THE COMING STORM

Throughout the decade of the 1850s, mid-Marylanders and their near-by neighbors in Pennsylvania and Virginia found themselves trying to navigate a path through the increasingly tense sectional disagreements between the largely northern "free" states and the "slave" states located south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Residing in a non-slaveholding state, most Pennsylvanians aligned themselves with the Northern position. For opposite reasons, most Virginians on the Potomac River border saw themselves entwined with Southern policies. Mid-Marylanders, on the other hand, had extensive ties – politically, economically, and socially –

with both state to the north and those to the south. As sectional discord became more difficult to contain, citizens in this border region became witnesses to, and participants in, some of the most cataclysmic events that preceded the outbreak of war. By 1861, these border residents were faced with difficult, at times agonizing, choices as the country lurched toward war.


The Tragic Prelude, a mural by John Steuart Curry, depicts John Brown and events leading to the Civil War. (Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society)

SLAVERY AND THE GROWTH OF SECTIONALISM

Sectional loyalties of mid-Marylanders and their neighbors began to assert themselves in earnest as the crises of the 1850s produced divisions within the region. By 1850, politicians had been wrestling with the issue for many years. Efforts to retain the balance between free and slave states had produced the Missouri Compromise in 1820, which granted statehood to one free state (Maine) and one slave state (Missouri), and tried to create a balance of slave and non-slave territories in the United States. New territory gained by the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 set off a new round of disputes over slavery in the territories. By the time the Compromise of 1850 attempted to settle the question of what to do with the land taken from Mexico, the dialogue about the slavery issue was clearly intensifying. In 1849 Frederick, MD diarist Jacob Engelbrecht identified as "new fangelled" the phrases "abolitionism" and "free soil;" after 1850 these became familiar terms, appearing frequently in contemporary sources.[1]

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[1] Jacob Engelbrecht, December 17, 1849, *The Diary of Jacob Engelbrecht, 1818-1878,* ed. William R. Quynn, vol. 2 (Frederick, MD: Historical society of Frederick County, 1976), n.p.
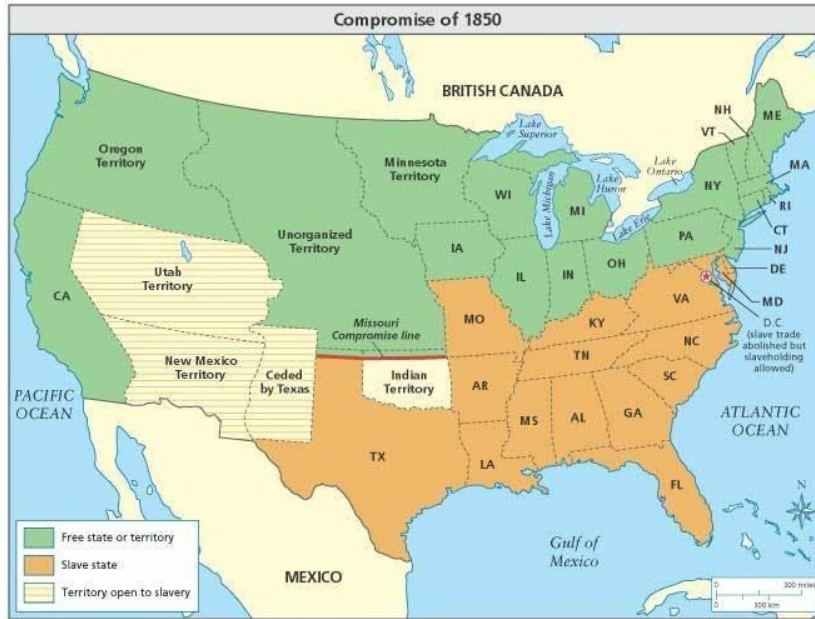
The Compromise of 1850 consisted of a series of laws dealing with the issue of slavery in the United States; this map shows the free and slave states in the United States after the Compromise. (http://mrkash.com/activities/compromise.html)

Citizens on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line had, then, already confronted the issue of slavery repeatedly, both directly and indirectly. The state of Pennsylvania had passed a gradual emancipation act in 1780, and slavery slowly disappeared from the state. In Virginia, on the other hand, slavery was intertwined deeply with the state's economy. In the 1850 census, residents of Loudoun and Jefferson Counties together had close to 10,000 enslaved people, who accounted for 27% of the total population of the two counties. Across the Potomac, in the mid-Maryland counties of Carroll, Frederick, and Washington, the enslaved, numbering almost 7,000, made up only 8% of the total population.[2] The varying degrees of fealty to slavery would have profound consequences for mid-Maryland and the areas just north and south.

The most controversial measure of the Compromise of 1850 was the provision for a new and stringent fugitive slave law. This law, which facilitated the capture and return of freedom seekers, was particularly relevant to a region that shared a border with the free state of Pennsylvania. Newspaper notices about "runaways" appeared throughout the 1850s, and enslavers below the border with Pennsylvania felt beleaguered in having to deal with not only Pennsylvanians who protected freedom seekers once they crossed the border, but also agents of the Underground Railroad that operated within the region. Now the new fugitive slave law helped them by requiring every citizen to be a slave catcher. Throughout the region, discussions took place over the enforcement of the fugitive slave law, with some wrestling with the option of disobeying what they believed to be a morally wrong law, and others expressing fear that the abolitionist "fanatics" in the North might defy the law.[3]

In yet another attempt to solve the slavery question once and for all, the United States Congress in 1854 approved the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which replaced the Missouri Compromise with a system of popular sovereignty that shifted the responsibility of determining the fate of slavery in

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[2] "Population of Virginia – 1850," http://www.virginiaplaces.org/population/pop1850numbers.html; "Black Marylanders 1850: African American Population by County, Status & Gender," *The Maryland State Archives Presents: Legacy of Slavery in Maryland*, http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/research/census1850.html.
[3] *Frederick Republican Citizen*, Nov. 8, 1850.

these territories from Congress to the inhabitants.[4] The reaction of mid-Maryland and her neighbors was mixed. Some citizens were hopeful that the new legislation would bring an end to the growing sectional divide and restore peace and stability, while others were certain that it could only end in discord and disunion. Democrats in Frederick, for example, endorsed the idea of popular sovereignty set forth in the Kansas-Nebraska Act as the plan most likely "to obviate all future difficulties, and to settle the excitement at once and forever."[5] The opposing political party at the time, the Whigs, saw Stephen A. Douglas' "reckless" scheme for popular sovereignty as one that would "renew the Slavery agitation," and reignite a bitter dispute that would only end in secession.[6] Mid- Maryland, the border region, and the entire country had the opportunity to witness popular sovereignty in action as territorial elections proceeded in Kansas. The resulting violence and brutal killings that earned the territory the name "Bloody Kansas" produced passionate feelings and alarmed prose in eastern presses, and, predictably, further destabilized relations between the North and the South.
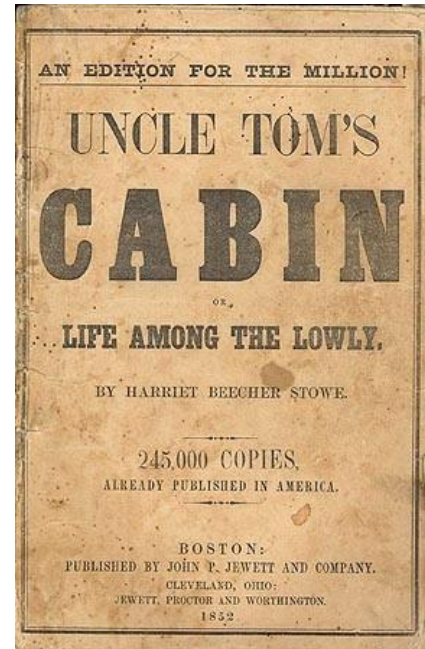
Uncle Tom's Cabin, **written by Harriet Beecher Stowe and published in 1852, was an anti-slavery novel immensely popular in the North. (University of Virginia)**

With Congress unable to defuse the question of slavery, in 1857 the Supreme Court tried its hand with the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision. This legal case was initially about whether an enslaved man who had been taken to live in states and territories that had outlawed slavery was therefore entitled to his freedom. Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney, who had lived in Frederick City for some time as a young man, wrote the opinion for the majority.[7] In hoping to finally end questions about slavery in the United States, Taney's decision touched on far more than the original dispute. Among other provisions of the decision, the Taney court ruled that no one of African descent could be a citizen of the United States, and therefore had no rights as a citizen. Instead of quelling the arguments about the institution of slavery, the *Dred Scott* decision immeasurably inflamed the issue. Taney's unqualified support for the institution of slavery deserved, according to the *Frederick Examiner,* a "large measure of respect."[8] "We are proud," continued the *Examiner*, "to see … the decision controlled by the spirit of the law."[9] Others in the region, especially abolitionists, saw it differently. They were more inclined to agree with Frederick Douglas, who called the decision an "open, glaring, and scandalous tissue of lies."[10]

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[4] Four of Maryland's six congressmen (two were absent) and both senators voted for the bill. *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., 1854, pt. 2, pp. 3101 and 3107.

[5] *Frederick Republican Citizen*, February 17, 1854.

[6] *Frederick Examiner*, March 8, 1854, March 31, 1854.

[7] Roger B. Taney was born on a tobacco plantation in Calvert County, the son of a prominent family of enslavers. ("Roger Brooke Taney (1777-1864)," *Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections*, accessed 5/2/2024, https://archives.dickinson.edu/people/roger-brooke-taney-1777-1864.

[8] *Frederick Examiner,* May 6, 1857.

[9] *Frederick Examiner,* May 6, 1857.

[10] Frederick Douglass, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," May 1857, found online at

The *Star and Banner* of Gettysburg titled one of its editorials "Another Triumph of the Slave Power," and said that this "humiliating decision" had simply reopened the "whole slavery agitation…."[11]
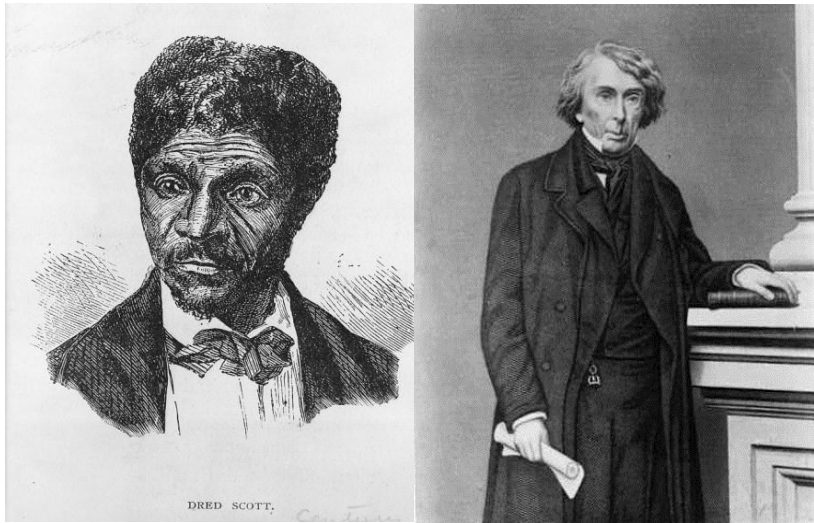
The *Dred Scott* (left) case decided in 1857 by the Supreme Court, ignited passionate feelings about slavery North and South, and is cited by many as one of the causes of the Civil War. (Library of Congress)

Roger Brooke Taney (right), Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a former resident of Frederick, MD, wrote the majority opinion in the *Dred Scott* case in 1857. (Library of Congress)

The Supreme Court, then, joined Congress in failing to formulate a policy that settled the slavery issue. Of particular concern to some mid-Marylanders was the large free Black population in the state, which the census of 1850 had numbered at over 70,000.[12] This was considered, by some, to be an "evil of no small magnitude."[13] In June of 1859, a convention of Maryland's enslavers met in Baltimore to consider what to do about the presence of free Black residents in the state. In Hagerstown and Frederick, the convention was regarded as "a trick of certain politicians, who had axes to grind," and by "*a few Democrats, who expect to make some political capital of it in the coming campaign*" [italics in original]. It was noted that in Hagerstown, only six or seven individuals met to select delegates. Though the convention proposed several "very extreme measures," including prohibiting all future manumission and expelling all free Black men, women, and children from the state under threat of immediate enslavement, "fortunately the good sense of a majority of the body defeated them all." In the end, the convention held that the removal of free Black people from the state as "impolitic, inexpedient, and uncalled for by any public exigency which could justify it."[14] The expulsion of free Black people would have eliminated the laborers necessary for seasonal grain crops and forced Maryland's farmers to hire more expensive immigrant labor.[15] Four months later, opinions about slavery and abolition would once again be jolted by a shocking event, this one very close to home.

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http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=772.

[11] (Gettysburg) *Star and Banner*, March 13, 1857.

[12] "Black Marylanders 1850: African American Population by County, Status & Gender," *The Maryland State Archives Presents: Legacy of Slavery in Maryland*, http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/research/census1850.html.

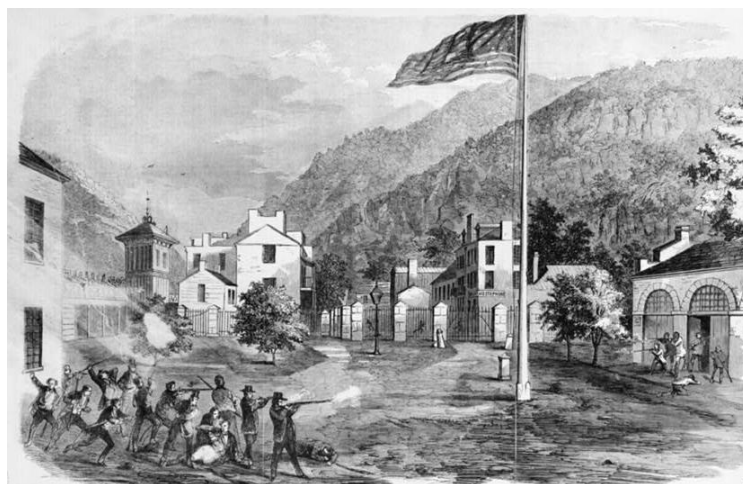[13] *Frederick Examiner,* June 8, 1859.

[14] *Frederick Herald,* June 14; *Frederick Examiner,* June 15, 1859.

[15] Free African Americans served as day laborers in the grain-based economy of mid-Maryland. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Muddling in the Middle: Maryland and Emancipation," *Reviews in American History,* vol. 14, no.2 (June

RAID ON HARPERS FERRY

In June 1859, a man calling himself Mr. Stearns appeared in Frederick County, ostensibly selling books but in reality familiarizing himself with the area. He reported the information he gathered to a Mr. Isaac Smith, who in July rented the Kennedy farm in the southeastern corner of Washington County. Local citizens paid little attention to Stearns or to Smith, or to any of Smith's twenty-one associates, five of whom were Black. They did not suspect that Smith was actually abolitionist John Brown, who was formulating a plan to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and to incite a slave insurrection.[16]

On October 17, 1859, Jacob Engelbrecht noted that in Frederick at 10:00 a.m. bells were ringing with commands for the town's militia companies to assemble for the purpose of suppressing "a kind of Insurrection among the Negroes of Jefferson County Va…to Sieze on the u.s. arms there."[17] News of a raid at Harpers Ferry quickly set off a wave of panic and confusion in the region. Rumors circulated that there was a force of one thousand insurrectionists, that six hundred armed slaves were participating, and that hundreds of abolitionists had joined the raiders.[18] Frederick's three military companies, the United Guards (commanded by Captain Thomas Sinn), the Junior Defenders (led by Captain John Ritchie), and the Independent Riflemen (under the

John Brown's Harpers Ferry Raid in 1859 galvanized public opinion on the issue of slavery and led to a hardening of positions North and South. (Library of Congress)

command of Captain Ulysses Hobbs), hurried to Frederick's railroad depot to get to the scene of the "Harpersferry [sic] Riot."[19] Brig. Gen. Edward Shriver, a Frederick attorney and commander of the Sixteenth Regiment, Maryland Militia, was in overall command of the troops from Frederick. Militia companies from all over the region were already in Harpers Ferry, and the Frederick men joined the others in position around the perimeter of the armory buildings where

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1986): 216-221, 217; also Edie Wallace, "Reclaiming the Forgotten History and Cultural Landscapes of African-Americans in Rural Washington County, Maryland," *Material Culture,* vol. 39, no. 1 (2007), 12.

[16] Paul and Rita Gordon, *A Playground of the Civil War* (Frederick, MD: M&B Printing, Inc., 1994), 5.

[17] William R. Quynn, ed., *The Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3 (1858-1878) (Frederick, MD: The Historical Society of Frederick County, Inc., 1976), entry on October 17, 1859, n.p.

[18] Quynn, *The Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, October 17, 1859; Gordon, *A Playground of the Civil War*, 8; Thomas J.C. Williams, *A History of Washington County, Maryland, Volume 1* (First published Hagerstown, 1906. Reprinted Regional Publishing Company, Baltimore, 1968), 349.

[19] Quynn, *The Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, entry on October 17, 1859, n.p.
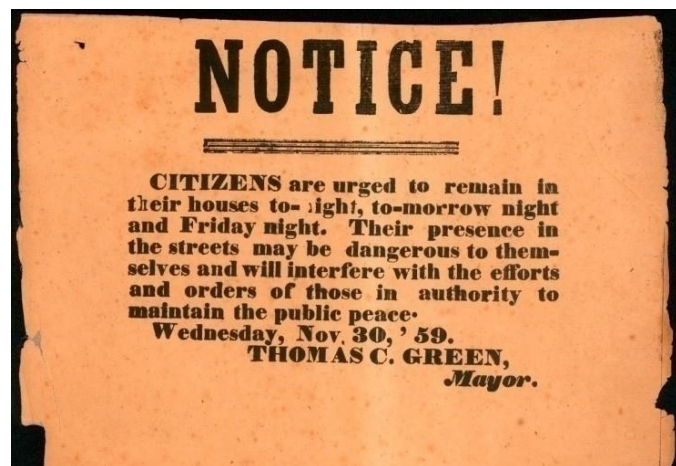
Brown's men had taken refuge.[20] There they discovered that the "riot" they were suppressing consisted of twenty-two men, and that many were already dead or in custody. In a report dated October 22, 1859, General Shriver described what happened next:

> Between 11 and 12 Oclock [sic] Capt Sinn who was with a detachment of his company on guard in front of the building occupied by the Insurgents was hailed and invited to approach it for the purpose of conference in regard to the terms on which the Insurgents proposed to surrender.... Capt Sinn communicated with me and...I held a parly [sic] with Captain Brown and the gentlemen he held as prisoners. I told him that he was completely surrounded by an overwhelming force and every avenue of escape effectually guarded.[21]

The raid ended the next day when the brick firehouse, where Brown and his men and hostages had taken refuge, was stormed by U.S. Marines, led by Col. Robert E. Lee. By 2:45 p.m. the three militia units returned to Frederick from Harpers Ferry.[22]

Although little had actually happened – the slave insurrection never materialized, the raiders were killed or captured, and Brown was summarily hanged – John Brown's Raid had an enormous effect on the region and the nation. A week after the raid, a Hagerstown paper reported that "the citizens have not yet recovered from their astonishment at the civil war which has so suddenly been engendered in their peaceful community."[23] Brown's "nefarious scheme" for the violent overthrow of slavery threatened the region's stability. In Hagerstown, "the people of our quiet town could hardly realize the fact that a plot of such villainy could have been concocting almost in their midst" by "a few phrenzied [sic], malignant out-laws." Brown's antislavery violence was the result, the Hagerstown paper declared, of the "intense fanaticism" of "misguided…abolitionists from the North and elsewhere." The raid "spread dismay and terror" among Marylanders who feared violent reactions among the state's large enslaved and free Black populations.[24]

In this broadside, residents of Charlestown, Virginia (later West Virginia) are urged to stay indoors before the hanging of John Brown. (Gettysburg National Military Park)

Reaction was similar throughout the region. Following Brown's raid, rumors spread that another revolt was imminent. Residents of the region became anxious

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[20] Edward Shriver to James M. Coale, October 22, 1859, in Gregory A. Stiverson, ed., *"In Readiness to Do Every Duty Assigned": The Frederick Militia and John Brown Raid on Harper's Ferry*, October 17–18, 1859 (Annapolis: Maryland State Archives, 1991), http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc2200/sc2221/000030/html/sc2221_30.html).

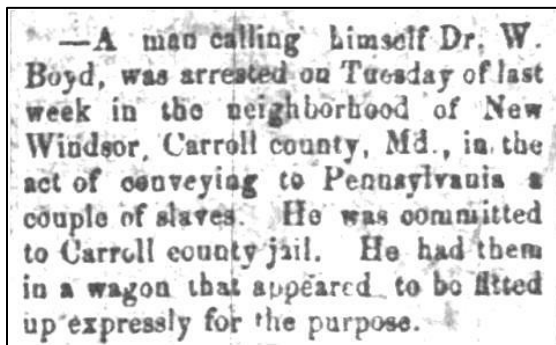[21] Edward Shriver to James M. Coale, October 22, 1859.

[22] *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on October 21, 1859, n.p.

[23] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, October 26, 1859.

[24] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, October 26, 1859.

about secret abolitionist plots, about strangers, and even about provocative language. By order of Governor Hicks of Maryland, sheriffs in mid-Maryland were authorized to "arrest and detain" suspicious persons, and they hired extra deputies to assist with the process.[25] In New Windsor, in Carroll County, a Dr. Boyd was arrested for trying to smuggle out of Maryland and into Pennsylvania several enslaved people who were hidden in a secret compartment he had made in his wagon. For his effort, Dr. Boyd was incarcerated in the Carroll County jail.[26] A month later, Dr. Breed, a Democrat, was arrested and held for $2,000 bail. He had used "incendiary language, by saying 'that the negroes ought to murder their masters, kill their wives, set fire to their houses, and then run away by the light of the fire' and that 'he thought it was the duty of every Christian to encourage the negroes in it.'"[27]

—A man calling himself Dr. W. Boyd, was arrested on Tuesday of last week in the neighborhood of New Windsor, Carroll county, Md., in the act of conveying to Pennsylvania a couple of slaves. He was committed to Carroll county jail. He had them in a wagon that appeared to be fitted up expressly for the purpose.

Report of Dr. Boyd's arrest in Carroll County. *The Valley Register*, **November 11, 1859.**

Brown's raid exacerbated racial tensions for Blacks as well as whites. Among Brown's personal papers was a letter he wrote in which he referred several times to Thomas Henry, a Black clergyman in Hagerstown. Henry had been "long suspected of an improper intercourse and intimacy with the abolitionists of the North." By November of 1859, the Hagerstown Herald reported that Henry had sold all of his property and left Maryland.[28]

Increased anxieties as a result of the John Brown raid led to the formation of even more militia companies in the region. On January 11, 1860, the Hagerstown newspaper, The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light, noted:

> Since the Brown foray, a large number of military companies have been organized in Maryland and Virginia. Nearly every exchange that we open, from the surrounding counties in this and our neighboring State beyond the Potomac, speaks in flattering terms of the formation of one or more of these companies in its midst; and at no former period does there appear to have been so ardent a military spirit awakened.[29]

By February 1, 1860 at least seven new military companies had been formed in Frederick County; in Berkeley County, Virginia, eight companies were formed.[30] Maryland's arsenal ran out of rifles and muskets to distribute to the new volunteer companies. Even the state's allotment of weapons for 1860 was already committed by December 24, 1859, and the General Assembly's

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[25] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, November 1, 1859.
[26] *The Valley Register*, November 11, 1859.
[27] *The Valley Register*, December 2, 1859.
[28] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light,* November 18, 1859.
[29] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, January 11, 1860.
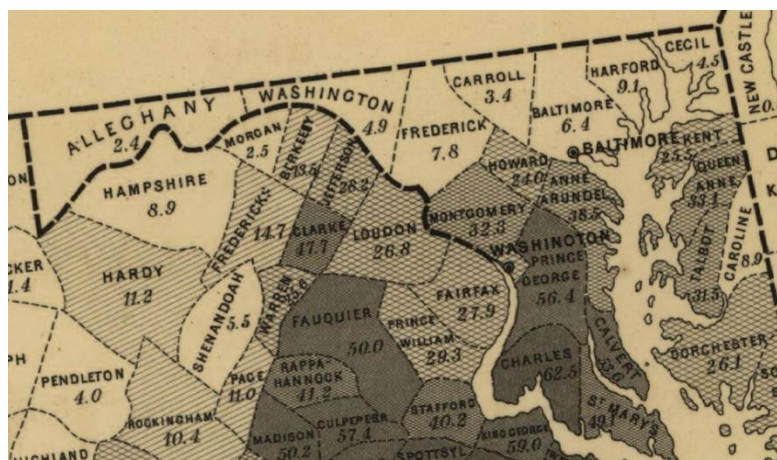[30] *Frederick Examiner*, November 30, 1859; December 14, 28, 1859; January 11, 1860; February 1, 1860; *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, February 1, 1860.

appropriation of $70,000, which was much larger than usual, was insufficient to meet the demand from the newly formed military companies.[31]

With the community "excited…to a degree hitherto unknown," the partisan opportunities that John Brown's Raid created were seized upon by Democrats in the region, who made the most of the intensified fears by accusing the Republican Party of being in league with John Brown.[32] Although the majority of Republicans continually tried to distance themselves from Brown, portraying him as a solitary figure who acted alone, some mid-Marylanders were no longer listening. While most Northerners saw John Brown as a fanatic who deserved his punishment, John Brown and revolutionary violence were now forged together with the Republican Party in Southern minds. Rather than seeing the raid as an utter failure, those sympathetic to the Southern point of view saw it as a taste of what was to come.

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM IN 1860

By 1860, the situation for African Americans in mid-Maryland and the surrounding region varied. Slavery in mid-Maryland had been declining since 1820: in 1820 over 16% of the total population of Frederick County was enslaved; by 1860 that number had dropped to 7%. The same pattern was true for Washington County, which went from 14% enslaved in 1820 to 5% in 1860. In Carroll County, carved in part from Frederick County in 1837, only 3% of its residents

"Map showing the distribution of the slave population of the southern states of the United States. Compiled from the census of 1860." (Library of Congress)

were enslaved by the time of the Civil War.[33] A prominent historian has argued that in this wheat-producing interior of the state, a way of life was developing in which slavery was "tangential."[34] Yet these diminishing numbers are in some ways misleading with regard to slavery's significance in the region, for slavery persisted in exerting its influence politically and socially despite its decline. Mid-Maryland was not economically dependent on slavery, but it did have an investment in the institution.

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[31] *Frederick Examiner*, December 24; *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, January 7, 1860.
[32] *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light,* October 26, 1859; *Frederick Herald,* November 1, 1859.
[33] Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Date Center, 1998; at http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/. (This link is broken. However, the data can be found at https://www.nhgis.org/ (free but requires registration).
[34] Barbara Jean Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 7.

1860 US Census Enumeration of Enslaved African Americans by County and District[35]

Carroll County		Frederick County		Washington County	
District	#Enslaved	District	#Enslaved	District	#Enslaved
Franklin Dist.	135	Buckeystown Dist.	538	Boonsboro	34
Freedom Dist.	381	Catoctin Dist.	3	Boonsboro Dist.	102
Hampstead Dist.	0	Creagerstown Dist.	16	Cavetown Dist.	99
Manchester Dist.	0	Emmitsburg Dist.	47	Clear Spring Dist.	170
Middleburg Dist.	34	Frederick City	443	Conococheague Dist.	26
Myers Dist.	9	Frederick Dist.	273	Funkstown	15
New Windsor Dist.	11	Hauvers Dist.	0	Funkstown Dist.	78
Taneytown Dist.	24	Jackson Dist.	5	Hagerstown	60
Uniontown Dist.	17	Jefferson Dist.	242	Hagerstown Dist.	131
Westminster Dist.	90	Johnsville Dist.	59	Hancock Dist.	128
Woolery Dist.	82	Liberty Dist.	232	Leitersburg Dist.	24
-	-	Mechanicstown Dist.	21	Pleasant Valley Dist.	83
-	-	Middletown Dist.	114	Sandy Hook Dist.	84
-	-	Mt. Pleasant Dist.	61	Sharpsburg Dist.	150
-	-	New Market Dist.	338	Smithsburg Dist.	0
-	-	Petersville Dist.	558	Tilghmanton Dist.	91
-	-	Urbana Dist.	223	Williamsport	22
-	-	Woodsboro Dist.	70	Williamsport Dist.	138
Total	783	**Total**	3,243	**Total**	1,435

[35] Based on the numbers given in the 1860 Slave Schedule for each district within county. Totals each county can also be found in the 1860 summary for Maryland, Table No. 1 "Population by Age and Sex," in *1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 213, https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1864/dec/1860a.html.

The neighboring counties in Pennsylvania and Virginia had demographic patterns distinct from those in mid-Maryland. Pennsylvania was a non-slaveholding state by 1860. In that year, Franklin and Adams Counties had small free Black populations of 1,799 and 474, respectively, which together comprised a little over 3% of the total population of the two counties. In Loudoun County, Virginia, on the other hand, where slavery was still a thriving institution, African Americans made up 25% of the total population, and the vast majority were enslaved. A similar pattern existed in Jefferson County, Virginia, where African Americans comprised 27% of the population and nearly 9 of every 10 were enslaved in 1860.[36]

It was the growth of the free Black population, which increased faster than any other segment of the population, that was the most notable demographic development in mid-Maryland and across the state throughout the nineteenth century. As slavery declined, the number of free African Americans increased steadily, and by 1860, free African Americans outnumbered those enslaved. In Frederick County, the percentage of free Black individuals rose to 11% of the total population in 1860; in both Washington and Carroll Counties, free African Americans accounted for 5% of the total population in each county. In 1860, the three mid-Maryland counties included almost 8,000 free African American residents navigating a society that exerted social and political pressure to keep them subordinate.[37]

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, free Black families sought the strength of community to lift them through the struggles of life. In the mid-Maryland counties, the county-seat towns of Frederick, Hagerstown, and Westminster, were home to the greatest concentrations of free Black households. They formed communities within – and largely separate from – the larger white population. Similarly, free Black communities developed on the edges of the smaller towns and villages. Scattered clusters of Black households formed in rural countryside, usually where a source of employment – larger farms, mills, iron works – was located nearby. In many cases, these rural groups grew around one or two free Black landowners on whose land other households often related by kinship settled as tenants. Others lived as tenants on nearby properties. While the early city communities often included a church building, in rural areas such institutional buildings were less common and congregations simply gathered in homes or in white churches offered by sympathetic white neighbors.[38]

Hagerstown, the county seat of Washington County, was a busy market town with over 2,600 inhabitants in 1820, 112 of whom were free African Americans and 119 enslaved. In 1818, the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church was established to serve the free Black and enslaved people of Hagerstown. By 1830, the free Black population in the city had nearly tripled and in 1838, the Ebenezer AME Church congregation was formed. Both the ME and AME congregations built

[36] "Population of the United States in 1860: Pennsylvania," Table 1, 409, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-30.pdf; "Population of Virginia – 1860," http://www.virginiaplaces.org/population/pop1860numbers.html.

[37] Carroll County enumerated 1,225 free African Americans, Washington County had 1,677, and Frederick County had 4,957. *1860 Census: Population of the United States* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 1864), 214.

[38] Thomas W. Henry, Jean Libby, ed., *From Slavery to Salvation* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 25, 28, 30.

their churches on or near Jonathon Street, in the northwest quadrant of the city, where many of the free Black households were located.[39]

By 1850, the free Black population of Washington County numbered over 1,800 men, women, and children, largely scattered across the rural county. Small clusters of households were located on the back streets of several towns and villages.[40] In Boonsboro, six of the seven Black households were listed in succession on the census. In Williamsport, 35 free Black households appeared in several clusters of 3-5 houses. Approximately 46 free African Americans lived in Sharpsburg by 1860, including a group of related families living on West Antietam Street. They were descendants of Nancy Carter, who purchased one of the lots in 1819. On East High Street (also known as Back Street) several tenant families occupied homes on lots owned by Samuel and Catherine Craig, both formerly enslaved.[41] Other rural towns included small populations of free African Americans, including Clear Spring and Hancock.

The rural hills and mountainsides of Washington County also attracted enclaves of free African Americans. On Red Hill, near Sharpsburg and Keedysville, the wooded land owned by the Antietam Iron Works harbored an early cluster of free Black households. Likely employed at the nearby iron works, two free Black men and one woman were listed as heads of household in the area. By 1830, the number of households had grown to seven. Rev. Thomas Henry noted serving an AME congregation at the iron works in the late 1830s in a log schoolhouse at the base of Red Hill. When the iron works land was sold after the death of the owner in 1856, several lots were purchased by Black families. By 1860, the community included approximately 20 independent households, five of which owned the land on which they lived.[42]

Of note to the west, in the Clear Spring District, was the farm of Nathan Williams, encompassing the ruined walls of the 1750s stone fort called Fort Frederick. Williams purchased the land in 1857. The Williams' Fort Frederick farm would play a role in the coming Civil War, selling supplies to both Federal troops encamped on the Maryland side of the Potomac River, and to Confederates on the Virginia side.

In Frederick City, Frederick County's seat of government, the antebellum free Black population was concentrated on the south and east edges of the city. In 1825, the Frederick County tax assessment record listed five Black landowners in "Fredericktown," including William Hammond. Hammond's property was likely on All Saints Street, where in 1818, he sold part of Lot 10 to five free Black men, David Peck, Nicholas Smith, James Harper, Archibald Gull, and Sampson Gross. The five men purchased the lot as trustees to "build a house of Worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church."[43] The church would serve as the center

[39] Heritage Resource Group, Inc., "Jonathon Street, Hagerstown, Maryland" (City of Hagerstown, 2002), 10; "Black Marylanders 1820: African American Population by County, Status & Gender," *The Maryland State Archives Presents: Legacy of Slavery in Maryland*, http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/research/census1820.html.

[40] Heritage Resource Group, Inc., "Jonathon Street, Hagerstown, Maryland" (City of Hagerstown, 2002), 10, 14;

[41] Edith B. Wallace, "'They Have Erected a Neat Little Church': The Rural African American Experience, 1865-1900, in the National Capital Area," (National Park Service, Department of the Interior, National Capital Area, 2021), 243-244; Emilie Amt, *Black Antietam* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2022), 27.

[42] Wallace, "They Have Erected a Neat Little Church," 293-295.

[43] FC DB JS6, page 424-427. The church, known locally as the "Old Hill Church" would be officially called Asbury

of the Black community on the south side of Frederick. By 1835, the city's Black landowners had grown to 22, twelve of whom were located on the south end of town along All Saints Street, South Street, and South Market Street. There were also two lot owners on 6th Street and one on 3rd Street, likely in the vicinity of the Bethel (Quinn) AME Chapel, built on East 3rd Street in 1819.[44] Another six Black residents owned lots along East Street, in a section called "Sherb Row" (today's Shab Row). Eight of the Black lot owners in Fredericktown occupied brick houses, while twelve owners lived in one-story log dwellings. One, Susan Duffin, lived in a "1 story rough cast house" located on "1st St."[45]

Free African Americans in Frederick County formed communities on the edges of at least six of the county's rural town/villages. These included Emmitsburg (W. Lincoln Ave., ca.1830), Lewistown (Powell Road, 1840s), Libertytown (1830s), New Market (1830s), Middletown (S. Jefferson St., "Little Africa," 1820s), and Mt. Pleasant (ca.1856). Significantly, John B. Snowden, a Black resident in the Westminster area (Carroll Co.) noted that he sent three of his children to school in Libertytown, perhaps in the 1840s. It is unclear what school that might have been.[46]

Three Frederick County rural town communities included associated church buildings before 1860. A Methodist Episcopal (ME) Church was indicated on the outskirts of Mt. Pleasant on the 1858 Bond map of Frederick County. The earliest burial in the adjoining cemetery is dated 1856. This early church appears to be in the same location as today's Silver Hill United Methodist Church, deeded by a

Mt. Pleasant section of the 1858 Bond Map of Frederick County showing the location of an ME Church at the crossroads east of the village. (Library of Congress)

local landowner to the trustees of the "Colored People's Methodist Episcopal Church of 'Mt. Pleasant'" in 1875.[47] In Lewistown, the "Colored Methodist Episcopal" congregation purchased

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Methodist Episcopal Church. The old church was demolished in the 1920s when a new church building, today's Asbury United Methodist Church, was constructed on W. All Saints St.

[44] The congregation reportedly dates to the 1790s. "Church History," *Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church*, https://www.quinnamefrederick.org/about-us.

[45] Jeffrey A. Duvall, "African American Land Owners, Frederick County Maryland, 1825 Tax List" (2016), and "Frederick County Maryland 1835 Tax, African American Land Owners" (2022), https://sites.rootsweb.com/~midmdroots/afriamericans/index.htm.

[46] John B. Snowden, *The Autobiography of Rev. John Baptist Snowden*, Thomas B. Snowden, ed. (Huntington, WV, 1900), 34, https://www.loc.gov/item/67040929/.

[47] Wallace, "African American History of the Monocacy-Catoctin Region, Northern Frederick County, Maryland," 55-56; Libertytown had ten Black lot owners in 1835 and New Market had three, Jeffrey A. Duvall, "Frederick County Maryland 1835 Tax African American Land Owners" (2022), https://sites.rootsweb.com/~midmdroots/afriamericans/files/fc1835tax_blacks.pdf; "The forgotten: the Middletown African Methodist Episcopal Cemetery, Middletown, MD" (Buckeystown, MD: The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Carrollton Manor Chapter, 2015), 3; "Siver Hill Methodist Episcopal Church," MIHP #F-8-124, citing Fred. Co. Deed Book (FC DB) TG4, pp. 17-18, also see "Wayman-Silver Hill Church Cemetery," https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2187284/wayman-silver-hill-church-cemetery. The cemetery is shared with

the former white Protestant Episcopal church building in 1859.[48] In Middletown, the Black Methodist Episcopal congregation built their church as early as 1829. On August 25, 1829, Israel Ramsburg sold a quarter acre of land to Isaac Johnson, Jacob Black, Leonard Maers, Samuel Walker, and Basil Bell, the trustees of the "Methodist Episcopal African Church at Middle Town" (later called the Asbury ME Church) for $50, "that they shall erect thereon a house of Public Worship for the use of the members of the colored people belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America."[49]

The Charles Lee stone house replaced the original log dwelling ca.1840.

In rural northern Frederick County, the "Mountain Community" was an early cluster of rural free Black households (located on today's Annandale & Crystal Falls Roads). In 1804, Charles Lee purchased his freedom from John Bayard, a local large landowner and enslaver. Lee bought his first parcel of land in 1813 and owned a second parcel by 1825. Each of the two parcels included a log dwelling in 1825, according to the Frederick County tax record.[50] It is likely Charles Lee occupied one of the lots while his adult son Isaac lived on the other with his young family.

This small kinship cluster formed the core of a larger scattered community that grew along the mountain road just north of the area's largest employer, Mount Saint Mary's College. In 1835, the county tax assessment record identified Stephen Green with three acres of "mountain land" and a "log house" located in the same area.[51] By 1850, Stephen Green, a "laborer," was listed in the US Census with his wife Susan and four children, along with Augustus Green, likely Stephen's brother.[52] "Gust. Green" was additionally listed on the census as a laborer at Mount St. Mary's College. William Richardson was another free Black employee at the college in 1850. Richardson was listed on the census as the head of a household next to Stephen Green, along with his wife, five children, and a boarder named James Bowie. Richardson's next neighbor was Martin Conrad, who owned $200 in real estate and lived with his wife and a woman named Mary

the nearby Wayman AME Church, originally built ca. 1868.

[48] Wallace, "African American History of the Monocacy-Catoctin Region, Northern Frederick County, Maryland," 82, citing FC DB BGF 4, page 377 (Frederick Cronise et al trustees to trustees of Colored ME Church, 1859). The 1873 atlas map showed the building on Lot 152.

[49] FC DB JS32, p. 423. See "The forgotten: the Middletown African Methodist Episcopal Cemetery, Middletown, MD" for a list of the people buried in the cemetery (note this publication incorrectly identified the church as AME).

[50] FC DB WR26, page 330 (Bayard to Chas. Lee, 1804); FC DB WR44, page 13 (Andrew Smith to Chas. Lee, 1813); "African American Land Owners, Frederick County Maryland 1825 Tax List," compiled by Jeffrey A. Duvall, 2016, https://mdhmapping.com/african-american-land-owners-frederick-county-1825-tax-list/. Lee also purchased his wife and children, WR28, page 132 (Brawner to Chas. Lee, 1807), WR44, page 488 (Brawner to Chas. Lee, 1814), and manumitted them in 1822 (FC DB JS15, page 480).

[51] "1835 Frederick County Tax (Free Black Land Owners)," compiled by Jeffrey A. Duvall, 2020, https://mdhmapping.com/1835-frederick-county-tax-free-black-land-owners/.

[52] "Stephen Green has paid sixty-six dollars…" April 15, 1840, "Slavery Manuscripts," Folder 6, Special Collections, Hugh J. Phillips Library, Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD. Stephen Green's land purchase apparently was never entered into the Frederick County land records.

Lee. Most, if not all of these "mountain community" residents were members of the Catholic Church and many were buried in a segregated section of the nearly St. Anthony's Cemetery.[53]


Annotated image of St. Anthony's Cemetery showing African American burials. (Courtesy Rick Smith)

As free African American inhabitants of Frederick County grew steadily in number through the first half of the 19th century, many free Black households gathered in rural clusters similar to the "Mountain Community" (described above). A small enclave known as Poplar Ridge (Irishtown Road) formed north of Emmitsburg in the 1820s. Pattersonville (Catoctin Hollow Road) got its start in 1853 when Robert Patterson purchased land on the west side of the mountain (later known as "Bob's Hill") near Catoctin Furnace. The Bartonsville community (Bartonsville Road) got its start east of Frederick in 1838; Mt. Ephraim (near Sugarloaf Mountain) began with a land purchase in 1814; and the Burkittsville area community (Route 17/Gapland Rd.) began to coalesce by 1840 when an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation was identified by Rev. Thomas Henry. The congregation purchased a lot in 1858 and constructed a church building soon after.[54]

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[53] Edith Wallace, "African American History of the Monocacy-Catoctin Region, Northern Frederick County, Maryland" (Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, 2023), https://catoctinfurnace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/N.Frederick.Co_.African-American-Context.FINAL_.2023-1.pdf.

[54] Wallace, "African American History of the Monocacy-Catoctin Region, Northern Frederick County, Maryland," 47-54 (Pattersonville, Poplar Ridge); Henry, *From Slavery to Salvation*, 30-31, and Wallace, "Ceres Bethel AME Church" National Register nomination (Burkittsville area); George McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources in Upper*

By the time Carroll County was carved from eastern Frederick County (and western Baltimore County) in 1837, a scattered free Black community had already begun to form along both sides of Buffalo Road, the new boundary line between Frederick's Liberty District and Carroll's Franklin District. In 1835, two years prior to the county division, James Smith, a free Black man, was assessed for 12 acres of a parcel of land called *Leigh Castle* and a "Log House," then located within Frederick County. Smith was again assessed for his 12 acres of *Leigh Castle* in 1837, this time in the newly-formed Carroll County, District 9 (Franklin District).[55] It was on part of the tract known as *Leigh Castle* that the "Colored peoples Church called 'Fair View'" was constructed on Buffalo Road about 1851.[56] By 1840, the US Population Census recorded 29 free Black households in District 9, including James Smith, as well as Dotson (Dodson), Dorsey, and Murdoc (Murdock) families that would later be noted among the founders of the Fairview ME Church. Other founding church families were listed on the 1840 census in Liberty District (Dist. 8) in Frederick County, including Hammond (Boss, Moses) and Costly. A Fairview Church history also named William Flanagain, Jefferson Carter, Tyler Murdock, and John and Daniel Hammond as early members.[57] The 1850 census records show Jefferson Carter living in Liberty District in Frederick County, while Daniel Hammond (11-year-old son of Moses Hammond)
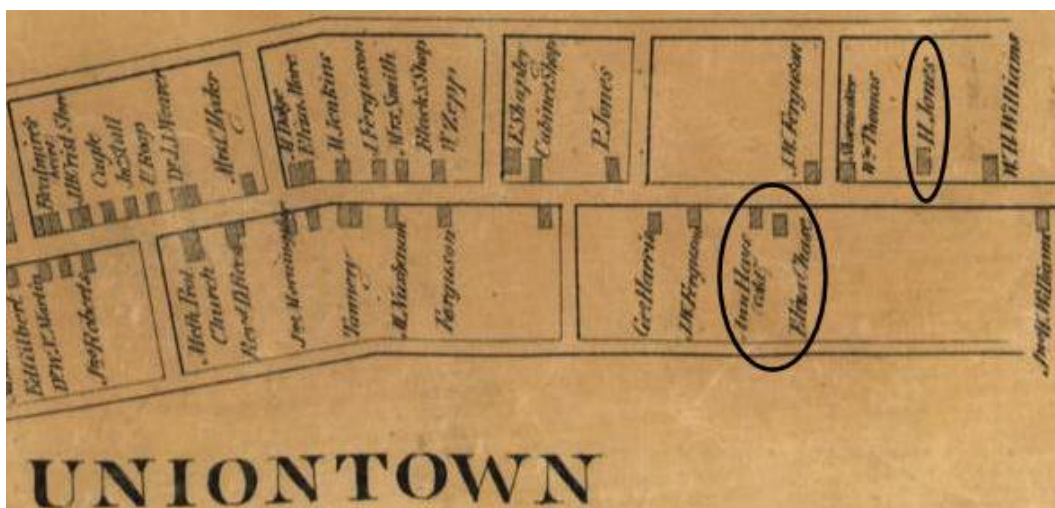
Uniontown detail map from Martenet's map of Carroll County, 1862. (Library of Congress)

Western Montgomery County, https://mht.maryland.gov/Documents/research/contexts/FRRMont28.pdf (Mt. Ephraim).

[55] Jeffrey A. Duvall, "Frederick County Maryland 1835 Tax, African American Land Owners" (2022), https://sites.rootsweb.com/~midmdroots/afriamericans/index.htm; Jeffrey A. Duvall, "African American Land Owners (Carroll County 1837 Tax List)" (2018), https://mdhmapping.com/african-american-land-owners-carroll-county-1837-tax-list/. Two other African American landowners were assessed in District 9, Gustavus Savvy and Owen Walker. Duvall was unsure of the name "Gustavus Savvy," and indeed, that name does not appear on the 1840 census. However, the 1840 census did list Benjamin Survoy in District 9 of Carroll County.

[56] Carroll County Deed Book (CC DB) 78, page 105 (This deed was recorded in 1893, in which "Abraham Long, surviving trustee," apparently a white man, transferred the church property to seven Black trustees. Since Long was a "surviving trustee," there must have been an earlier deed though it has not been found and was likely never recorded at the county land office); Mary Ann Ashcraft, "Church Preserves Tradition," *Carroll Yesteryears*, 26 October 2008, *Historical Society of Carroll County*, https://hsccmd.org/26-october-2008-church-preserves-tradition/.

[57] Ashcraft, "Church Preserves Tradition."

lived in Franklin District in Carroll County. In 1862, the "Col^d Ch" on the Buffalo Road boundary between the two districts/counties appeared on Martenet's map of Carroll County.[58]

Another rural cluster of independent African American households was located in District 2 (Uniontown District) in Carroll County. The rural district with Uniontown at its center included at least 35 free Black households in the 1840 US Population Census.[59] Among those listed was an elderly woman named "Darky Donson," who shared her home with a young man and child. By 1850, "Dacus Dunston" (age 80) was listed on the census in her own household with real estate valued at $200, which she shared with the separate household of her son Barney Dunston. In 1858, probably following his mother's death, Dunston (Dunson) sold the property located on the road "from Uniontown to Middleburg" to Singleton Hughes, a formerly enslaved man and ME preacher. Hughes reportedly held church services in the former Dunston home and in 1859, sold the property to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church ("colored"), including himself, Jeremiah Key, Ephraim Brown, William [Joabs], William H. Brown, William Matthews, and William H. Dunston.[60] Members of the congregation included a small enclave of free Black residents on the west end of Uniontown. Among them were Dennis and Eliza Chase,

1858 Bond map of Frederick County, detail of Buffalo Road boundary showing Isaac Dodson (Franklin Dist.) and Boss Hammond (Liberty Dist.). (Library of Congress)
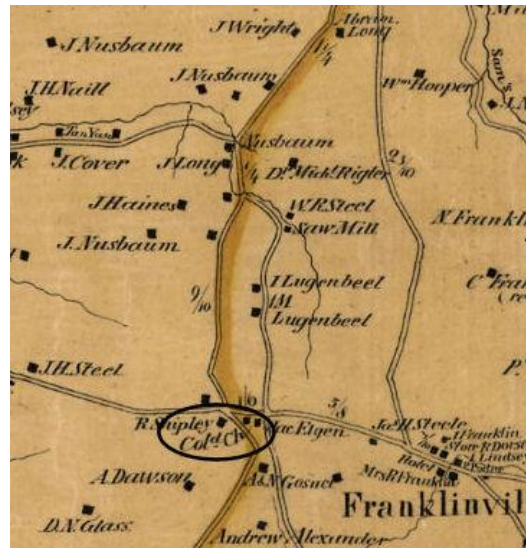
1862 Martenet map of Carroll County, detail of Buffalo Road boundary showing "Colored Ch" at location of Fairview ME Church. (Library of Congress)

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[58] Another "Col^d Meth Church" is indicated on the 1862 map in Woolery Dist. 4, near Pleasantville (today's Gamber). According to local researcher Mary Ann Ashcraft (unpublished manuscript on "Woolerys"): "Before the Civil War, Woolerys had a sizable number of enslaved men, women, and children. According to the 1860 census, 32 families held one or more people in bondage. …Henry Pool and his wife, who held nobody in bondage, built the church on their land as a house of worship for free and enslaved Blacks."

[59] These included Henry Toop and Nathan Jason, who were assessed for 1 and 2 acres respectively on the 1837 Carroll County tax assessment (Jeffrey A. Duvall, "African American Land Owners (Carroll County 1837 Tax List)").

[60] CC DB 25, page 95 (Dunson to Hughes, 1858); "Carroll County African American Heritage Guide" (Maryland State Highway Administration, 2014), https://www.roads.maryland.gov/OPPEN/Carroll%20County%20Brochure%20(WEB%20VERSION).pdf; CC DB 26, page 106 (Hughes to Trustees, 1859). A church building was reportedly constructed in 1880 and called Mt. Joy Methodist Episcopal Church (MIHP #CARR-352, "Mt. Joy M.E. Church").

who owned their lot as early as 1850 according to the census, Anna Hays, who purchased her lot in 1859, and Perry and Harriet Jones, who owned their lot by 1860.[61]

In the northwestern Taneytown District (District 1) where in 1850 enslaved people far outnumbered free African Americans, a tiny enclave of three independent Black households (16 people) was present in the small town of Taneytown.[62] By 1860, that number had grown to seven households representing 40 free Black men, women, and children. The district was home to St. Joseph's Catholic Church, which numbered among its members John Coats and family, a free Black man who owned a lot in Taneytown by 1850 and was buried in the church cemetery in 1882. Others gathered for meetings held by Methodist preacher John B. Snowden.[63]

The town of Westminster, Carroll County's seat of government, was situated in the middle of District 7 (Westminster District). At the time of the 1850 census, 51 free Black individuals resided in the town of Westminster. About half of those lived as servants in white households, while the remaining (24) lived in seven independent free Black households. Beale (Billy) Beho owned 2 acres in "Pigman's Addition to Westminster," said to have been purchased by Beho in 1838. It was located on the east side of the road to Littlestown "opposite the property of Isaac Shriver Esq." where Shriver had laid out a short cross street called Union Street on his 17-acre "Shriver's Addition to Westminster" in 1834.[64] In 1864, Elizabeth and William Harden were the first African Americans to purchase an unimproved lot on the south side of Union Street.[65] John B. Snowden was already preaching the (Methodist Episcopal) gospel when he purchased his freedom and arrived in Westminster in 1831. In his autobiography, Snowden described holding "protracted meetings in Westminster, my home, for many years" prior to the 1864 formation of the all-Black Washington Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[66] No schools for African American
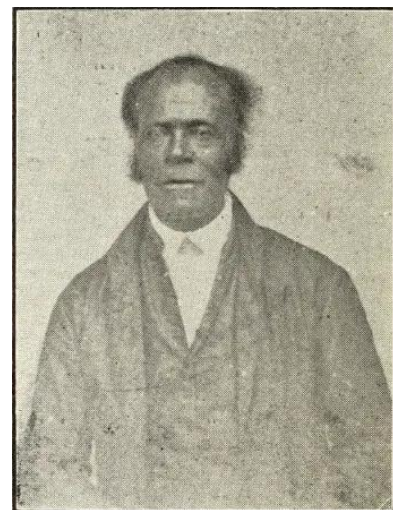
John Baptist Snowden (from his *Autobiography*, Library of Congress)

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[61] "Carroll County African American Heritage Guide."

[62] The census-taker for Taneytown District (District 1) recorded 78 enslaved people and 37 free Blacks.

[63] Snowden, *Autobiography*, 45, https://www.loc.gov/item/67040929/.

[64] CC DB 15, page 523. This deed dated 1853 described a conveyance "by the said Hezekiah Crout to the said Beale Beho by his bond of conveyance dated April 2, 1838 Witnessed by L.L. Savomisteadt *[sic]*." Moses, Samuel, and Beale Beho were enslaved by Baltimore County (later part of Carroll Co.) resident Col. Joshua Gist. Moses Beho purchased himself, Samuel, and Beale from Gist in 1834, then manumitted Samuel and Beale the same year. Joshua Gist died in 1839 and is buried in the Gist Cemetery in Westminster. (Baltimore County Court (Miscellaneous Court Papers, Index), Volume 2, 1931-1851, MSA CE19-2, image 46 and 52, Maryland State Archives; "Col Joshua Gist," https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8783736/joshua-gist.

[65] "Union Street District," MIHP #CARR-501; CC DB 31, page 310. Speculators purchased lots along the street in the 1850s, some of which were then improved with small dwellinghouses.

[66] Snowden, *Autobiography*, 27, 50, 52, https://www.loc.gov/item/67040929/. Snowden additionally noted helping others in Carroll County with their pre-1864 meetings, including "at Fairview, Mount Olive, Uniontown, Manchester, Hampstead, Poole's Schoolhouse and other places," and identified "Singleton Hughes, William Tascoe, Richard Hall, Oliver Randall, Samuel Thompson, Isaac Dotson and other local ministers." (p. 52)

children were available during this period. Snowden recalled paying a private tutor to teach his children, and was even offered the opportunity to send them to a white school during off-hours:

> Mr. John Bowman, who taught a white school near where I lived a few years before the Rebellion, undertook to teach my boys at night, but was stopped by bad young white men, who would slip and fasten the schoolhouse door on the outside and then stone the house. It was not an easy matter to try to have my boys and girls to learn just a little in the State of Maryland in ante-bellum days.[67]

Snowden's children were the exception to the rule. For those families with access to a church community, Sunday school would provide the only education available.

CONCLUSION

John Brown believed that only a war against slavery would bring an end to the institution in the United States. Although it would not happen exactly the way he envisioned, it would be war that brought its final demise. For decades enslaved people damaged the institution by successfully fleeing their bonds. In 1862, one Frederick citizen wrote to *The Frederick Examiner*, "Slave owners see that the institution is melting away like a snow ball in the sun."[68] The final blow would come in 1863 with President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and his instruction to the US Army to accept free and enslaved volunteers, eventually including Black men in the draft. The influx of highly motivated and determined Black men into the Federal ranks would mark a turning point in the Civil War that brought an end to slavery in the US.

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[67] Snowden, *Autobiography*, 34, https://www.loc.gov/item/67040929/.
[68] *The Frederick Examiner*, April 2, 1862, https://www.crossroadsofwar.org/research/newspapers/?id=1249.