunday afternoon in mid-November 1827 on his 21st birthday, Pennington took his first steps toward what he hoped would be freedom. In the first moments of his escape, after walking across a barnyard in western Maryland, J.W.C. Pennington came across a small cave in which he divested himself of the one of the most conspicuous badges of slavery by hiding his slave clothing there.[315] His journey typified that of many fugitives. Traveling alone and at night, without an elaborate plan and with little knowledge of the surrounding countryside, Pennington soon lost his bearings. The first evening he arrived at Reisterstown, about 25 miles from Baltimore where he was arrested but managed to escape. Two days after his escapee, as Tilghman circulated handbills that offered a 200-dollar reward, Pennington found his way into Pennsylvania, in Adams County. There, ushering him into the informal Underground Railroad, a local woman sized him up correctly and directed him to a Quaker, William Wright, who sheltered him at his farm near York Springs and helped him find a more secure refuge further eastward.[316]

Nearly 25 years after Pennington's escape from slavery, while he was pastor of a church in New York, efforts were made to affect the escape of his brother who was still in slavery in Maryland. His brother, with his brother's two sons, was on his way, by way of the Underground Railroad, to New York City where they managed to arrive. Being pursued by slave officers, the escapees had not been as fortunate as Pennington and were overtaken and hurriedly taken before a commissioner, who ordered they be returned to Maryland. To Pennington's great grief and disappointment his brother and his brother's sons were captured and returned to slavery in Maryland before he had been able to learn of their presence in that city.

After one or two days, Pennington received a letter from Mr. Grove, the claimant of his brother, offering to sell him to Pennington, should he wish to buy

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[315] Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, 216-217.

[316] Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, 15-41.

him, and stating that he would await an answer, before "selling him to the slave-drivers." In the midst of Pennington's grief, friends soon raised about 1,000 dollars to purchase his brother but the unfortunate sons were doomed to the auction block and the far South.[317]

As a free man, Pennington visited England where he delivered addresses on behalf of the antislavery cause. When he returned to this country, he became the Pastor of Shiloh Presbyterian Church, New York City. While in such position, he was most active in the work of the antislavery cause. His slave narrative, "The Fugitive Blacksmith" captures many of the archetypal experiences of those who struck for freedom. He had no connections to or information about anyone, White or Black, who might help him, and only his own intuition to assist him in deciding whether to trust happenstance offers of advice or assistance. Men who eyed every African American on his own as a possible runaway and source of reward money abounded, both in Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.[318] Still, crossing the state line was an important milestone; only then could he come into contact with men like Wright, who used a network of antislavery colleagues to aid him. Pennington also learned that life in Pennsylvania was not entirely safe; the reluctance of many citizens and local authorities to cooperate with slave hunters did not rule out the chance of a midnight raid leading to a forced journey back to slavery.

By 1828, one year after his departure from Maryland, Pennington relocated to New York state. Although Pennington became a well-known speaker and writer, his status was still that of a fugitive slave, subject to return to bondage. He could only secure legal freedom by emigrating to Canada or England, or as Pennington ultimately did, by arranging a self-purchase with the executor of his oppressor's estate in 1851, 24 years after his escape. Finally, to return to the beginning of this story, it is worth noting that Pennington's dreams of flight were paradoxically

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[317] Bragg.

[318] William Otter, *History of My Own Times*, Richard B. Stott, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1995) for accounts of slavecatching as a part time occupation of White craftsmen or laborers in Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.

galvanized into action by Tilghman's efforts to master him psychologically and better fit him for slavery.[319]

Like Pennington, James Watkins's flight was occasioned by slaveholders' failed efforts to cajole a young adult male into acceptance of lifelong slavery. His story also illustrates the inspiring effect of the presence of free Blacks living in community. Watkins, who lived near Cockeysville, in Baltimore County, Maryland, sought to marry a free Black woman in the city of Baltimore. His owner, Luke Ensor, followed the dictates of conventional wisdom and forbade the marriage; slaves married to free women were more likely to yearn for freedom themselves and more able to find help in securing it. Maryland's most notable fugitive, Douglass, had been crucially assisted by his free wife, Anna Murray Douglass, for example.[320] Besides, he would not be entitled to enslave any of the offspring of a free Black women married to an enslaved man. Ensor's wife counseled Watkins to take up with any of several "suitable" slave women, seeming "anxious... that I should be married, believing that I would then be quite settled for life." Instead, Watkins escaped Ensor's enslaving grasp in June, 1841. Retaken by men with bloodhounds while still in Maryland, he resumed life on Ensor's farm, after enduring a public beating meant to discourage others from emulating him.

As had many a determined escapee before him, Watkins would not be daunted. He reached Pennsylvania on a second attempt in 1844, defeating the bloodhounds by lacing his tracks with snuff and cayenne pepper. Settling in Hartford, CT, Watkins married, after overcoming the reservations of the bride's father about his fugitive status. Shortly after enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, Ensor discovered Watkins's whereabouts and offered 1,000 dollars to Hartford police for his return to Maryland. Tipped off by a sympathetic constable, Watkins

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[319] Thomas, *J.W.C. Pennington*, 56.

[320] William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass*, 70; Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 28-29. Douglass' wife's earnings helped finance his escape by train, and family history credited her both with conceiving the idea of Douglass passing as a free Black sailor, and with altering a set of clothes to suit this role.

sailed for England where he lectured to antislavery groups and published his narrative.[321]

Watkins, like most escapees described in Still's *Underground Railroad* in the 1850s, had no help while in Maryland, and secured assistance "providentially" in Pennsylvania rather than through prior arrangement. But Watkins and the fugitives of the 1840s and 1850s could tap into a deeper, better organized network of assistance. Once he reached a safe house in York, Pennsylvania, he was guided to Columbia, Maryland, a Susquehanna River town with a Black population of nearly 1,000 in the 1840s.[322] There, Black entrepreneurs like Stephen Smith and William Whipper used their commercial connections to move runaways on canal boats, stages, and railroad cars; Whipper even owned a boxcar with a hidden compartment for transporting fugitives.

Canada-bound travelers could proceed westward toward Pittsburgh or directly north along the Susquehanna Canal as far as Williamsport, and thence into New York state. Or, as happened to Watkins, they could be "forwarded" like freight to Lancaster and its environs, also home to several hundred Blacks, and then on to the Philadelphia "station" where they passed through the hands of Still and his associates. As for the volume of runaways leaving Maryland for south central Pennsylvania, William Whipper estimated that he had helped "hundreds" of fugitives who had passed through Columbia in the period 1847 to 1850 alone.[323] Columbia's thriving Black community no doubt drew some refugees to it, but many

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[321] James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* (Birmingham, England, 1854), 11-38.

[322] William Whipper, a Black lumber merchant in Columbia stated that 943 African Americans resided in Columbia in 1850, nearly one fifth of the town's population. See his letter to William Still in *Underground Railroad*, 735-740.

[323] On Columbia, see Willis L. Shirk Jr, "Testing the Limits of Tolerance: Blacks and the Social Order in Columbia, Pennsylvania, 1800-1851," *Pennsylvania History* 60 (1993) 35-502; for Lancaster, see the many articles on its Black community by Leroy Hopkins, including "The Negro Entry Book: A Document of Lancaster City's Antebellum Afro-American Community," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 88 (1984):142-175, and also Carl Oblinger, "In Recognition of Their Prominence: A Case Study of the Economic and Social Backgrounds of an Ante-Bellum Negro Business and Farming Class in Lancaster County," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 72 (1968): 65-83. On Whipper, Richard P. McCormick, "William Whipper: Moral Reformer," *Pennsylvania History* 43 (1976) 23-48. Whipper's estimate, see Still, *Underground Railroad*, 738-739.

also headed that way to avoid zealous policing of main roads from Baltimore to York and Philadelphia that characterized the late antebellum decades. Such had not always been the case.

White Challenges to Slavery

In the 1790s, Quakers like Isaac Wilson who lived on the "banks of the Susquehanna" in Maryland (i.e., near Rising Sun or Havre de Grace) had been so persistent in hiding runaways and ferrying them across the river as to earn public denunciation by Baltimore slaveholders.[324] Authorities all but closed down these options by the 1840s with vigorous enforcement of laws that meted out long prison terms to those who supposedly "enticed" or "kidnapped" Black runaways. For free Blacks, the penalty could be sale into term slavery that might all too easily become permanent.[325]

Perhaps inspired by these proofs of Black willingness to strike hard for freedom, abolitionists Charles T. Torrey and William L. Chaplin took up residence in the Chesapeake and devoted themselves to direct challenges to slaveholders. They hoped to encourage more slaves to run away and thereby to destabilize slavery in the border states while also galvanizing opposition to slavery in the northern states.[326]

Torrey, a Massachusetts clergyman, newspaper editor, and Liberty Party activist, planned and carried out several rescues between 1842 and 1844, while

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[324] See advertisement of Christopher Hughes, *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, May 17, 1798.

[325] See *Baltimore Sun*, February 18, 1841, for the arraignment of a free Black for purchasing a railway ticket and conveying it to a runaway slave.

[326] Harrold in *Abolitionists and the South* argues for strong and continuous support by abolitionists of slave escapes and rescuers, from the early 1830s onward, in contrast to Larry Gara, who portrayed most abolitionists as largely indifferent to rescues and the underground railroad in *The Liberty Line: The Underground Railroad.* Merton Dillon sees abolitionists shifting toward embracing slaves as allies in the wake of the shipboard risings on the *Amistad* and *Creole* in 1839 and 1841, in *Slavery Attacked*, 201-223.

visiting or living in Washington, DC, and Baltimore. Operating in tandem with a Washington freed man named Thomas Smallwood and a free Black painter named Jacob Gibbs, Torrey concentrated on Black families about to be broken up by sale, and helped steer dozens of people to Canada.[327]

Smallwood himself retreated to Canada in 1843 to avoid prosecution, but Torrey persisted with aid and advice from the likes of Thomas Garrett and the Philadelphia Vigilant Association, an antislavery and anti-kidnapping group. Late in 1844, Baltimore authorities arrested and convicted Torrey for "stealing" the slaves of William Heckrotte, sentencing him to six years in the Maryland penitentiary. Torrey died there of pulmonary disease in 1846, eulogized as a martyr to freedom and an inspiration to more direct northern action against slavery.[328]

Slave Catchers: The Christiana Incident

Successful recovery of escapees and the removal of many free Blacks to Canada represent only one portion of the story. Far more visible and consequential in shaping public opinion were the handful of situations in which slave catchers clashed openly with Blacks and their allies. Perhaps no such incident fed the bitterness that increasingly characterized North-South disputes over slavery more fully than the fatal shooting of Maryland slaveholder Edward Gorsuch in the so-called Christiana Riot of 1851.[329] Gorsuch enslaved a dozen captives and operated a substantial farm in Baltimore County, only a few miles from the Pennsylvania boundary. Perhaps hoping to minimize discontent and

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[327] Harrold, "John Brown's Forerunners," 92, 97; Joseph C. Lovejoy, *Memoir of Charles T. Torrey* (1848, reprint, New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969); Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood*, (Toronto, 1851).

[328] See Lovejoy, *Memoir of Charles T. Torrey*, 287-301.

[329] Thomas P. Slaughter's *Bloody Dawn: the Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1991) offers a stimulating and comprehensive treatment of the incident. Also see W. U. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851: An Historical Sketch*, second ed. (Lancaster, PA, 1911).

thereby forestall flight, Gorsuch committed himself to gradual manumission of all his male slaves at the age of 28. In some cases he subsequently offered seasonal employment at planting and harvest time to the newly freed.

Waiting for Gorsuch in Christiana, a village in northeastern Lancaster County, was William Parker, himself a longtime runaway from Maryland, and leader of a loosely organized Black self-defense group organized to resist kidnappings and the retaking of fugitives. Parker's memoir, published after the Civil War, portrayed life for rural Blacks in southern Pennsylvania as that of a lawless borderland, with self-help and the occasional assistance of antislavery Quakers as the only recourse against kidnappers who operated with the tacit approval of a largely "negro-hating" populace.[330]

Parker had escaped from an Anne Arundel County planter as a teenager, after seeing a series of relatives and friends sold off to raise cash. He had reached Pennsylvania after a sojourn in Baltimore, where he and a companion passed themselves off as brick makers to avert suspicion about their movements. Settling in Lancaster County, Parker married and joined a "mutual protection" organization. Likening themselves to revolutionary era Minute Men, these African Americans forcibly liberated several victims of kidnapping before their captors could get them across the state line and rioted at the Lancaster jail in an unsuccessful rescue attempt. When they detected a free man of color "decoying" escapees for kidnappers, they burned down his house. A White tavern keeper who boasted of welcoming slave catchers met a similar fate. Gorsuch's stubborn desire to recover his enslaved captives would be countered by Parker's equally unswerving determination to keep them free.

Gorsuch and several other men arrived at William Parker's isolated house on a rural road outside Christiana just before dawn on September 11, 1851, hoping to surprise and capture all four of Gorsuch's runaways. Parker and his Black allies,

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[330] William Parker, "The Freedman's Story. In Two Parts," *The Atlantic Monthly* xvii (1866):152-166 and 276-295; electronic edition, U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/parker.

including two of those sought by the posse, were ready for them. They had been tipped by off by Samuel Williams, a free Black who had shadowed Kline and his men when they left their Philadelphia headquarters, and spread the word of a prospective fugitive raid to Lancaster County Blacks. When Kline produced his warrant for the fugitives and tried to cow the men into surrendering peaceably, Parker rebuffed him. Then Parker's wife blew a horn, a signal that summoned more than 30 Blacks as well as White onlookers to the scene. Now outgunned, Kline advocated withdrawal, but Gorsuch would not relent, and declared, "my property I will have, or I'll breakfast in hell. I'll go up and get it." Gorsuch advanced toward the house, and was killed in the ensuing exchange of gunfire.[331] Gorsuch died as a failed attempt to capture suspected runaways, Buley, Ford, and the Hammonds, erupted into violence when Blacks rallied to fend off his party. When local Whites also present at the skirmish were acquitted of all charges in connection with Gorsuch's death, Maryland residents and the entire South expressed outrage and feelings between the regions worsened.[332]

Attention turned to prosecution of those who had flocked to the scene that September morning. A public meeting of 5,000 Baltimore residents demanded that southerners cut off trade with the North and that college students withdraw from northern schools so long as "abolitionists and traitors are permitted to influence public opinion." Maryland governor Louis Lowe picked up on the theme, urging President Millard Fillmore to take severe action against the "treason" that had occurred, and grimly predicting secession in the absence of such retribution.[333]

Bowing to southern pressure, Fillmore's administration sought and obtained more than 100 indictments for treason, not only for men who had resisted Kline at Christiana, but also for "treason by words," consisting of writing or distributing abolitionist tracts. In the meantime, as had so many escapees before him, Parker

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[331] Parker, "The Freedman's Story," 285.

[332] Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 28-29.

[333] Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 104-105.

and others who had resisted Gorsuch fled to Canada, and quickly faded from public view.

Taken together, slaves' widespread determination to escape bondage, the efforts of a few Whites to assist them, and the approval of both groups' actions by a significant sector of the northern public slowly but significantly corroded both slaveholders' perceptions of "master-slave relations" and of the tenacity of slavery within the Union and called into question the supposedly absolute control of enslavers. The deception that slaves routinely practiced to make good their escapes likewise undercut the myth that they respected and admired their owners.

The provocative actions of freedom seekers and those of their accomplices helped create the crisis-filled atmosphere of the late 1850s that spawned secession and Civil War. To the extent that freedom seekers provoked this miscalculation on the part of enslavers and lawmakers, by their unflinchingly grasp for freedom, those African American escapees, whether successful or not, catalyzed the emancipation of their people.

After the Civil War, former conductors and station masters told their stories. Still, a Philadelphian of African-American origin, published a mammoth account detailing how he, along with Black colleagues and a number of White, mostly Quaker associates, helped some 800 fugitives, chiefly from Maryland and Virginia, evade pursuit and reach freedom in Ontario. Still's *The Underground Railroad* recounted events from the 1850s, a decade during which the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 had rendered it unsafe for runaways to move about openly or remain safely anywhere in the United States.

These narratives of flight and assistance speak to the larger reality of capable men and women, being held in bondage by their fellow countrymen, and the defiant citizens who came forward to assist them. The historic Underground Railroad reveals the culmination of 250 years of undying hope, determination, and spirit that lies at the root of the quest for the promise of America, life, and liberty. These brief stories and narratives are but a fraction of the experiences of

the enslaved's quest for freedom throughout Maryland and the Chesapeake region. From the first to the last, flight from captivity, at all times and in all places represented a viable solution to the problem of slavery.