

Chapter 1

SLAVERY IN BALTIMORE COUNTY THROUGH THREE CENTURIES

*I apprehend you will embrace every opportunity to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions which so generally prevail with respect to us.*¹⁵

Benjamin Banneker to Thomas Jefferson, 1791

Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) is often called America's first African-American scientist. Benjamin Banneker was a free black who lived on his family's one-hundred acre farm in Oella, several miles upstream from the town of Baltimore in the Maryland colony. Benjamin Banneker was a self-taught mathematician and astronomer who calculated and published his own series of almanacs, and also worked with Pierre-Charles L'Enfant on surveying Washington, D.C.

Banneker's grandmother, Molly Walsh, an indentured servant from England who finished her seven years of bondage, bought a farm in Oella as well as two African-American slaves to help her grow tobacco. Walsh freed both slaves and married the one called Bannaky. One of their children, Mary, also bought and married a slave, Robert, and together they raised their son Benjamin Banneker.¹⁶

Benjamin grew to manhood at the farm known as "Bannaky Springs." It was a fine piece of land, fed by springs that provided irrigation during dry spells for both tobacco as a cash crop and corn and other vegetables for food. The family probably bundled the tobacco leaves into wooden "hogshead" barrels and carefully rolled them to the nearby port of Elkrige for shipment overseas.

¹⁵ Benjamin Banneker, Letter to Thomas Jefferson, August 19, 1791, WGBH Interactive for PBS Online, "Africans in America," 1998, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h71t.html>.

¹⁶ Silvio A. Bedini, *The Life of Benjamin Banneker: The First African-American Man of Science* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1972), 156-164.

Benjamin Banneker was born and died as a free black who triumphed over almost insurmountable odds to live an intellectual's life in a white-dominated society. When he died in 1806, there were more slaves in Baltimore County than at any time in its history, before *or* after. The following history presents a broad outline of slavery from the county's formation in the seventeenth century until slavery's end in November 1864.

Slavery in the Seventeenth Century

The territory now known as Maryland was occupied solely by American Indians at the opening of the seventeenth century, but by the close of the century the arrival of the European settlers had begun vast changes in the Chesapeake Bay Tidewater region. Starting in the 1630s, a growing stream of immigrants steadily pushed the European frontier further into the Virginia and Maryland piedmont, strengthening Europe's hold over the region's culture and economy.

The first settlers learned about the bay's attractions from Captain John Smith's journals and maps recording his explorations in 1608. Smith was the leader of the Jamestown colony in Virginia, and he took several sojourns up the Chesapeake Bay to explore and document its navigable tributaries, including the Patapsco, Gunpowder, and Bush Rivers in present-day Baltimore County. Smith encountered the Massawomeks and the Susquehannock Indian tribes in this upper region of the bay.

In 1629, William Claiborne established the earliest known European settlement in the upper Chesapeake Bay, a trading post on what is now Kent Island, Maryland. The following year, Cecil (Caecilius) Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, received a Charter from King Charles I allowing him to become the proprietor of the land lying north of the Potomac River, adjacent to the Virginia colony. Calvert named his colony (which then included present-day Delaware) Maryland, in honor of Queen Henrietta Maria. Two ships arrived in 1634 to establish the colony's first permanent settlement, at what became St. Mary's City.

No surviving record is known by which the date of Baltimore County's designation can be defined, but it occurred sometime before 1659. Figure 1 (page 10) shows the county in its setting at the northern limit of the Tidewater region. Until 1674, the county included all the land in the northern part of the colony, stretching both east of the bay opposite Annapolis to the Delaware Bay, and far west into the Piedmont and Appalachian wilderness. Nominally, it even extended to 40° North latitude in the area of the overlapping royal grants to the Calvert and Penn families. Baltimore County's land area was steadily reduced, however, as new counties were formed. Table 1 (page 9) provides a historical perspective on the county's land area by which the relative population densities at various times can be gauged.

The treaty negotiated with the usually hostile Susquehannocks in 1652 permitted white settlers to move into the Indians' traditional hunting grounds north of the Patapsco River, Baltimore County's southern boundary. The earliest settlers, however, resided at

Table 1: Baltimore County, Maryland, Land Area, 1674-1837

Years	Approx. No. Sq. Mi.	Cause of Change in Land Area
Before 1674	>5000	(Original area)
1674-1748	4200	Establishment of Cecil County
1748-1773	1300	Establishment of Frederick County
1773-1837	825	Establishment of Harford County
After 1837	598	Establishment of Carroll County

Source: Baltimore County Office of Planning

the head of the bay, in the areas of present-day Harford and Cecil counties.¹⁷ By 1667, there were still only about nine hundred people living in the colony's vast, unexplored northern territories.¹⁸ Even by 1700, there were only an estimated 1,700 total residents in this huge territory.¹⁹ Baltimore County remained a primitive backwater in the Tidewater region until the end of the eighteenth century. The delayed development, and the county's minimal role in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Tidewater tobacco culture and economy, produced a county with fewer slaves than usual amidst the stratified slave culture that took hold elsewhere in the Tidewater.

Like many English colonies, Maryland was established with specific civic goals in mind, particularly relating to religious practices. Maryland and Pennsylvania provided some of the most open conditions for settlers to practice their own religion, but this did not necessarily mean that most settlers were seeking relief from religious persecution. Rather, between seventy and eight-five percent of the settlers in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake region were immigrants who sought economic opportunity as indentured servants from England.²⁰ Indentured servants were able to pursue economic opportunities

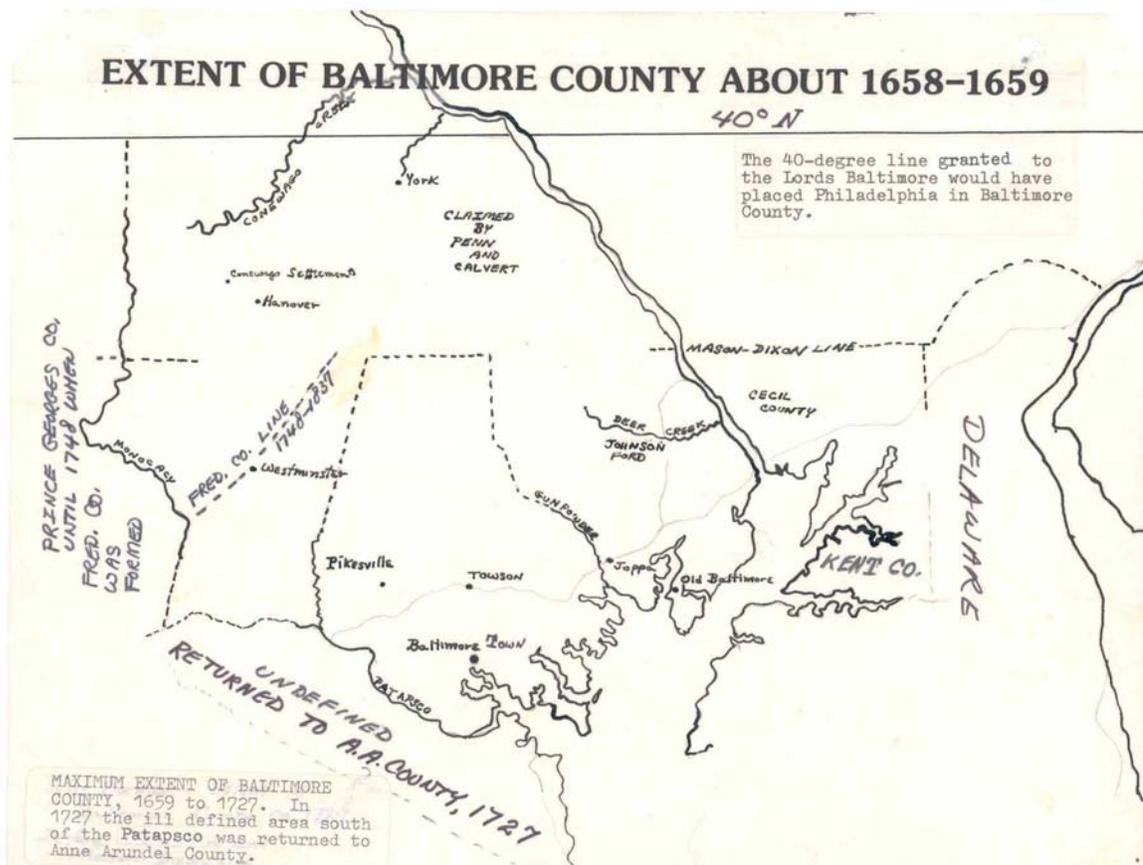
¹⁷ J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County: From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men* (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA, 1997), 39-42.

¹⁸ Charles G. Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen: The Gentry of Baltimore County 1660-1776* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 12.

¹⁹ Arthur Karinen, "Maryland Population 1631-1730." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 54 (1959): 390, quoted in Charles G. Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen*, 12.

²⁰ Lois Green Carr, "Maryland's Seventeenth Century," Maryland Humanities Council, 2001, <http://mdhc.org/bibliotest/essays.php?essay=29>.

Figure 1: Extent of Baltimore County About 1658-1659



Source: John W. McGrain, *Baltimore County Historian*, 1985

unavailable in overcrowded England by contracting to work for another person for a definite period of time, usually in exchange for the cost of passage.

Beginnings of Slavery in Maryland

Mathias de Sousa, a black man of African and Portuguese descent who was brought to Maryland by Jesuit missionaries in 1634, was one of the most notable indentured servants in Maryland's history. De Sousa's life exemplifies the socio-economic mobility offered to a person of color in early Maryland before these chances were erased by institutionalized slavery in the colony. After his indenture was finished in 1638, Mathias became a mariner and trader who commanded a trading voyage north to the Susquehannock Indians and sailed as the master of a ketch owned by the Provincial Secretary, John Lewger. Mathias de Sousa also voted as a member of the Lower House

of the Assembly, marking the first time a man of color voted in a legislature in the New World.²¹

These fluid social conditions for black-skinned West Indian and African individuals, as well as for white indentured servants, were short-lived. Whereas some of the first Africans brought to Jamestown (and St. Mary's City) were indentured servants, not slaves, by the mid-century the colonies began to codify a slave system that was fully established by 1680. Africans brought to the colonies thereafter were imported specifically as "chattels," defined as articles of property that could be bought, sold, willed to another person, or even beaten viciously. Since chattels, or slaves, had absolutely no legal rights, their offspring also belonged to their owner.²² By the end of the seventeenth century, African slaves had become the basic labor force in the Tidewater region, framed within a larger social structure described by Alan Kulikoff as follows:

The seventeenth century Chesapeake was full of opportunities. Thousands of English men (and fewer women) arrived in the region as indentured servants. Many of these immigrants fell ill and died before completing their term of service.... Those who survived, however, would serve their term, work a few years for other planters, and then procure their own land and servants. Since the price of tobacco remained high, freedmen often became prosperous.... In the decades after 1680, intertwined series of demographic, economic and social changes transformed this social world and promoted increasingly hierarchical relations between men and women, masters and slaves, and gentlemen and yeomen. Rapidly falling tobacco prices discouraged white immigration.... Planters turned to African slaves to replace white servants, thereby eliminating the status of poor whites. At the same time, political dynasties appeared, composed of descendants of officeholding families.²³

The social changes described above are evidenced by the growth in the total number of slaves in the colonies. In 1660, approximately 1,700 blacks lived in Maryland and Virginia, and by 1680 their numbers had increased to about 4,000. The trend accelerated; during the last five years of the century, planters enslaved another 3,000 Africans.²⁴

²¹ David S. Bogen, "Mathias De Sousa: Maryland's First Colonist of African Descent," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 96, No. 1 (Spring 2001): 73-74.

²² Theresa Ann Murphy. "Scholarship on Southern Farms and Plantations." American Studies Department, George Washington University, 1996, <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history//resedu/slavescholarship.htm>.

²³ Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 4.

²⁴ Russell R. Menard, "Servants to Slaves," *Social Studies*, 16 (1977): 363-375, quoted in Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 40.

At the close of the century, however, blacks still remained a small portion of the total population in the region. Blacks accounted for about three percent of the Chesapeake population in 1650 and fifteen percent in 1690, with most of these people enslaved on small plantations where there were fewer than eleven other black slaves.²⁵

Slavery in Baltimore County was beginning to take on a slightly different pattern than elsewhere in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia. In his work, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen; The Gentry of Baltimore County, Maryland 1660-1776*, Charles G. Steffen argues that Baltimore County was a more socially mobile and egalitarian county than others in the Tidewater. As such, the county was relatively slow in transitioning to slavery, with Baltimore area planters continuing to rely on white laborers well into the eighteenth century, long after the large planters in southern Maryland had already shifted to a predominantly slave work force by 1696.²⁶ Steffen also notes that Baltimore County continued to retain lower levels of slavery than its Tidewater counterparts as a result of several interrelated factors. The county's topography was more hilly than other areas of the Tidewater, and the fall line that cuts across the county several miles or less inland from the bay minimized the amount of the flat, sandy coastal lands preferred by the tobacco planters. Additionally, the county was slow to develop because of the lingering threat of warlike Indians from the North, and by the time it was finally settled, a Tidewater gentry like that described by Kulikoff did not arise to dominate the economy and the social structure.

Steffen reached his conclusions by analyzing the assets and holdings of the county's wealthiest property owners, as reflected in the Inventories taken at their death, and he compared these data to the wealthy property owners in other Tidewater counties. His research provides a beginning for understanding how Baltimore County diverged from the pattern in the rest of the Tidewater in having lower levels of slavery and a more socially mobile society.

Steffen's research provides a generalized, comparative view of slavery in seventeenth century Baltimore County. Fortunately, in addition to Steffen's broad-based analysis, the work of a local historian, William B. Marye, provides additional insight on this murky part of the county's history. Marye spent his childhood in the Upper Falls neighborhood of Baltimore County, in the territories first settled by the Europeans, and he also researched the locations and the chains of title of the county's earliest land patents. In 1922, Marye wrote:

In 1667 there were probably no white settlers whatever north of a line drawn from the [current] Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bridge over the Big Gunpowder Falls to the site of the City of Baltimore.... Much of the land was taken up and patented at earlier dates in large tracts of holding bearing

²⁵ Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 319.

²⁶ Charles G. Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen*, 15.

various names, and was largely held by men of means who could afford not to settle them, and hold them perfectly vacant for numbers of years. The cause why the settlement of the backwoods was so long delayed about forty years after white men first settled on the tidal rivers of the Chesapeake Bay in Baltimore and Harford counties, was the fear of the Indians and the ability of wealthy owners to pay taxes without receiving any income. "Gunpowder Manor" a tract of over 7,000 acres ... was patented to Lord Baltimore in 1683, and was not open to settlers until 1720, and must have been until that time, a perfect wilderness.²⁷

In 1699 there were approximately ninety-six slaves in Baltimore County, comprising a minute portion of the 13,000 total slaves in Maryland and Virginia.²⁸ The following descriptions of several seventeenth century sites associated with slavery will serve as a starting point for the process of identifying some of the locations where these slaves worked for and alongside Baltimore County's earliest settlers. Ideally, some rare find of a slave testimony from this period, or even a minimal amount of archaeological research, would provide the type of information needed for a better understanding of this period in county history. However, even without those resources, we can begin to put a physical and geographic face on slavery because of the painstaking efforts of several twentieth-century historians (William B. Marye, John McGrain, Carlton Seitz, and George Horvath) to map the boundaries of many of the county's early land grants. When primary source data from wills, inventories, and the tax lists from 1692, 1694, and 1695, is attached to these maps, much further detail on the historical geography of slavery can be presented.

In approximately 1664, Thomas Todd settled "Todd's Range" on the Patapsco River overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. Thomas Todd imported thirty-eight people with him from the Virginia colony and transformed 1,500 acres of waterfront land into one of the county's premier plantations, and the only Baltimore County plantation named on Augustine Hermann's 1673 map of the Chesapeake.²⁹ Todd shifted slaves back and forth between Baltimore County and his son's 1,200-acre plantation in Virginia.³⁰

The first place called "Baltimore Towne," which was established in 1671 as the county seat on the Bush River in present-day Harford County, also appears on Hermann's map. James Phillips and William Osbourne were major landholders in the vicinity.

²⁷ William B. Marye, "Perry Hall's Earliest Settlers." (N.p.: cover title on October 17, 1922 typewritten letter to "Miss Scharfetter." Copy filed at Baltimore County Office of Planning): 12.

²⁸ Neil A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County* (Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, 1979), 15.

²⁹ Edward C. Papenfuse and Joseph M. Coale III, *The Hammond-Harwood House Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 13.

³⁰ Charles G. Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen*, 21.

James Phillips was one of the town's high-income residents, and William Osbourne operated the local Bush River ferry. The 1694 Baltimore County Tax List shows William Osbourne with six taxable persons and one slave, and James Phillips with nine taxable residents and five slaves.³¹ (Taxables at that time included slaves and white males over the age of fifteen.) Phillips operated a tavern to serve those attending court in the small town. Excavations at the site in 1999 recovered over 17,000 artifacts, revealing a refined, European-influenced life in the Maryland frontier that contrasts with presumptions that these early settlers all lived an extremely primitive existence. Unfortunately, available reports do not indicate whether the analysts of the artifacts sought any information about the African-American slaves at "Baltimore Towne."³²

Other seventeenth-century slave sites include Joseph Peake's Back River tracts called "Broughton's Forest," "No Name," and "Peake's Purchase." Peake was assessed for one slave called "Dolle" in the 1692 Baltimore County Tax List.³³ In contrast, Richard Guin, owner of parts of tracts call "Brandan," "Newtown," and "Gwinn's Farm," was assessed in the same year for four taxables in his households, none of whom were specified as slaves.³⁴

Slavery in the Eighteenth Century

The pace of slavery and European settlement increased rapidly in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia in the first half of the eighteenth century. Planters continued to import African slaves. Between 1700 and 1739, slavers brought 54,000 black captives into Virginia and Maryland, with another 42,000 slaves imported in the following three decades.³⁵ By 1770, there were 250,000 slaves in the Chesapeake Bay region, up from 13,000 in 1700.³⁶

After about 1700, the colonists began moving into the hilly backwoods of Baltimore County. Settlement extended to the present Pennsylvania border by 1730. In

³¹ Edward F. Wright, *Inhabitants of Baltimore County, 1692-1763* (Silver Spring, MD: Family Line Publications, 1987), 4-7.

³² David G. Blick, "Aberdeen Proving Grounds Uncovers 17th Century Settlement of Old Baltimore," *Cultural Resource Management* 22, no. 5 (1999): 42-44.

³³ Edward F. Wright, *Inhabitants of Baltimore County*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁵ Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 65.

³⁶ "The Civil War, Slavery and the Chesapeake Bay," Chesapeake Bay Program, "African-American History in the Bay," December 11, 2003, <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/pubs/blackhistorybackgrounder2-01.pdf> .

1737, the county contained approximately 9,100 total inhabitants and 1,067 slaves.³⁷ Until a more comprehensive analysis is conducted using inventories and wills, the picture of the physical dimensions of slavery in the county's landscape during this time remains a blurry, abstract image. No buildings from the first years of settlement are known to have survived, since the first houses and buildings were simple wood structures, either horizontal log construction laid on the bare earth or built in the "puncheon" style where the timber posts were inserted vertically into the earth. Both types of expedient, expendable structures were long ago consumed by termites or fire. However, when wills are linked to land patent maps, the landscapes where the early slaves labored can be located, and in some cases these sites may yield archaeological remains of the buildings that housed both the planters and their slaves.

In 1718, Anthony Johnson, owner of part of "Johnson's Interest" on the north side of the Patapsco River and part of "Howard's Prize" on the river's south side, bequeathed to his wife "one Mulatto Girl."³⁸ Nicholas Day's will dated March 31, 1738, identifies Day as a resident of Joppa, owner of the tract called "William the Conqueror," several lots in Joppa, and portions of a tract called "Dock," all of which was bequeathed to his sons, along with four "Negro" women named "Dina", "Jenny" "Judith" and "Jessy."³⁹ Nicholas Day also appears in the 1737 Baltimore County Tax List with five slaves.⁴⁰

Daniel Scott, a major landowner and slaveholder in northern central Baltimore County, willed to his heirs in 1745 parts of the tracts called "Scott's Improvement Enlarged" "Scott's Clafe," "James Forrest," "Beals Camp," "Trust," and "Scott's Hopewell," along with twenty-two slaves.⁴¹ Because of his extensive land holdings, Daniel Scott appears in Steffen's study of the county elite in the 1720s, with the elite being defined as the set of individuals who ranked in the top ten percent of inventoried decedents.⁴² Not surprisingly, Daniel's sons, Aquilla Scott and James Scott, also appear in the list of the county's elite in the 1760s.⁴³

³⁷ Neil A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, 15.

³⁸ Maryland State Archives, Prerogative Court (Wills), Book 17: 81-82, Anthony Johnson March 30, 1718.

³⁹ Maryland Hall of Records, Baltimore County Wills, Box 6, folder 7, Nicholas Day, March 31, 1738 (proved May 25, 1739).

⁴⁰ Edward F. Wright, *Inhabitants of Baltimore County*, 18.

⁴¹ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 2, folio 212, Daniel Scott (proved April 15, 1745).

⁴² Charles G. Steffen, *From Gentlemen to Townsmen*, 171.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Thomas Norris was one of the earliest settlers in the county's northern territory near the Pennsylvania line. In 1761, Norris bequeathed to his five sons various portions of the tracts called "Macedon," "Turkey Range," and "Hills and Dales," the latter of which Norris noted "as lying within His Lordship's Reserves." The so-called reserves were lands in the northern part of the county that Lord Baltimore had held unpatented well into the eighteenth century. Most of these reserved lands were sold as confiscated English property after the American Revolution. Thomas Norris' one slave, a "negro" girl called "Phillis," was willed to his son James along "with her increase unto him," meaning that all her children would also be his property.⁴⁴

Thomas Norris might have had some of the first Germans in the county as neighbors. The first wave of German immigrants came into Maryland through Pennsylvania, moving south as early as the 1730s. Until then, the majority of county settlers were English, with limited amounts of the Scotch, Irish and Dutch. The Germans were experienced in raising grains and their arrival coincided with increasing demand for cereal grains in Britain, Europe and the West Indies.⁴⁵ As such, the Germans were instrumental in establishing and strengthening a non-slave-based agricultural system of wheat and other grain cultivation. The majority of the Germans moving into Maryland settled in Frederick and Washington counties, where the 1790 U.S. Census lists close to 10,000 residents with German surnames. Lord Baltimore attempted to lure some Germans to Baltimore County in 1737 with the development of a new road from the Susquehanna River crossing at Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania to Baltimore, but these efforts met with limited success.⁴⁶

In 1768, the seat of Baltimore County government was moved from "Joppa" on the Gunpowder River, to a new "Baltimore Town," on the Patapsco River. The shallow Gunpowder River estuary had been steadily silting as a result of the deforestation of the surrounding hinterlands. In contrast, the Baltimore Town site was on one of the deepest rivers on the bay, forming a large, sheltered harbor. The relocation of the county seat marked the beginning of the rise of Baltimore County and the city of Baltimore as a major industrial center and port in the Industrial Revolution.

Some of the same geographic factors that had limited Baltimore County's participation in the seventeenth and eighteenth century tobacco economy and society gave the region a competitive lead with the onset of industrialization. The fall line that lies only a few miles inland from the Chesapeake Bay, and that indirectly limited the county's supply of flat coastal plains desired by tobacco planters, also provided water energy for the numerous mills that sprouted along the Patapsco River and its parallel

⁴⁴ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 2, folio 357-358, Thomas Norris, December 26, 1757 (proved March 24, 1761).

⁴⁵ Neil A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, 30.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

stream, the Gwynn's Falls. The city boomed during the Revolutionary War as a provider to the armed services, and between 1790 and 1810 the city of Baltimore's population grew from 13,000 to 47,000 residents (Table 2).

Although the end of the eighteenth century was the beginning of a rapid increase in the free African population in Baltimore County and the city of Baltimore, the statewide slave population remained remarkably stable. Historians have been vigorously studying the variations in Maryland's slave population to find relationships among the rates of slavery, manumissions, the growth of the state's free colored population, and the changing economy, as well as intangible factors such as religion and the colonists' heightened consciousness of natural individual liberties awakened during the Revolutionary War. Although researchers acknowledge the danger in ascribing a motive for someone's actions, William Calderhead presents a convincing argument that the egalitarian principles of the Revolutionary War resulted in an increased number of manumissions in Maryland, particularly between 1783 and 1790. Forty of the 951 total manumissions in the state during this period were for slaves in Baltimore County.⁴⁷

Table 2: Slave and Non-slave Population, Maryland and Baltimore County, 1790-1820

Year	Total pop.	No. slaves
1790		
Maryland	319,728	103,036
Baltimore County	25,434	5,877
1800		
Maryland	341,543	105,635
Baltimore County	32,516	6,830
1810		
Maryland	380,546	111,502
Baltimore County	29,255	6,697
1820		
Maryland	407,350	107,398
Baltimore County	33,463	6,720

Source: University of Virginia, Historical Census Data Browser

Quakers and Methodists probably accounted for some of this manumission activity. Both religious groups strengthened their positions against slavery during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. In 1788, Quakers in Maryland moved to eliminate slavery within their ranks. The Methodists also went on record as opposing slavery on humanitarian and religious grounds, and at their famous "Christmas Conference" at Lovely Lane Church in Baltimore city in 1784, the Methodist church leaders ruled that

⁴⁷ William Calderhead, "Slavery in the Age of the Revolution," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 98, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 319.

ministers could no longer hold slaves. As T. Stephen Whitman notes, the Methodists did urge ministers to cease holding slaves for life, as follows:

"...but as early as 1800, they had made that stance a 'local option' issue. The Lovely Lane records show ongoing problems with keeping Baltimore Conference ministers from owning slaves, and of course lay Methodists acquired more and more slaves as the group became wealthier."⁴⁸

Whereas the Quakers had been instrumental in beginning the abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania in 1780, their efforts failed in Maryland where sixty of the sixty-five state legislators owned slaves in the 1780s.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, as a result of Quaker and other abolitionists' pressures, the Maryland legislature passed a law in 1783 prohibiting the international slave trade from operating in Maryland, and in 1790 restored the slaveowners' right to emancipate by the terms of a last will and testament.

By 1790, there were approximately 1,300 slaves in the city of Baltimore, and almost 6,000 slaves among the 25,000 total Baltimore County residents. Wills from that era give insight into the prevailing attitudes on the disposition of slaves within the county.

For example, George Ensor and Edward Stoxdale both owned slaves and executed similar wills that evenly divided the slaves among their heirs. In 1771, George Ensor left parts of the tracts called "Vinyard" and "Jamessay's Prospects," and seven slaves, to his eight heirs, one of whom would receive one of "Negro Hannah's" children when born.⁵⁰ Edward Stoxdale, owner of parts of "Edward's Adventure," "Stoxdale's Addition," "The Park," and "Fine Soil," also specified that his grandchildren would own the offspring of the five female slaves that he bequeathed to his eight children.⁵¹

Millicent Price's will in 1787 was even less humane than George Ensor's and Edward Stoxdale's because its terms required that his slaves "Zingo," "Dick," "Peter," "Paschence," and "Elizabeth" would be auctioned at his death to ensure that his estate would be evenly apportioned to his eight children.⁵² Two or more of these slaves probably were family members who thereby suffered the horrible tragedy of being sold to a new owner, away from the family and community they had formed in this county.

⁴⁸ E-mail message to author from T. Stephen Whitman, February 16, 2004.

⁴⁹ William Calderhead, "Slavery in the Age of the Revolution," 316.

⁵⁰ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 3, folio 195, George Ensor, May 22, 1771 (proved November 11, 1771).

⁵¹ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 3, folio 376, Edward Stoxdale, August 16, 1779 (proved October 13, 1779).

⁵² Baltimore County Wills, Liber 4, folio 243-244, Millicent Price, November 9, 1784 (proved May 26, 1787).

As quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Benjamin Banneker spoke in 1791 against the slavery that surrounded him. Benjamin Banneker died in 1806, after living through two more events that worsened prospects for the gradual abolition of slavery in America: the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1793, and the invention of the cotton gin. The Fugitive Slave Act allowed slaveowners to seize fugitive slaves in non-slave states and territories and made it illegal for anyone to help a slave escape or to provide refuge to a fugitive. This meant that slaves were not necessarily free once they crossed the Mason-Dixon Line into Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, the line remains famous as a geographic symbol between slavery and freedom in the United States.

Eli Whitney's cotton gin dramatically increased productivity. U.S. cotton production invigorated the South's appetite for slave labor, and was a boon for Northern and English cotton mills. The invention had a tragic effect on Maryland and Virginia slave families. The increased demand raised the price of slaves already within the country, since international slave trading had been prohibited by federal law in 1808. Although notable numbers of slaveholders in Maryland were manumitting their slaves, or allowing them to purchase their freedom, there were other profit-oriented slaveholders who sold their slaves to the planters in the cotton-growing states. In fact, by 1840, twelve percent of Maryland's slave population was auctioned per annum, many of them out of the state.⁵³ As a result, the port in the city of Baltimore became a major center of this new interstate slave trade.⁵⁴

In 1790, the City of Baltimore contained 13,000 total residents and the county another 25,000; 1,300 of the city residents were slaves and another 6,000 county residents were slaves. A considerable portion of the county's population still lived in frontier-like conditions at the close of the eighteenth century. The 1798 Federal Direct Tax List identifies only 1,457 main dwellings, 292 secondary dwellings, and 2,500 outbuildings in all of Baltimore County.⁵⁵ Over sixty percent of the main dwellings were constructed of log and only eighteen percent were two stories.⁵⁶ The Federal Direct Tax List also provides the first and only comprehensive inventory of slave housing in some areas of the

⁵³ Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6.

⁵⁴ Ralph C. Clayton, *Cash for Blood: The Baltimore to New Orleans Domestic Slave Trade* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2002).

⁵⁵ Bayly Ellen Marks, "The Tax Assessor's Portrait of a County," *History Trails* (Baltimore County Historical Society) 30, no. 1 & 2, (Autumn-Winter 1995-96): 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

county where that particular assessor denoted slave housing as "negro quarters."⁵⁷

The 1798 Federal Direct Tax List's inventory of the county's buildings and agricultural operations can fairly be seen as representative of the conditions that prevailed from the time the county was first settled. Some stone and brick buildings were evident, but log and frame structures were the norm. Subsequent industrialization and grain cultivation in the early nineteenth century, however, resulted in widespread prosperity in the region. Grand stone and brick houses, and massive German-style bank barns, stand today as testimony to the county's increased economic prosperity beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Slavery in the Nineteenth Century

As the region prospered, the free black population in Maryland was steadily increasing, even as slavery levels remained relatively stable. Historian Barbara Jeanne Fields studied the paradoxical nature of slavery in Maryland where a significantly large population of free African-Americans co-existed amidst African-American slaves. Fields described conditions in Maryland as follows:

Like the United States as a whole, Maryland was a society divided against itself. There were, in effect, two Maryland's by 1850: one founded upon slavery and the other upon free labor. Northern Maryland, embracing Allegany, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, and Washington counties was an overwhelmingly white and free labor society, the only region of the state in which industrial activity had grown to significant proportions. Black people contributed only 16 percent of its population and slaves less than 5 percent. Southern Maryland (Anne Arundel, Charles, Prince George's, Montgomery, and St. Mary's counties) was a backward agricultural region devoted primarily to tobacco.... The population of the southern counties was 54 percent black and 44 percent slave. Occupying an intermediate position, much like that of Maryland within the Union, was the Eastern Shore, comprising Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, and Worcester counties. Like the southern counties, the Eastern Shore devoted itself to agriculture to the virtual exclusion of industry. Like the northern counties,

⁵⁷ The assessment lists compiled throughout Baltimore County for compliance with the 1798 federal direct tax law obviously were prepared by more than one commissioner. Completeness of details varies notably among the county's eleven geographic "Hundreds." In some areas (e.g., Middle River Upper Hundred), the inventory clearly lists ten structures as "house for negro." Other Hundreds (e.g., Middle River Lower) give little or no detail on structures. Still another variation (e.g., Upper Gunpowder) is to identify some structures as "quarter house" but without specifying whether or not the structure is occupied by slaves. The properties selected for attention in this thesis are *only* ones with an explicitly identified "negro" house or quarters.

it produced mainly cereals. Just over 20 percent of its people were slaves and just under 40 percent were black in 1850.⁵⁸

T. Stephen Whitman's, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland*, further informs about slavery in Baltimore County through focused research on manumissions and the components of urban slavery in the city of Baltimore. Whitman observes that the decline of the tobacco economy reduced the need for slave labor in the rural counties. The rapidly growing city offered job opportunities for those slaves sent by their owners to work, as well as for those who were fugitives or were legally free. In this rapidly growing free black community, slaves negotiated with their owners to work a term of years before they would be freed (called "term slavery"), thus making the city increasingly a center of freedom in a state legally wedded to slavery up through the Civil War.⁵⁹

In 1820, there were approximately 2,200 free blacks in Baltimore County and approximately 10,300 free blacks in the city. By 1860, this population had grown to include 4,200 free blacks in the county and 27,000 free blacks in the city. The free blacks in the county generally lived in fifteen communities located throughout the county. These communities continued to grow after the Civil War as official and unofficial segregation policies shaped African-American settlement patterns.

Even as Maryland's free black population continued to grow, with most of the increase concentrated in the city of Baltimore, the number of slaves remained relatively constant. From 1790 to 1860, Maryland slaveholders owned between 90,000 and 107,000 slaves at any given time during that period, in an era when the state's total population soared. Slave ownership in Baltimore County and Baltimore city also remained relatively constant, with between 6,000 and 10,000 enslaved African-Americans in the county between 1790 and 1860.

Although much has been said that might imply a positive effect from the state's overall low levels of slave-owning, Fields notes that "much of the suffering incidental to slavery in Maryland resulted directly or indirectly from the small size of slaveholdings, a characteristic that had become steadily more marked over the years from the Revolution to the eve of the Civil War."⁶⁰ Small holdings cruelly divided slave family members among several owners and curtailed the formation of family units in the enslaved black community. Baltimore County and Baltimore city paralleled the statewide trend towards small holdings. Approximately one-quarter of the county's 3,100 slaves in 1860 lived in households with less than three slaves. Although a considerable number of slaves were

⁵⁸ Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 6.

⁵⁹ T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

held on large plantations, this was not the characteristic situation in Baltimore County or in the rest of the South. In the early colonies, between 1658 and 1710, approximately three out of four slaves lived on farms with twenty or fewer slaves, two out of four inhabited farms with ten or fewer slaves, and nearly a third lived on farms with five or fewer slaves.⁶¹ In 1850, half of all slave owners in the United States owned five or fewer slaves.⁶² In 1860, only 2,300 planters, or about five percent, owned one hundred or more slaves.⁶³ Charles Carnan Ridgely, owner of the vast "Hampton" estate, was the only Baltimore County resident ever to break into this rank of slaveholders, owning over 350 slaves at his death in 1829.

Several wills from the early nineteenth century provide insight into the lives of some Baltimore County slaves who were promised freedom, but at such a distant future and with such conditions, that the owners made a veritable mockery of the word freedom. In 1835, Joseph Pearce willed his "colored girl named Sophie to serve until she is thirty years old... and if she has any children, they are to be set free at the same age.... she nor her children shall be sold..."⁶⁴ Whereas Sophie had some certainty in her life, "Beck's" future was less certain. Henry Wilhelm, in his will in 1843, specified that if Beck turned forty while his wife was still alive she would be set free, but if his wife died before then, Beck would be sold by his executor and the proceeds divided among Henry's children.⁶⁵ Perhaps Beck would have had a better future if sold to another family than having to endure this type of uncertainty in the Wilhelm household.

One of the most puzzling bequests in the county's history was Charles Carnan Ridgely, who freed almost all of his 350 slaves at his death in 1829. After his death, however, his son, John Carnan Ridgely, purchased sixty more slaves and manumitted only one.⁶⁶

By the 1830s, because of people like John Carnan Ridgely, because of Maryland's unwillingness to abolish slavery even gradually as had Pennsylvania, and because of the

⁶¹ George W. McDaniel, *Hearth & Home; Preserving a People's Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 38.

⁶² James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 39.

⁶³ Theresa Ann Murphy, "Scholarship on Southern Farms and Plantations."

⁶⁴ Baltimore County Wills, Liber 15, folio 246-247, Joseph Pearce, Sr., January 26, 1829 (proved January 28, 1835).

⁶⁵ Baltimore County Wills, Henry Wilhelm, June 1, 1843 (proved August 10, 1843).

⁶⁶ R. Kent Lancaster, "Chattel Slavery at Hampton/Northampton, Baltimore County," Hampton National Historic Site, <http://www.nps.gov.hamp/lancaster2.htm>. First published in *Maryland Historical Magazine* 95, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 409-427.

South's increased use of slave labor for cotton-growing, many white abolitionists, free African-Americans, and other individuals intensified their engagement in the informal network for assisting fugitive slaves known as the Underground Railroad. Little is known about Underground Railroad operations in Baltimore County, but further study of the Quaker communities, the free black communities, African-American churches, and fugitive slave records, might unveil clues.

The increase in Underground Railroad activities in the 1830s occurred at the same time that much of the South was in a state of terror created by Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831. Nat Turner, a slave in Southampton County, Virginia, proclaimed that he was called by God to organize sixty other slaves in a rebellion that killed sixty whites and destroyed fifteen homesites. As a result, slaveholding states further restricted the liberties of both freed and enslaved African-Americans, going so far as to disallow blacks to preach.⁶⁷

In 1850, Congress toughened the fugitive slave laws with the enactment of a new Fugitive Slave Act, which was part of a larger set of bills called "The Compromise of 1850." Overall, the compromise retained the fragile balance between the numbers of slave and non-slave states in the rapidly growing nation, but the Fugitive Slave Act incited great controversy and strengthened opposition to slavery by imposing the requirement that citizens must assist in the capture of runaways. The act required "all good citizens" to "aid and assist [federal marshalls and their deputies] in the prompt and efficient execution of this law."⁶⁸

Some northern states reacted to this imposition by passing new personal-liberty laws that defied the legislation. Tensions increased nationwide. Locally, tensions culminated in the "Christiana Riots" in 1851. Christiana is a town at the eastern edge of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and about fifty miles northeast from central Baltimore County. In September, 1851, a Baltimore County farmer named Edward Gorsuch, along with his cousin Joshua, his son Dickinson, his nephew Dr. Thomas Pearce, and neighbors Nathan Nelson and Nicholas Hutchins, pursued four of Gorsuch's slaves (Noah Buley, Nelson Ford, George Hammond, and Joshua Hammond) who had escaped to Christiana. The slaves were rumored to be have been given refuge in the home of a free black named William Parker. Townspeople gathered, a fight ensued, and Edward Gorsuch was killed. Some of the participants in the fight left for Canada when charged with treason, but in the end no one was sentenced. The Christiana Riots stirred much debate and bitterness between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces around the nation.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ These types of restrictions imposed on the free African-American population are described in Ira Berlin's aptly-titled work, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: New Press, 1992).

⁶⁸ U.S. Congress, *Fugitive Slave Act*, September 18, 1850, Fordham University, Modern History Sourcebook, 2001, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1850fugitive.html>.

⁶⁹ Neil A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, 231.

A little known fact is that, some months after the trial, Baltimore County witnessed a vigilante revenge killing of a man named Joseph Miller who was in the county pursuing legal actions to gain the release of a free black woman who had been kidnapped from his farm in Lancaster County.⁷⁰

The Supreme Court's notorious "Dred Scott" decision in 1857 compounded the negative impacts of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Court ruled that both enslaved and free African-Americans could never become U.S. citizens, and that a slave did not become free when taken into a free territory. The Dred Scott Decision was instrumental in Abraham Lincoln's nomination to the Republican party and his election as President in 1860. South Carolina seceded from the Union in December, 1860, followed by ten more states, marking the beginning of the Civil War.

Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri legally allowed slavery, but did not join the Confederacy. Thus, slaves in these states were not freed by the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln on September 22, 1863. Not until November 1, 1864, did the Maryland General Assembly free all slaves in the state. On April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered. Five days later, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

On April 21, 1865, the funeral train bearing the martyred President's remains left the Calvert Street Station in Baltimore at 3:00 p.m., bound for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The train headed north on the Northern Central Railroad, through a landscape that had been invisibly marred by almost two hundred years of slavery. A mere 152 days earlier, almost 3,000 African-Americans had still been enslaved in Baltimore County. Surely, the train's procession aroused a range of emotional responses among county residents, ranging from bitterness from the ex-slaveowners to sorrow from the newly freed African-Americans. These recently liberated slaves were now able to stay in Baltimore County and join the other 4,200 free African-Americans, or leave for new territories. Fugitive slaves who had been forced to start an entirely new life in Canada or another northern state could return to what family or friends they may have left behind. How bittersweet the freedom was for African-Americans who lived to see freedom knowing how many others had suffered and died under the brutal yoke of the South's "peculiar institution." Finding new ways to discover and present these untold stories is the central purpose of this thesis, beginning in the next chapter.

⁷⁰ Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 137.