

THE DESPOT'S HEEL

Race, Politics, and Industry in Late Antebellum Maryland

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Dr. Etan Bourkoff
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May 31, 2000

Dear Dr. Bourkoff:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to you for the generous award you bestowed upon me on behalf of Mr. And Mrs. Edwin Kanner. As the first recipient of the Kanner Award for an outstanding thesis covering a business policy issue, and as an aspiring historian, I am deeply moved to know that people like the Kanners would take the time to give so generously to students like me and to the school.

As you know, *The Despot's Heel: Race, Politics, and Industry in late Antebellum Maryland* is the product of over two years of research. It touches on the issue of slavery's profitability, both agricultural and industrial. I hope the Kanners have a chance to read it.

It is my earnest desire to remain worthy of the honor that has been bestowed upon me, and one of my fondest wishes is to someday be capable of making such academic experiences possible, as the Kanners have done, for future Baruch College students. Please thank them on my behalf for their generosity.

Sincerely,

David Hamilton Golland

The despot's heel is at thy shore,
Maryland!
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland!
Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore
And be the battle queen of yore,
Maryland! My Maryland!¹

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PREFACE

In April, 1998, I attended a lecture on Maryland hosted by the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. It was part of a Spring lecture series on the border states and their impact on secession and the Civil War. Perhaps I chose the lecture on Maryland consciously; perhaps it was the only one in the series which fit into my busy schedule (Richmond is, after all, a five- to six-hour drive from New York). Whatever the reason, that night I was given a view of the Civil War from a unique perspective, and I have been interested in antebellum and Civil War Maryland ever since.

This work is the finished product of two years of research. At first, my research concerned itself with the decline of the tobacco-raising economy in the antebellum Chesapeake, and with it the decline of the slave power in Maryland, and how that contributed to the secession question in that state. I read Arthur Pierce Middleton's Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era, Vertrees Wyckoff's Tobacco Regulations in Colonial Maryland, and Gloria Main's Tobacco Colony. I learned how tobacco was planted, grown, replanted, and harvested. I learned the ins and outs of the colonial transatlantic trade. I learned the value of a good hogshead of product and the importance of packing only leaves, not stems. I became a smoker (I am currently trying to quit).

I then looked at late antebellum Maryland politics in an attempt to connect the two topics. I read Gerald Henig's biography of U.S. Representative from Baltimore Henry Winter Davis. I read The Narrative of William Wilkins Glenn, a Maryland journalist. I read William C. Wright's The Secession Movement in the Middle Atlantic States and Harold Manakee's Maryland in the Civil War. To see how secession conventions worked, I read Secession Debated: Georgia's Showdown in 1860, a collection of secessionist and anti-secessionist speeches made during the

Georgia secession convention. As this research progressed, however, I began to realise that not only was the decline of tobacco production only one of many issues facing late antebellum Marylanders, but also that there were much more important (and more interesting) issues that hadn't been dealt with by historians nearly as much.

I began to look at how slavery might play a role in this topic. I set out to discover if slavery was different in Maryland than in the other states of the South. I read Barbara Jeanne Fields' Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground and discovered that, at least by the late antebellum era, slavery was indeed different there. To get an overall comparison of the regions wherein slavery existed during the antebellum era I read Robert Starobin's Industrial Slavery in the Old South and Richard Wade's Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860, as well as Claudia Dale Goldin's book on the same subject. I discovered that Maryland, bordering on the north as it did, was in the early throes of industrialization at this time. In fact, Baltimore was emerging as the strongest contender to Atlantic-coast trade and industry dominance New York City had ever faced. But what else I discovered was that, unlike the North, which had been emancipating its slaves gradually for nearly eighty years, Maryland was instead integrating them into the new economic system.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My general study on late antebellum slavery and politics consisted of such works as Ira Berlin's Many Thousands Gone, Penelope Campbell's Maryland in Africa, Eric Foner's Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, Peter Kolchin's American Slavery, 1619-1877, James Oakes' The Master Race, and Betty Wood's The Origins of American Slavery. This work is also due in no small part to the constant and unfailing guidance of my faculty mentors and advisors, Professors Carol Berkin, Catherine Clinton, and Myrna Chase. Professor Wendell Pritchett, Graduate Teaching Fellows Angelo Angelis and Steven Levine, and Adjunct Lecturers Cindy Lobel and Carl Skutsch contributed thoughtful insights and much-needed support and encouragement and often put me on the right track to uncovering useful pieces of evidence. I am also grateful to the staff and members of the American Antiquarian Society, the Maryland Historical Society, and the New York Public Library periodicals division.

INTRODUCTION

Slavery in Maryland, as a labor system, was attempting to make the transition from agriculture to industry and was doing so to a very profitable degree. This combination of its “southern” quality--slavery--with its “northern” quality--industry--made Maryland a border state in every sense, and helped shape the highly-contentious years of 1861 to 1865, during which the state had to resolve its most difficult and divisive issues. This thesis explores those issues and attempts to answer the political and socioeconomic questions of the day: first, was slavery viable in an increasingly-industrializing Maryland? Second, how did blacks, both free and slave, contribute to late antebellum Maryland society and economy? and third, what was the social, political, and economic position of Maryland just prior to and during the Civil War?

The first chapter of this thesis offers an overview of the state of Maryland: geography, population, history. Maryland was founded by the First Lord Baltimore, Cecil Calvert, out of a tract of land originally part of the Virginia colony, in the mid-seventeenth century. It lies between Virginia and Pennsylvania, north of the Potomac river and south of the Mason/Dixon line. Maryland dominates the northern two-thirds of the Chesapeake bay and stretches west from there, growing thinner the further it goes, until it ends in Appalachia. Slavery developed in Maryland along similar lines to Virginia, growing in importance with the expansion of the tobacco crop. By the mid-eighteenth century, the tobacco economy was in decline and the Chesapeake region, including tidewater Maryland, experienced drastic economic ups and downs, booms and busts. The American Revolutionary era brought a major, although temporary, displacement of the institution of slavery, and the founding of the city of Baltimore. Recovery from that tumultuous period brought a strengthening of the institution of slavery accompanied with a continued decline of the tobacco economy.

Antebellum Baltimore, the subject of the second chapter, was a city emerging. Founded in 1798, this city had risen from an accumulation of shacks along the Fells Point waterfront district to an urban metropolis enriched by Chesapeake/Atlantic trade as well as hinterland trade from the Susquehanna river and overland via locomotive from the Ohio river. Baltimore was developing its own industries and vied with New York for supremacy in both industry and trade. Each of these Queen cities had its own hinterland trade headquarters dependent to a degree on the larger port: for New York it was Chicago; for Baltimore it was St. Louis. This affluence was not dependent on slavery, but slavery was very much a fact of life in antebellum Baltimore. The city's industry used slaves in a variety of trades, some owned by companies outright and others hired. Slaves were also present in the shipping areas of the city's economy. Free Blacks played an important and growing role in Baltimore's emerging status as well.

The third chapter focuses on one of the peculiar aspects of the peculiar institution: slave hiring-out practices. In the late antebellum era Chesapeake, many slave owners found it more profitable to lease their slaves to farms or industrial concerns or allow them to find wage-paying jobs than to put them to work on their own farm or in their own factory. Many slaveowners did not own farms or factories, and yet inherited or purchased slave capital. Slave capital, of course, is worth only its resale value if the slaves are not put to work; the hiring-out system solved this problem. In the agricultural sector, usually in southern Maryland and on the eastern shore of the bay, slaves were often hired away for year-long contracts; in the industrial sector and in urban areas, slaves were hired (or sought jobs themselves) in the same manner as free wage laborers. Of course the difference here was that their wages were collected by or payable to their owners, making their situation much worse than that of most free wage laborers.

Industrial slavery in Maryland is the subject of the fourth chapter. Here we see the variety

of trades in which intrepid entrepreneurs put their slaves, and those of others, to work. The two divergent historiographical schools on this subject are the Wade/Genovese school, which states that industrial slavery was unprofitable by nature and did not fit into the greater paradigm of slavery as a system of racial paternalism, and Robert Starobin, who argues that industrial slavery was not only profitable but preferable (from a business, not a moral, standpoint, of course). Whereas Wade, the earlier historian, approaches the topic of industrial slavery as part of his greater work on slavery in urban areas, Starobin looks solely at industrial slavery, some of which was found in cities and some in smaller town in the countryside. The earlier work put forward the theory that slavery was unprofitable because the cost of a slave's initial purchase price and upkeep outweighed the value of a slave's labor while free workers could be had for the lowest market price. Starobin gives innumerable examples of how purchase price was often not a factor, as many slaves were rented or inherited; upkeep, also, was low when compared to the wages of free laborers, as free workers were already organizing prototype labor unions and demanding higher wages. This paper weighs both schools carefully, but ultimately supports Starobin.

Antebellum Maryland's free blacks are the subject of the fifth chapter, and are of great importance to any work focusing on late antebellum Maryland. This is a population which grew by leaps and bounds during the eight decades between independence and sectional crisis, and which presented white supremacists with several problems. The wave of nineteenth-century manumissions across the state might have heralded the eventual end of the institution of slavery there. Yet free blacks were constantly represented by the press as financially and morally bankrupt. One solution for white supremacists was found in the Maryland Colonization Society, which worked independently of the American Colonization Society to send Maryland's free blacks to the west African colony of Maryland, just south along the coast from Liberia. Free

blacks in Maryland had fewer rights than whites, to be sure, and enjoyed a standard of living in many cases worse than that found in slavery, yet many used their freedom to take additional steps towards equality and social participation, forming benevolent societies, burial insurance groups, and schools for their children.

The final two chapters, “Maryland on the eve of the Civil War” and “Maryland in the Civil War,” take a turn toward the political and military side of history while demonstrating how the peculiar institution played a role in Maryland during both the secession crisis and the Civil War. The years in which Marylanders debated slavery and freedom as their labor system and agriculture and industry as their economic system culminated in the secession crisis of 1860-61 and the American Civil War of 1861-65. Slavery, economics, and racism colored Maryland’s returns in the presidential election of 1860, which indicated a state still very much divided over those issues. The rash of secessions in the rest of the South forced Maryland to face the question of secession and a war-ravaged state or loyalty to a union in which Marylanders, as the sometime proponents of slavery, would be in the minority. During the Civil War, however, the exigencies through which the state and its institutions passed so changed the nature of Maryland slavery and economics that by 1863 general, immediate, and uncompensated emancipation became a reality.

ONE: BASIC FACTS ABOUT MARYLAND

Maryland was founded by Cecil Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore, on June 20, 1632. A royal charter, including absolute powers, was granted to Calvert for lands in Virginia north of the Potomac.² As rent to the King, Calvert had merely to send his Majesty “two Indian arrowheads...each year at Easter week.”³ Baltimore was a Catholic, and a land grant the size of Maryland to a Catholic carried strong political repercussions at home in Anglican England. For this and other reasons the King was deposed and beheaded after a civil war some ten years later. The new Puritan government left Maryland alone, however, for by then the tobacco shipments were so numerous as to render revocation of the charter economically impracticable.⁴

The climate in Maryland can be particularly harsh without modern conveniences. The hot, humid summers and comparatively mild winters kept the average colonial-era life span very low. Most early colonists in the Chesapeake region were men. They came over as indentured servants, earning their own land if they were lucky enough to survive. But the scarcity of women meant that many would never marry. Those who did married late, and often left a widow and orphans. For financial reasons more than anything else, these widows would promptly remarry. Most children grew up orphaned by at least one parent, some in households where they were unrelated to both of their “parents.”

The unique family structure of the Chesapeake prompted the enactment of unique family laws. As the father’s presence in the family was fleeting, it was orphans who needed the most legal protection, to ensure that they received their inheritances after the custodianship of their mother or step-parent. Orphans’ courts were established to protect these children from scheming widows and widowers.

No decisive war or organized coexistence with the native population ever occurred in

Maryland. Individual Indians were murdered by landowners clearing forests to make way for tobacco farms; sometimes murders were committed by the Indians. Thanks also to smallpox and rum, “Within a half century Indians had ceased to be a factor in the Tidewater.”⁵

The history of slavery in colonial Maryland begins, as does its political history and economic history, in Virginia. Prior to the granting of a royal charter to Cecil Calvert, the land later known as Maryland was a part of the Virginia Colony. While Maryland seems to have developed along similar lines to Virginia in the seventeenth century, one difference becomes clear: Maryland had a distinct awareness of the legal status of slaves as early as 1658 (it took the Virginians until 1705). Perhaps this can be attributed to Calvert’s authority: legal status is more easily defined in an autocracy than in a democracy, where debates could continue for years. Still, the numbers of West African slaves remained small, even as late as 1670. Of 151 households polled, only 15 listed slaves, while “these same 151 households had 260 white indentured servants.”⁶

Not so for lack of trying. Charles Calvert (Cecil’s son) seems to have been very much in favor of replacing the indentures with slave labor early on. In 1663 he wrote his father of a fruitless search for at least a hundred Marylanders who could guarantee that a Dutch shipload could sell its cargo: “I find wee are nott men of estates good enough to undertake such a businesse, but could wish wee were for wee are naturally inclined to love neigros if our purses would endure it.”⁷

West African slavery was not practicable in Maryland during the seventeenth century for a variety of reasons. While tobacco was a labor intensive crop (to say the least), the supply of whites from England as indentured servants was more than enough to meet labor demands. England was in economic and political turmoil: peasants were being displaced by acts of

enclosure; Anglicans, Catholics and Puritans were persecuting each other with successive revolutionary and restoration governments. These factors made the purchase of indentures an inexpensive affair, which was fortunate, for health and nutrition were so poor in the Chesapeake that many indentures would not live to see freedom. Conversely, the Dutch monopoly of the trans-Atlantic slave trade made the purchase of West Africans a very expensive venture. It was assumed that West Africans would survive only as long as white indentures.

Toward the end of the century, however, changes in all these factors virtually overdetermined a switch from indentured labor to chattel slavery. The return of economic and political stability to England began to dry up the supply of indentured servants in the Chesapeake. Improved health and nutrition meant that more and more indentures were graduating into land ownership, posing the problem, for the pre-existing planters, of competition (while there was still good land available) and rebellion (when there was not).⁸ With life spans in the Chesapeake growing longer, laborers with longer contracts (i.e. for life) became more desirable; they became cheaper, too, when the British broke the Dutch monopoly of the slave trade.⁹ British ships began arriving with West African slaves and the Marylanders bought them.

Slavery in Maryland and the rest of the Chesapeake was a particularly brutal affair. Slaves worked from sunup to sundown in small gangs of four to ten persons, usually of the same sex, cut off from their friends and family elsewhere in the plantation. There was land to be cleared of timber; tobacco weeds to be planted and replanted and planted again; leaves and stalks to be cut, dried, and packed in hogsheads. There was scarce time for the slaves to build communities or establish a subculture.

By the late colonial period Maryland was unique, for a variety of reasons, among the British provinces in North America. One of the most important ways in which it was a unique

colony was the fact that it was still governed autocratically. Unlike the great landlords of the New York manors, Frederick Calvert, the sixth and last Lord Baltimore, possessed a feudal title to the entirety of the province by royal fiat. As colonial Americans everywhere would begin to view the king of England as their oppressor in the years immediately preceding the Declaration of Independence, Marylanders would see the king as the only person with whom they could redress the transgressions of the proprietor. As a result, many Marylanders had difficulty choosing sides in the American Revolutionary War. Like the manor lords of upstate New York, the landed gentry of the Tidewater faced the very real possibility of an armed loyalist opposition in Maryland from members of the western “country” party, townspeople, and less wealthy farmers. Slaves could generally be assumed to take whichever side promised an easier route to freedom, and when they saw the chance to escape to a British outpost, they did. In addition, much of Maryland’s eastern shore, cut off from the gentry of Annapolis and Georgetown by the expanse of the Chesapeake bay, remained loyal to Great Britain for most of the revolutionary war.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton was the principal actor in the formulation of an effective compromise. As a delegate to the Maryland Constitutional Convention of September to November, 1776, he proposed a two-house legislature. Voters could elect county sheriffs, delegates to the assembly, and an electoral college for the election of state senators. The relationship between the two houses was vague, but both houses together elected the governor. Extreme property qualifications effectively barred all but the wealthiest men from high office. As undemocratic as it sounds, its early adoption, along with the forced abdication and forfeiture of lands owned by Calvert, helped spare Maryland the major social upheavals felt in places like upstate New York.

But Maryland did not quite share the peaceful fate of its neighbor, Virginia. Despite the strength and intelligence of Carroll and his cronies, the Maryland planter class never achieved the level of social control which planters like George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison and their families had enjoyed for decades. For one, they had been unable to stem the tide of Methodism, which held great appeal for slaves and poor whites, especially along the eastern shore. Indeed, slaves and poor whites showed signs of uniting, and for much of the war armed bands of Tories roamed freely through the Maryland countryside, although pitched battles between Redcoats and Continentals never actually occurred in Maryland.

The idea of a constitutional convention originated in Maryland. After a conference at General Washington's estate in Mount Vernon, Virginia, dealing with the peculiarities of cross-Potomac trade, a call was made for delegates from the several states to meet at the Maryland state capital of Annapolis in 1786 to discuss the difficulties of disunion posed by the Articles of Confederation. There, a New York delegate named Alexander Hamilton called for a constitutional convention to take place in Philadelphia.

Maryland was represented at the Philadelphia convention by James McHenry, Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, and Daniel Carroll. Unlike New Jersey and Virginia, the state put forth no memorable constitutional plan. Unlike New York, Maryland had no flamboyant Alexander Hamilton to argue for controversial stipulations for the document. But Maryland set an example with its own state constitution: two legislative houses, an electoral college, and high property qualifications. The state of Maryland became the seventh state to ratify the United States Constitution on April 28, 1788.

The city of Baltimore was founded in 1798, and soon came to dominate trade in the upper

Chesapeake. Relying first on trade between Pennsylvania's Susquehanna river and the lower bay, the city grew in leaps and bounds and slowly began to develop its own industry and manufacturing by the 1820s and 1830s. With the invention of the railroad, Baltimore was linked to the west, and became an important link in the trade route from the Ohio river.

The institution of slavery recovered in Maryland after the Revolutionary period, and expanded into new areas of the economy as Maryland began to diversify its economic base. As elsewhere in the slave-holding South, Maryland put its slaves to work in urban settings. Slightly more than half of the slaves in urban areas in the antebellum South worked in a domestic setting, and the vast majority of these were women.¹⁰ These slaves did the cooking, cleaning, and miscellaneous household chores for their masters, usually residing in small dwellings in the rear areas of their master's lot.¹¹ Because domestic slaves represented no threat to white male labor, slave women often had an easier time adjusting to urban life and were rarely the victims of labor-related violence. Other slaves, mostly male, held skilled labor positions and were either hired out by their owners for a specific period of time or hired out their own time. Some skilled city slaves lived on their owners' lots, while many others found lodging for themselves, often near their work and often also in enclaves peopled almost exclusively by free blacks.¹² These skilled slaves worked as coachmen, stevedores, draymen, barbers, Hucksters, and bricklayers.¹³ It is understood that female and male slaves had very different lifestyles, whether in the city or on the farm, and endured very different experiences, often based on race. While female slaves will be mentioned from time to time, the remainder of this thesis concerns itself primarily with the varying experiences of male slaves, when discussing slavery in Maryland.

TWO: URBAN SLAVERY IN LATE ANTEBELLUM BALTIMORE

It is tempting to see slave life in the antebellum era as the uniform picture given us by such cinema extravaganzas as *Gone with the Wind* and televised melodramas as *North and South*. These depictions of plantation life offer an ideal many antebellum planters would prefer projected: servile, happy slaves who never worked too hard and were handsomely rewarded with good food and a modicum of affection from their white masters. Even when one looks at the reality of slave life, it is easy to see slavery as simply an agricultural enterprise, with slaves as a labor force. In this version, slaves are used almost exclusively in the fields of great plantations and hold positions requiring little or no skill. In fact, the cities of the antebellum South were filled with slaves as well as free blacks who worked in trades as varied as the southern cities themselves.

One of the most important ways in which city life differed from rural life for slaves was their proximity to a large community of free blacks. This community usually outnumbered slaves in the cities and provided the slaves with a constant reminder that their racial identity was not an automatic guarantee of slavery, despite the system's profoundly racial character. With their status somewhere between the slaves and the whites, these free blacks showed that blacks were capable of independent living, working, and thinking. True, free blacks often found themselves treated little better than slaves and they were often denied the equality under the law one would expect for free people. And yet their wages were their own, their time was their own, and they could move about, prior to curfew, as freely as they chose. Such freedom surely seemed enviable to any slave who worked side by side with free blacks in such trades as ship-caulking on Baltimore's Fells Point docks.¹⁴

Employers often favored slave and free black labor over white workers, for free blacks

had little ground to stand on when demanding higher pay and better working conditions, and slaves had none. In 1830, when Irish and Italian immigrant workers forced the end of the black labor monopoly in the Baltimore ship-caulking industry, employers were forced to hire white labor, and wages went up.¹⁵

It was not merely at work that slaves came into contact with free blacks but at home as well. In the streets outside their homes, slaves and free blacks would congregate, exchanging information and forging friendships and sexual partnerships. They frequented restaurants and taverns and in the process mingled with whites as well.¹⁶

This close proximity the urban slaves had to free blacks and whites caused consternation among the white community. Owners, of course, feared escape (especially in Baltimore, so close to the North), but generally avoided sending or selling their slaves out of the city. After all, skilled slaves could earn their owners more money in the city than on the farm. To the well-to-do and the middle class, the prospect of whites and blacks coming together as equals was appalling (black-white interactions of this type usually involved lower-class whites). In every antebellum southern city including Baltimore, therefore, various ordinances were passed during the antebellum period to regulate the lives of slaves. The city provided an environment wherein the status of slavery was relegated to a mere business arrangement between the slave and the owner. The owner, therefore, could not be expected to control the behavior of the slave outside working hours. The city government was expected to fill that role.¹⁷

One of the important aspects of the research of Ira Berlin is the division of slave owning societies into two categories: “slave societies” and “societies with slaves.” The fundamental difference is that in slave societies, slaves serve as the primary labor force and the economy is based on goods produced thanks to slavery. Societies with slaves do not depend on slavery for

their economic well-being. While the American South as a whole was a slave society during the antebellum period, Maryland, considered separately, was a society with slaves. This is because of Maryland's location between the free industrial society of the north and the slave south. Baltimore, in particular, was never a city which either relied primarily on slave labor (as did Charleston) or traded primarily in slave-produced products (as did Richmond). While Baltimore did trade in tobacco grown by slave hands on the eastern shore and in southern Maryland, Baltimore's economy depended largely on agricultural goods brought down from Pennsylvania's Susquehanna river and over land from the Ohio, and upon local industry. Slavery was of course legal in Baltimore and many slaves did in fact live and work there, especially on the docks, but Baltimore was never dependent on its slaves for labor.¹⁸ From 1820-1860, the population of slaves declined every year proportionally, and in some years, actually.¹⁹ As a result, Baltimore is an atypical southern city. However, slavery in Baltimore *is* typical in that, like slavery in other southern cities, it helped undermine the slavery system. The very fact that urban slaves who sought work on their own and lived apart from their owners were still slaves created fundamental cracks in a system predicated on the subordination and inferiority of blacks. Here were members of a supposedly lazy and intellectually feeble race succeeding in their own financial and residential maintenance. In many cases, these slaves also gained enough education to read, write, and do simple math.

THREE: HIRING-OUT PRACTICES IN THE ANTEBELLUM CHESAPEAKE

In 1835, when living in Baltimore with Hugh Auld, the brother of his master, Frederick Douglass was hired out to William Gardner, a Fells Point shipbuilder. The purpose of this was for Douglass to learn a trade, caulking, so as to make him profitable to “Master Hugh.” In the three years during which Douglass was hired out, he was, according to his narrative, ordered about “at the beck and call of about seventy-five men” all of whom he was “to regard as masters.”²⁰ At the end of each week, Douglass would have to report to Hugh Auld and hand over his wages.

Douglass noted that, each time, Auld would “look me in the face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, ‘Is this all?’”.²¹ On the rare occasions, however, when Douglass earned as much as six dollars in a week, Auld gave him a reward of six cents. As Douglass reports: “The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them.”²²

Aside from monetary concerns, working conditions were poor as well. Douglass describes in graphic detail a beating he received at the docks at the hands of the white workers. In 1838, Douglass obtained permission to hire himself out and live apart from Auld, with a considerable degree of freedom. He had to pay for his own room, board and caulking tools, and would have to pay Auld three dollars every week for the privilege.²³ Speaking of his post-escape employment in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Douglass makes the following comparison: “It was the first work, the reward of which was to be entirely my own. There was no Master Hugh standing ready, the moment I earned my money, to rob me of it...I was at work for myself and newly-married wife.”²⁴

There are, to be sure, other sides to the story. Hugh Auld’s writings, if he left any, would certainly approach the subject of Douglass’ being hired out and subsequent self-hiring from a

different point of view. And one must certainly question (even if Douglass' memory is unimpeachable) whether other hired-out slaves had similar experiences. To gauge the percentage of industrial slaves who were beaten by their white co-workers, for instance, as Douglass records he was, is next to impossible (given the fact that so many of these crimes probably went unrecorded).

There were two ways to hire out a slave: hiring-out by the owner, and hiring-out by the slave. The latter category is the one which afforded the slave the greater degree of freedom: his relationship with the employer was similar to that of a free man. This is only referring to the slave's experience at work, of course; it can be supposed that not all slaves who were allowed to hire themselves out were also allowed to live away from their owners, although Frederick Douglass certainly was. When the slave *was* allowed to live out, those who were hiring themselves out generally would be expected to provide for their own upkeep with their wages; those hired out by their masters would generally receive the regular "benefit" of having their owner or hirer provide them with life's essentials. In 1833, for instance, Douglass was hired out for a term of one year to work and live on the farm of Edward Covey, a "slave-breaker" near Easton on Maryland's eastern shore. For that year, Covey was Douglass' master in all but title, whipping and driving him as if Douglass were his own.²⁵

The practice of hiring-out can also be divided into two categories which deal with the nature of the work done: agricultural and industrial (this excludes housekeeping, work that occurred in both urban and rural settings, and the conditions of which would probably depend more on the individual situation than on the question of ownership). While there may have been instances in agriculture where slaves hired themselves out, most opportunities occurred in the industrial setting.

For agricultural slave owners, hiring-out was an efficient method of capitalizing on excess labor. The fixed rental sum guaranteed a profit to the owner, regardless of the profitability of the agricultural season. Owners' costs were minimal. Although medical expenses were often the owner's obligation, room and board was usually covered by the hirer. For slave owners without land or manufacturing sites, hiring-out was even more common. Healthy male slaves, for instance, could earn their owners much more in wages than their use as house servants would save on household costs. Such was definitely the case with Douglass. Here gender may also have been a factor, for widows who inherited slaves were, for a variety of reasons, unlikely to keep large numbers of male slaves around without some sort of white male supervision. This could stem not only from the problem of "keeping up appearances" (avoiding town gossip over sexual issues) but from property laws as well: in some states, like Maryland, slaves were considered personalty and could thus be inherited by women outright. Land would more often be inherited by male heirs.²⁶

The benefits sought by slave hirers are analogous to benefits sought by other short-term investors. There is risk involved, especially in agriculture: a bad crop could mean a loss of the fee paid for the slave as well as the cost of board. Yet the purchase price of a slave was far higher. Renting was not only cheaper than purchase; it also freed the hirer from any responsibility for slaves who died or got sick from overwork or disease. In industrial slavery, the benefits were somewhat different. Accidental death in factories and mines was a grave threat in the early nineteenth century. The fact that slaves could not organize for better conditions seems to be the principle reason for Joseph Reid Anderson's conversion to hired slave labor for the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond.²⁷

The benefits of hiring-out to the slaves themselves are more difficult to ascertain. Slaves

hired out by their masters lived lives virtually identical to any experience they would have working directly for their owners. They were separated from their family and friends, but such a separation, and on a more permanent basis, was always a threat in a slave's life. Given the individual variances of "good" masters and "bad" masters, a slave had no better chance of having a fair master simply by being hired out. As for the variation in supervision, this too would depend again on the individual situation. Douglass was supervised by Edward Covey more strictly than he had been on his owner's farm; when hired out by Auld in Baltimore to the shipbuilder Gardner, Douglass went virtually unsupervised during his non-working hours. "When I could get no caulking to do, I did nothing."²⁸ The benefits of hiring-out to slaves can most easily be seen when the slaves hired themselves out and lived out as well. In such a situation, the slave was allowed to pay for his weekly "freedom" and could contract freely with employers who would, at least theoretically, treat him as they would any freed black. Some slaves actually set up shop on their own. This privilege was granted to a slave blacksmith who pleaded "I would be much obliged to you if you would authorize me to open a shop in this county and carry it on...I am satisfied that I can do well and that my profits will amount to a great deal more than any one would be willing to pay for my hire."²⁹

Hiring-out by owners continued to be a thriving practice right up to the Civil War. It benefited the owner and the hirer but had no certain benefits for the slave, and thus, posing no threat to Whites, remained widespread and legal. Slaves benefited only by chance, hoping for a master kinder than their owner. The practice of slaves being allowed to hire themselves out, on the other hand, which had direct benefits for the slaves, "was neither expanding nor flourishing in the last antebellum decades. Actually, by 1860, it was clearly declining and it had been made illegal in many areas."³⁰ The strengthening of the conviction in the South that slavery was both

good and moral, as regional tensions over the slavery issue increased, was forcing legislatures to clamp down on all manifestations of freedom among slaves.

FOUR: ASPECTS OF INDUSTRIAL SLAVERY

In 1970, Robert Starobin recast the discussion of southern antebellum industrialization. He posed four questions whose answers would lead to the conclusion that industrial slavery was viable in the antebellum period. Those four questions are: 1) was industrial slavery profitable, 2) was industrial slave labor generally as economically efficient as its alternatives, 3) what are the specific competitive advantages of industrial slavery, and 4) did southerners have sufficient expendable capital to support their industries without serious detriment to their economy.³¹

Slaves were used in a variety of fields in both private and public industrial enterprises. They were employed in textile mills, iron foundries, tanneries, sugar mills, cotton presses, and flour mills. They worked on highways, railroads, rivers, and in mines. They were also employed in semi-industrial trades, such as in fisheries and in the hauling of tugboats upstream. In short, there was no industrial trade in the south which did not, at one time or another, employ slaves. The questions posed by Starobin can be answered by examining several of the numerous examples of the use of slave labor in industrial concerns.

First, was industrial slavery profitable? Most industrial enterprises and transportation concerns employing slaves could expect a minimum “annual rate of return of about 6 per cent.”³² In southern textile mills, annual profits usually ranged between 10 and 65 per cent, with an average of 16 per cent. Iron foundries did nearly as well. One foundry in South Carolina earned 7 per cent annually during the 1850s, and Richmond’s Tredegar Iron Company made “better than 20 per cent [per year] returns from 1844 to 1861,” precisely the years in which Tredegar was run solely on unfree labor.³³ During the 1840s, “One hemp manufacturer testified that he realized more than 42 per cent profits” per year. “A gas works also earned a 10 per cent return in 1854.” The extracting industries also found profit in the employment of slave labor.³⁴

Second, was industrial slave labor generally as economically efficient as its alternatives? The traditional argument against the economic viability of slavery rests on the assumption that it was more expensive than free labor. With the influx of impoverished immigrants, especially the Irish in the 1840s and again especially in Baltimore, one could easily assume that wage levels for free whites were dropping. Employers need not concern themselves with the upkeep of free employees, especially with fresh workers arriving by boat every month. Slaves, on the other hand, required minimal subsistence levels to remain alive, and a healthy diet to remain productive. Further, a slave was an investment and a source of credit; dead, incapacitated, or undernourished slaves could negatively affect an owner's financial standing. Given these factors, it is easy to conclude that free labor was in all ways preferable to slave. In fact, however, this was not the case. First, the cost of free workers never dropped below the cost of slave upkeep. Many businesses, located far from major towns, had to provide their white workers with housing. In addition, as early as 1830 white workers had begun to organize for better pay and conditions. The influx of immigrants from Europe was driving wages down, but many industrial concerns, such as the mines of Allegany county in western Maryland, were located too far away from a point of entry to benefit directly.

Third, what are the specific competitive advantages of industrial slavery? Several factors combined to make slave labor economically more viable than free labor in Southern industry. While wages for free whites had to provide not only for the upkeep of the worker himself but often for his wife and family, slave men could be employed in industrial enterprises while their partners worked as domestics or in agriculture. Duties could be found for slave children as well, in both industry and agriculture. And while upkeep for slaves consisted of food, clothing, and shelter, few whites could be found who would work for lengthy periods of time at mere

subsistence levels. Slaves also had no legal ground from which to protest their condition; as one state engineer said, “Another disadvantage attending the employment of white laborers is the fact that they are more difficult to control than the negro, and when they know you are most dependent on them they will either demand higher wages or leave you.”³⁵ Strikes among white workers occurred in Maryland coal mines in both 1853 and 1854.³⁶ Slaves could neither demand better pay and conditions nor simply quit. They did require more supervision, but the cost of an additional overseer did not outweigh the savings in wages.

Finally, did southerners have sufficient expendable capital to support their industries without serious detriment to their economy? The capital outlay necessary to acquire a slave labor force proved less real than hypothetical. Many individuals came into industry as a side line to their agricultural endeavors, using slaves they already possessed through inheritance or through natural increase. Even for those who had to purchase slaves at the outset, there is at least one example of a successful venture. The plans for the building of a turnpike, which used slaves purchased in North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland, estimated not only a profit of \$60,00 at the end of the venture, but additional gains from the resale of 300 slaves.³⁷

The use of slaves as industrial labor was propounded in the southern political arena at three periods during the antebellum era: the 1790s, the late 1820s, and the 1850s. What is striking about these periods is their correspondence with moments of crisis in sectional identity. In the 1790s, the South was expanding slavery as the North was making plans for gradual emancipation. In the late 1820s, the nullification crisis, with its issue of state sovereignty, held the nation’s attention. In the 1850s, the potential for Civil War grew into a reality.³⁸

Was the call for slave labor in industry part of an attempt to rebut claims that the slave system was antiquated? Proving that slavery was compatible with industrialization removes the

practical basis for emancipation and consigns the debate to the realm of morality.

The issue of industrialization based on slave labor aroused political debate across a broad spectrum. Some slave traders called for reopening the African slave, using Africans in agriculture while creole slaves were being put to work in a burgeoning southern industry.³⁹ One newspaper envisioned a south that gave primacy to industry over agriculture: “Imported blacks should build levees and railroads...while ‘seasoned’ slaves were shunted from the fields to the factories.”⁴⁰

Another political impetus toward industrial slavery in the 1850s came in the wake of land distribution after the Mexican War. As California was admitted to the Union as a free state and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 further limited the potential expansion of slavery, many southerners felt that the existing southern economy and labor force should be converted into a system that was not dependent on limitless expansion. Another paper commented:

“the slave labor of the south will...become the successful competitor of northern white labor...[and] we will be compelled to use the surplus black population in cotton and woolen factories [and] in iron furnaces.... [But] we will have for our market place the whole habitable globe...we propose...the employment of slave labor in the construction of rail-roads throughout the southern states, and the use of negroes in our factories and in our workshops.”⁴¹

Evidently, this editor hoped that the labor costs would be so cheap that southern goods would gain the market advantage over not only northern but British and French goods as well.

The success and profitability of slave labor in southern industry only intensified the sectional crisis. White southerners grew increasingly worried as the slave system came under greater attack from the north. The industrial progress that was occurring was increasingly dependent on slavery.⁴²

Maryland was an exception. Its principal industrial town, Baltimore, was not as

dependent on slavery as were industrial centers in states further south. Indeed, no examples of Maryland industrial concerns can be found which depended completely on slave labor. Western Maryland was peopled in large part by Germans, hostile to slavery because it undermined their independent yeoman existence, and by Quakers from Pennsylvania, hostile to slavery for moral and religious reasons. While the use of slave labor in Baltimore manufacturing and shipping, in western Maryland mining, and in tugboat hauling and fishery-work on the Potomac persisted, it never played a prominent enough role to influence Maryland politics separately from agricultural slavery.

Where industrial slavery did play a significant role is in the difference it created between slavery in Maryland and the institution in the other Southern states, and how that difference affected the secession question. Statesmen in the deep South may have seen industrialization as the first step toward general emancipation in border states. Seen in this light, secession was in part a move to consolidate the loyalty of the upper South (and in that regard it failed). The state of Virginia, perhaps the one southern state to be more industrialized than Maryland, failed to secede until after the firing on Fort Sumter, and when it did, it lost half its territory (which became the new state of West Virginia). As in Virginia, Marylanders, because of the different way slavery was used in their state, did not view slavery the same way their brethren in the deep South did, and this was an important distinction during the secession crisis.

FIVE: ANTEBELLUM MARYLAND'S FREE BLACKS

Free blacks had resided in Maryland almost longer than Maryland had had slaves, but their numbers had never been so great as during the antebellum period. Several factors had simultaneously contributed to this growth. Two major factors were manumission and immigration from the deep south. The Maryland census of 1830 shows 291,108 white residents, and 155,932 black, including 102,994 slave.⁴³ This made a total population of 447,040, out of which 52,938 were free blacks. The approximate percentages are 66% white, 22% slave, and 12% free black. Thus free blacks constituted a significant portion of the population, and that population rose as the 1860 census reported twice the number of manumissions as in 1850.⁴⁴

The majority of whites responded negatively to this increased presence of free blacks in their midst. Many whites may have opposed the presence of free blacks from outright racism, but often opposition came from economic grounds--fears that cheap free black labor would lower wage levels or force whites out of work. Slave owners were concerned that the presence of free blacks was a reminder to their slaves of the possibilities of freedom, and a hindrance to the doctrine of racial slavery. A common opinion among white Marylanders during the antebellum era was that free blacks harmed the general good of the state and that freed men and women ought to emigrate from Maryland or be forcefully removed. Government records demonstrated this view: "At the next session [of the Maryland House--1842] the delegates from Charles County, to whom the matter had been referred, presented a lengthy report. The presence of the free blacks, they said, is deemed as evil by almost everyone, and with continued increase in their numbers, the whites must eventually amalgamate with them, or leave the state, or be reduced to slavery."⁴⁵ That same year the House unsuccessfully attempted to enforce emigration. As one historian observed,

The House [of Delegates of Maryland] passed a bill to require blacks to take out new freedom papers at charges proportioned to their age, but the Senate rejected it...but of greater moment seems the report of a special committee of the House appointed to consider evidently a proposition that the free blacks of Charles county be removed--that measures be taken to cause all the free blacks in Maryland to emigrate.⁴⁶

The defeat of such bills is attributable to the group of Marylanders who were most interested in the retention of free blacks--the nascent (but growing) class of industrialist entrepreneurs. As Barbara Jeanne Fields explained: “Regarding the law as ‘an attempt to deprive them of the services of the free [black] population, and compel them...to hire the surplus slave population,’ they ‘indignantly rejected’ it.”⁴⁷

Free blacks worked in trades and occupations similar to their slave counterparts. The following table taken from The Free Negro in Maryland, 1690-1860 by James Martin Wright conveys the steadily growing numbers of free Baltimore blacks in particular trades at a variety of times during the period:

	<u>1819</u>	<u>1831</u>	<u>1840-1</u>	<u>1856</u>	<u>1860</u>
Blacksmiths	8	13	18	29	30
Barbers	18	12	45	86	117
Caulkers	14	37	38	75	74 ⁴⁸

The same source identifies the diversity of trades practiced by free blacks in the rural Chesapeake. “In Talbot county a certain negro who was a shoemaker by trade at times turned boat-builder, wagon-maker, wheelwright and general wood-workman. Anne Arundel, Cecil, and Kent each had a nearly similar case.” Many more free blacks worked in only one trade, falling back on a second skill only when necessary, “for instance, blacksmithing and wagon-making,

carpentry and cabinet-making or carpentry and shoemaking.”⁴⁹ Those free blacks who remained in agriculture often found their lot similar in duties but worse in recompense. “On the farms both free negroes and slaves were hired from Christmas to Christmas, or as in Cecil county for terms of nine or ten months each.”⁵⁰ Yet “the free Negro endured poor living conditions and, in fact, strived to eat and dress as well as slaves.”⁵¹ They endured similar labor conditions as the slaves but had the added onus of having to provide for their own upkeep.

Despite their poor lifestyles, legal conditions were more favorable for free blacks than they were for slaves. While slaves, under normal circumstances, could neither bring cases to court nor give testimony. Free blacks “could acquire and dispose of property and bring court action.”⁵² Some mild regulations existed against large meetings and assemblies, but these laws were usually ignored with impunity.⁵³ Sometimes loopholes were found. While free blacks were not permitted to send their children to the tax-supported schools, for instance, some did form schools on their own.⁵⁴

Employers were often very specific about race in “help wanted” advertisements. A random sampling of the *Sun* in 1852 showed needs of varying specificity. “A woman to cook, wash and iron. None but an American [meaning white and not Irish] need apply.” “Wanted--An American white girl, to do the cooking, washing and ironing for two in a family.” “Wanted to hire, two servant women...white women preferred.”⁵⁵ “Wanted--An experienced white waiter for a private family.”⁵⁶

Despite this negative reputation, free black employees were sought for the social status that came with the perception of slave ownership. “The advertiser wants to employ a servant woman, colored...also, a colored man....” “Wanted, a good colored cook...”⁵⁷ “...Also, a small Girl to attend to children--German or colored preferred.”⁵⁸

There were those among the white Marylanders who felt they had a solution to “the Negro problem.” In 1831, following in the wake of the establishment of the African colony of Liberia for American free blacks, The Brawner Committee was formed in the Maryland House of Delegates to address the labor situation in Maryland. Their conclusion was that slavery in general and manumission in particular was leading to widespread emigration of white workers from the state. One of their recommendations was the formal chartering of the Maryland State Colonization Society, and with it, widespread voluntary emigration of free blacks (and slaves, where purchase or manumission was possible) to a new Maryland, south along the African coast from Liberia. In March, 1832, the State General Assembly approved “An Act Relating to the People of Color in this State.” The governor and state council appointed a board of managers and a director who appointed a staff. A missionary of sorts was hired to travel up and down the Chesapeake to ask for donations and gather names of prospective emigrants, and he always returned to Baltimore with reports of scores of potential emigrants and promises of trunkloads of money. Despite such claimed enthusiasm for the program and the increasing antipathy of whites to free blacks, during its 20+ years of existence, the Maryland State Colonization Society managed to send only one boatload of blacks to Africa, on average, per year. This amounted in total to but a single year’s natural increase of Maryland’s black population. The venture was, therefore, like the National Colonization Society which sent voluntary emigrants to Liberia, a failure.⁵⁹

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War and as sectional tensions were increasing not only between North and South but between slave-owning tidewater Maryland and industrializing northern and western Maryland, the Maryland State government passed a law prohibiting manumissions in the state. This could be taken as evidence that control of the legislature was

passing from the hands of slaveowners, who had for a long time held great power based on electoral districts peopled by non-voters [slaves], into the hands of voters from Baltimore, Frederick, and the rest of northern Maryland. Manumitted blacks often migrated to Maryland's free cities, where they could seek a higher standard of living while remaining close to enslaved loved ones. To emigrate north would mean abandoning friends and family, and most did not choose this course. This law, a restriction on the rights of owners to manumit, should be recognized as a means of checking the growth of the free black population in the cities of Maryland.

The Civil War made the question of manumission moot, despite continuing proslavery sentiment. In Maryland, in fact, general emancipation went into effect prior to the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. On April 27, 1864 a state Constitutional Convention was called with the express purpose of drawing up a new State Constitution which would provide for the emancipation of all slaves in the state. On November 1, 1864, slavery became illegal in Maryland without compensation to owners. The history of Maryland's blacks would now be one of free people.⁶⁰

SIX: MARYLAND ON THE EVE OF THE CIVIL WAR

The election of the Republican Presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln, in November, 1860 caused great rumblings throughout the slave-holding south. Lincoln had carried the election without receiving a single slave state electoral college vote. Yet Maryland differed from the rest of the South in its failure to give an outright majority to Breckinridge, the “favorite of the slave-holding extremists.”⁶¹ The county electoral statistics draw what is probably the last true picture, in such a format, of the sentiments of Marylanders prior to emancipation. Later elections have since been proven to have been rigged by Federal troops. The county statistics are also barometers of the degree to which slavery was important in the various regions of the state.

	Lincoln	Douglas	Bell	Breckinridge
Southern (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s)	63	700	5001	5749
Eastern Shore (Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Somerset, Talbot, Worcester)	251	962	8906	8533
Western (Allegany, Frederick, Washington)	720	1931	7704	6621
Northern (Baltimore excluding the City, Carroll, Harford)	167	870	7545	6623
Baltimore City	1083	1503	12604	14956
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Total	2294	5966	41760	42482 ⁶²

The election in Maryland was primarily between Bell, the moderate Southern Unionist, and Breckinridge, the extreme Southern Democrat. In the southern counties, where slavery was most prevalent, Breckinridge handily defeated Bell by 748 votes; on the Eastern Shore, where slavery was nearly as strong but notions of union were stronger, Bell won by 227 votes; in the west, where slavery was weakest, Bell defeated Breckinridge by 1083 votes, receiving nearly an outright majority in the region; the same held true in the northern counties (excluding Baltimore

City), where Bell won by 922 votes; and in Baltimore City, still extremely pro-southern and pro-slavery in its sentiments (despite not being as dependent on the institution as other cities, such as Charleston or Mobile), Breckinridge easily defeated Bell by a margin of 2352, garnering nearly a majority in that densest region of the state. The final tally gave the state's electoral votes to Breckinridge, who gained a plurality but defeated Bell by only 722 votes cast.

The state of South Carolina did not secede until December 20,⁶³ but on Monday, December 3, after United States Senators Hammond and Chestnut of that state failed to appear in session, the Baltimore *Sun* printed an editorial explaining "The Crisis" in no uncertain terms. It stated that "It is a sad fact that this may be--in fact is quite likely to be--the last session of a Congress for these United States.... Personally messrs. Hammond and Chestnut were very popular in Washington. ...As regards compromise, one proposition is to re-establish the Missouri line, and extend it to the Pacific--as if revolutions went backwards."⁶⁴

The election of 1860 may have proven to be the death-knell for the institution of slavery in the United States, but to slaveholders on Maryland's Eastern Shore, it was business as usual. On Saturday, October 13, two female slaves, each with five more years to serve and each with a child, slaves for life, were up for sale in separate advertisements in the *Easton Gazette*.⁶⁵ On Saturday, December 15, the following advertisement appeared in the same newspaper: "An OVERSEER wanted for the year 1861. A young man with industrious and sober habits can obtain a situation by applying to the editor of the *Gazette*."⁶⁶

Several months of secession fever culminated with the firing upon Federal troops at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861.⁶⁷ This marked the official outbreak of hostilities between North and South. The attack on the federal garrison in Charleston's harbor came at the end of several months of secession fever, as state after southern state called conventions and

voted to leave the union. A secession convention had been called in Maryland's sister state, Virginia, and Marylanders watched the proceedings anxiously. Although many Marylanders favored secession, the state would obviously be helpless should it secede and Virginia remain in the Union. Maryland would be surrounded by a hostile nation. Many other leading, if atypical, Marylanders were opposed to secession in any event. For Henry Winter Davis, U.S. Congressman from Maryland's Fourth Congressional District (which included Baltimore), secession and slavery were not legally connected. In a February, 1861 speech, he denied that any state had the right to secede from the Union, but also denied the right of the Federal government to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states. "In Maryland, we...cannot comprehend the right of secession. We do not recognize the right...of Maryland to repeal the Constitution of the United States; and if any convention there, called by whatever authority, under whatever auspices, undertake to inaugurate revolution in Maryland, their authority will be resisted and defied in arms on the soil of Maryland...." He went on to state that slavery "exists by state authority. When established, the Constitution guaranteed it. The impression...that the North design, at some future time, to destroy slavery, let us propose to quiet forever that apprehension and anew to consecrate the principle of states rights to internal matters, by forbidding any change in the Constitution affecting slavery in the states."⁶⁸

Questions of a secession convention in Maryland had temporarily been quieted back in December when Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks had determined not to call a special session of the state legislature for just such a purpose. In January, the Governor received a petition of 5000 signatures, headed by U.S. Senator from Maryland Anthony Kennedy, approving of his decision.⁶⁹ But after Sumter, as Virginia appeared ready to secede, the question was again on the minds of most white Marylanders.

In anticipation of the growing national crisis, President Lincoln ordered troops from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania to travel south to defend the capital. On April 19, two thousand such troops arrived at the President Street Railway Station in Baltimore and commenced to march down Pratt Street to Camden Yards, from which point they were to ride on to Washington. Perceiving that these troops were to be used to fight Southerners and not wishing them to be able to make use of Maryland to do so, a pro-Southern mob assembled to block the troops advance on Pratt. At first using only stones and fists, the mob soon gained control of several of the soldiers' own weapons and used them as well. Bewildered and without orders, the troops fired upon the crowd. The final death toll was four infantrymen and nine or ten among the crowd, with many more wounded. The Massachusetts Sixth Infantry reached Washington later that day, but the Pennsylvania volunteers returned to Philadelphia.⁷⁰

The incident has since been referred to by Northerners as the Pratt Street Riot, and by Southerners, who saw it as a part of the general rebellion of the South, as the Pratt Street *Incident*. The affair caused great consternation in the white House, of course, for troops were increasingly believed to be necessary to defend the city. Baltimore Mayor George Brown was summoned to Washington along with Governor Hicks to work out the problem with the president and General Winfield Scott. Two routes were considered as a solution: by water to Annapolis and by train from there, or west on foot and wagon around Baltimore. It was an extraordinary spectacle: the President of the United States and the general of its armies parleying with a mayor and suspending the right of national troops to march through his city to save Washington."⁷¹

In the immediate aftermath of the affair on Pratt Street, Governor Hicks called a special session of the state legislature to convene at Annapolis. Since the Democrats controlled the House and the Senate by a very slim majority, the Governor hoped that they would not renew

demands for a secession convention. More importantly, Hicks could use this to placate the extremists, who felt that more positive moves ought to be made toward that end.⁷² Still, when the legislature was forced to convene at Frederick because Federal troops had occupied the state capital, the situation did not look altogether hopeful for the anti-secession forces. Indeed, on the first day of the session (April 26), a memorial from Prince George's County in Southern Maryland was read which called for the immediate passage of an act of secession. But the Senate promptly replied that "We know that we have no Constitutional authority to take such action. You need not fear that there is any possibility that we will do so."⁷³

The difficulties experienced by the Lincoln administration in Baltimore would soon be dealt with militarily. On May 13, Lincoln ordered General B.F. Butler to take possession of Federal Hill and train his cannon on the city of Baltimore. Federal troops were placed at other crucial positions throughout the state shortly thereafter, including the railroad depots, and Maryland would remain under martial law for the remainder of the war. In the face of General Butler's move, the Maryland state legislature adjourned until June 4.⁷⁴ On that date, the legislature reconvened to hear the reports from two peace delegations earlier sent out from the state: one to speak with Lincoln, and the other to speak with Jefferson Davis. The state of Maryland, as a crucial border state, was attempting to play the role of arbiter with these delegations, as some of its finest orators had attempted at the earlier Peace Conference (people like Reverdy Johnson, pushing for a reconsideration of the Crittenden compromise). The delegation to Davis reported that it had met with the Confederate President and that his position was defensive, seeking only the independence of the new nation. The delegation to Lincoln had been unable to meet with the President, and had given up their mission as useless after the firing on Fort Sumter.⁷⁵

The state legislature convened until June 25, and met again from July 30 to August 7. Since the unanimous decision of the Senate to reply the Prince George's County call for secession, the only major legislation on the question was a resolution stating that Maryland would not aid in the forceful return of secessionist states to the Union. This had conciliated the southern sympathizers and given Maryland secessionists (as well as the Lincoln administration) reason to believe that the earlier decision might yet be overturned. They set a date of September 17 for their next session, at which time it was believed by the Lincoln administration and the secessionists that the state would indeed secede.⁷⁶

That was not to be the case. The commander of Union forces in the state, General N. P. Banks, received a letter on September 11 from the Secretary of War stating that "The passage of an act of secession by the legislature of Maryland must be prevented. If necessary, all or part of the members must be arrested."⁷⁷ Shortly thereafter, legislators from throughout the state were arrested and sent first to Fort McHenry and later to New York City. They served no more than fourteen months in prison, making secession impossible until the 1861 elections could be rigged (by Northern soldiers who not only voted themselves but prepared a color code for ballots, turning away voters with secessionist colors) to produce a unionist state legislature. The legislature elected later in the year would indeed have a majority of Constitutional Unionists (Republicans); they would almost have a majority of emancipationists.⁷⁸

Many historians tend to believe that secession in Maryland would have been a foregone conclusion had the federal government allowed for an honest plebiscite and open convention.⁷⁹ Secession in Maryland, they argue, was prevented by the Lincoln administration for fear the national capital would be surrounded by hostile states. Yet that is not necessarily the case. While the retention of Maryland in the Union was indeed paramount to the Lincoln administration, and

while the federal government did indeed intervene to ensure that secession did not occur in that state, the decision of the electorate of Maryland to secede was not a foregone conclusion. The most obvious evidence of this is in the election returns for the 1860 presidential race. While the state did vote for Breckinridge, the favorite of those in the states which later seceded, its electorate did so only by a plurality of votes. The majority of the Maryland electorate, in all four regions including Baltimore City, voted for Bell, Douglass, or Lincoln, candidates not favored by the secessionists. Certainly had Virginia not seceded Maryland would not have done so either, and it was in Virginia that the hardest battle for secession was won. There were several important reasons why Maryland would have remained in the Union even if there had been a secession convention. One of the most obvious reasons was military geography. While Virginia had a natural defensible border against the North in the Potomac river, no natural defense protected Maryland from the neighboring states of Pennsylvania and Delaware. If Maryland seceded, it would become the battleground between the armies of the South and the North.

A good way to examine the feelings of Marylanders on the issue of secession is to break down would-be secessionists by class and occupation. Slave holders, for instance, would have been the most likely to vote in favor of secession. It was they who, in the southern region and in Baltimore City, nearly gave Breckinridge a majority. But one must be careful not to lump all slave holders together into one class. One must also be careful not to assume that Maryland slave holders all had very large plantations and hundreds of slaves. In fact, it was quite the opposite. The average private slave holding in Maryland was between 1 and 4 slaves, with only 34 percent ever owning more than 10, and only 3 percent ever owning more than 50.⁸⁰ As many were among the best educated citizens in the state, most Maryland Slave holders were in favor of gradual emancipation and many had regularly manumitted their slaves (either at the time or in

their wills) until the passage of the state anti-manumission Act of 1860. To be sure, many slave holders favored secession, and quite a few crossed the Potomac to join the Confederate armies. But many were Unionists above all else. The most important factor in Maryland's remaining in the Union, of course, was the constant presence of Federal troops in key locations, Lincoln's declaration of Marshall law, the arrest of leading Maryland secessionists, and the suspension of the writ of *habeus corpus*. These factors made a convention, let alone secession, impossible in that state.

Maryland slave traders opposed secession for their own reasons. They did a thriving business selling Maryland slaves to the cotton South, and felt sure one of the first acts of the new Southern Confederacy would be to re-open the African slave trade. This move would drastically lower the price of their Maryland slaves.

Slaveless farmers in Maryland were a group perhaps hardest to gauge in terms of secession sentiment. The typical slaveless farmer lived in western Maryland and was the second- or third-generation descendent of German or Quaker Pennsylvanians. These people were often abolitionists, but more often opposed slavery for economic reasons. Slave holding, they believed, constituted an unfair advantage, both at the market and at the polls. The slave holders relied on unpaid labor, much of it inherited and much more born into their possession, while the slaveless farmer relied on the sweat of his own brow and paid wages to those employees he had. At the polls, voters in districts with a high slave population had greater representation than those in districts with few slaves, in both federal and state government elections (more so in the latter). Slaveless farmers could have believed what propaganda the South published denying that slavery was at the root of secession, but most knew that the power structure in the secessionist states favored slave holders and the slaveless farmers of western Maryland tended to distrust that

power.

The sentiments of Baltimoreans on the issue of secession were complex. While it may have been true that a near-majority were southern sympathizers, it was also true that the city's commerce did not rely or depend on slavery or slave labor as southern cities like Savannah did. The elected officials of Baltimore (with the notable exception of Henry Winter Davis) spent the late 1850s increasingly antagonistic to the needs of the free black population and supported slavery more as a way to keep the black population in the city low than out of any sense of its moral rightness. Many merchants in Baltimore saw alignment with the South as a means to enhance the city's importance, making it the New York of the Confederacy. Many more pointed out that the dissolution of the union between Maryland and the United States would cut off the crucial trade with Pennsylvania and the Ohio valley. Had it come down to a vote, it is difficult to determine which direction the electorate of Baltimore City would have gone.

SEVEN: MARYLAND IN THE CIVIL WAR

The war threw the institution of slavery in the state of Maryland into turmoil. Many people in the state perceived that slavery was their enemy, despite the public anti-abolition rhetoric of such local statesmen as former United States Attorney General Reverdy Johnson, United States Representatives Henry Winter Davis and J. Morrison Harris of Baltimore, and Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks, and did what they could to undermine it. Union soldiers from the North often saw Maryland slaveowners as their enemy, regardless of Union sympathy, and took every opportunity to liberate their slaves in an effort to hurt them. The owners regarded this as theft, but often felt powerless to press any charges against soldiers who seemed to have the full authority of the Federal government behind them. Often owners would request compensation from Washington. These requests were usually met with demands for proof. Such proof was exceedingly difficult to come by as owners were rarely allowed to visit their escaped slaves in the Union camps where they were usually employed.⁸¹

In many cases the slaves took the initiative of securing their own freedom. Despite the fact that the Federal government did not promise freedom to any slaves in Maryland until long after the state legislature had already passed the emancipation act of 1864, slaves abandoned their masters in numbers not seen since the immense upheavals of the revolutionary epoch. They ran to Union lines, where they were employed in various menial tasks; they ran to Washington after the district emancipated its slaves; they ran north; or they remained in their locality, causing what the local whites undoubtedly referred to as “trouble.”⁸²

As a result of these liberations and escapes, and due also to the fact that many southern-sympathizing owners fled across the Potomac when it became apparent that Maryland was not to secede, slave life in southern Maryland and along the Eastern Shore was thrown into confusion.

Slaves knew that their masters could not control them, and therefore submission and obedience diminished. The situation looked as bleak for the 1862 harvest as it did for the future of the institution.⁸³

The Maryland state legislature attempted to address the problem in December, 1861. “Resolved...that a joint committee...be appointed...whose duty it shall be to proceed forthwith to Washington and request an interview with Major General McClellan, and to solicit the adoption of some plan to prevent the admission of fugitive slaves within the lines of the army.”⁸⁴ They went further in March: “If any slave shall escape from his owner by being transported on any such railroad, steamboat, towboat or other vessel, the master or owner of such slave shall and may recover the value of such slave from the President, Directors, and Company of such railroad, or the owner and Captain of such steamboat, towboat or other vessel (as the case may be), by action in any of the courts of law in this state.”⁸⁵ All legislative attempts to return the institution to normal were destined to fail, however, and escapes and liberations by Federal troops increased as the war wore on, especially with such seemingly external federal declarations as the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

The majority of Marylanders who fought in the Civil war fought on the side of the North. In fact, after Congress passed the draft act, it turned out that four Maryland counties had far exceeded their quotas: Allegany and Washington in the west, and Cecil and Kent at the northern end of the Eastern Shore.⁸⁶ During the course of the war, Maryland put 46, 638 soldiers into the field on the side of the Union.⁸⁷ The Maryland Union units included three regiments of Cavalry, six batteries of light artillery, and nineteen regiments of infantry. There was also the Fourth Maryland Infantry Regiment, known as the German riflemen, who were later consolidated into other units. Of the Marylanders who fought for the Union, the overwhelming majority of them

(44,973) were volunteers. There were only 1,426 draftees and 2,456 substitutes.⁸⁸

Obviously all Marylanders who fought for the South were volunteers, either by actually volunteering for military service or by volunteering by escaping to the South over the Potomac. As Fred Albert Shannon claims, some 20,000 Marylanders fought for the South, almost all from the southern counties of Maryland; in fact, almost all of those Maryland soldiers who fought for the South came from these counties.⁸⁹ “Unable to secure secession in the state but determined that Maryland be represented in the Confederacy, many southern sympathizers from these areas found their way into the Confederate army.”⁹⁰

Perhaps the most famous of these Marylanders was General Jubal Early, who distinguished himself at the battles of Gettysburg, The Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, and Petersburg as the commander of a division in the army of the Virginian Robert E. Lee. Early, who had served in Stonewall Jackson’s corps, was never promoted to the rank of Corps Commander although his remarkable abilities as an officer obviously outdistanced many of those in Stonewall’s corps who were promoted in his stead.⁹¹

Maryland saw two important military campaigns cross its borders during the Civil War. The first was the Antietam campaign, in September of 1862; the second was the Gettysburg campaign, in July of 1863.⁹²

After the Union disaster at the battle of Second Manassas in July of 1862, General Robert E. Lee resolved to take the war into Maryland and the north for the first time in the war. Lee’s idea was to enter the north, striking deep into Maryland and perhaps even Pennsylvania, and then turn right to threaten Washington. Lee’s goals were the recruitment of fresh troops from Maryland, fresh supplies, and relief for the farmers of war-torn Virginia. James Longstreet’s corps, accompanied by Lee, moved north to the town of Sharpsburg, in Washington county,

Maryland.

To maintain his meager gains, Lee knew he had to block Union General George McClellan. In the mountains between Sharpsburg and Frederick, he pitted some twenty-five thousand men against McClellan's eighty-seven thousand-man juggernaut. The southerners were forced to give way, and by September 15, 1862, battle lines had been drawn across the Potomac tributary Antietam Creek, which runs to the east of Sharpsburg. That same day Harper's Ferry surrendered to Stonewall Jackson, and by the sixteenth Jackson was with Lee in Sharpsburg, swelling the still-outnumbered Confederate army to 40,000. A.P. Hill's division remained at Harper's Ferry.

The battle of Antietam Creek (Sharpsburg to the southerners), the bloodiest single day in American history, took place in three phases. First was the cornfield, where Jackson's and northern General Hooker's men fell in rows between the bullet-cut cornstalks as they marched; next came the sunken road, now called "Bloody Lane," where Union General Edwin V. Sumner's corps walked into an empty field with little cover only to find southerners under D.H. Hill, protected by a recessed road, who used them for target practice; and finally there was the long, indecisive afternoon at a bridge crossing the creek, to the south of town, where Ambrose E. Burnside's troops finally crossed, after having been held back by some four hundred Georgians all day, and advanced almost into town before A.P. Hill, freshly arrived from Harper's Ferry, drove them all the way back to the bridge. Twenty-three thousand, one hundred and ten Americans fell that day. Free and liberated Maryland blacks were used to remove the bodies and dig graves.

As indecisive as the battle may have been, it did send Lee back into Virginia. He had failed to successfully carry the war into the north. Lee had found discovered what most

Marylanders already knew: that western Maryland had no sympathy for the Confederate cause. Lee had not found any new recruits among the Marylanders, and the locals had not exactly jumped at the chance to supply him with food and clothing for his men.

The most important result of the battle, however, was not military. The victory gave President Lincoln the opportunity to proclaim the Emancipation of all slaves held in bondage in the secessionist states. The Emancipation Proclamation may not have actually freed any slaves, but it did change, to a great extent, the goals of the war.

Nearly a year after Antietam, General Lee made another attempt at a northern invasion, and he chose roughly the same route. This time he made it all the way into Pennsylvania before he was stopped in three singularly bloody days in and around the town of Gettysburg. On this campaign, Lee fostered little illusions about the sentiments of western Marylanders--they were obviously just as Unionist as the residents of the newly-created thirty-fifth state, West Virginia.

According to deductions that can be made from at least one newspaper, not only did Unionist sentiment pervade the western region, but the absence of the most vehement of Maryland's fire-eaters was making it possible for a Unionist propaganda campaign in the southern region and on the Eastern Shore. On June 14, 1862, a Unionist poem (by "Cymon") appeared on the front page of the *Easton Gazette*, a newspaper published in the heart of the slave owning Eastern Shore, in Talbot county, where Frederick Douglass was born. The poem eulogized all of the states which had remained in the union, including Maryland: "Maryland, tho' torn by faction's power/and rent by civil feuds/proved her devotion in that hour/and traitors' wiles withstood."⁹³ Not a single advertisement relating to slavery appeared in that edition, excepting that of one James D. Mansfield of St. Michaels, who was trying to sell "SERVANT'S WEAR--Blue denims, heavy plantation drills at the old prices."⁹⁴ Was he attempting to unload

useless goods or purvey to the slaveholding community?

By 1863 all but the staunchest defenders of slavery in Maryland realized that the days of the peculiar institution had come to an end in their state (and most of the staunchest had fled). On April 20 of that year, a group of Ultra-Unionists headed by Governor Bradford, ex-Governor Hicks, and Postmaster-General Montgomery Blair converged on the Maryland Institute in Baltimore. There, they publicly demanded an act of general emancipation for the slaves of the state and the acceptance of President Lincoln's offer for compensation to slaveowners. This caused a split in the Maryland Unionist (Republican) party, the banner to which so many had flocked after the commencement of hostilities. The rift was not over whether or not Maryland would emancipate its slaves, but over how to do it. The "Conditional Unionists" believed that an amendment should be made to the State Constitution of 1851, while the "Unconditional Unionists" believed that an entirely new State Constitution should be written.⁹⁵

The state elections of 1863 would decide the question. Again, state polling places were heavily guarded by Union soldiers who in many cases actually voted; and again a color code system was used to deny the right of the secret ballot, and many Democratic voters were turned away. Given these factors, it is surprising the Democrats did as well as they did. The Democrats won the southern region and the Eastern Shore, while the "Unconditional Unionists" edged out their intra-party rivals in the west, the north, and the city of Baltimore, winning a majority in both houses of the state legislature. A new State Constitution was drafted the following April and in October, 1864, Maryland saw the abolition of slavery within its own borders and without, as it happened, any compensation for slaveowners.⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

Given the rapid industrialization which continued after the war, Maryland blacks turned increasingly to employment in the industrial centers of Baltimore, Frederick, and Cumberland. The 1880 census lists 210,230 black Marylanders. Of this number, 53,716, or nearly twenty-five percent, resided in Baltimore.⁹⁷ Most former slaves, however, continued to reside in or near their former homes, i.e. in the rural areas of southern Maryland and the eastern shore, working for their former masters. By 1900, the census reported that only 2,882 out of a total 46,012 farms in the state were owned and operated by blacks; of the 5,170,075 acres the state had under cultivation, only 374,301 were being farmed by black landowners.⁹⁸ For those blacks who resided in the cities following the war, a very few managed to attain prominence in business, but the majority remained penniless. While it was reported in 1900 that one black man owned “a score of houses and...\$50,000 in cash; one of the best...jewelry stores belongs to another; [and] a third has the best beef trade in town,”⁹⁹ the same source also pointed out that, when it came to the black community, “all the wealth of any amount was held by less than 2,000 individuals. There were probably about 205,000 who owned nothing.”¹⁰⁰

Maryland in 1865 may have seemed unrecognizable to the traveler who had not visited the state since the 1850s, but in many ways the changes which the state had undergone were based on social and economic changes which had already been taking place before the war. The industrialization taking place in Baltimore and other towns continued after the war, growing in leaps and bounds with the advent of new technologies. Blacks still constituted an important component in the state workforce, and in many instances labor conditions became harder after slavery, just as they had for freed slaves of earlier generations.

Economically, the war connected Maryland inextricably to the north. Having

emancipated its slaves prior to the end of the war, and already having a mixed system combining industry with agriculture, Maryland's economy in 1865 no longer resembled that of a southern state. In addition, the war had severed Baltimore's connection to the hinterland trade center of St. Louis and made impracticable the Susquehanna trade. By the time St. Louis recovered from the devastation of the war, Chicago had secured dominance in the west. When the war ended, therefore, Baltimore's position as the great challenger to the supremacy of New York had ended.

As a border state, Maryland played a pivotal role in the antebellum era and during the Civil War. The state straddled the fence between slavery and freedom, between agriculture and industry, between defeat and victory, and between slavery and freedom. What made Maryland unique was what made the state vibrant and interesting. As a state which had not seceded, Maryland did not have to endure reconstruction; the state was spared postwar military occupation thanks to occupation during the war. Maryland politics, like its economics, became tied ever more to the north. Today, roads connecting Maryland to Virginia display signs informing travelers that they are entering "Dixie" or "The South," as if to say that the state of Maryland should not be numbered among the southern states, is not a part of Dixie. Here, perhaps moreso than anywhere else, the American Civil War became truly a "brothers' war." Here, again perhaps unlike anywhere else, so many slaves encountered the idea of freedom in the person of manumitted friends and relatives. Maryland was then and is today the bridge between the north and the south. It is in this state that we as Americans could find what tore us apart. And it is in this state that we can find what brings us together.

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