

Rediscovering Free Blacks
In Somerset County, Maryland, 1663-1863

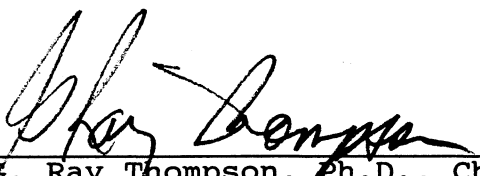
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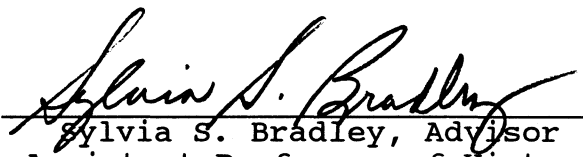

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Abstract

Rediscovering Free Blacks

In Somerset County, MD., 1663-1863

From the first days of settlement by non-native-American pioneers, free blacks counted themselves among the inhabitants of Somerset County, part of Maryland's Eastern Shore. The most well-documented of these free black settlers was Anthony Johnson who moved into Somerset County from neighboring Accomack County, on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Johnson had owned nearly 1,000 acres of land in Virginia, but moved his family into Maryland during the first wave of settlement, thus establishing a tradition of free black land ownership and presence in the new county. Other free black families also moved into the area, owning varying amounts of land. Generally, the free black residents tried to fit into the social and cultural arena established by the dominant white culture: land ownership, self-sufficiency, church membership and even slave-ownership. Although African cultural identity survived in the slave portion of the population, and networks of free black support existed, acceptance of the norms set by the successful white residents was a strong incentive for free blacks to identify with that culture and society.

Generally, in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth, the county court system in Somerset County showed special concern that contracts were fulfilled legally, and that morality be constantly checked - especially sexual conduct. Free blacks who

had dealings with the court over contracts, and who could prove that the contract they held had been violated, won their cases. The court was relatively color blind as long as the case contained the clear-cut legal concept of the sanctity of the contract. In morality cases, punishments for any woman who bore a child out of wedlock were meted out liberally, but a white woman who bore the child of a black slave was treated more harshly, emphasizing the implied inferiority of blacks, and the negative connotation of black/white sexual unions. Contractual and morality cases made up the vast bulk of all court cases during those early decades, and free blacks rarely appeared as defendant or plaintiff in more serious criminal cases.

Slaves who dreamed of entering the ranks of the free black population usually had to rely on the good will of their owners to release them into freedom. Skilled craftsmen or exceptionally clever workers were often hired out by their master to neighbors who paid for their labor, and the slave was usually permitted to keep part of his earnings. Some slaves managed to buy their own manumission by saving their earnings and paying prices for their freedom ranging from the nominal one cent to several hundred pounds or dollars. However, the majority of slaves who became free men or women were manumitted because of a special relationship with their owners. A few people in Somerset County were moved by kinship, religious or political sentiment to free slaves, but most cited the hard work and loyalty of the slave as the reason for manumission. As the free black population grew, by means of manumission and

natural increase, opportunities for land ownership decreased and the specter of poverty and ever-increasing legal repression emerged for the free black residents of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Church records often reveal facets of free black life not available from other sources. Somerset Parish, the Anglican parish established in 1692 as one of the "official" parishes in Maryland, maintains exceptional records from an early date, and both free blacks and slaves figure into the complicated history of the parish. Both slaves and free blacks were baptised, married and buried in the church from its earliest days, but full-fledged adult incorporation into the life of the parish was never achieved before the Civil War. Slave masters apparently did not force their religious customs onto their slaves, but did act as sponsors and patrons for their slaves who chose to have dealings with the church. Somerset Parish clergy were varyingly active and passive about administering the rites of the church to its black members, and some defied the nineteenth-century law prohibiting slave marriages by uniting slave couples as well as mixed slave and free couples. Attitudes held by church members and hierarchy encompassed either end of the religio/political spectrum, and all stances in between: some viewed slavery as God-ordained, and some worked for immediate manumission, some were colonizationists, and some established free black churches. But, as in the legal and social arenas of life, Somerset Parish's acceptance of black members, whether free or slave, went from less restricted to more stifling as the county and the nation lurched toward Civil War.

Because Somerset County is an isolated region of the country and was settled and inhabited by a small number of persons who originated from the British Isles, their surnames are easily traced, and, in some cases are unique. There are a few distinctly "black" surnames in Somerset County, which have no white counterparts, but in most cases, the names of free blacks are indistinguishable from those of their white neighbors. Most freed slaves obviously adopted the surname of their former masters in Somerset County, and most local names have both white and black branches.

Ante-bellum Somerset County was a world which was both interested in reform, and determined to maintain the status quo. Economic hardships abounded; residents struck out for unsettled western lands; slaves were sold in the town square, and steam boats ran across the Chesapeake Bay. Somerset County free blacks faced an uncertain future, sharpened by tightening controls on both slave and free black life. Social mobility was a two-edged sword: not only could slaves hope for freedom, free men might sink into the dread of slavery. Both slave and free black families risked imprisonment and hardship to maintain family ties, and slave buyers set up shop in local hotels. Many of the white ruling elite held on to slavery practices until the bitter end of the Civil War, while the vast majority of free blacks in the area rejected overtures to resettle in African homelands, preferring to strive for the ideal held out for them that "all men were created equal".

By 1820 a unique free black community existed in western Somerset County, one in which land-owning black residents encouraged others to join the community for reasons of self-sufficiency, safety and security. Generally in the area, white and black farmers lived on neighboring tracts of land, forming a racially mixed society of small land holders. However, 650 free blacks appeared in the 1820 census records, living in a community unofficially known as "Santo Domingo". Several free black women and men had begun buying land early in the nineteenth century from white landowners who still lived in the region. Relationships seemed peaceful for all involved. Perhaps the residents of Santo Domingo formed their own "domestic colonization society" for mutual benefit. Since many of them had lived in the county for many decades, the chance to start a new life in Africa did not appeal to them as practical, but living in a protected community did. Many residents of Santo Domingo owned livestock, houses, land, or businesses, and manufacturing concerns also existed, revealing a complex world of opportunity and perseverance. Unravelling the social, economic, religious and communal world of free blacks in Somerset County, Maryland, is a complex and on-going task; however, the rich history of survival against heavy odds cries out for the telling and retelling, for discovery and rediscovery, for investigation and understanding.

Introduction
Rediscovering Free Blacks
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Mary O. Klein

Upon the realization that a significant number of free black persons had lived in Somerset County, Maryland, since the foundations of the county in 1666, questions about their significance in a three-tiered society began to arise. Who were these people? How did they fare in a society composed of a white majority, a significant slave population, and free blacks? How were they treated legally and practically through the centuries? How did they maintain their freedom in a constricting world for persons of color? How were they to be discovered, or rediscovered?

Throughout this paper the term "free black" will be used when referring to free persons of color. The contemporary public record used that term more often than any other, and trying to use current terminology became strained and artificial. Popular usage may change through the years, but historical references remain constant.

The public record contained a wealth of information concerning free black persons, although at times that information proved difficult to excavate. Often free blacks were indicated with that notation beside a name, and sometimes "free negro" was used; however, in a significant number of cases, no notation was made at all. Only by knowing that a certain person was actually a free

black person (from previous documentation) could the information be applied. Family names became important, as did family history. Buried facts had to be dug from census records, tax lists, court documents and church records. Questions arose, and many remained unanswered. Non-public records containing information concerning free blacks were scarce. A few store ledgers mentioned free black customers, but no diaries or memoirs were discovered which had been written by free black persons. Manumission records and wills sometimes detailed the reasons owners gave slaves their freedom, and freedom certificate records described the appearance of the certificate holders. How free blacks saved enough money to buy land or to purchase the freedom of family members remained questions only partially answered, since discovering the skills or professions held by free blacks proved difficult. Only a few notations of occupation were made in official records, and some hints as to skill could be gleaned from descriptions of injuries, or tools bought or sold.

The lives of free black persons who lived in Somerset County from the seventeenth century until the beginning of the Civil War contained elements of success, failure, fear, accomplishment, disaster, hard work and insecurity. Yet this group of people caught between true freedom and slavery survived, grew, prospered and continued. Their story is one of courage, defiance of odds, and perseverance, and a story that should be told to their descendants, as well as to their neighbors in Somerset County and beyond.

Somerset County, Maryland, was created in 1666, by a proclamation of the Lord Proprietary of the province of Maryland, Cecil, Lord Baltimore. Lying on the Eastern Shore of the state and named after Lady Mary Somersett, the county stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Chesapeake Bay, and from the line with Virginia on the south to what is now Delaware on the north. Although white men had traded with the native Indians in the vicinity since about 1620, there had been no permanent settlement of the area. It was not until the 1660's that settlement was encouraged on several fronts. A boundary feud between Virginia and Maryland regarding their Eastern Shore properties, encouraged Lord Baltimore to entice permanent settlers into the area of the peninsula he claimed as part of Maryland. Also playing into the hands of those encouraging settlement of Maryland's Eastern Shore, was a Virginia law passed in 1660 which forbade any more Quakers to enter the colony, and requiring anyone holding to that faith to be removed. Quakers on Virginia's Eastern Shore saw a chance for freedom of worship in Maryland, and a provision for free land called other pioneers to settle a few miles north of Virginia on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Among the first group of settlers to Somerset County were Quakers escaping persecution, Anglicans and Presbyterians; and these three groups remained the dominant religious influences on the Eastern Shore until the introduction of Methodism in the eighteenth century. The vast majority of free settlers were of the "middling sort", some of comfortable means: planters, farmers,

traders, small manufacturers, merchants, and a few professionals. Many indentured servants were among the first emigrants; and families instead of single men were prevalent. Interestingly, there is no mention made of slaves among the settlers, but there were free blacks. The names of the first settlers were overwhelmingly English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, with a few French names interspersed. These hearty men and women had survived their first difficult years in Virginia, and were seasoned to the hot, humid conditions of the Eastern Shore. They had adapted to the soil, and to the way of life, and had proven to be survivors in a world where early death was commonplace. They were apparantly tolerant of each others' religious practices, which was rather uncommon; and they worked to make their venture successful and capable of being passed on to their children. The names of those settlers are still very much in evidence in Somerset County: Boston, Coulbourne, Bozman, Jones, White, Beauchamp, Whittington, and Layfield. Their legacy was passed on to their children, and three hundred years later, their story survives.

I. Free Black Pioneers

The origins of a free black population in Somerset County, Maryland, can be traced to the origins of the county itself. The first permanent non-Indian settlers to the area came up to Maryland in 1662 from neighboring Accomack County, Virginia, under a provision by Lord Baltimore offering free land. Two of the original claimants for land, Randell Revell and Ann Toft, claimed as headrights Anthony and Mary Johnson, along with their son John and his wife Susannah. The Johnson family were free blacks who had also lived in Accomack County. The Johnson family has become "famous" in the circles of Colonial Chesapeake historians because they were apparently one of the first documented free black families to settle on the Eastern Shore.¹

It is documented that Anthony Johnson came into Virginia in 1621. He was probably never a slave, but entered the colony as an indentured servant of Richard Bennett. Because the record is unclear, no positive proof that Johnson was an indentured servant and not a slave for life can be found; however, circumstantial evidence is strong that he was the "Antonio the negro" who was a passenger on the ship "James" which docked in Virginia in 1621. Richard Bennett owned a tobacco plantation on the James River, and Antonio worked for him there at the time of the March 22, 1622, Indian attack on the vicinity, which included the Warresquioke plantation. The massive Indian raid claimed the lives of over 350 settlers, and more than fifty of them had lived on Bennett's Warresquioke. Somehow Antonio, along with four others, managed to survive the vicious attack. In 1625, when a count of Bennett's

servant assets was taken, Antonio was among the mere twelve remaining people, along with the recently arrived "Mary a Negro woman", the only female among the servants. She had arrived in 1622 on the "Margaret and John" and later became the wife of Antonio, appearing on a headright claim of John Upton in 1635 as a married couple.²

At some point in their early married life Anthony and Mary moved over to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, possibly under the auspices of their original employer Richard Bennett. Bennett had become governor of Virginia and frequented the Eastern Shore for official reasons as well as to visit his family. His daughter Elizabeth had married Charles Scarborough, the eldest son of Edmund Scarborough, the famous (or infamous) landowner and political activist on the Eastern Shore. The land patented by Anthony and Mary Johnson was in the same neighborhood as the Charles Scarborroughs. The Bennett family and the Johnson family apparently continued on friendly and respected terms with each other, because Anthony and Mary named one of their children Richard, and Governor Bennett sent a gift of a black cow to his namesake Richard Johnson.³

Sometime after the Johnsons arrived on Virginia's Eastern Shore, they began to accumulate land and cattle. Together with their four children, two sons Richard and John and two daughters, one of whom was named Jone, the Johnson family had, in some instances by claiming headrights of imported persons, accumulated substantial land holdings. By the 1650's, the family's land

qualified as a plantation of nearly 1,000 acres on "great Nuswattock Creek". Anthony had been given a patent for 250 acres in 1651, and his son John acquired the adjoining 550 acres. Anthony's son Richard patented an additional 100 acres next to his brother's and father's land, and Jone was given 100 acres by the Indian chieftain Deabedanba. In 1653 Johnson presented a petition before the Accomack County court which asked for a tax exemption because fire had devastated his holdings. At that time the court reported that he "had been in the country above 30 years".⁴

An interesting aspect of the life of the pioneering free black man, is that Anthony Johnson owned black servants himself. In being granted a land patent in 1650, Johnson claimed five people as headrights, among them a man named John Gesorroro, whose surname has also been identified as Casor, Cassagh, Cazara and Cassadow. Apparently this John Casor saw an opportunity to gain his own freedom in 1653, because he took his master to court claiming that he (Casor) was being held against his own wishes and contrary to his seven-year indenture. Anthony Johnson swore that he had no knowledge of any such agreement and "had ye Negro for his life". After the incident, Johnson finally agreed to free Casor and give him freedom dues of corn and clothing. Strangely, Casor never left the Johnson family, and travelled with them when they moved north into Somerset County, Maryland, where he lived out his life.⁵

The records of early Virginia are silent regarding the reasons Anthony Johnson and most of his family decided to relocate to Somerset County, Maryland in 1662, when Randell Revel transported

them as headrights. But Anthony Johnson sold most of his land, leaving just fifty acres for his son Richard who stayed in Virginia. Perhaps Johnson, like others who were leaving Virginia for better opportunities in Maryland, saw a better future in the adjoining colony. Johnson took with him his herd of fourteen cattle, eight sheep, his wife, son, daughter-in-law and his "servant" John Casor and set out across the Pocomoke River.⁶

In 1666 Anthony Johnson leased 300 acres of Somerset County, Maryland, land from Stephen Horsey in a two-hundred year lease: Horsey had patented that same piece of land and called it "Tony's Vineyard" a few months earlier, probably with the intent of leasing it to Anthony Johnson. Anthony Johnson owed Horsey 1800 pounds of tobacco in 1666, which may have been the price of the land; and the lease agreement described Johnson as a "planter of Manonokin", one of the land divisions in the new county.⁷

After Anthony Johnson died sometime prior to June 1670, Stephen Horsey leased "Tony's Vineyard" to Johnson's widow Mary and her sons for ninety-nine years, also providing that the land would pass on to their heirs. The rent was to be one ear of Indian corn yearly. Mary Johnson made a gift of cattle to her grandchildren Anthony, John's son, and Richard's children Francis and Richard in 1672. At the same time Mary gave her son John her power of attorney, with her faithful servant John Casor (this time spelled Cazara) serving as a witness to the transaction. Since Casor served as witness to a legal document and used both a given name and a surname, he was not regarded as a slave.⁸

In 1679 John Johnson's son, John junior, bought a piece of land and named it "Angola" - an appellation suggestive perhaps of the family's African heritage. Eventually the Johnson family seems to have moved on to Delaware or possibly to Dorchester County, but the precedent of free black land ownership had been well established in Somerset County.⁹

In 1682 John Puckham, a Monie Indian, was baptized by The Rev. John Huett, the Anglican priest in the county, and a month later the clergyman married Puckham and "Jone Johnson, negro", probably a granddaughter of Anthony Johnson. The Puckham family thus became established as another of the first free black families on the Eastern Shore, a family, which like many of its white counterparts, continues today.¹⁰

The Somerset county record is silent on the lives of John and Jone Puckham until the 1698 court convened. Apparently John Puckham had died, and Jone was unable to care for her three young sons, because Jone Puckham asked the court to apprentice her son Abraham, who was only three years of age, to Adrian Gordin until Abraham reached the age of twenty-one. In 1699, Jone indentured her sons Richard and John to Benjamin Cottman, jr., until they were both twenty-one years of age. Richard was ten and John was thirteen at the time of their apprenticeship. No specific trade was mentioned in the court action, so probably Cottman took the boys in to work for him on his plantation, and Gordin kept little Alexander until he could also work on his farm.¹¹

The next mention of Richard Puckham appeared in the tax lists

of 1723. Richard was living in the household of the Reverend Alexander Adams, the rector of Stepney and Somerset Parishes. The rector had accumulated a large tract of land on the north side of Wicomico Creek, next to Richard Cottman, to whom Richard Puckham had been indentured, and across the water from "Tony's Vineyard", the home place of Richard's mother Jone Johnson. Apparently the Johnson family kept close ties with the Anglican church, since John Puckham had been baptized before his marriage to Jone Johnson, and Alexander Adams' household included Richard Puckham for several years. In 1723 and 1724 Richard was included as a taxable in Mr. Adams' household, but was missing in 1725. In 1727 Richard was listed in Pocomoke Hundred, but in 1730 he was back with the Adams family.¹²

By 1736 Richard Puckham had set up his own household in Manokin Hundred, near Wicomico Hundred. In the 1744 tax list Richard's household included his son John, who to be included as a taxable had to over the age of sixteen. As the years advanced, more children were added to Richard's taxables: Richard, jr., Matthew, Samuel, David and Solomon, making a good-sized work force for farm labor. The name of Richard's wife never appeared on his tax notations, which gives some indication that she was either a white woman or a free mulatto whose mother was black or mulatto. In 1725 Maryland had passed a law making all free Negro women taxable, as well as free mulatto women whose mothers were white. White women and free mulatto women who were the daughters of Negro or mulatto mothers were tax exempt. Not only was this law

concerned with raising revenues, it was obviously concerned with the social control of white women, imposing a double punishment on relationships with black men.¹³

Richard Puckham also had a daughter Mary, apparently named after her great-grandmother Mary Johnson, who appeared in court in 1743. As was common in colonial Maryland, "bastard bearing" was considered "in contempt of her Majesty's good laws of the province and ye evill example of offence", and neighbors were encouraged to inform on women bearing children out of wedlock, or if the baby was of another race than the mother. Daniel Jones was the informer in Mary Puckham's case, and Mary declined to disclose the name of the father. She was fined 30 shillings by the court, which she paid in cash; and Joy Hobbs, a male planter of Somerset County, undertook to be Mary's security for an additional L40. The court made it clear that it was not in any way responsible for the raising of Mary's child.¹⁴

Mary Puckham appeared in Somerset County tax records in 1743 in Manokin Hundred with her brother John, and in 1746 with her brother Richard. On the fifth of January of 1746, Mary had entered into an agreement with George Wilson in which she rented his plantation "Conclusion" for seven years beginning on January 12, 1746. This rental property included "all houses, orchards, Gardens, woods, all ways and water courses", with the rent to be twenty-five bushels of Indian corn per year. Another part of the agreement was that Mary was to provide Wilson with "two hundred and fifty Loggs to be mawled" the first year in place of the corn, and

he in turn would be "oblidging himself to find nails the next year to cover the Dwelling house on the said plantation". In an exchange of labor and commodities, George Wilson gave Mary Puckham a chance to try her hand at farming, apparently without a husband, and he agreed to give supplies of difficult to find nails needed for the repair of the house. There is no indication whether Mary renewed her lease with Wilson, but the 1759 tax list found her still in the Manokin Hundred with her brothers David, Matthew and Solomon, as well as a sixteen year-old Priscilla, perhaps the child she had borne in 1742. In 1770 Priscilla Puckham was also convicted of bastard bearing, with the father of the child, Isaac Coulbourn, willing to pay a double fine for her crime. ¹⁵

Richard Puckham, sr., apparently died sometime soon after 1754, since the last mention of him in the record was a January sale to James Polk of some cattle for the sum of L7. In that deed, Richard was described as "planter", even though he apparently never owned outright the land he farmed. His sons however, did become landowners. Richard jr., John, and Matthew each owned land in the county, although each sold his land, in some cases to repay debts owed to other citizens of Somerset County. Matthew Puckham leased his land "Chance" for fifty years to Charles Redding for a mere 5 shillings in 1764, and in the same year deeded "Content" to Joseph Dashiell. Later in 1771, Matthew sold "Content" outright to Charles Redding for L5 for the five-acre tract. Richard and his brother Solomon were sued for nearly L30 by William Gaddes in 1769 and by Wilson Heath in 1771, which probably prompted Richard to

sell land in 1769 and 1772, and some of his precious livestock in 1767 and 1771. In these court cases both Richard and Solomon were referred to as "Carpenters", so they must have had an additional skill as well as farming. Struggling farmers with small land holdings were at the mercy of weather, poor crops and marginal assets and could easily slide into debt, forcing them to sell off meager assets to keep their heads above water. Many free blacks did not possess a skill to act as insurance against their being forced into total poverty, but the Puckham brothers did possess a hedge against starvation by acquiring a marketable skill which did not require the ownership of land. The only Puckham brother who seemed to be able to make a profit at land ownership was John. He bought a thirty-two acre tract in 1804 for the price of L5, and sold the same piece of property for \$300 four years later.¹⁶

Jone Johnson Puckham's youngest son Abraham appeared in the 1724 tax list in the household of Jacob Crouch in Wicomico Hundred. The preceding year Abraham was taken to court for the recovery of a debt of L2, six shillings, one pence, which he owed to the estate of Robert Crouch, apparently the father of the Jacob Crouch with whom he was living. In that court case Abraham was referred to as "a planter of Stepney Parish", although no land indenture mentioning him has been located. The term "planter" seems to have been used to denote anyone who made a living at farming, whether or not he actually owned land, not just successful plantation owners.¹⁷

In 1727 Abraham Puckham was in the household of Philip

Covington, where he apparently met his future wife Honour. In 1729 there were counter-suits between Covington and Honour, in which she was referred to as "Honour Puckham wife of Abraham Puckham in common form." Honour's suit against Covington stated that she had "served a certain Philip Covington part of her term of years for which she was transported into this Country being the last of the said time, and that Covington had not paid her freedom dues". The court ordered Covington to pay the freedom dues "as to such servants is allowed by Law". No other suits were filed, so the Puckhams and the Covingtons must have settled their differences. The court's reference to Honour and Abraham's union as "in common form" may indicate that Honour, who was probably white, could not legally be married to a black man, as stipulated by a 1717 law prohibiting interracial marriages. Another possibility is that Honour Puckham ("Honour" being a common name given among Quakers) was a Quaker woman. If Honour and Anthony had been married in a Quaker ceremony, their union would not have been recognized by the Established church, and therefore by the courts. Abraham again appeared in the 1738 tax list as living in Nanticoke Hundred, north of Wicomico Hundred, then disappeared from the record.¹⁸

As with many of the early free black families in Somerset County, the Puckham family suffered setbacks and worked for successes, but they managed to maintain their freedom in a society where the threat of slavery was always present.

The Driggus (variously spelled Driggers, Drighouse, Driggous) family history in Somerset County is a curious one which began with

a black man in Northampton County, Virginia, named Manuell Driggus. Manuell Driggus (who called himself in official records Manuel Rodriggus, and to whom others referred as Emmanuel) made a contract with his master Francis Pott in 1645 to indenture Driggus' two daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, with Pott promising to feed and clothe them well, and to "use my best endeavor to bring them up in ye feare of God and in ye knowledge of our Savior Christ Jesus". Later, in 1652, Driggus bought the remainder of Jane's contract from Potts.¹⁹

Driggus was subsequently mentioned in the will of George Williams in 1667:

To Manuell Driggus, Negro, for his care and trouble in tending me in my sickness, the wages due me for 11 months service on the ship "Louis Increase" of Bristoll, my chest, and all other goods belonging to me in Northampton County in Virginia.²⁰

As attested to by his earlier transactions, Manuell had some means of earning a livelihood, and with the legacy from George Williams, wanted to ensure his children financial stability and freedom. Manuell was either married to or had children by at least three women, one of whom, Elizabeth, was white. In 1673, Manuell, who described himself as "Negro", insured that the children who had a white mother, and were free, had means of support by deeding them his "black mare colt" and all her future increase while the children were still in their minority. Since stock was worth relatively more than land at that time and in that place, the gift of a horse allowed his children Mary and Deverick Driggus some freedom of life choice and financial stability.²¹

In 1677 Manuell Driggus' son Deverick (or Deverax or Devoraux)

entered Somerset County as a headright claimed by Stephen Costen, which began a puzzling chapter in the life story of Devoraux Driggus. Although his name appeared many times in official Somerset County records, there was never any notation that he was negro or mulatto. Because his mother was white, and his father, with the name "Rodriggus", may have been at least partly of Spanish extraction, perhaps Devoraux infiltrated white society by passing as a white man, a possibility in a pioneer community. In 1689 two-hundred thirty-eight of Somerset County's landowning elite, many of whom had strong affiliations with the Anglican or Presbyterian church, signed a loyalty oath to King William and Queen Mary following the Glorious Revolution in England. Among the signatories was "Devoraux Drigas". He also ran with a particularly "fast" crowd, and appeared in court occasionally with Captain Edward Hammond, who was a dealer in land and fast living. In 1705 Hammond was brought into court by Enoch Griffith for carrying on an open affair with Griffith's wife. In testimony, Griffith told of finding his wife Jane and Hammond "in naked bed" together in Griffith's own house. After an angry and heated argument, Edward Hammond, jr. and Devoraux Driggus, who were also in the house, took Mrs. Griffith's child to the Hammond house. The long depositions told of repeated instances of Hammond and Jane Griffith openly flaunting their affair, with Griffith being forced to sleep at his neighbor's home because Hammond refused to get out of Griffith's bed. Hammond openly defied church authorities by telling the rector of Snow Hill parish, when he came to confront Hammond about

his behavior, to get out of his house, and that he would "as soon go to heaven or hell, it made no difference to him". This disturbance to the propriety of Somerset County behavior became a public scandal, and Devoroux Driggus was closely associated with Hammond.²²

Hammond and Driggus were also prosecuted in 1706 for public drunkenness and Sabbath Breaking. None of the defendants were identified by race, and it is assumed that they were all white men, except for Driggus. Devoroux Driggus apparently never owned land, but prior to his death lived on Henry Bishop's land, "in the right of" Bishop's orphaned children. Driggus probably rented the acreage from Bishop's estate, and when an inventory was taken shortly after his death in 1709, his net worth amounted to just over L37. Included in the inventory were cows, sheep, horses, a flax spinning wheel and two guns, indicating the typical Somerset County small farm pattern of diversity in farming, instead of dependence on tobacco. Devoroux Driggus had at least two children, since his son, called Devoroux Driggus, jr., received a legacy in 1708 from his deceased sister's estate.²³

Devoroux Driggus remains an enigma. How did he insinuate himself into Somerset County society, without one mention being made in the official records of his race? The records sometime indicate race when naming free black residents, and sometimes the records merely state the name without a racial reference. But among the documents, mention is made of a particular person's race often enough to make reasonable assumptions that certain people are

considered "negro". However, in the case of Devoroux Driggus, with no mention of his race found in any document, whether deed, tax list or court case, (where the clerk was actually present in court), the assumption would be made that he was white. Did society assume that he was white, and did he just allow that assumption to continue? His descendants are not mentioned as negro either, although other branches of the Driggus family are. Perhaps Devoroux Driggus believed that real success could only come by becoming a member of the dominant white society, which he proceeded to do.

The branch of the Driggus family definitely denoted as black came into Somerset County from the Eastern Shore of Virginia because of a rumor, instigated by people with a scheme to grab the land holdings of free blacks, that all free blacks in Virginia were going to be enslaved. Sarah Driggus emigrated with some of her children along with Peter and Mary George, a free black couple also from Northampton County. (Sarah's husband was Thomas Driggers, half-brother to Devoroux, but Sarah's family and the Georges settled in Wicomico Hundred near Mary Johnson, widow of Anthony, not near Snow Hill and Devoroux.) In 1688 "Sarah Driggers negro woman, wife of Thomas Driggers negro" took Margaret Holder to court complaining that Margaret "hath stolen and purloyned several things which include ribbon, nutmegs, a child's coat and a bracelett". Peter George "negro of Wicomico Hundred" undertook to give surety of L5 for Sarah, and testified on her behalf. Mary George, Mary Johnson and Sarah Driggers, jr., also testified, but

the jury thought the evidence "wholly disagreeing in their depositions" and found Margaret Holder not guilty.²⁴

At the end of the seventeenth century, free black women were exempt from paying taxes in Maryland, but the burden of proof of their free status was laid upon them. In 1689, Sarah Driggers again appeared in court, this time requesting tax exemption for herself and "all the other Negroes", presumably Mary George, Sarah Driggers, jr., and another Driggers daughter. The court ruled that "the four women be exempted and that the men pay taxes for this year, and that they bring a Certificate under the Minister's hand where they formerly did live or word bound that they are free Negroes and baptised." Thus the court, not prejudiced by Sarah Driggers' former case, allowed the exemption on the word of the free black citizens, with a minimum of fuss and a reasonable request for proof from their former place of residence.²⁵

Sarah Driggus eventually returned to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where her husband Thomas had remained. He died in 1694, but she regained the land which had been usurped from her when she fled to Somerset. Some members of Sarah's family chose to remain in Somerset County, and a William Driggus, who may have been the grandson of Sarah, owned a one-hundred acre tract of land called "Driggus Adventure", which he passed on to his son William in his 1720 will. William senior's widow Jane was on the land in Bogerternorton Hundred in 1724, and John Driggus occupied it from 1734-1740.²⁶

Another free black family prominent in Somerset County, the

Game family, had its free origins with slave parents Sambo and Betty. Peter Douty, a Somerset county slaveowner, freed several of his bondsmen in his 1709 will, among them Richard Dunn who was to have "one hog delivered to him and no more." Another of Douty's slaves, Nanny, was also to be free. She was to live with her parents until she was twelve, then go to Ann Colier, one of Douty's heirs, until she was thirty-one, and then be freed. But Sambo and Betty Game were singled out for special consideration:

It is my will that my negro man Sambo Gam and his wife Bettea be free at my decease and that they have and to hold a parcel of land of mine lying on the west side of ye creek known as Tyaskin near the head during their lives and att their decease to redown to Ann Colier and the said Sambo Gam shall have 2 cows & calves, 2 sows & pigs, 2 ewes, frying pan, one iron pot, and nails to build a small house and all ye clothing that they have, boarding and provisions for one year. . . and two 50 gallon casks of cider every year.²⁷

Peter Douty did not specify the reason he set the Game family up as self-sufficient farmers, but it is clear that such was his intent. The livestock, parcel of land, and even nails to build their house, as well as a year in which to get settled were all provided. Because the land would revert to Ann Colier when Sambo and Betty died, they were not actually land owners, but like many farmers on the Eastern Shore, tenants. Sambo Game appeared in the tax lists of Somerset County as head of a household and landowner in 1724 along with a slave named Grace and a hired servant named Magnus Dickson, suggesting that Game was successful enough at his venture into farming to have a slave and hire a helper. (Sambo Game was erroneously listed as white in that tax list.) By 1730 the Game's son Robert appeared as a taxable in Sambo's household,

and interestingly, Betty was listed in the household of Fortune Game, a woman who had a singular history of her own. The households were not next to each other but close by. In 1733 Sambo was taxed on fifty acres, and Robert and his wife Elender were listed in a separate household. Fortune also had fifty acres and Betty and Rose Game lived with her. What were the reasons for Sambo and Betty living in separate households? Could there have been any economic advantage or did the older couple merely get along better in separate households? Perhaps the land holdings were not contiguous, and the family felt that to retain possession, they should live on each piece of land to avoid questions concerning possession.²⁸

The evidence concerning Fortune Game was both mysterious and confusing. Her entrance into the world was a controversial one, and her life began in difficult circumstances. In 1705 the following transaction was entered into Somerset County Liber GI:

The opinion of the Court is that Fortune, mulatto, was born of the body of a white woman Maudlin Magee in Wedlock with George Magee a white man, and that she [Fortune] is mulatto, and that she be remanded in service until she is one & thirty years old and that she [in] no way belongs to the court.²⁹

In later records, a group of free black women were referred to as "Magee alias Game" and "Magee or Game", so it appears that the Fortune Game found in the tax records living with the matriarch of the free black Game family and the unfortunate Fortune Magee were the same person. It seems probable that the father of Fortune was one of the men in the Game family, and that that family made her part of their own, even before her thirty-one years of service was

over. Perhaps Fortune spent the later years of her "sentence" with the Game family. Shunned by white society and forced into indentured servitude because of the "sin" of the mother, Fortune adopted the rather modern practice of being known by a double name, "Magee Game", which practice followed for at least another generation.

Of interest also is the tax record of Fortune Game. In 1730 she was listed as the landowner, and head of the household which included Betty Game. However, in the column set aside to list the sex of the person mentioned, the entry reads "unknown". Did the tax assessor simply not know the sex of Fortune, who may have been absent from the house at the time of the census? Or was he unable to tell if she was male or female? Or was the notation made by someone else transcribing the records who saw a blank space and was confused about the name Fortune as to sex? In any case, from 1733 to 1740, Fortune was listed as male, head of the household, and owner of fifty acres of land. Also in 1733 Fortune Game appeared in court "according to her recognizance", so the court clerk, who was present in court, listed her as female. (The security for the "several officers' fees" was paid by a white man, Cannon Winright, who lived next door to Sambo Game.) The question arises, were there two Fortune Games living in Somerset County at the same time, one male and one female, who could have been confused with each other? With such a small population of the county, and an even smaller free black population, the odds that there were two Games named Fortune are very small.³⁰

Stepney Parish, one of the original thirty parishes established in Maryland in 1692, was required by law to register the births of everyone within the parish's geographical boundary. Interestingly, the births of very few black persons or mulattoes were actually recorded prior to the Revolution; only the names of two families of free blacks can be found: Dutton and Magee-Game. Between 1737 and 1751, two women by the name of "Magee, alias Game" registered the births of their children with the church authorities. "The mulatto Sue, alias Sue Magee or Game" entered the births of Berlinda in 1741, Dawry in 1743, Janney in 1746 and James in 1750. Rose Game lived in the household of Fortune and Betty Game in the 1733 tax list, and "The mulatto Rose or Rose Magee or Game" registered the births of her sons Stephen in 1737 and Isaac in 1751. Why these two women made the effort to register their children's births with the parish, when only one other black family did so, remains a mystery. Perhaps the elusive Maudlin Magee, mother of Fortune, was also taken in by the Game family at the birth of her child, but continued to attend the parish church, instilling in her child the importance of maintaining religious ties.³¹

Another fascinating branch of the free black Game family belonged to Dr. Harry Game. At the time of his manumission in 1750 by Mitchell Dashiell, he was referred to as "Negro Harry - known by the name of Doctor Harry, otherwise Harry Game", so obviously the practice of some sort of medicine was the trademark for a few slaves. Harry Game was probably related to the Sambo Game who was

freed by the 1709 will of Peter Douty, since Priscilla Dashiell, the mother of Mitchell Dashiell, received several legacies from Peter Douty's will. When she died in 1748, Priscilla willed to her only son Mitchell, among other things, "two negros Harry and Tom", and two years later Mitchell Dashiell released Dr. Harry from bondage. Apparently Mr. Day Scott had guaranteed Dr. Harry the L30 for his freedom, because that amount was payable from Scott to Dashiell within six months of Dr. Harry's release. (Day Scott also sold land to another member of the Game family, a woman also named Betty Game in 1754.)³²

By the 1753 tax assessment, "Dr. Harry and Harry's Wife" were listed in the Wicomico Hundred section of Somerset County, and in 1757 "Dockter Harry (Negro)" purchased from John Covington a 150 acre tract of land called "Covington's Choice" for "Seventy Pounds current money of Maryland . . . Paid by the said Dockter Harry". Harry Game had the skills to earn a livelihood which enabled him to become a landowner, establish an independent household, and earn the respect of both the black and white communities. Perhaps he was the man referred to in a 1750 advertisement found in the Maryland Gazette describing the services of a negro physician of Somerset County. According to the advertisement, this physician learned his skill from "an old skillful, experienced Guinea Doctor", and was anxious to pass on his vast knowledge to a willing apprentice for L50. In a short commentary on the letter, the editor of the Gazette waxed eloquent about the doctor and expounded that he

has been a slave, but is now free. It seems he was born in the Country, and by some means obtained so good an Education, as to learn Reading and Writing, which he improv'd at all Opportunities, and of which he has made good use; for he was and is remarkable for his Fidelity, Sobriety, and Honesty, and has been for many Years a Communicant in the Parish where he lives; and has liv'd a regular, Christian, blameless life.³³

Whether the writer actually knew these things to be true, or was merely setting the stage for the following advertisement is not known. But if the man described is Dr. Harry, the evidence of his own will points to the fact that he could not sign his own name.

The Game family were customers at a general store owned by the Nelms family, and the accounts of Daniel and Jeremiah, sons of Dr. Harry, may give some indication of their lifestyle. Daniel ran up a bill of over L10 in April of 1775, with purchases of fine white lining, a pair of scissors, several types of fabric, a gallon of molasses, as well as a loan from Mr. Nelms of L3,7 shillings, plus interest. Written at the bottom of Daniel's account was the notation of April 15, "Which Dr. Harry promises to Pay". On the Contra side of the ledger "By Cash paid by your Father" was duly entered. Even though Daniel was an adult, his father elected to pay some of his bills. Jeremiah, on the other hand, did not ask his father to help settle his account of L7, 5 shillings, 10 pence, but paid for it himself "By an allowance in the purchase of your land".³⁴

In Harry Game's 1781 will, he left his plantation, including "fencing, houses, Woods and Orchard and underwood" to be divided between his sons Daniel and Jeremiah, as well as "a Sow & Piggs" to Charles Game, Daniel's son. Even though Harry Game was trained as

a doctor, he was illiterate, as attested to by his mark, a capital H, on his will. Dr. Harry entered into the world of the white planter of Somerset County by achieving success by the standard of the county. He was a plantation owner, enjoyed a sufficient medical practice to supplement his farm earnings, and joined the ranks of slave owners. In 1757 he petitioned the court to exempt him from paying taxes on "his Negro man called Tite, who is ancient & infirm and not able to labour".³⁵

The pioneer free black families who inhabited Somerset County were a diverse group from differing backgrounds, each possessing varying skills and ambitions. Some, such as the Johnson family, had never known slavery, while others, like the Games, had risen from bondage into the ranks of free black society. Anthony Johnson had come into Somerset County seeking better opportunity for himself and his family; Deveraux Driggous probably slipped into white society by passing as a white man. Opportunities were not closed in early Somerset for free black women, as exemplified by Mary Puckham's independent lease of a plantation. Some free black men, such as the Puckham brothers, learned a marketable trade, in their case carpentry, and freed themselves from the dependence on farming and land ownership. Dr. Harry Game made a living as a doctor, and insured his children a stable future by providing them with land and enough money to secure a headstart in life. Some free black pioneers were small landowners and some were tenant farmers, like many of their white contemporaries. Although the class of free blacks was tiny in early Somerset County, they were

assured relative equality of opportunity along with most white citizens, and probably saw success in terms of identifying with the white majority. Of course slavery stood for everything they were trying to put behind them, even though some of their own family members may have still been in bondage, and real security lay in independence. Some free blacks achieved self-sufficiency and must have been examples to those who were beginning the journey. Despite restrictions, Somerset County in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries provided a place where free blacks could attempt success and where independence was within reach.

2. SOMERSET COUNTY COURT EVIDENCE

Maryland's county court records contain a wealth of information which may shed light on the position of free blacks in colonial society. Courts performed a varied list of functions, which included levying taxes, and hearing most criminal and civil cases instigated by the county's citizenry. Throughout the Chesapeake area, county officials, such as sheriffs and justices, were appointed rather than elected, but the state appointment was always of local men.

The legal position of free blacks in colonial Somerset County was similar to that of any other free citizen. The only restrictions imposed by law were those enacted long after the initial settlement of the county. A 1717 law prohibited free negroes from testifying against white persons in court, and free black women were not exempt from paying taxes; but generally, there were few restrictions on free blacks which prevented them from receiving the same legal treatment as white citizens. However, the white majority in the county effectively could have blocked attempts of the few free blacks to assert their legal rights, if relationships between whites and free blacks had been threatening. The mere existence of a law providing free blacks with legal rights did not mean that they were always carried out in far-flung counties throughout the state. The Capital city Annapolis was a long way from Somerset County, and "de facto" mistreatment of a

small minority would have been simple to carry out, despite "de jure" restrictions.³⁶

While there is no known incidence of a free black landowner holding office in colonial Somerset County, most of the white residents of the county never held office either. Colonial Chesapeake society was dominated by an elite few, who began their careers with minor appointments, and worked their way through the system, gaining ever-increasing authority and responsibility. White men who were minor landholders might serve on a jury, but the great majority of them never held any office, nor had much of a chance to do so. In that respect, free blacks were not in a very different category than most of their white neighbors.

There is very little evidence of prejudicial treatment of black citizens in colonial Somerset court records. The laws were observed, and the cases heard on individual merit. In some cases, the black resident won the case in court, and at other times he lost, which was no different from the statistics of other citizens. Even the elite lost court cases, if proof was not sufficient, or the law had obviously been broken. Free blacks were not denied their right to initiate court proceedings, as testified to by the number of cases brought before the court, even if the defendant against whom the suit was made was white. The courts heard many cases involving debt, and also cases concerning indenture terms and conditions. Fornication and bastardy cases took up a large amount of the courts' time, as did cases of livestock theft. Serious crimes such as rape or murder were tried in provincial court, but

assault and breaking and entering cases were heard locally.³⁷

Evidence has been cited concerning the treatment of free blacks in early Somerset County court cases, and occasionally even slaves were brought into court to testify either against other slaves or in their behalf during the Colonial period. In a case which demonstrated Somerset's apparent lack of deep prejudice against blacks in general, George Hardy in 1740, brought his slave Dinah to court for setting on fire 500 pounds of tobacco, a gun and 89 flax sheaves. Dinah pled "not guilty" and several slaves were called to testify about the case. Slaves Rose, Caesar and Robin told their stories in court, and Dinah was found not guilty. What is unusual about this case is that Dinah's master brought the case before the court at all. If the slave owner had thought he was a law unto himself on his own property, he certainly would not have bothered to bring a slave accused of setting a costly fire to court.³⁸

Many slave owners brought slave children to court to have their ages officially determined by the court; and many asked for tax exemptions for old, infirm or injured slaves who could no longer work. In one interesting case, Lewis Jones of Somerset Parish asked the court for a tax exemption for his slave Hannah, because of "her great age". Jones testified that Hannah had been "about 50 years in the country, and when imported was a full grown woman and already had three children before she left her native country." ³⁹

The court, acting as the social control agency in a changing

society, was also very concerned about the morality of its citizens and tried cases of bastard bearing in every court session. In cases of white women bearing an illegitimate child whose father was also white, the court usually fined the man and the woman; however if the woman was unable to pay the fine or have someone else stand her security, she was usually publicly whipped. But in cases where a white woman bore a child whose father was a slave, the baby was sold into indentured service for thirty-one years. In a common type of case, Honor Haley was convicted in 1733 of fornication and bearing a bastard child, whose father was Jupiter, a negro man owned by Jonathan Stanton. Honor Haley received seven years of indentured servitude for her crime, and her month-old baby, Sarah, was sold for thirty-one years to William Gray of Manokin who paid 500 pounds of tobacco for the baby. Jupiter received no punishment from the court, and since the county residents were offended by the actions of Honor, she was awarded to John Scott for the seven years service "due the citizens of the County". He paid only ten pounds of tobacco for Honor and was admonished by the court to "cure her of her distemper".⁴⁰

Hannah Black was arraigned for committing fornication and begetting a bastard child, who was born on January 10, 1734. But, in the opinion of the court, Hannah Black was not punishable for adultery or fornication, since she was a black woman. The General Assembly's act did not specifically include black women bearing black children, so the Somerset court declined to prosecute her. Free mulatto women were punishable under the 1728 law, which also

applied to white women, so apparently the Assembly looked at mulatto women and black women differently. Perhaps the lawmakers viewed free black women as more akin to slaves, and mulattos as closely associated with whites. A 1733 case involved a mulatto woman named Moll Jarvis who had given birth to a "mulatto boy", Sam Jarvis. The court ordered Sam sold to Mrs. Alice Ellis until he was thirty-one years old, and the county was due 500 pounds of tobacco for the contract.⁴¹

Because the court officers held a strong belief that contracts were inviolable legal documents and held the power of the law, disputes involving a contract of any kind usually ended with the terms of the contract being enforced. If the specific terms of the contract could be proven, then the court insisted that one party comply with the document. In 1759, "the Negro Roger" petitioned the court because Thomas Pollitt had "detained him as a Servant". The sheriff was ordered to summon Pollitt immediately and have him appear in court before the justices "now sitting". The justices found that the terms of the indenture had indeed been fulfilled, and that Pollitt must release Roger immediately. Rogers' position was a precarious one in that he, as a free negro who had indentured himself for a term of years, was being held past that term by a white man, and his only recourse to ensure his freedom was to petition the court. Roger apparently thought he would receive an impartial hearing before the justices, also white men, or he would not have bothered to apply for a hearing.⁴²

The Pollitt family had a history of holding free blacks beyond

their legal indenture, for in the same year, Jane Dutton, a member of a well-known free black family, petitioned the court regarding Jonathan Pollitt, who had detained her "as a servant or Slave". Pollitt was again ordered by court to release Jane immediately.⁴³

Relationships between the white majority in Somerset County and the black population, whether slave or free, was seemingly on good terms during the Colonial era. There were very few incidents in the court proceedings which hinted of fear among the whites, or rebellion among the black population. One notable exception occurred in 1759 when three slave women were indicted for attempting to poison a white woman. Thomas Holbrook's slave woman Dinah was indicted by the court in November, and two of George Abbott's slaves, Rachel and Hagar, were also charged that they did "feloniously of premeditated malice voluntarily procure a certain poisonous mixture composed of sundry poisonous herbs" and that in July they attempted to poison Samuel Ingram's wife Ann. Rachel was charged with actually doing the poisoning, in that she

procured then and there in a cup with Hysop tea therin which the said Rachel held in her right hand, voluntarily and feloniously did give unto Ann Ingram the wife of Samuel, with an intent to poison her; the said Ann then and there did drink, whereby the said Ann immediately grue [which means pain or grief] and continued from the aforesaid day in July until August next following.⁴⁴

Ann Ingram obviously was not killed by the attempted poison, because she signed the bill of indictment, but many questions are brought to mind concerning this puzzling case. What were three slave women doing in the home of Ann Ingram, who was not the mistress of any of them? Were they called to "doctor" her with

their herbal remedy? They presumably were there by invitation, because Ann Ingram freely drank the mixture. Perhaps the slave women were actually attempting to care for an ill woman, or perhaps this is evidence of subversive resistance on the part of slaves dominated by overbearing mistresses. As with many court cases, the outcome was not recorded with the indictment, so the fate of the women is not known. Because they were unable to testify against a white person, it is difficult to envision a "not guilty" verdict.

Free blacks in Colonial Maryland were a relatively small and powerless group whose legal treatment was basically determined by the attitudes held by the white majority. The white population was not dependent on free black labor and perceived little competition or threat from the free black minority. The legal position of free blacks was essentially consistent with the rights of any free person, except that they could not legally marry a white person. In Somerset County, free blacks felt little restraint in initiating legal cases against white persons, and the court's ruling seemed fairly unbiased toward blacks. However, after the Revolutionary War, despite the rhetoric of "liberty and justice for all", Maryland passed an increasing number of laws restricting free blacks' options in a predominantly white society.

One of the ways a free black man could make a living in Somerset County was on the water, and an act passed in 1824 required ships' masters to keep careful records of all black persons employed on their vessels. Ship captains were prohibited from carrying any free black without a freedom certificate outside

the state. Later, white watermen became agitated that free black oystermen were cutting in on their livelihood, and a 1836 law required that a white person above the age of eighteen be the chief navigator of any ship working in the waters of Maryland.⁴⁵

In 1805 reports to the assembly indicated that free blacks were selling farm produce they had received from slaves, hurting the economic profit of slave-owning farmers. Consequently, a new statute insisted that any free negro who sold corn, wheat or tobacco must have a license from a justice of the peace stating that the seller was of good character and orderly. If caught without a license, both the seller and buyer were fined. A later law further restricted free blacks by adding bacon, beef, pork, oats and rye to the list, as well as making a requirement that a certificate stating that he had come into the possession of the items honestly be issued. If a free black person was caught trafficking in stolen goods, he could be sold as a slave outside the state. An 1806 law stated that a free black with a gun must also have a certificate from the magistrate stating that he was an orderly person. For a short time between 1824 and 1831, the state even outlawed the privilege of free blacks owning a gun at all, but this law was repealed because guns were needed for hunting throughout the state, even by free blacks. Restrictions were also enacted concerning the sale of liquor to any black person, whether slave or free. As fear grew among the general public, the state legislature passed more laws restricting free blacks and drawing an obvious line between white and free black citizens of Maryland.

Whether all these laws were carried out to the letter in local areas is unknown, but in Somerset County where relationships between white majority and free black minority had always been fairly good, it is difficult to imagine the local officials hunting down offending free blacks and bringing them to court for such offenses. The county court records does not indicate prosecution for these minor offenses.⁴⁶

The state constitution of 1776 allowed all free men to vote in elections for the lower house, without regard to color, but a 1783 statute began restricting the vote of free blacks. Men who were manumitted after 1783 were denied the privilege of office-holding or voting, and in 1802 a constitutional amendment took away their voting rights altogether. It is ironic that the post-Revolutionary era produced more restrictive laws concerning free blacks than had been passed in the Colonial years. The white majority had difficulty differentiating between free black persons and slaves, both physically and philosophically. Lawmakers tended to group all black people together, and apparently thought that if there were any trouble, the free blacks would be on the side of the slaves. Despite evidence to the contrary locally, where free blacks who were ambitious to be successful followed the pattern of the white majority, white politicians could not see lines of class taking precedence over color lines.⁴⁷

3. MANUMISSION

Free blacks sometimes made agreements to indenture themselves for a specific length of time to learn a trade. In 1759 the "negro Nann" bound herself out to Hugh Porter until she reached the age sixteen so that she might be taught to "sew, weave and spin and to read well in the Testament". Porter in turn promised to "find and provide for his said apprentice meat, drink, washing, lodging and cloathing" and to present her at the end of her apprenticeship with a "new jacket and Petticoat of Linseywoolsey". By serving for a term of years, Nann not only learned a trade with which she could support herself in adulthood, but also learned to read, a highly prized commodity in a relatively illiterate society. Likewise, in 1763, "the negro Jacob" bound himself until he was twenty-one years of age to Nicholas Collier who promised to teach Jacob the cordwainer's trade. Collier also contracted to teach Jacob to "read well in the Bible" and to give him tools at the end of his indenture, "sufficient to make a good shoe" as well as a new suit of clothes.⁴⁸

Slaves, however, who dreamed of entering the ranks of their free black brothers generally had to rely only on the good will of their owners for freedom. Prior to 1752, slave owners in Maryland could free bondsmen in their wills, but after that date, manumissions, as the only means of freedom, were required to be recorded by deed in the county court system. Between 1797 and

1799, in the Somerset County deeds there were 552 transactions recorded - everything from oaths of loyalty to land transfers to the sale of livestock. There were thirteen manumissions recorded during that time period, and of that thirteen, four involved the freed slaves paying the master an amount of money. The "price of freedom" varied from L55, L50, L25 paid by men to L1, 15s. paid by a woman. The other nine people who freed slaves gave various reasons for the manumissions and various time tables for release.⁴⁹

The American Revolution moved many slaveholders to reconsider the philosophical and humanitarian bases of keeping fellow human beings in perpetual bondage. The contradiction between the rhetoric of freedom for all Americans and the practice of generational slavery must have struck a chord in some Somerset County slaveholders. At the same time as Revolutionary sentiments concerning freedom were abroad in the country, the Eastern Shore was experiencing a wave of religious revivalism. The Methodist Church made huge inroads in the county, and itinerant preachers infiltrated all the little villages and isolated island communities. In 1784, the Methodist Church called upon its members to free any slaves they held, and although the church later backed away from its strong anti-slavery language, members in many congregations were encouraged to stop buying or selling slaves, and to free their bondsmen. Although most of the converts to Methodism were from the less wealthy segment of the Somerset County population, some of the enthusiasts obviously did own slaves.⁵⁰

Between 1797 and 1805, there were twenty-one manumissions

recorded in Somerset County deed books, and eight of those, or about 30%, listed moral or religious reasons for their actions. Of those eight, three used almost identical language in their deeds of manumission, words which came directly from the Methodist Church's official anti-slavery stance. In 1797, three men signed the manumission of one of their slaves, and in 1799 Elizabeth and Mathilda Fletcher freed five slaves with the formula:

being conscious to ourselves that the practice of holding our fellow man in perpetual bondage and slavery is repugnant to the Golden Law of God and the unalienable rights of mankind as well as to every principle of the late Glorious Revolution which has taken place in America

Interestingly, none of them freed their slaves immediately, but insisted that the slaves be anywhere from 25 to 40 years of age at their release.⁵¹

During the same eight-year period, five people freed slaves for various moral reasons, ranging from "the belief of the impropriety of holding a fellow creature in slavery" to "motives of justice and humanity", to "a full persuasion in my own mind that freedom is the natural right of all mankind". Four of these manumitters were men and one was a woman, and only one freed the slave immediately. The others delayed manumission of the slaves, many of whom were children.⁵²

Despite the impetus of some slaveowners to free slaves from religious, philosophical or moral reasons, others continued to grant freedom to slaves for very personal reasons. Three men freed slaves because of the slaves' good behavior or because the master felt a measure of good will for a particular slave. One man

in Johnston County, N.C., wrote an interesting will in 1804:

My two negro men Davy and Daniel, ever since they have been my property have conducted themselves in the most dutiful and faithful manner and should be set free. If the executor of my estate will not free them, they are to go to my brother George in Maryland

The executor of the preceding Handy Mathias estate did not free Mathias' favored slaves, because the Somerset County deed book for 1804 recorded George Mathias' manumission of them, according to his brother's wishes, nearly a year after Handy's death. John Johnson, in a typical manumission involving the freeing of a favorite of the slaveowner, in 1804 wrote that "for the good will I bear negro Grace plus 5 shillings", Grace was to be freed.⁵³

Historians have also listed another reason that slaveowners freed certain slaves: kinship. The idea that slaves were freed because they were somehow related to their owner is nearly impossible to prove by the recorded evidence. But the case of Nicholas Tull presented a fascinating look into the peculiar lives of Tull and his slave Milly and her family. In 1804 Tull freed Amelia (whose nickname was Milly) with this notation:

Milly possesses a healthy constitution & sound mind and body & who is capable by labor to procure sufficient food & raiment together with other necessities of life for herself and her offspring & being willing & desirous to be set free. . .

Milly was twenty-four and pregnant at the time of her release from slavery, and her birthdate and that of her three children were duly noted in the deed. However, in a bizarre and probably illegal addendum, Tull acted on his assumed right of "reserving to my self during my natural life the free use, enjoyment, occupation & service" of Milly and her family. All the "freed" slaves would

continue to live with Tull until his death in 1836, over thirty years later. (In 1804 Tull also freed a slave woman Nancy after she paid him £1, 15 shillings, but she apparently left his household.) In 1805 Tull sold Milly three acres of his tract of land called "Friendship", and in the 1810 census, only Tull and Milly and her children lived on his estate. When Tull died in 1836, he left his niece and nephew a few family items, including books, but he left "all my little movable property" to Amelia plus the remainder of his twenty-acre tract of "Friendship". Amelia was fifty at the time of Tull's death; her son Harry, who was two years old in the 1804 manumission was thirty; daughters Leah, twenty-three, Harriet twelve, and Sarah nine, were also mentioned in Tull's will. Leah also had two small children, and Tull was careful to make sure that "all children proceeding from Amelia's line" would be free. There were no other slaves mentioned in the will. Questions abound when looking at the statistics surrounding Nicholas Tull and Amelia, and more than one interpretation of the facts is obviously possible. One scenario seems probable. Nicholas and Amelia lived together, probably as man and wife "in common form", for nearly forty years, had six children and at least two grandchildren. Since they were all legally free, and as we have seen, Somerset County justices were diligent in ensuring that legal contracts were carried out, Milly and her children could have left Tull's household any time after 1804, despite his postscript to the manumission. However, they remained. Tull sold Milly three acres of land so that she could be self-sufficient and to "keep up

appearances"; and at his death, Tull left almost his entire estate to Milly. He never married. In a society where respectable white people did not marry their former slaves, the only solution to the social problem of cohabiting with a black woman, was for Tull to live quietly in isolation and carry on the subterfuge of a master/slave relationship.⁵⁴

The 1818 Somerset County deed book recorded even more startling statistics regarding manumission of slaves. Of eight manumissions recorded throughout 1818 and up to February 1819, seven involved payment by the slave to his or her owner in sums ranging from the nominal 1 cent to \$400. Since the law prohibited the freeing of slaves unable to work because of old age or physical or mental disability, each freedom paper mentioned the newly freed person's ability for self-support. The youngest of the freed slaves was Lochkey, who was twenty-six, whose master also accepted 1 cent for her release from bondage - obviously a mere token. The other six ranged in age from thirty-six to forty-five, past middle age in early nineteenth century life expectancy.⁵⁵

The major question, "Where did slaves get large amounts of money to pay for their own freedom?", comes to mind. In 1818, amounts from \$200 to \$400 were not small sums of money. Many owners hired out slaves with special skills to others in the area who were willing to pay wages. The master kept much of his hired slave's earnings, but usually allowed the slave to retain a portion of his or her pay. How long would it take to save \$350? Presumably the slave had obtained a marketable skill or trade, and

would prove useful to a master. (One wonders why a master would free such a slave who possessed potential earning ability.) Perhaps freed slaves bought freedom for other members of the family who were still held in bondage.

Contemporary newspapers advertised both the availability of slaves for hire and those desirous of availing themselves of the service. In 1831 the Princess Anne Village Herald ran an advertisement from Gilbert Guillet who wanted to "hire laboring slaves for the ensuing year", and a year later a news article regarding an Asiatic Cholera epidemic mentioned that a ship captain had died along with two blacks, one : "the property of Josiah Bayly and hired by Capt. Jones, the other of Capt. Jesse Hughes."⁵⁶

The 1818 manumissions indicated that Bob paid his master \$350; Elzey Jenkins, age thirty-six, paid \$45 for his freedom; Mieagre, also thirty-six, paid her mistress \$400; and Arnold who was forty years of age and Ebbin, thirty-five, together presented \$60 to their owners. In the case of large amounts of money changing hands, perhaps the worth of the slave on the market was reflected. But an interesting and puzzling transaction was recorded in February of 1819. On the 13th., William Warwick sold his slave Wafe and her daughter Levina to Marcy Maddux for \$200. Three days later, Marcy Maddux manumitted Wafe and Levina for the consideration of \$200. Apparently Marcy Maddux bought the slaves in order to free them. Had Wafe approached Warwick with the proposition of buying her freedom for \$200, and had he then sold her? Or did Marcy Maddux act as go-between in some other

arrangement? The record does not answer the question.⁵⁷

The only 1818 manumission not involving money was Francis Waters' release of four slaves who may have been a family: George, age twenty-one, Carey, twenty-seven, and Carey's children Robert, five, and Angelina, four. Francis Waters stated that because of an "aversion to enslaving human beings" he was freeing the four slaves. Aversion to slavery however did not mean Waters was willing to lose money on his investment in human bondage, for the slaves were not to be free until their best working years were over. Carey would gain her freedom in 1823 when she was thirty-two, George would remain enslaved for nine more years until he was thirty. Carey's son Robert would have to serve for twenty-five more years, and baby Angelina an additional twenty-one years. Waters also made provisions that Carey's future children; and Angelina's future offspring could expect freedom at age thirty for the males and twenty-five for the females.⁵⁸

Waters' "aversion to enslaving human beings" was the only moral reason given for manumissions in the 1818 group of eight. The others accepted compensation. If they held religious or moral convictions concerning the freeing of slaves, those reasons were not mentioned in the deed of manumission.

Somerset County slave owners generally did not release their slaves immediately unless the slaves were past middle age. The practice of delayed manumission made it easier for the slave to move into a free society by giving him or her time to learn a trade. Slaveowners were prohibited by law from releasing sick or

feeble slaves, including young children and those unable to earn a living. So, unless children were released along with a working parent, they could not be turned out into a society which would be forced to pay for their care. The county and state were protecting themselves from an influx of welfare cases on the one hand, and a sudden sharp increase in a free black population on the other. Delayed manumission also allowed planters to gradually move away from dependence on slave labor in an unstable post-Revolutionary economy. Adult male slaves carried out most of the heavy planting and reaping responsibilities on a plantation, so they were usually freed at a later age than females. Nearly every manumission described an older age for males to be released than for women; often men were released at 28 or 30, and women at 21 or 25. The small number of manumissions recorded in the county deed books after the early 1790's may reflect the change in Maryland law which again allowed slave owners to set their slaves free by clauses in their wills. This legal tool also allowed slave owners to effectively free their slaves gradually, and sometimes additional requirements for freedom were added so that slaves inherited by children of the deceased had to work for several more years to attain freedom. James Polk freed all of his slaves by his 1795 will, but only after each one had reached the age of 25. This meant that for nine of his slaves freedom came immediately after Polk's death, but for the remaining thirteen, freedom was delayed for from three to twenty-four years.⁵⁹

Manumission of slaves and natural increase enlarged the free

black population of Somerset County, but sometimes the evidence is difficult to see at first glance. Census statistics for 1800 and 1810 particularly, cloud the number of free black citizens living in Somerset County. At first glance it would seem that there were only a handful of independent free black households in either census, because the listings of free blacks by name are so few. However, on closer inspection of the record, it becomes obvious that the great majority of free blacks were considered to be living within the households of white landowners. The statistics were grouped according to the numbers of free white males of certain age groups, free white females of particular age groups, slaves, and "all others excluding Indians". The "all others" column can only mean free black persons, but this obvious fact may be missed by cursory glances at early census records. (More concerning the census data will follow.)

Manumissions during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made economic impact on white Somerset County society, and on the entire free black population. By the middle 1700's free blacks in the county had carved out for themselves a relatively secure place, and were certainly better off in many ways than their slave neighbors. But the release of new free workers into the labor pool forced many of the newly manumitted to hire themselves to the very people who had freed them, and in some cases they probably lived in the same quarters they had occupied as slaves. However, the importance of free black labor also increased with the numbers, and the number of slaves in the county actually began to

decrease in the early nineteenth century. White laborers also saw opportunities opening up for them by moving westward in hopes of finding new, cheap lands; consequently white farmers began to rely on the free black workforce. This reliance forged a lasting place for free blacks in Somerset County's economy, one which, although necessary to white farmers, encouraged poor treatment and second-class citizenship for the freedmen.⁶⁰

4.CHURCH RECORDS

Researchers interested in the treatment of free blacks in a predominantly white society often overlook the evidence which may be available in church records, particularly in the official Anglican records of the Colonial era. Because the Anglican Church was established by law in Maryland in 1692, it became an official arm of the state in keeping records and maintaining the good conduct of the citizens. Of course some "clerks in Holy Orders", as the clergy were called, were better record-keepers than others. Therefore one church's registers may be full of vital information, and others may have very little of interest pertaining to the study of free blacks. Fires destroyed written ledgers, as did negligence, so some churches do not even possess early records; but Somerset Parish in Somerset County does have a remarkable collection of early records which enables the researcher to piece together a glance into the workings of the Anglican Church in early Maryland. How black residents of Somerset Parish, both slave and free, participated in the life of the church provides another piece to the complicated puzzle of Somerset County society.

As rector of Somerset Parish, The Reverend Alexander Adams wrestled with the moral question of the salvation and Christianization of slaves. With so few Anglican clergy on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Mr. Adams served one parish then another in Somerset County during his long ministry. In 1724 he had been a "Missionary to the Plantations" for twenty years. Among the

problems facing him were inadequate pay, poor housing, a parish fifty miles long, four-hundred families scattered along those fifty miles, difficulty in buying wine for Communion and no altar on which to prepare the sacrament. Mr. Adams had responded to the call for missionaries in 1704, only three years after it was issued by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.). Formed in 1701 to encourage missionary work in the British Colonies and promote the conversion of the natives, the S.P.G. sent a questionnaire to its missionaries in 1724. One of the questions was, "Are there any Infidels, bond or free, in your Parish and what means are used for their conversion?" To this Mr Adams replied, "There are Indians & Negro slaves. Some Negroes are baptized after instruction in the Church Catechism & frequent the public worship. No means used to convert the Indians; their language unknown to us."⁶¹

Since the establishment of the Church of England in Maryland in 1692, the question of slaves in the church had been a problem. The population of the Eastern Shore was sparse and widely scattered, and slaves labored to help grow the main cash crop, tobacco. A huge parcel of land originally stretching from Maryland's border with Virginia north to Delaware, Somerset County embraced four parishes - Somerset, Coventry, Stepney and Snow Hill; and a June 1694 report to the governor noted that although there were four parishes laid out, there was "never a church". By 1724, however, a building had been raised in each parish. The Rev. Mr. Adams' job of attending to the needs of Anglicans and converting

the Infidels was hampered by geography, lack of transportation, cold, heat, mosquitos and apathy all around. The Bishop of London, who had oversight of the pioneer churches, was constrained by political pressures from sending anyone to lead or organize these ventures, and the slave owners were either unconcerned about the conversion of their slaves to Christianity or afraid they would be freed if baptized.⁶²

Although the Anglican Church was the first church in the Colonies to work among slaves for their conversion to Christianity, the question of whether baptism constituted freedom for the slave was not clear in the minds of Anglican clergy or slaveowners. A 1664 Maryland law stated that baptism had no effect on the status of a slave, but the Bishop of London was still instructing his missionaries as late as 1727,

Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least alteration in Civil Property. . . The freedom which Christianity gives is a freedom from the Bondage of sin and Satan. . . But as to their outward Condition, whatever it was before, whether bond or free, their being baptized and becoming Christians makes no manner of Change in it.⁶³

Nevertheless, slave owners were slow to bring their slaves for baptismal instruction. The Eastern Shore of Maryland at the time of the 1724 questionnaire was a difficult place in which to live. The plantations were widely scattered along the rivers, and for anyone to attend any church service required enormous commitment. Families were responsible for most of the education, both Christian and otherwise, for their own children and slaves alike, and they were encouraged to fulfill their duty to teach them. The Lord Bishop of London did send a Visitor to the clergy on the Eastern

Shore in 1730, the Rev. John Lang, to encourage, admonish and examine credentials. In a speech at the opening of the conference on June 24, Mr. Lang chastised the attendants about the neglect of "the Instruction of the Negroes". "It cannot be denied that they are part of our cure, & that we shall be accountable to God for the discharge of our duty to them." Although he did not expect the clergy to become schoolmasters to them, he did

seriously & passionately exhort Masters & Mistresses to teach and instruct them or procure others to do it for them. . . Their own salvation depends upon the faithful discharge of it. . . I cannot give myself leave that any Master or Mistress will be so barbarous as not to engage in this laudable design.⁶⁴

Neighboring Mr. Adams' parish in Somerset County was Coventry Parish, served by The Rev. James Robertson, who worked there from 1718 until his death in 1748. In his answer to the S.P.G. inquiry concerning Infidels in his Parish, he replied, "There are Indians whose Language we dont (sic) understand & there are negro slaves whereof some come to Church & are baptized & others who neither by their own consent nor their masters are willing to be baptized." This answer indicated that not only did some masters keep their slaves from baptism, but that some slaves refused to be baptized. Both Mr. Adams and Mr. Robertson seemed very matter-of-fact about slaves joining their masters at public worship, being instructed in the Christian faith and receiving the sacrament of baptism. There did not seem to be any idea of keeping blacks from worshipping with the rest of the congregation. It is difficult to know if the slaves who chose baptism believed the teachings or were forced into Christianity by their masters. Mr. Robertson's observation at

least hints that adult slave baptisms were voluntary. However, in a series of sermons in 1750, another Maryland clergyman, Thomas Bacon, expressed concern over the actions of both master and slave. "These baptized slaves were often living in as profound Ignorance of what Christianity really is, (except as to a few outward Ordinances) as if they had remained in the midst of those barbarous Heathen Countries from whence their parents had first been imported." At least some people, therefore, thought that even the slaves who had been baptized were still clinging to native religion.⁶⁵

All births were required to be noted in the Parish registry within two months, but baptisms were rarely listed along with births. Parish registers became a legal tool to keep track of births, deaths, marriages and the names of those who had paid their taxes for upkeep of the church and clergy salaries. The records for Somerset Parish listed in 1703-1705 the births of three slaves owned by the Denwood family. In January 1703, Frost, and in April 1704, Bess, were born and belonged to Arthur Denwood. In 1705 Domway, belonging to Levin Denwood, was born.⁶⁶

The Denwood family represents a particularly interesting page in the history of Somerset Parish slaveowners and slaves. Levin Denwood came to Somerset County in 1670/01 with his wife Priscilla and infant son Levin, who was born in "Nasawadocks, Accomack County, Virginia". A second son Arthur, was born in 1671/72 in Somerset County. The elder son died in 1703, so the Levin and Arthur referred to in the Somerset Parish listing of slave births

were father and son. While only three Denwood slave births were shown in church records, Mr. Levin Denwood registered at the Somerset County Circuit Court, between 1690 and 1697, seven other slave births. Some of the slave parents had African names: Boobo, Tockoe, and Gola, but the children were given English or Biblical names: Sue, Moll, James, Will, Pegg, Sarah and Sampson. Mr. Denwood was a law-abiding subject of the crown, for when the law required him to register births with the parish, he did so, even though he was not an Anglican, but a Quaker. His 1725 will carried this legacy:

I give and bequeth unto my Daughter Betty Gale & Elizabeth Waters Fifteen pounds to be by them disposed of among Friends commonly called Quakers. I also give to the (said) Betty and Eliz & their Heirs & Assigns forever one Acre of Land Lying between Weccocomico & Manny whereon ther now is a Quaker Meeting House with the said meeting House to be kept for that purpose.

His will made no mention of slaves, but his son Arthur's 1720 estate inventory was valued at over L 1200 sterling, with the most costly item being seventeen Negro men, women and children worth L 451. He also had one white servant man worth L 9. Arthur's widow Esther made out her will in 1724, leaving nine of her slaves to her children. (Interestingly, some more African names were mentioned: Binah and Becudah, along with Plymouth, Bristol, Jacob, Robin, Tony, Jack and Jemm.) These prominent Quakers who built the Meeting House on their own land were slave owners in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, despite the famous anti-slavery stand held by Quakers in later years.⁶⁷

Baptism was not mentioned alongside the names of anyone born during that time. But in 1817 baptisms began to be listed along with births. The rector of Somerset Parish at that time was the Rev. William Wickes. Perhaps he was a better record-keeper than his predecessors, and perhaps he encouraged baptism among blacks, because there are seven baptisms of slave children and four baptisms of free blacks in 1817 and 1818 alone. The child's name was given along with birth and baptism dates, and the parents' names were noted, but, in the case of slaves, not the names of the owners. In a typical slave baptism entry, "Susan, daughter of slaves Job and Tilla was born December 10, 1818, and baptised June 1818". However, the free blacks' surnames were listed along with the term "negro". "John Henry son of Simo and Rose Ballard - negroes- was born September 17, 1818, baptised same time." Raising questions about earlier birth entries, in 1822 the rector wrote a heading on one of the registry pages "Baptisms by the Rev'd. Joseph Covell", but listed only births. Were baptisms administered at the same time as the birth, as in previous entries? It is impossible to say. One entry was particularly interesting: "Sarah Ann, daughter of Slaves Abraham and Sarah his wife was born October 10. 1822". It is the first entry showing the slave parents being married. (Entries for whites were entered "Anne Ayers, daughter of Henry Hyland and Harriet his wife . . .") Abraham and Sarah's sons were noted under "Births" in 1824 and 1826.⁶⁸

Were Somerset Parish's neighboring Anglicans also baptizing slaves and free blacks in this period? Unfortunately, Snow Hill's

early records were lost in an 1834 fire. The statistics for Coventry Parish, contained within a narrow, hand-made book having a leather-covered wooden back, listed only one entry for blacks. "Betty - at George Bosman's, a mulatto, born September 10, 1724". Stepney Parish (at Green Hill Church) from 1737 to 1763 listed the births of only a few mulattos. A woman listed as "the Mulatto Sue, alias Sue Magee or Games" gave birth to five children between 1741 and 1754. "The Mulatto Rose, or Rose Game, alias Magee" is shown to be the mother of two children born in 1737 and 1751; and "Mary Dutton (mulattoe)" had two children born, one in 1759 and the other in 1762. No other births of free blacks or slaves were listed. Undoubtedly, record-keeping was careless. But Somerset Parish seems to have been unique in the county when it came to the baptism of slaves and free blacks.⁶⁹

Even if slaves and free blacks were being baptised, were they incorporated into the life of the parish, and what did that entail? As noted earlier, slaves did attend worship services. In fact, St. Andrew's Church of Somerset Parish in Princess Anne still retains the original slave gallery built when the church was erected in 1770. But before the American Revolution, there were no American bishops in the church and none sent from England to ordain clergy or confirm lay people. Men seeking ordination were compelled to travel to England or Scotland for the laying on of hands, and it must be assumed that very few parishioners on the Eastern Shore were confirmed from the earliest days until 1792 when Thomas J. Claggett took his place as the first bishop consecrated on American

soil. It was customary to be confirmed before being allowed to receive communion, but the extraordinary circumstances of the Anglican Church in America made that impossible. Apparently, to be listed as a "communicant in good standing" meant one had been baptised and prepared for confirmation, but had not yet been confirmed. Were blacks listed as communicants in good standing? In 1790, before he was made bishop, The Rev. Mr. Claggett was rector of St. James' Church, Herring Creek, near Baltimore. A list of communicants of the parish was drawn up on Easter Day: "There are 48 whites and 13 negroes, total 61. The list of 'Black brethren communicants' include two servants of Mr. Claggett". In 1791 the black communicants asked for a piece of ground to use as a cemetery for themselves and their descendants. The vestry gave it to them, provided they fence it in themselves. It seems that the blacks were incorporated into the life of the church and seen as full members in good standing, even if they could not be buried in churchyard reserved for whites.⁷⁰

"Bishop Claggett confirmed over 2000 people in his first year of the Episcopate, the first confirmations in the Church in Maryland since its existence - 160 years". He made his first visit to Somerset Parish in 1795 and confirmed seventy people. There was no indication that any of them were black. (Consistently, when blacks were listed in the church records there was some written notation, whether "free negro" "slave", "mulatto", "servant", or "colored".) However, in an 1805 entry, Somerset Parish church members were listed. The page is headed "A list of those persons

who have subscribed to the canons of the P.(Protestant) E.(Episcopal) Church" and numbered 86-131. The preceding page is numbered 1-85 with the first 31 names those of blacks, 29 slaves and 2 free women. They were all listed by first name only in one column, followed by "property of" and their owner's name in the adjacent column. In the owner column, "free" is written beside the names "Nanny" and "Tabby". The rest of the page is numbered through 85 with the names of whites, and "Communicants" is written at the bottom of the page. The titled page has more names numbered 86-131 and the date April 16, 1805. It is assumed that everyone listed as a communicant had been baptised and was at least a teenager, if not an adult, since children did not receive communion until "the age of discretion" when they could be prepared for confirmation. An earlier list of Somerset Parish communicants in 1796 listed no blacks at all. The rector's discretion must have been a determining factor in drawing up the list. It was, and is, the custom of the Episcopal Church to receive the communion wine from a common chalice. Are we to assume that blacks and whites, slave and master drank from the same cup?⁷¹

There are many gaps in the Somerset Parish records, sometimes due to clergy vacancies in the parish and sometimes, it must be noted, due to the rector's complete avoidance of bookkeeping. From about 1825 to 1845 there were no blacks named in the register as having been baptised. But when the Rev. Harvey Stanley was elected rector in 1844, the registers began to be kept current and the baptism of many blacks were recorded. Mr. Stanley did not list the

names of the parents of the slaves, but noted instead the names of the owners. The birth date and baptism date were given along with the names of the godparents or sponsors. Usually the owners were named as sponsors, and sometimes the parents or mother of the slave child as well. The sponsor at an infant baptism must have been baptised and assumed responsibility for seeing that the child was raised in the Christian faith. It is to be assumed then that the rector considered slave parents practicing Christians when he allowed them to be godparents along with their owners. Where did these baptisms take place, in the church or at the home of the slaveholder? In some cases "private" was noted in the register, and those probably took place in homes. But most entries have no such notation. Can it be assumed that the vast majority took place in church?⁷²

On January 1, 1846, Dr. Henry Hyland's infant daughter Anne Ayers Hyland was baptised at St. Andrew's Church, Princess Anne, Somerset Parish, along with six slaves, aged sixteen years to 15 months. Mrs. John Smith was Anne's godparent and Dr. Hyland served as sponsor for his slaves. In 1849, Dr. Hyland's brother, the Rev. William Hyland must have been visiting Somerset Parish because he administered baptisms and performed two marriages. The Rev. Mr. Hyland married "Littleton Henry Maddox and Henrietta Susan Steward, and also Zaddok Maddox and Jane Jones on September 3, 1849. The parties were all colored". We may assume they were all free blacks because surnames were given for everyone. In 1850 and 1860 separate Federal census' were taken for slaves and free persons,

and the 1850 count for free persons showed that Dr. Hyland's household consisted of himself (aged 63), his wife Harriet (aged 47), nine children and Littleton Maddox, aged 30, a black oysterman, presumably the same referred to in the marriage record. The slave census showed that Dr. Hyland owned seven female and nine male slaves in addition. Somerset Parish records indicate that in 1849 "his woman Anne" brought two daughters for baptism and "his man Henry's son" was baptised by Dr. Hyland's brother. The only other baptism involving blacks associated with Dr. Hyland was Henrietta and Littleton Maddox' son James. The parents and Dr. Hyland acted as sponsors. Dr. Hyland owned three slave women of childbearing age in 1850, yet only one, Anne, had her children baptised. The male slaves who were old enough to be fathers added up to four, yet only one chose baptism for his son.⁷³

The statistics suggest, in Dr. Hyland's case at least, slaves were not forced to accept their master's religious practices, but when they did, the master supported them in their choice. But what about other slave owners in Somerset Parish?

Mr. William Wilson Johnston, an active churchman at St. Andrew's Church in Princess Anne, Somerset Parish, was a prosperous farmer. Elected a vestry member for many years, in his 1865 will he left the parish \$5,000 worth of City Of Baltimore stock "for upkeep of the church". The 1850 slave census showed that he owned eight female and eight male slaves, and in 1860 he owned 12 females and 10 males. Eight church register entries mention W.W. Johnston and slaves. In 1846, two of his slaves were married to slaves

owned by other people. Candace married Lyttleton, who belonged to Miss H.B. Hayman; and James married Sylvia, a servant of J.W. Crisfield. Candace's four-year-old daughter was baptised in 1859, and her infant daughter in 1862. In 1848, "his man William's" fourteen-month-old son Stephen Cecil was baptised; and in 1851, Peggy's nine-year-old daughter Sally Jane also received that sacrament. Only one other slave, Ann, was mentioned as the mother of Daniel who was baptised in 1858, with the father being Mr. W.T.G. Polk's slave Isaac. Again, although Mr. Johnston owned six female slaves of child-bearing age in 1860, from 1858 to 1862, only three of the women had an interest in having her children baptised.⁷⁴

Somerset Parish, in the Episcopal Church, was fairly regular at baptizing slaves and free blacks as well. From 1846-1857, the Rev. Joseph Nicholson was particularly active in baptizing and officiating at the marriages of slaves and free blacks. (Interestingly enough, the 1850 slave census showed that he owned slaves himself: a 45-year-old man, a 30 year-old woman, 17 and 7-year-old girls, and a 4-year-old boy. Possibly this was a family of man, wife, two small children plus a teenaged girl.) In fact Mr. Nicholson baptised no less than 69 slaves, both children and adults. He also officiated at the marriages of nine couples, some of whom were slave, some were free, and some were a combination of slave and free, even though it was illegal for a clergyman to marry slaves. It is interesting to note that "Levin Libby was married to Henny, a servant of Mrs. Ann W. Jones on Easter Day, March 31,

1850, in All Saints' Church, Monie". (The church at Monie is included in Somerset Parish.) Also, "The Sunday after Easter, April 15, 1849, at the Evening service at All Saints', Monie, James Murray, a free colored man & Betty Ann Bounds, a free colored woman" were married. Quite a public display - the marriage of blacks in the church on Easter Day and the Sunday after Easter during the Evening service!⁷⁵

Even though blacks were being baptised and married in the church, confirmation records list no blacks at all. Confirmation was seen as the adult affirmation of baptismal vows, and meant full adult incorporation and involvement in the church. If blacks were not confirmed, unlike earlier days on the Eastern Shore when there was no bishop to confirm, it meant they could not vote in vestry elections, and most probably could not receive communion. Blacks were not listed in mid-nineteenth-century communicant lists either. One conjecture is that while the clergy were willing to incorporate blacks into Christianity by baptism, and make a show of Christian marriage, they were not willing to make the step of offering blacks full adult participation in the church.⁷⁶

The Rt. Rev. William R. Whittington, fourth bishop of the diocese of Maryland and bishop during the Somerset Parish rectorship of Joseph Nicholson, perhaps represented the view of the day. In an 1842 letter he expressed his abhorrence of abolition and urged Dr. John Scott, a catechist to a congregation of negroes on the Eastern Shore:

The calumny of abolition must be carefully guarded against. This can be best done by the most scrupulous adherence to

religious instruction and intercourse with the negroes, and by bringing out fully . . . the bearing of faith on practice, the Gospel rule of Subordination in society, and the compatibility of spiritual privilege with temporal privation, and even oppression.

Yet he always addressed words of instruction to the blacks in church, and in private homes asked for the servants to be called in at times of family prayers. However, when the single black congregation in Baltimore petitioned the Diocesan Convention to be admitted as a parish, the bishop put the request aside. Later, when asked if the black man were not entitled to all the rights as a Christian, the bishop replied, "Doubtless; but I do not consider representation in Convention to be a Christian right."⁷⁷

The evolution of the position of blacks, both slave and free, in the life of Somerset Parish, as seen from existing records, seems to have gone from less constrained to more constrained as nineteenth-century Maryland lurched toward Civil War. In this regard, the church followed suit with the state as a whole. If the clergy viewed blacks as their brothers in Christ, they were their younger step-brothers, needing protection and guidance, and not quite measuring up to full fraternity.

Many of the clergy themselves were slaveholders. The citizens of Somerset Parish, of course, held widely differing opinions about slavery. There were slave owners and those who had no slaves; some masters took special interest in certain slaves and acted as advocate and patron. There was at least one colonizationist, Littleton Upshur Dennis, who held 83 slaves in 1823. His 1833 will instructed his brother John to buy his slave Joseph's wife Nancy

and allow them to go to Liberia. He also wanted to give his slave Nelson all his personal clothing, \$25.00 and permit him to go to Liberia. Further, Mr. Dennis made provisions for his slave Levin Miles, Miles' wife Martha and their children to become citizens of Liberia if both of his own children died before age twenty-one or left no heirs.⁷⁸

When all the statistics are added together, lines are read between, assumptions made, and theories presented, it does remain clear that blacks in Somerset Parish were not fully incorporated into the life of the church from 1692-1865. Given the theological thinking of the day on the generally conservative Eastern Shore, perhaps that was impossible. Paternalism could allow for salvation to be extended to blacks, but not full brotherhood as Christians. But a picture may develop of a society where slaves were not forced to accept a master's religious practice. Records are sketchy, inaccurate, missing and misleading. What can be pieced together is not a monochromatic blanket, but a complex, many-hued patchwork quilt of a fragment of life in Somerset Parish, Maryland.

5.NAMES

An interesting aspect of tracing slave and free black families in a fairly closed geographic area, is the study of names. Because Somerset County was settled by predominantly British peoples, and because many of the families stayed on the Shore and intermarried, the pool of names of white settlers is small and distinct. By knowing a surname, settlement patterns can quite easily be traced, but it is difficult to distinguish between black families and white families, since they both are known by the same surnames. It is rare to find the names of solely black families. Game, Puckham, Armwood, Pinkett, Logy, Bluet and appropriately, Black are the only names of free blacks in the county with no white counterparts. By checking the census statistics through 1840, no other distinct free "black" last names can be found.⁷⁹

Some historians have attempted to make the case that when newly free slaves were faced with choosing a surname for themselves, they did not choose the name of their former masters. Suggestions that the names of American heroes were chosen, such as Washington, Jackson or Jefferson are not borne out in Somerset County, at least. The 1832 census of free blacks in the county listed the full names of 2,238 "colored people" and the overwhelming majority had the same last names as Somerset County whites. Because of the unique nature of county names, reading the 1832 list makes it obvious that, whether by custom or design, the surnames of free blacks were the same as their previous owners.

Distinct Somerset County names such as Woolford, Dashiell, Beauchamp, Waller, Toadvine, Gale, Elzey, Nutter, Horsey, Tilghman and Winder abound. In fact, there were no Washingtons or Jeffersons and only three Jacksons. Somerset County deeds which recorded manumissions gave two examples in the year 1799 of newly freed slaves taking their master's names. William Polk freed his slave David "who now takes the name David Polk" and Thomas Cannon made an indenture with his newly manumitted slave named Job Cannon. Somerset County Certificates of freedom recorded many free black persons who had taken the surname of their former masters. Richard E. Waters manumitted his slave Isaac in 1812, and when he came to ask for freedom papers, the freedman gave his name as Isaac Waters.⁸⁰

The colonial tax lists of Somerset County enumerated the names of slaves living in the county along with their owners. Investigating the names of slaves living in the first district in the 1753 list and comparing them to the slave names listed in the same district's 1823 tax list, revealed some interesting trends. Several categories of names can be noted: classical, Biblical, descriptive, English, African, place names and peculiarly Somerset County names. Obviously some slaves were named by owners, but the many foreign names in the earlier listing also suggests that many slaves retained their African names in 1753. Surely, slave masters could have renamed their bondsmen who were known by distinctly African names if they were interested in stamping out all traces of African culture in a white society. But the number of African

names still being used in the second half of the eighteenth century is evidence that such was not the case in Somerset County.

In 1753 classical names were in vogue, as attested to by such names as Caesar, Nero, Venus, Jupiter, Pompey, Mars and Hector; but in 1823 there were far fewer such names. In fact, only Horace, Caesar and Lucretia were listed. Biblical names were popular in both tax lists of slave names, however the 1753 names show several Biblical names which depict a negative or pejorative tone. The name Hagar, the Biblical concubine of Abraham, was found, as was her son's name Ismael. In the Biblical story, both mother and son were expelled from the community by Abraham's wife Sarah and the name Ismael came to be associated with being an outcast. Cain, the first murderer in the Bible, was also a slave name, as was Esau who sold his birthright, and Lot who was seduced. However, heroic Biblical names were also found in the 1753 list: Peter, Esther, Abraham, Luke, Jeremiah and Silas. In contrast, the 1823 list, while showing an equal number of slaves with Biblical names, did not list any with decidedly negative connotations. Moses, Sarah, Judah, Isaac, Sampson, Elijah, and Job were all found in the later list.

In the 1753 list, many slaves had place names for their given names, perhaps telling something about the origins of the master's family, or in a few cases, the slave's own beginnings. Dublin, Glasgow, Surry, London, York, Essex, Kent, Kingston and Barberrry were all used as first names in the list. However, in the 1823 taxes, there were far fewer place names as given names for slaves;

only Glasgow, York, Preston and Richmond were shown. The majority of slaves in both lists had English names, although fashion in names changed in the sixty intervening years. The earlier list showed Bess, Jack, Kate, Will, Moll, and Tom to be popular slave names, while in the 1823 list Amelia, Priscilla, James, Stewart, Charles, Amy and Lydia were common.

Descriptive names for slaves were more in vogue in 1753 than in 1823. Messenger, Mover, Coffee, Tawney, Fortune, Cooker, Bony, Prince, Jockey and Pleasant were a few of the descriptive names found in the list, but in 1823 only Sandy, Milky, Nicey, Comfort, Major, and Frost were mentioned.

Since Somerset County is a fairly isolated community, the names of the settlers comprise a small and distinctive list, and some slave names reflect that small sampling. In 1753 one slave was named Randell (for Randell Revell, one of the first settlers of the county), one was named Purnell (a prominent family name), one was known as Somerset, and one was Whitehaven, which is a ferry - crossing in the county. But in the 1823 tax, there were many more Somerset County names reflected in the slave list. Peculiarly regional surnames as first names included Handy, Bozman, Beauchamp, Whittington, Spence, Hooper, Tubman, and Littleton; while equally distinctive first names such as Levin, Randell and Messor were also listed.

But the most interesting contrast was in the category of African names. In the earlier tax list, at least sixty slaves had names that probably were not given to them by their masters, since

they were distinctly foreign, and probably African. Somerset County took a census in 1755 which showed a total of 3088 slaves residing in the county, so only a small percentage of them still were known by African names. Many of the names ended in the letter "o": Collego, Mesawco, Joo, Arnako, Mayrio, Tarroh, Dyoro, Keto, Dido, and Kelto; others were strange to western ears: Aeram, Jelemechus, Aener, Pashen, Quomenar, Cundis, Pleonoth, Derinder, Cuffey, Meswegie, and Polesdor. But by the 1823 tax list, only six slaves had African-sounding names: Cudger, Mingo, Minta, Binah, Cato and Sambo. The inference to this comparison is that in 1753 there were slaves who retained their African names, and had not been renamed with English ones. Perhaps these slaves had come directly from Africa as adults, which would indicate rather heavy slave importation at that date. Or perhaps the evidence points to the possibility that African culture was still alive in the slave community. But by 1823, when slave importation had been illegal for a generation, all but a few bondsmen in Somerset County had lost their African name heritage. But the fact that any remained is perhaps surprising. Even in the 1832 census of free blacks, there survived a few African names among the free blacks. Men were named Zasah, Mecajiah, Phellis, Azereah, Kellar, Mingar, Lizar, Cherchal, Cousmon, Cato and Quak.⁸¹

Most manumitted Somerset County free blacks chose surnames which also belonged to white families in the county, and some free blacks continued to give their children African names as first names, even into the mid-nineteenth century. Both of these facts

point to the relatively non-violent relationship between blacks and whites during the years before the Civil War. White masters could have suppressed all vestiges of African culture in one generation if they had desired its eradication. Black men and women could have chosen any surname they wanted, but preferred the names of local families with whom they had a relationship. While the nineteenth century may have seen more restrictions on black families, most chose to stay in the place they had lived all their lives. The 1832 census which polled which free blacks wanted to migrate to Liberia only indicated two men who desired to leave the county for Africa.

6.ANTE-BELLUM SOMERSET COUNTY

No examination of the lives of free black residents of an area can be seen as separate from the world of the white majority, and the slave cultures which surround it. Following the Revolutionary period, the Maryland legislature passed laws affecting the everyday lives of free blacks, and the economic and cultural climate influenced the lives of free black residents of Somerset County. Somerset County in the 1830's exhibited both the hopeful spirit of the age and a society ripe for reform. Newspapers accounts provide a snapshot of the day:

"William A.D. Bounds offers reward for negro woman named Margaret, having with her a child 9 months old; she is about 26, 5 ft. 6-8 inch; her husband, a free negro was seen on board a vessel to Baltimore; he goes by the name of Thomas Brown."

"William Layfield and Isaac Bozman to apply as insolvent debtors."

"H.P.C. Wilson, wishing to remove from the State of Maryland, offers at private sale tract of land where he resides."

"Civil appointments by the Governor and Council for Somerset County: Levy Court, Surveyors, Justices of the Peace, Judges of the Orphans Court."

"Sheriff's sale at the suit of Williams & Dickey, against Josiah Johnson, negro man named Bob, negro boy Ben, negro woman Hannah."

"Littleton Dennis Teakle, Princess Anne, solicits support in his effort in the state Legislature to protect the oysters."

"A steam boat has commenced running from Baltimore to this county; she will soon be able to perform her trips in 10-11 hours"

"A barbecue at the store of Isaac Newman; it is expected the candidates for the General Assembly and Sheriffalty will be present."²²

An examination of society in antebellum Somerset County, Maryland, for three distinct groups of residents - slaves, the white majority and the group somewhere in between - free blacks - reveals a complex pattern of social life in a fairly isolated, insular community. Each group had distinctions within it which made society a complicated structure. Slaves might hope to be manumitted and enter the ranks of free black society. Free blacks feared sinking into such poverty that they could be forced to sell family members into slavery; yet the opportunity also existed for their buying land and moving beyond mere subsistence into commerce. The free white male still had the chance to rise from poor man to businessman to county elite in a lifetime; but the reversal of fortune in an unstable economic climate was also a distinct possibility. Antebellum society in Somerset County was mobile, shifting and fearful, despite the appearance of long-time stability.

Following the War of 1812, Marylanders looked toward the future with high hopes of prosperity and progress. Open markets and low tariffs held out a promise of profit from farming and manufacturing as well as progress in steam power and scientific methods. But high hopes soon gave way to the harsh reality of impending economic hard times.

The 1816 Congressional duties on foreign products raised the price of everyday items such as clothes and hardware, and Maryland agricultural products were in competition with cheaper overseas sources. The credit collapse in 1819 further produced a critical

financial problem. On the Eastern Shore, oystermen saw the progress of "drudging" for the bivalve with cable-driven dredges, instead of with the traditional tongs, as impending doom and extinction for their traditional livelihood. Banks failed, lotteries were run to stimulate the flow of money, and businessmen organized stock companies for business ventures.⁸³ The Tariff of 1828, or the Tariff of Abominations, made manufactured goods more expensive, and credit was tight. Mortgages were being called in and insolvent debtors abounded. Because the land on the Eastern Shore had been farmed for nearly two-hundred years without replenishment, its productivity was diminishing, forcing many to choose between staying on the "home place" or moving west to more fertile ground. The men with the largest investment in the land, both in terms of money and human capital, slaveowners who held more than two or three slaves, could not move as easily as the marginal farmer.

The newspaper in Princess Anne, the county seat of Somerset County, was rife with examples of men casting their fortunes with westward movement in the 1830's. "Joshua Johnson intends to emigrate to the Southern or Western country, will sell cattle, horses, sheep, hogs &c." On February 21, 1832, a notice read, "Littleton Long, expecting to leave the county in a few weeks will sell a part of his furniture. . ."; and in April, "Littleton Long, having removed from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, offers to sell a farm . . . of 373 acres, also a farm at Coaksberry chapel, 150 acres". H.P.C. Wilson wanted to "remove from Maryland" and sell

1200 acres of land, along with all his crops, and was asking \$15,000 for his accumulated capital.⁸⁴

The frightening financial situation prompted men to react in various ways to their impending financial doom. H.K. Long advertised in the newspaper, "I want money and must have it! Peaceably if I can, forcibly if I must. . . . a serious call to those indebted to me." But George Dashiell of Princess Anne announced,

LAST NOTICE! The subscriber. . . has lost, by bad debt, and money advanced and paid for others, at least, FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. . . His property has been sold at Sheriff's and Coroners' sales. But he does not despair. He only asks for fair play. . .and he will never give up the ship while there is a plank left to keep his head above water.⁸⁵

Baltimore lottery agents even advertised in the Somerset County newspaper, The Village Herald in an attempt to attract speculators or gamblers. Banks were also being formed in the county and were looking for subscribers for investment. 1830 was the opening date for a branch of the Salisbury Bank in Princess Anne and in 1833 The Somerset Savings Institution of Princess Anne was incorporated with at least two hundred investors.⁸⁶

Not only was the economic climate of the day clouding over with threats of ruin, even the weather was disastrous. The newspaper reported a hurricane in 1831 which blew down a house and orchards and in the same year a tornado killed two men and destroyed a home.⁸⁷

A compelling picture of slave family structure during the antebellum period is painted by newspaper advertisements taken out which offered rewards for runaway slaves. In the Village Herald,

there were over fifteen advertisements carried between 1830 and 1834 alerting citizens about runaways. In nearly every case the runaway was said to have had relatives in or near Somerset County, and it was assumed that these runaways were heading to see their relatives. On July 6, 1830, the following notice appeared in the newspaper, "\$100 Reward for Runaway Slave family - man Jerome, woman Nanny and two small sons Charles and Henry. Has brother in Snow Hill and one in Philadelphia." In 1833 Elizabeth S.J. Evans offered a reward for a negro man Joe who had run away in Baltimore. Joe was described as 6 feet tall, aged 45-50 and somewhat gray. "He formerly lived with me near Green Hill on the Eastern Shore." The death of masters also apparently signaled an opportunity for slaves to attempt a run for freedom. In 1832

Joseph Nichols, administrator of Clement Stanford, offers a reward for a Negro Man, Littleton, who ran away from the residence of Edward Rawleigh, near the drawbridge in Dorchester county. He is 5' 9", 40-45, slender & delicate and came originally from Somerset County out of the estate of the late John Dashiell.

Contrary to the notions of some students of slave family relationships, these anecdotal incidents bear witness to a very strong family relationship among slave families. Even though Littleton had been sold away from his home in Somerset County to a neighboring county, the authorities thought he might risk capture by coming to see his family still in Somerset. Surely the risks of an entire family's attempt to gain freedom was far greater than that of a single individual, but rather than leave children or wife behind Jerome held his family together during their flight. Unfortunately there is no further evidence concerning these

runaways, and the success or failure of their freedom trek remains unknown.⁸⁸

The precarious economic situation in the county as well as the tenuous situation of free blacks in general made the antebellum period more difficult for this minority than it was even for white men struggling to keep their heads above water. Despite some advances made by a few landowners, free blacks still walked a tightrope of freedom. Proof of freedom had to always be at hand, or arrest and enslavement could ensue. In 1832 a story in the Princess Anne newspaper pointed out the dilemma. Julia Anne Mitchell, about 18 years of age, was jailed and described as "dark chestnut color with a 5 1/2" scar on her instep. She says she is free because her mother was set free by Mrs. Lecompte of Dorchester County." But because Julia Anne did not have proper identification of herself as a free person of color, she was arrested. A woman and her two babies were also arrested in Princess Anne. The elder child was twenty months old and the infant was only four weeks old. The runaway said she belonged to Mr. James H. Picken of New Orleans. How and why did she come to the Eastern Shore of Maryland? Another woman named Nancy was committed to the jail of Somerset County, saying she had been set free by John Corben and had gone to Kentucky about two years earlier. Why did she risk coming back into the county? Interestingly all three prisoners were women. What did officials have to fear from these women who claimed to be free? Surely, in a society with hundreds of free blacks, slaves hearing about freedom was no new threat.⁸⁹

A poignant advertisement appeared in 1831, which highlighted human fear and desperation. A shipwreck had occurred and among the wreckage there was found a pocketbook which contained a "protection of Pollard Helms - formerly a slave of Peggy Walker of Caroline County, Maryland." With no follow-up stories to any of these incidents, it is difficult to see a clearer picture. Were the women released or sold back into slavery? Did Pollard Helms survive the shipwreck without his protection papers, or was he lost at sea?⁹⁰

Insolvent debtors of both races were common in antebellum Somerset, yet the marginal existence of many free blacks made their plight more distressing than their white counterpart. With so little personal property, the sheriff's sale for the insolvent debtor could not have provided the county with very much revenue. In a constable's sale regarding the suit of Levin D. Jones against Katy Horsey, a free black, all Katy had to sell was "three hogs, 1 yearling, 1 iron pot, 1 spider and a Negro man named Titus." Could Titus have been husband or brother? In another incident, Stephen Sudler, "a free man" was the defendant in a suit against Thomas Robertson, and all Sudler had to offer for sale was "a negro woman, Milkey". No matter how poverty-stricken white debtors became, no white man had to sell his relatives to pay off a debt.⁹¹

If owning property and household goods was no guarantee of security for free blacks, living in a home owned by another man presented an even more precarious predicament. When Parker Selby died in 1832, his administrator advertised that he had several

houses now available for rent. All the houses were occupied by free negroes. The landless were presumably evicted in the interest of financial gain.⁹²

As if the fears of sliding into poverty and slavery were not enough, free blacks also had to contend with the sight of slave buyers conspicuously present in town. The Washington Hotel on the main street of Princess Anne was the inn for all sorts of travellers, and slave buyers were no exception. In 1832, Nolan Stewart offered cash for Negroes, as did William B. Jones, William J. Boatner, Alexander S. Jones, Charles Mills, and J.T. Adams - all could be found at the Washington Hotel. Slave buying was a profitable business for buyer and seller, and cash was offered on the spot. Some slave buyers wanted "40-50 negroes", and a "Gentleman from Louisiana" wanted thirty slaves. Another "planter of Louisiana" wanted to "purchase 20-30 negroes", and Levin Collier, "having returned from the South wish(ed) to purchase 50-75 Slaves". The sale of American-born slaves was big business, since the importation of slaves had been illegal since 1808. Slaves were also a source of revenue for governments. In 1832, there was a "Sale of @ 30 negroes by order of the Orphan's Court from the estate of Alcey and Isaac Harris." The administrators of wills sold slaves as did slave owners needing money. The "Sale of slave women with their children" was advertised in 1831; and men in the market for specific slave labor also advertised in the paper. Robert Pollitt wanted to purchase a "negro woman to serve as cook

and washer" and John Anderson wished to purchase a negro boy to train as a blacksmith.⁹³

Slaves seeking manumission were usually freed because they had impressed their master by exceptional service and devotion. The house slave had a better chance to gain the master's attention, since field hands and those who worked in out buildings did not see the master every day. Those slaves in the "upper echelon" of slave society guarded their place in the slave hierarchy. Slaves owned by the wealthy or governing members of society very often married slaves owned by other whites in the same social stratum.

William W. Johnston was a prominent citizen of Princess Anne, merchant, a lay leader in the Episcopal parish, slave owner and a good example of a man who climbed the social ladder from apparent anonymity to county office holder. Johnston's family was not one of the Eastern Shore's prominent families, since there were no Johnston's mentioned in county records before William's name first appeared in the military appointment list of 1824 as "ensign of Captain King's company, vice sudler, promoted". Building on his experience as sudler, Johnston opened a mercantile business in Princess Anne in 1830, became postmaster and a director of the Salisbury Bank in Princess Anne, and in 1833 was named a commissioner of Somerset County. Marrying a woman with a prominent Eastern Shore name, Rosina Upshur, in 1835, Johnston continued his upward mobility in the county, serving on the Somerset Parish vestry for over forty years.⁹⁴

Slaves owned by the Johnstons often married slaves owned by other prominent members of Somerset County society, and often their children were baptized in the parish church. Not all of his slaves chose to have their babies baptized, and apparently he did not force them to adhere to his own religion. However, when his slaves did have their babies baptized, Johnston and his wife acted as sponsors or godparents, along with the child's parents. Sometimes both parents of the baby were noted in the register, as in the following entry. In 1858 Johnston's slave Ann had her son David baptized and "the father was W.T.G. Polk's slave Isaac". Polk was another prominent Somerset County resident, a constable, contributor to the Somerset Savings Institution and slaveholder.⁹⁵

The Johnston's had nine children, four of whom died as children. Their second child, Susan Upshur Johnston, died at the age of nine months, the day after her baptism in 1838. Most interestingly, in 1847, the following entry is found in the parish register: "Susan Upshur Johnston, child of W.W. Johnston's woman, was baptized on Aug. 6 at Mr. Johnston's home". The clergyman failed to mention the name of Mr. Johnston's woman slave, but one wonders about the naming of the slave child after her master's deceased daughter. Did William Johnston name the slave child, which was the master's prerogative, or did the baby's mother name her own child? If the mother named the baby, was she touched by the pain of her master and mistress or was she insuring her place in the household by currying favor? Of course the record is silent, but perpetuating a beloved daughter's name could have been a clever

device for better treatment for the child as well as the mother. There is no evidence that Johnston ever manumitted any of his slaves, no matter how "enlightened" his treatment of them may have been.⁹⁶

J.W. Crisfield was a lawyer in the county and son-in-law of Col. George Vandy. In 1846 his "servant Silvia married James the servant of W.W. Johnston." This entry from the parish register is evidence that the two slaves from elite families were married in a Christian ceremony, not merely "jumping the broom", as in a slave ceremony. The register contains many such marriages of slaves from elite families marrying slaves from other elite families. Another of Crisfield's slaves, Daniel, was the father of a five - day old baby daughter, Sarah, baptized in 1860 whose mother was Dr. William Stewart's slave Esther. And so it continued in a county whose ruling white families were careful to "marry their own kind", the slave members of the family followed the same pattern.⁹⁷

Another member of the Somerset County aristocracy was Dr. Henry Hyland who was a veteran of the War of 1812, a physician and justice of the Orphan's Court for Somerset County. In 1820 he owned three slaves; in 1840 he owned 12 slaves; and in 1850 he owned sixteen slaves and also listed Littleton Maddox, age 30, a black oysterman, in his household. Dr. Hyland had a patronage relationship with the Maddox family, for in 1846 Dr. Hyland's brother, the Rev. W.H. Hyland, a visiting clergyman, had married Littleton Henry Maddox and Henrietta Susan Stewart along with Zaddok Maddox and Jane Jones. The register of church services

read, "The parties were all Colored". In 1852 Dr. Hyland served as sponsor at the baptism of Littleton and Henrietta's son James. There is no evidence that Littleton Maddox had been a slave of Dr. Hyland's, although in the 1823 tax listing, Hyland did own a ten-month-old named Littleton. However, there is no manumission record for Littleton Maddox. But for some reason Dr. Hyland singled out Littleton Maddox for special sponsorship, as attested to by the land record which showed Hyland granting a deed for 25 acres of land (part of "A Little Worth") to Littleton Maddox. White patronage could serve as powerful insurance for free blacks in a precarious world.⁹⁸

The social and economic instability on Maryland's Eastern Shore in the antebellum period prompted actions and reactions in every segment of society. White land-owners who had large investments in land and slaves were tied to the land and labor system. They held on to slavery until the bitter end, trying desperately to keep things "normal", even with the approach of the Civil War. Free blacks presented a threat to their well-thought-out justification of slavery as a beneficial system. Whites who were freer to leave unproductive land, headed west, out of bankruptcy toward new horizons. Some white slave owners freed their bondsmen, adding to the population of free blacks, while others sold slaves further south. For reasons of fear or economy or greed or survival some whites, fearful of free blacks, used every means available to return freedmen to slavery.

In the world of black men and women, despite every effort to destroy familial relationships, family ties somehow remained. Slaves created their own societal ways to cement relationships, even if they were not acknowledged legally. Slave families risked jail and capture to reunite splintered familial groups. Often free black families were not altogether free, since in many cases, parts of the family were slaves, sometimes owned by their own relatives.

One large group of free blacks organized their own segregated community, called Santo Domingo, as early as 1820. Perhaps Santo Domingo can be seen as a colonization project within the state of Maryland formed by free blacks themselves. Many free black families had been in the county since the first settlers came up from the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and had no desire to leave the land of their birth for a foreign country. But the promise of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as held out in the Declaration of Independence seemed an unattainable goal in the face of racism, and the thwarting of upward mobility by the white majority. Instead of an African colony, the settlers in Santo Domingo made their own island of safety and mutual assistance in Somerset County. In large numbers, free blacks could be relatively assured of safety, communal assistance, family togetherness, and financial opportunities.

7. SANTO DOMINGO AND COLONIZATION

Before the American Revolution the few free black families in Somerset County had been free for several generations and were relatively secure farmers either owning their own land or living on long-term lease property. In 1755 each Maryland county was required to take a census which polled the number of whites, both free and indentured servants, the number of mulattos - both free and slave, and the number of blacks - both slave and free. In Somerset County a total of ninety-three free blacks or mulattos were counted in that year. In the 1800 census most free blacks were listed in the household of white residents. No names of these free blacks were noted, merely the number of "other free persons". Only three free black heads of household were noted who had first and last names: Planner Frost, Levi Johnston and Stephen Wright. However, five free blacks with only first names were shown as heads of households. If the census data is to be trusted as believable, then the majority of the 586 free blacks either lived with the white families for whom they worked, or the census takers made that assumption. Free black landowners, then, were few and far between in 1800. In the same census, 7432 slaves lived in Somerset County, in many cases working the same plantations as the free blacks.⁹⁹

In the 1810 census only three male and eight female free blacks were shown to be heads of households, with a population in their households of twenty-nine persons. However, when the "all

other free persons" column was totaled, 1,054 free blacks appeared. Clearly the possibility of free blacks making a living as self-sufficient landowners had diminished, because the number of free blacks had nearly doubled since 1800, and while the number of free black households listed in the census had also doubled, the great majority of free blacks still lived on the estates of white persons. Although they were no longer slaves, most of the free blacks at the beginning of the nineteenth century were in a similar position to slaves, as yet depended on white employers for a livelihood. Census takers obviously considered most free blacks to be a part of a white household, because that is how they were enumerated. The 1810 census also added the number of slaves living in each Hundred of the county, and clearly, the number of slaves was over five times the number of free blacks. However, the number of slaves in the county had actually decreased, from the 7432 in the 1800 census, to 6,975 in 1810. Manumissions were having an effect on the slave population as well as the free black population. White landowners were beginning to restructure their working conditions, and depend more and more on the labor of free black workers. In Somerset County, as opposed to the deep South, cotton was not a viable crop, and grains, which were not labor intensive, continued to be the major commodity grown. Tobacco also continued to decline in importance. Maryland, as a border state, clearly was on a divergent path from the rest of the Southern states. 100

Prior to the 1820 census, there was no indication that free blacks in Somerset County chose to live in separate neighborhoods, but lived interspersed with white residents on scattered farms. White farmer lived "next door" to black farmer, except for a clue in the 1800 census about the formation of a community, which noted that in the Salisbury District there were "7 Free Negros" living in the same household. However, the 1820 census showed a startling change in the general pattern. Living close to each other, listed one after another, with no white residents in between, were 106 households headed by free blacks. The entire census counted 316 free black heads of household, and nearly half of them lived in this separate community. Six-hundred fifty people made up the community unofficially known as "Santo Domingo".

The name of the community, "Santo Domingo", is also curious. There is no official record of the reason the name was chosen. Perhaps some of the settlers had lived there. Or perhaps the name was chosen to warn whites away from the area. The slave uprising in Santo Domingo in 1790 was notorious throughout the slave-owning world, and was used as a watch-word to stir up anti-slavery sentiment. When frightened whites wanted to ensure stringent treatment of the slave community, the mere mention of Santo Domingo brought to mind scenes of the murder of whites at the hand of former slaves. Could the name Santo Domingo have been a purposeful choice to help ensure segregation and independence? The Santo Domingo uprising was well publicized in the Western world, and Maryland and Virginia received emigrants from the island. During

1791, the Virginia assembly passed bills to build a new road leading to a French settlement and to loan the emigrants L 600 "to enable them to complete the settlement of their lands". In 1793, the international situation over the uprising was still hot, because The Secretary of War, Henry Knox, sent an urgent message to Maryland's governor and council:

The Minister of France has represented that certain inhabitants of St Domingo are combining to form a Military expedition from the territory of the United States to go and support their Accomplices in the said Island who are still Opposing the constituted authority there; and that Baltimore has been pointed out as the place at which such combinations are taking place. I am directed, sir, to inform you that the President of the United States deems the fitting out of Military expeditions from any of the ports of the United States as unlawful... and he requests that you will please to take the necessary measures accordingly, and report the result in writing.¹⁰¹

Free black inhabitants of the Eastern Shore had close contacts with the Baltimore maritime trade, and many had access to newspapers, so that it is not unlikely that some Somerset free blacks had knowledge of the historic events which had pushed Santo Domingo to the forefront of international news.

There is no official reference to "Santo Domingo" in early county records, the area being part of the Salisbury district, south of the Nanticoke River, stretching to the Sharptown area. Several free blacks bought land in the district in 1820 from a man named Levin Bailey. He sold parts of "Taylor's Addition", lying on the south side of the Nanticoke River to Betsy Dutton, Rose Anthony and James Brown. Bailey also sold other parts of the same tract to Betsy Taylor, who sold her part of "Taylor's Addition" to the Badley family who later sold it to James Brown in 1857. Brown, a

free black entrepreneur, began acquiring more land in the area, and his sons Leonard and Byard continued to accumulate land after their father's death. The Bradley (or Badley) family sold several tracts of land to the Brown family, one of which was "Tower Hill". The Browns then sold or rented acreage to other free black families attracted to the area. In the 1823 tax records, three free blacks owned parts of the original "Taylor's Addition". James Brown himself owned five acres, John Moore owned six and one-half acres, and Rose Anthony still owned her fifteen. Brown's subsequent purchase of an additional thirty-two acres of "Taylor's Addition" added to his expanding real estate holdings. Somewhere along the line Brown acquired part of "Baker's Folly" (the land record is unclear as to when) which he deeded to one of the first black Methodist churches in the county.¹⁰²

Earlier in the century, other free blacks had also purchased land in the "Santo Domingo" area. On December 6, 1817, Matilda Dashiell, a free black woman who was 65 years old, paid \$45 to buy 1 1/2 acres of "Evan's Purchase" from Gowan White. The land was situated on the southeast side of the Nanticoke River on the corner of the seller's land. In the 1820 census, Matilda Dashiell was shown to be the head of a household consisting of five free blacks in the Santo Domingo settlement. The 1823 tax list valued her house and lot at \$30, considerably less than the \$45 she had paid for the land alone. In 1832 Matilda was 80 years old and in a household with another Matilda Dashiell who was 39, several younger women and yet another Matilda Dashiell who was 12 years of age.

Apparently the family of a free black woman landowner displayed great pride in perpetuating the name.¹⁰³

In 1816 the Badley (or Bradley) family also sold ten acres of land on the south side of the Nanticoke River to another free black man, Stephen Dutton, who was 36 years old. For \$120 "all the high land that is not drowned by the mill" on "Badley's Lott" became the property of Dutton. In the 1823 tax list his 10 3/4 acres of "Badley's Lott" was taxed at a value of \$55 - less than half the amount he paid for it a few years earlier. Dutton who owned 2 horses, 1 yoke of steers, 3 cattle and 7 hogs was obviously a subsistence farmer along with his wife Polly.¹⁰⁴

Stephen Dutton was a member of a large family, free by long standing. Several of them were also land owners in the district. Mary Dutton had been one of the few mulatto women to register her son Stephen's birth with Stepney Parish officials in 1762, and perhaps that Stephen was the father of the owner of "Badley's Lott". Albin Dutton bought land in 1814, and Betsy Dutton purchased another part of "Taylor's Addition" from Levin Bailey in 1820. Several members of the Dutton family registered with the county for their freedom certificates in the 1820's and 1830's, and all were listed as "born free".¹⁰⁵

Of the 106 families living in Santo Domingo in the 1820 census, at least fifteen owned either a house and lot or larger acreage. Stephen Wright, one of only three free blacks in the 1800 census, owned 135 acres in the 1823 tax assessment, comprised of parts of three larger tracts of land. Wright was fifty-two years

old and in addition to the land owned a yoke of steers, eight cattle, eight sheep and ten hogs, making him a fairly well-off self-sufficient farmer. (Hogs, sheep and cattle were common stock animals for small farmers to own, and allowed for their own production of meat, milk, cheese, butter and wool, while the steers could pull the plows.) The 1820 census had listed eight free blacks in Wright's household, one of whom was engaged in some sort of manufacturing. Wright was taxed in 1823 on more acreage than any single free black land owner in the first district. Stephen Wright had purchased his land lying on the south side of the Nanticoke in 1804 from Belitha and Mary Anne Wright for \$200. The deed was very careful to note the previous land transactions. The land had originally been sold to David Dutton on April 19, 1798, by James and Betty Reed; then Matthew Wright and Mary Anne Dutton, who was now Mary Anne Wright, received it from David Dutton's will. Stephen and Belitha Wright were most probably related, because Stephen had sold land to Belitha in 1796, which Stephen had purchased from Levin Pollitt. The Dutton family had obviously been dealing in land in Somerset County for many years. In the 1832 census of free blacks, Stephen Wright was noted as being 63 years of age; his wife Matilda, 57, and several children and grandchildren made up their household.¹⁰⁶

George Mosley was also a land owner in Santo Domingo, acquiring eighty acres from part of the tract known as "High Suffolk". In the 1823 tax list, the seventy-one-year-old Mosley also owned two horses, four cattle, thirteen hogs, eleven sheep,

one yoke of steers, three beds and \$30 worth of additional personal property, for a total of \$476.00 worth of taxable wealth. Many white land-owners were taxed on similar amounts of wealth, while most free blacks owned considerably less.¹⁰⁷

Most of the free black property owners enumerated in the 1823 tax records owned ten acres of land or less, with Wright and Mosely being the exceptions. Owners of house and lot combinations were in the majority of property owners, but the remainder of the 106 heads of household living in Santo Domingo presumably rented land and homes or were tenant farmers. Many who did not own their own land did own horses, cattle, sheep, hogs and steers, and a few possessed carriages, along with their taxable beds, furniture and other personal property. One home-owner, Cutter Townsend, was taxed on a silver watch, a walnut table and four oz. of silver plate, items not owned by any other free black in the district.¹⁰⁸

Jesse Townsend had freed Cutter Townsend in 1805, but had retained "guardianship and tuition" of him until 1809. The phrase Jesse Townsend used to free his slave was "being convinced in my judgment that it is contrary both to the will and word of God for any person to hold his fellow creature in perpetual bondage" will have a significant effect on Cutter Townsend at a later date. Jesse Townsend's "tuition" of Cutter apparently stood the freedman in good stead, for in the 1820 census, Cutter was listed as engaging five members of his household in some sort of manufacturing. What is unique about Cutter Townsend's census entry is that he had living in his household, in addition to two free

black males between 14 and 26, two free white young men, one between 10 and 16, and the other between 16 and 26. Perhaps Cutter Townsend was teaching them the trade which he had learned; but it is unusual for white apprentices to be taught by a black artisan. Because Cutter Townsend was successful at his trade, he became a slave owner himself, but in 1820 and 1821 he freed two of his slave women with the phrase "being convinced in my judgment that it is contrary both to the will and word of Almighty God for any person to hold his fellow creature in perpetual bondage. . .", almost the exact phrase which had been used for his own manumission.¹⁰⁹

Ephriam Nutter had at one time been a slave of W.T.G. Polk, one of the county's elite, who mentioned Ephriam Nutter in his will. When Polk owned Nutter is not clear, because in 1813 Ephriam Nutter had been manumitted by Charles Nutter for the price of \$350. Ephriam had been described as thirty-six years old and able to support himself. In any case, Ephriam purchased in 1821 ten acres of land called "Waggaman's Purchase" from the same Levin Bailey who sold James Brown his land. Previously, in 1819, Ann Bayly had sold to Ephriam Nutter for \$200 a forty year-old woman slave named Esther and Esther's ten month-old child Elizabeth. Immediately upon his purchase of the woman and her daughter Ephriam freed them both. They were his wife and daughter. In Ephriam Nutter's 1848 will, in which he named Polk to be his executor, he left the land to his wife Esther, but two of his four children were slaves. A son still belonged to Mr. Polk and a daughter was the slave of Isaac Covington; two other daughters were married to free blacks.

In W.T.G Polk's will, he left "old Ephriam Nutter, my former slave, if he survives me, in addition to his share of crops growing at the time of my death, one of the colts he raised on the farm, one cow and yoke of oxen". Nutter was apparently still share-cropping for Polk as well as farming his own land. Even though Polk had freed Ephriam Nutter, and apparently held some affection (or gratitude) for him did not mean that the slave master freed the son of his friend.¹¹⁰

Ephriam Nutter was not the only free black man who purchased the freedom of his wife or children. Cato Brown bought from William W. Polk a negro woman Pegg in 1813 for the price of \$150, and the next year a manumission was recorded in which Brown "for divers good causes and considerations" freed his "Wife Pegg, purchased from Wm. Polk", with Pegg, who was 44 years old, paying her own price for freedom, \$1. In 1815 Arthur Lankford purchased his wife Nanny from John Dennis for the price of \$80. Lankford was permitted to pay part of the price to John Dennis at the time of the transaction, and promised to pay the remainder when he could save the money. In the meantime, John Dennis died, and his executors freed Nanny outright. Casa Murrah's dilemma involved the terms of his former master's will:

At the sale of the estate of my old master James Polk, I purchased my infant son Samuel Polk, who according to my master's will was to serve until he was 25. I wish him to be free sooner, and release him at age 23 - 2 years from now.

Whether this action of circumventing the will of a former master was legal or not, Casa Murrah was not brought into court for the manumission.¹¹¹

Levin Boggs, a free black man who appeared in the Somerset County deed books in 1820, followed the custom of many white slave owners and freed his own children at various intervals. He apparently owned his entire family, because he freed his wife Hetty and his daughters Jane and Leah on the day the deed was recorded, and his other children on dates until 1840. His other daughters were to be freed at the age of sixteen, and his sons at twenty-one. Although Levin Boggs had a large family of eight children, he had been freed by William Boggs only fifteen years earlier.¹¹²

Adam Waters' 1808 will bequeathed the 100 acres of land he had bought from Samuel Duer to his sons Stephen and Adam, to be equally divided between the two. But to his wife Hannah, Waters left all his personal property and a commodity apparently within his power to give, her freedom. He also assured that all of Hannah's children and grandchildren were to be free after his death. Adam Waters had appeared in the 1798-1803 tax lists, and his son Adam was a 45 year-old man at the time of the 1832 census of free blacks in Somerset County, so the family remained in the ranks of free black citizens of the county. The incidence of black men actually owning their family members, but not freeing them immediately after their purchase, is surprisingly frequent. What positive effect did owning family members have over freeing them? Was it a matter of power or control? Or did the desire to fit into the role model of the successful white majority outstrip all other priorities?¹¹³

In some cases free blacks made financial arrangements to buy back the indentures of family members or friends. In 1813 a free

black man named Levin Bluett entered into the indenture made between William Williams and Roderick Hearlan, a free black man. Hearlan was bound to Williams for twenty years, with Williams agreeing to the usual terms for indenture: food, clothing, lodging, and washing. But the uncommon element was that Williams agreed that if Levin Bluett could at any time during the term of indenture pay Williams \$200, Hearlan would be freed from the bond immediately. No indication was given in the official document as to the relationship between Bluett and Hearlan, but one would suspect some sort of kinship ties existed between the two men.¹¹⁴

A interesting incident was illustrated in the transaction between Levi Ward, another free black man, and Amelia Sterling. In June of 1821 Ward purchased "the negro Amelia" and her child from Aaron Sterling for \$350, and immediately manumitted both Amelia and her son Calvin Lawrenson. But in an unusual move, in October of the same year Amelia Sterling entered into an indenture with Levi Ward. Describing herself as "a free black woman", Amelia bound herself to work for Ward until she paid back the expenses he had incurred by buying her. But the dignity of the act may be slightly tarnished by the fact that Amelia agreed to pay off \$70, a fraction of the purchase price. Still, this action of paying back the price of freedom was rare in the Somerset County deed books. Perhaps Amelia Sterling had made the arrangements with Ward as a precondition of her release from slavery.¹¹⁵

Another free black man who had accumulated more than ten acres of land in the early part of the nineteenth century was Harry

Johnson. In 1823 he owned thirty-five acres of land, horses, cattle, hogs, sheep and other personal property, but by investigating his will written in 1833, it can be deduced that Johnson was worried about the future held for his children and grandchildren. Johnson bequeathed all his personal property to his wife Charity, made provisions that his land be sold and left nothing to his children or their children. Instead he listed by name his three children and five grandchildren and bequeathed all of them to the

board of Managers of the Maryland Colonization Society appointed by the Governor to manage the State fund for the purpose of transporting people of Color to Liberia charged to be transported to Liberia the first opportunity after my decease.¹¹⁶

The drive for the colonization of American free blacks to Africa has been seen as both a benevolent and racist strategy by whites, but the interest by blacks to establish an African homeland actually predated the American Colonization Society's establishment by white founders. Captain Paul Cuffee, a half-black, half-Indian Quaker shipowner from New Bedford, Massachusetts, took thirty-eight black American volunteers to settle in Sierra Leone in 1815, but his influence with black religious leaders was more significant than his efforts at colonizing a new land. Absalom Jones, who had founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and other influential black leaders were convinced of the necessity of finding a new homeland for young free blacks, and feared that the American Revolution's rhetoric would never truly be accepted by the white majority when applied to black people. Because of the

inequities lived every day by many free blacks, moving to an African free homeland seemed a logical solution to American racism. For the year 1832 the state of Maryland established a fund of \$20,000.00 to remove all free blacks who were willing to resettle in Africa, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland had active Colonization societies. Newspapers carried notices of their meetings, resolutions and plans. In September of 1832 Joseph Whittington announced to "friends of African Colonization that he will sail for Liberia sometime between now and 1 Nov"; and later in the same year a group of subscribers adopted a resolution to ". . . furnish tools and implements to enable emigrants to prosecute the agricultural or merchant pursuits in Africa." 117.

The general Negro act of 1715 sanctioned the use of passes for slaves who were on errands for their masters, and as a consequence, many free blacks secured papers from the courts or their manumitters which identified them as free persons. But the counterfeiting of such passes prompted the state assembly to pass an act which made the issuance of a freedom paper the domain of the county court, the register of wills or a local magistrate. The 1805 law required free blacks who intended to travel within the county or within and outside the state to carry a certificate of freedom which was legal proof that they were not slaves. To ensure that freedom papers would be difficult to sell or trade, careful descriptions of the certificate owners were made. When the free black person came into the court house to claim his or her freedom, height, age, color of complexion, specific facial or other

distinguishing features and any scars were carefully noted on the certificate. Proof of freedom was also required. A manumission paper or search of court records to verify the manumission was expected of freed slaves. Those born of a free mother were required to either have a witness who could testify to the petitioner's freedom, or prove to the clerk that he or she had always "acted as a free person", and that no one had ever claimed that he or she was a slave. People who had been free for years, people who had been born free and people whose families had been free for over a century all were required to obtain freedom certificates or risk jail and sale into slavery.¹¹⁸

In 1821 Charity Birkhead was given her freedom certificate. Her former owner William Birkhead testified that Charity had been left to him by his mother for a term of years and that term was over. Charity was described as 5' 2" tall, dark brown of complexion, and twenty-nine years of age. She had a "large scar on the upper joint of the little finger of her left hand, which she says was caused by the cut of a broad axe". In the 1832 census of free blacks she was listed as forty years of age and the wife of Charles Birkhead who was sixty-three years old. Their children were Levin (17), Sandy (16), Henry (10), Noah (8), and Moses (7). In the 1840 census there were nine free blacks in the Birkhead family, except that the census-taker spelled their name as Brickhead. Interestingly, Charity's owner was named Birkhead, as was her husband. Was there a relationship between Charles and

Charity, perhaps on the Birkhead family farm, before their marriage? Was Charles also a Birkhead slave?¹¹⁹

The clerks who recorded the freedom certificates were very careful to record name, height, appearance and descriptive scars and features of freedmen, so it seems odd that so many certificates were issued to free blacks showing only a first name. Nearly one-third of the certificates indicate no family name of the recipient. Was it carelessness on the part of the clerk, or were a large number of free blacks known by first name only, as they had been in slavery? It seems likely that, James, who was described as free because he was "born of a white woman, bright mulatto in complexion, has long bushy hair" would possess a surname if his mother had been a white woman. Many former slaves who had been free for over twenty years by 1832 were listed by given-name only. Even Esther, age fifty-five, who had been freed by George Gale in 1810, did not use a surname in 1832, when she was issued her freedom papers, nor did her son John who was twenty-one years of age. More questions than answers surface concerning the practice. The 1832 census of free blacks in the county cited first and last names of all but a handful of the 2,238 "free persons of color". Why did the clerks issuing freedom certificates during precisely the same time frame refer to such large numbers of free blacks as "Negro Susan" or "Negro Bob"? Perhaps it was the white official's way of demeaning the black freedman and placing him in the same category as slaves who possessed no family names.¹²⁰

Some descriptions given on the certificates of freedom carried by free blacks were so detailed that a portrait of the person could be painted using the words. A man with the appropriate name of Freeborn Allen was described in detail by the clerk:

Age 25, was born free. 5'8" tall, of a dark brown complexion, of a healthy appearance and pleasant countenance. Scar on the left cheek, to the corner of his mouth from his eye caused by a burn as an infant. Also a scar on the big left toe caused by an axe. Also a scar on the upper lip, having been split and sewn up.¹²¹

Isaac Hayward's description included a scar rarely found on persons acquiring a freedom certificate, one from a vaccination. His other identifying features included more common scars from burns and a scar left by a broken leg. Some people displayed marks from dog bites, having been thrown by a horse, smallpox, scalds, cuts by knives, oyster shells and hoes, many such accidents having happened as children.¹²²

Not many of the Santo Domingo residents went into the county seat of Princess Anne to obtain freedom certificates. It was a long way into town, over twenty miles, and even today takes about forty-five minutes via major roads. Perhaps their community was so self-sufficient that they had little need to wander outside its confines, hence felt no need for a certificate of freedom. Exceptions would have been business people who of necessity travelled within the county, or those who worked in the homes of white employers. James Brown, who was a successful businessman, nevertheless did not bother to obtain a freedom certificate until 1832. Perhaps the social climate in the 1830's required that even well-known free blacks secure their freedom with official papers.

James Brown was described as forty years old, 5' 6 1/4" tall and of chestnut complexion with small scars on his forehead and forefinger of his left hand. His daughter Harriet, who was his oldest child, also obtained her certificate at the age of nineteen in 1836. She was described as 5' 5" tall and born of a free colored woman. Her "high cheek bones, sharp chin and downcast look" may have indicated an attractive young woman who was not happy about the process of obtaining a paper to prove her freedom.¹²³

More women than men came to procure freedom certificates. Perhaps it was necessary for the women to do work outside their community as day laborers, domestics, seamstresses, cooks or laundresses for white families. One free black woman who may have resented being forced to carry freedom papers was sixty year-old Esther Johnson. When she registered in 1832 she was described as a Somerset County native, and the daughter of a free colored woman and standing 5' 1/2" tall. A dark copper color, Esther had lost the first joint of the middle finger on the right hand and had a scar under her chin. She was further described as "very pirt in her talk", perhaps indicating her distaste for the requirement.¹²⁴

It is difficult to ascertain the occupations of many of the residents of Santo Domingo by looking at the official records of Somerset County. Occasionally a reference was made to the trade or occupation of a free black person, but more often only inferences have to be made. The case of Ephriam Conway is an obvious one, because his occupation was mentioned in his manumission. His owner Elias Robertson freed Conway "for divers good causes and

considerations" plus \$100, and mentioned that Conway could certainly earn his own livelihood because he was a shipwright. Many free blacks worked as watermen or on board some sort of seagoing vessel, and some evidence of occupation may be found on freedom certificate descriptions. It was noted on Levin Parks' certificate that his left big toenail was deformed because it had been "hacked off on board of a vessel"; and Robert Wallace's third finger on his right hand had been badly cut by an oyster shell. James Selby was to be given a set of shoemakers tools when he was released from slavery, and we have already seen free blacks employed as doctors, farmers, seamstresses, and manufacturers.¹²⁵

What was being manufactured and sold within the confines of Santo Domingo is impossible to determine, but there were a number of people in the community engaged in manufacturing and commerce. In the 1820 census, Santo Domingo was counted in the first election district of Somerset County, which included the communities west of Salisbury town. There were 6,564 people living in that district, which included 2,687 white persons, 2,224 slaves and 655 free black persons. Nearly ten percent of the entire population of that district was free black and living in Santo Domingo. Twenty-five residents of the free black community were engaged in some sort of commerce and fifteen in manufacturing, compared to a total of 264 in commerce and 228 in manufacturing in the whole district. Therefore ten percent of the commerce in the election district took place in Santo Domingo and 6.5 % of the manufacturing. There were several grist and saw mills south of the Nanticoke River, and it

can be assumed that some of the free black residents worked there. Others, such as Cutter Townsend, employed several people in his manufacturing business. Small manufacturing such as shoes was an obvious need, as was the work of blacksmiths. Other manufacturing may have included barrels, baskets, coffins, leather tanning, apparel, hats and gloves, candles, soap or sausage. General stores were needed to supply the needs of residents, and James Brown and his sons carried on that commerce for many years.¹²⁶

Particular mention must be made of James Brown and his contributions to the formation of the community of "Santo Domingo". The beginnings of James Brown's life remain shrouded in mystery, despite the folklore surrounding him. Some stories related that he came to the Sharptown area of Somerset County from Jamaica in the early 1700's, a clearly impossible date since he died in 1858. Other sources state that he was a shipwright and married his wife Elizabeth from neighboring Dorchester County. There certainly was a James Brown, a shipwright, who, along with his wife Sarah, sold land in 1768, but there was no indication that these people were free blacks; probably this particular James Brown has been confused with the Santo Domingo settler, who was not born until 1792. The only certain facts known about Brown were ascertained from the information entered on his freedom certificate, issued in 1832. The certificate stated that he was forty years of age at the time and was the son of a "free woman of color", and a native of Somerset County. Therefore, it is certain that he was born in 1792

in the county and that his mother was also a free black citizen; his father is unknown.

Also in 1832, each county was commissioned to take a census of all the free blacks, for the purpose of determining which of them were interested in migrating to Liberia. In that census, in which the census-taker obviously began in Santo Domingo, James Brown's was the fifth family polled. There were separate lists for males and females, and James and his sons Leonard and Byard were enumerated on the first page of the "Male Coloured people of Somerset County". His wife Betsy and daughters Harriet, Ardilla, Eliza Ann, and Emmaline were listed on the first page of "Females of Somerset County, Coloured".¹²⁷

James Brown purchased five acres of "Taylor's Addition" in 1820, and other parcels of land (purchased from James Bradley, Washington Melson and Betsy Dutton, a free black woman) were later added to his acreage. Not enumerated, however, in the land transaction files was Brown's acquisition of the seventy-five acre piece of property called "Baker's Folly". It is evident that he owned "Baker's Folly" because he deeded part of it, sixty-seven acres, to his eldest son Byard, and the remaining eight acres of the tract to the "Little Zion" Methodist Church, which his family was instrumental in building. The ownership of "Baker's Folly" may be one of the few leads in tracing James Brown's unknown ancestry.

In 1755 a man named George Brown bought the seventy-five acre tract of "Baker's Folly" from Thomas Huffington. The land was situated on the east side of the Nanticoke River, in the area that

was to become Santo Domingo. The Huffingtons were owners of large tracts of land in the Sharptown area, along with the Marine, Bradley and Bennett families. George Brown appeared in the Somerset county tax lists on that land in 1756 and 1757 in Nanticoke Hundred. In 1762 George Brown deeded "Baker's Folly" to William Marine, and thereafter the piece of land changed hands several times. At the end of the eighteenth century "Baker's Folly" became the property of Thomas Bradley, a member of one of the families in the Sharptown area which sold acreage to free blacks. Perhaps George Brown, the owner of "Baker's Folly" in the mid-1750's was a relative of James Brown, maybe his grandfather, and Thomas Bradley was persuaded to sell the land back into the Brown family. However the land came into the hands of James Brown, he insured that it stayed in his family by deeding it to his eldest son Byard in the mid-nineteenth century; Byard in turn deeded parts of the various pieces of property to his sisters and brothers.¹²⁸

Several white families in the Sharptown area were instrumental in selling land to free blacks in the same area, which land later comprised the community of Santo Domingo. The Badley (also called Bradley) family owned land in southern Sussex County, Delaware, and in the Nanticoke Hundred area of Somerset County, which areas are within yards of each. Various family members sold land to several free blacks, including "Tower Hill" to James Brown, and part of "Badley's Lott" to Stephen Dutton. The Bailey family sold land to James Brown, and at the corner of the land he bought, Betsy Dutton

purchased her five acres from the Baileys also. Members of the Bailey family sold land to Ephriam Nutter, as well as selling him his wife and child. Washington Melson sold forty-seven acres of "Robertson's Swamp" to James Brown, and he had apparently known the family for years, because it was he who went with James Brown's daughter Harriet into Princess Anne to apply for her freedom certificate. He swore that he knew Harriet to be the daughter of Betsy Brown, "a free woman of color of the county, and that the said Betsy Brown has always acted as a free woman." Therefore the white families who themselves lived in the same area in which they were selling land to many free blacks, were obviously not threatened by the thought of a community of free blacks living in their "back yard". They encouraged their settlement, and acted as patrons when legal problems requiring white interference was required.¹²⁹

James Brown died in 1859, and his estate was probated in October of that year. His wife Elizabeth, or Betsy, had apparently died, because his widow was named Lydia in the estate proceedings. She received her one-third portion, and his children received their portions. His sons Leonard and Byard's share was \$36.60 apiece. His eldest daughter Harriet had apparently died at a fairly early age, because she was not mentioned in the settlement. His daughter Ardilla had married a man named Moore, and was probably already a widow by 1859. Eliza Ann was the wife of James Game, to whom James Brown had sold ten acres of land in the middle of the nineteenth century. Emmaline had married Washington Hopkins, and Mary, the

youngest daughter who was born after the 1832 free black census, married John Moluck. The children all lived on the land they had been given by their father and continued to be active in the community of Santo Domingo and the Zion Methodist Church. James and Betsy, along with their daughter Harriet were buried in a wooded lot near the church, and the other children were buried in Zion's cemetery. Leonard's grave is surrounded by an iron fence, and he lies alongside his wife Mary and daughter Margareta. His second wife Mariah's grave is also surrounded by the same sort of fence. The names Brown, Byard, Ardilla, and Elizabeth abound in the little barren graveyard.¹³⁰

The phenomenon of a free black world which stood side by side with slavery and a majority white society was a fascinating and complex world indeed. Maintaining independence in a predominantly rural culture required careful management of assets, especially by free blacks in an unstable economic period. While marginal white farmers could fall into bankruptcy, unsuccessful free blacks risked falling into slavery. To help ensure success and to find strength in like peoples, a large group of free blacks organized their own segregated community as early as 1820. The original property owners in Santo Domingo all purchased their land; the land was not given to them by former owners or by well-meaning abolitionists. The settlers could be proud that their community was independently established.

Some slaves were able to work apart from the supervision of their masters to obtain wages for their work, and by saving their

money could hope to purchase their own freedom. Once freed, most black workers still depended upon the jobs obtained in white households for their livelihood. Did these freedmen also purchase the freedom of other family members? The deeds of manumission are not specific in many cases about who paid the master the money for slaves' freedom, and it is known that free family members paid the price for others in the family still enslaved. Some of the freedmen were successful in purchasing their own land with the money they earned and striking out toward independence. Farming made up the bulk of occupations of free blacks in antebellum society, but some former slaves had been trained as blacksmiths, shoemakers, and even doctors. Many women still did the domestic work for white families by acting as nannies, cooks, seamstresses, washerwomen, weavers and housemaids. The economic possibilities were limited for free blacks, but somehow even the shrinking possibilities did not stop the free black community from attempting its goal of independence and success in a white world. The complexities of a many-tiered society are difficult to unravel, and as generations of searchers look at the same records again and again, new questions are asked, new slants are given to old evidence, and new answers are sought to old questions. History remains a vibrant study of people who live in the tax records, wills, deeds and registers; and those people come alive in the minds of scholars who research and students who read of their survival.

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