“We Are Determined to Be White Ladies”: Race, Identity, and the Maryland Tradition in Antebellum Visitation Convents
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The Courage of Her Convictions: The Story of Miriam Brailey
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Flight of the Phoenix: Fire and the Modernization of Salisbury, Maryland
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Research Notes & Maryland Miscellany
“A Record of Heroism”: Baltimore’s Unionist Women and the Civil War Era, by Robert W. Schoeberlein

Running the Blockade: Henry Hollyday Joins the Confederacy, edited by Frederic B. M. Hollyday
Cover: Second Maryland Infantry Belt Buckle, c. 1862

Henry Hollyday (1836–1921) left his family’s Queen Anne’s County home in early September 1862 for Richmond, Virginia, where he joined the Confederate army. Injured during the fighting on Culp’s Hill, Gettysburg, and critically ill following the carnage of the Wilderness campaign, he was among the prisoners of war General Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House. Paroled two days later, Hollyday took the oath of allegiance and went home, where he packed away his uniform. The six surviving pieces, including this buckle, are currently on display in the society’s “Divided Voices: Maryland in the Civil War” exhibit. The Maryland seal is on the front of the buckle and the posthumous inscription on the back reads “Henry Hollyday 1836–1921 / Pvt. Co. A 2nd Md Inf / Appomattox / April 9, 1865.” (Courtesy, Michael Kramer.)
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**Correction**

The names of privates John Gustavus Brown and Joseph Brown should be added to the Compiled Roster for the First Baltimore Horse Artillery, Capt. Thompson’s Company of Cavalry, Maryland Militia, 1814, Winter 2013 issue, page 439.
Visitation Convent, Wheeling, Virginia, c. 1870. In 1848, eight Baltimore Visitation sisters opened a convent for their order in Wheeling, Virginia. (Courtesy Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.)
“We Are Determined to Be White Ladies”: Race, Identity, and the Maryland Tradition in Antebellum Visitation Convents

JOSEPH G. MANNARD

In April 1848, at the invitation of Richard Whelan, bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, eight nuns from the Baltimore Visitation Convent founded a colony for their order in Wheeling, Virginia. During the first decade in their new home, these women, and those who later joined them, endured numerous trials—including fire to the roof of their convent, chronic cholera fears, debilitating and mortal illnesses to key members of the community, a dearth of vocations for teaching sisters, hostility and threats of violence from anti-Catholic nativists, and, most perilous of all, local competition from a rival, non-Catholic female boarding school—before their foundation firmly established itself in this industrial town in the Upper Ohio Valley. Among the recurring problems the nuns faced were the sooty conditions stemming from the ubiquitous coal dust spouting from the iron mills of the so-called Nail City that not only polluted the air but settled everywhere on the convent grounds and its members. “So we have Coal dust showers in Wheeling,” wrote one sister to her former convent, “which is more than you can boast of in Bt. [Baltimore]. I had no idea it was so bad till I saw it with my own eyes. It’s impossible to keep clothes and hands clean.”

When Samuel Eccleston, fifth archbishop of Baltimore (1834–51), visited the Wheeling convent that summer, he found the sisters’ faces and habits covered with soot. One of them, Clare Agnes Jenkins, referring to a popular minstrel tune of the day remarked, “He said I could now sing ‘Coal Black Rose,’ without much alteration in my dress.” Despite the dreary conditions, Jenkins, the genteel, twenty-two-year-old daughter of a prominent Baltimore family, noted that “we are determined to be white ladies—although the Archbishop expects to find us coloured ones! Oblates!” a reference to the first congregation of African American sisters founded in the nation. Sr. Clare Agnes even recalled that the archbishop had called her “Sambo,” a name he meant as a term of affection and which the young nun took as a “pretty compliment.”

Joseph Mannard teaches American history at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
This story may have ostensibly been about eradicating blackness derived from coal dust, but the humor and fun the participants found in it reveal some of the racial attitudes they harbored, whether consciously or unconsciously, toward African Americans, slave and free. It also indicates the importance that at least one nun placed on establishing and maintaining her own whiteness as a measure of her claim to be a Southern lady. In the antebellum era, few white Americans outside radical abolitionist circles in the North would grant the status of being a lady, “a woman of virtue,” to any but a white woman.5

For present-day readers it can be disconcerting to see approving references to minstrel song titles like “Coal Black Rose” and the easy use of derogatory names like “Sambo,” to say nothing of patronizing allusions to “Oblates.” Such language strikes modern ears as not just insensitive, embarrassing, and politically incorrect, but also racially charged, demeaning, and troubling. Such words are all the more jarring when they trip off the tongue of an archbishop, the Catholic spiritual leader of the nation’s “premier see,” and are directed to members of one of its oldest orders of women religious. Yet this anecdote reminds us that we are dealing with a white American Catholic population from a very different time and place than the present. Indeed, however distinct from the Protestant majority in their religious thought and practice and often in their ethnic origins, white Catholics shared attitudes and values about race and slavery with the larger white population in antebellum America. This was especially true of Catholics living in the slave South, the geographical locus of most members of the American Catholic minority until well into the nineteenth century.6

A second vignette from Wheeling offers a snapshot of the mentality about race found among members of antebellum Visitation convents. On January 6, 1855, as part of the celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany, three Wheeling Visitandines actually donned blackface makeup and delighted their assembled sisters with a minstrel show. “Sr. Emmanuel made a great deal of fun for us,” wrote the Wheeling superior to her Baltimore counterpart. “She & Srs. Seraphina, & Philomena were colored minstrels. Their music bit & humor kept us all much amused — till time for reading the gospel & Office.” Two of the three sisters who performed in blackface were natives of the slave South: Sr. Emmanuel Loughborough then age twenty-three, born in Georgetown, District of Columbia, and educated at Georgetown Visitation Academy before profession at Georgetown Monastery in 1853; and Sr. Philomena Wynn, nineteen, born in Maryland and educated at the Visitation academies in Baltimore and Wheeling before reception at the Wheeling convent in 1854. The final member of the trio, forty-year-old Sr. Seraphina Coury, who hailed from Dublin, Ireland, had entered the Visitation novitiate at Baltimore in 1845. Although foreign-born, Coury’s enthusiastic participation in the minstrel show suggests that she had readily assimilated the racial attitudes of her fellow sisters native to the South.7
American Catholics and the Slavery Question

Scholars have long recognized the fundamental transformation of the U.S. Catholic population in the first half of the nineteenth century from a tiny, quiet, native-born minority located principally in the rural South into a large, feisty, mostly foreign-born minority filling up the urban ports and factory towns of the Northeast and Midwest. Because of the overwhelming impact of nineteenth-century immigration on the American Church, it is easy to overlook the fact that before 1830 the largest concentrations of American Catholics were to be found in the slave states, specifically Maryland, Kentucky, and Louisiana. As historian Robert Emmet Curran points out, American Catholicism until 1840 "was largely a Southern phenomenon, and the 'peculiar institution' [slavery] was an integral part of it." By the nineteenth century, Rome's official position on the question of slavery appeared somewhat ambiguous. For nearly two millennia, theologians from Paul in the early church to Aquinas in the Middle Ages had found slavery consistent with natural law and church teachings. In 1839 in the apostolic letter *In Supremo Apostolatus*, Pope Gregory XVI attacked the African slave trade but not the institution of slavery itself. Commentators at the time and historians ever since have failed to reach consensus on the meaning, purpose, and implications of this papal missive: Did the pontiff mean to condemn the slave trade itself, or simply the abuses associated with it? Was it a first step to abolishing slavery as an institution, or simply a measured, moderate response that promised no further action? Whatever papal intentions were, historian John McGreevy contends that in the nineteenth century
“most Catholics accepted slavery in principle,” and associated immediate emancipation “with a religious and political radicalism that threatened the foundations of society.” American Catholics, in particular, suspected radical abolitionism because of the anti-Catholic, and anti-Irish, sentiments expressed by many of its adherents.11

The available evidence suggests that members of the Order of the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in America shared the views of their co-religionists on the question of slavery. Their thinking about the “peculiar institution” appears to have been influenced less by formal pronouncements from the Vatican than by their personal experiences as slaveholders, both before and after entry into monastic life. In general, Visitation nuns seem to have held views on racial bondage close to those expressed by T. Parkin Scott, a prominent Maryland Catholic layman. In an address delivered at the Catholic Institute of Baltimore in 1856, Scott argued that while slavery “may be an evil, so is sickness, and extreme poverty, and there are other ills in life which flesh is heir to, but as slavery now exists in this country, it is not a sin, and it has become a necessity.”12 In this speech, Scott rejected the moral argument of the immediate abolitionists that slavery is a sin, a personal transgression against the will of God. Rather, he upheld the older “necessary evil” interpretation associated with the eighteenth-century Founders—that slavery is one of the many natural evils that must be accepted and endured, however reluctantly, in an imperfect world.

Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Visitation Order numbered among the most prominent female religious communities serving and educating the burgeoning Catholic population in antebellum America. Unlike most congregations of women religious established from Europe after 1830, though, the Visitandines were overwhelmingly composed of native-born women, especially women born in the South. In 1799, three women—Alice Lalor, Maria McDermott, and Maria Sharpe—came from Philadelphia to found a convent in Georgetown, D.C, at the request of Father Leonard Neale, an ex-Jesuit from a prominent southern Maryland family. Under Neale’s spiritual leadership, the “Three Pious Ladies,” as they initially called themselves, strongly desired to establish a branch of the Visitation Order in America. Originally founded in 1610 in Annecy, France, by St. Francis De Sales and St. Jane De Chantal, the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary are a semi-contemplative order of cloistered nuns with an apostolate for female education. The Napoleonic Wars in Europe delayed until 1816 the formal affiliation with the motherhouse in Annecy.13 After a difficult decade in which the economic survival of the Georgetown Convent was in doubt, the Visitandines began to thrive and expand rapidly over the next quarter-century as they sought to address the spiritual and educational needs of an American Catholic population rapidly swelling by hundreds of thousands of Irish and German immigrants. Between 1832 and 1855, ten new Visitation houses fanned out directly or
indirectly from the original Georgetown monastery. Nationally, membership for the order by 1860 numbered about four hundred women, making the Sisters of the Visitation probably the second largest sisterhood in the country behind only the Daughters of Charity of Emmitsburg, Maryland. Until the establishment in 1855 of their convent in Brooklyn, New York, however, each of the permanent Visitation colonies descended from Georgetown—Mobile, Alabama (1832), Baltimore (1837), St. Louis (1844), Frederick, Maryland (1846), Wheeling (1848), Washington, D.C. (1850), and Catonsville, Maryland (1852)—was founded in a slave state or on federal land where slavery was permitted. The two Visitation foundations made in free states before mid-century—Kaskaskia, Illinois, (1833–1844) and Philadelphia (1848–1852)—proved unsuccessful for various reasons.

Despite the obvious regional location of early Visitation convents, scholars have failed to explore the Southern character of the Visitation order in antebellum America. As followers of the Salesian tradition in Catholic religious life, the Sisters of the Visitation in America sought to fulfill the commission of their seventeenth-century co-founder, St. Francis de Sales, to “Live Jesus.” As residents of the slaveholding South, however, members of the Visitation order sought to carry out that commission within a cultural context that the late Church historian Thomas Spalding, and others have dubbed the “Maryland tradition” in American Catholicism.

The Maryland Tradition

As developed during the tenure of Archbishop John Carroll (1789–1815), the Maryland tradition was inclusive, marked by openness and social and cultural engagement with the non-Catholic majority. It represented the position of an American Catholic minority that at the turn of the nineteenth century was small in number and largely rural in residence but respected by the Protestant majority and well-integrated into the larger American culture. It stood in contrast to an emerging “immigrant tradition” marked by exclusivity, ghetto building, and antagonism to the native-born Protestant majority. The Maryland tradition principally reflected the attitudes of a Catholic landed elite that continued to dominate the Archdiocese of Baltimore politically, socially, and economically until the Civil War. This elite’s cultural hegemony was especially evident in the accommodation of Maryland Catholics to the institution of slavery, a stance that took on greater significance as the slavery question increasingly polarized the nation by the 1850s.

The Maryland tradition was itself an American Catholic variation of the older concept of corporatism that dominated British and American society in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Corporatism, according to the historians Gordon Wood and Paul Gilje, posited a hierarchical society consisting “of a single giant interest” rather than accepting the competing interests of a more democratic, egalitarian society. This ideal of corporatism, notes Gilje, “may not have fully reflected reality, but its proponents held that both society and politics were a single body, or
Whether you were rich or poor, whatever your race or gender, all was subsumed to the ideal of the greater interest.” Central to this ideal about society with a shared, common interest were the notions of paternalism—obligations owed by those in authority to those below—and of deference—obedience owed by those below to their social betters.18

This article argues that the Visitation Order in America bore the stamp of the corporatist Maryland tradition in its Georgetown origins, in the family backgrounds of the majority of its early members, in the hierarchical relations found among its convent ranks, in the leadership Georgetown exported to new Visitation foundations, and in how it engaged its non-Catholic neighbors through its mission of female education. In particular, a Southern identity and slaveholding culture were integral parts of the Maryland tradition that developed within the original Georgetown motherhouse in the early 1800s and then disseminated as the order expanded during the antebellum years.19

Before the Civil War, at least 482 women entered the six Visitation convents located in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Crosschecking data found in convent vow books with that in federal census schedules for 1850 and 1860 provided the place of birth for 401 (83 percent) of them.20 Of those 401 women, 62 percent (250) were American-born and 38 percent (151) were foreign-born, all but four of the latter in Europe. Among the 250 native-born Visitandines, the state of Maryland provided 126 women, half of the total. Second to Maryland was the District of Columbia with 16 percent, followed by Pennsylvania with 14 percent, and Virginia with 7 percent. Together three states and the District supplied 87
percent of the American-born Visitandines in these six convents, showing that the order was highly dependent on the immediate vicinity to provide its membership. Among immigrant nuns, the overwhelming majority—84 percent—were Irish-born; the next largest group, Germans, made up only about 6 percent of the total. Some native-born women were undoubtedly of Irish or German stock, that is, daughters of an immigrant parent or parents. Nevertheless, most American-born Visitation nuns came from the old English-Catholic element of rural Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia that had socially and culturally dominated the Catholic community in colonial America. As historian Thomas McAvoy first argued more than half a century ago, this relatively small, native-born, Anglo-Catholic group remained an important leavening agent within the Catholic minority in antebellum America, the element recent scholars have styled the Maryland tradition.21

Visitation Convent Hierarchy

Reflecting its seventeenth-century origins in the rigidly stratified society of Old Regime Europe, the Visitation order in America also contained four distinct tiers, or ranks, of nuns: choir, associate, lay, and out sisters. The hierarchy found in Visitation convents provides a rough gauge of the social origins of its members by their class and level of education. Curiously, this Old World hierarchy transplanted easily into the democratic New World and appears to have been a key to the order’s ability to appeal to women from across the social spectrum in America, and especially its acceptance in the South.22 Numerous scholars have documented the importance of race, class, and gender hierarchies in maintaining the patriarchal social order of the Old South.23

Making up the top rank in the convent, choir sisters “included those employed in the sacred Office of the Choir there to sing the Hours.” That is, the chief duties of choir sisters involved reading and singing the Divine Office. Because they had to be literate, choir sisters drew their numbers disproportionately from native-born, middle-class or elite families, whose daughters had the greatest opportunities for education.24 Women who met the educational prerequisites of choir sisters but whose health or constitution was too delicate to perform all the duties of that rank became associate sisters. In addition, a choir sister whose health declined significantly sometimes changed to the associate rank. In most other respects there was little significant difference between choir sisters and associate sisters. Members from both ranks filled nearly all the important leadership positions with Visitation convents and academies.25

In contrast to choir and associate sisters, lay sisters had as their primary responsibilities the various manual chores associated with housekeeping, thus their alternate name of “domestic sisters.” In a variation on the Mary/Martha dichotomy found in the Gospel story, lay sisters performed the bulk of the muscle labor in the convent, thus freeing the choir and associate nuns to chant the Divine Office during
prayer hours and attend to other duties. As their tasks required the least amount of formal education, domestic sisters came chiefly from the foreign-born females of the lower classes in antebellum society. These women frequently could not read or write with proficiency, if at all. Lay sisters, as “sisters of the household,” lacked a voice in the government of the convent, nor could they request admission to the first or second rank. At the same time, the Constitutions stipulated that lay sisters “shall in no way be treated differently from the others,” as to their temporal needs and spiritual development. Salesian Constitutions set a maximum number of thirty-three members for each monastery, “of whom twenty at least shall be Choir Sisters, and at most nine Associated, and four Lay Sisters,” unless granted an episcopal dispensation. Georgetown Monastery frequently had more than fifty women religious within its walls, but many other houses fell well below the maximum limit, especially in their early years. Such were the economic necessities and sheer amount of work necessary to establish and maintain religious life during the first century of convent-building in America that choir sisters often joined in the domestic tasks theoretically reserved to lay sisters.

A fourth classification found among monastic orders like the Visitandines was that of out sisters, also known as “externs.” Out sisters provided monasteries with indispensable services, but lacked full membership in the sisterhood, living on convent grounds but in separate quarters outside the cloister. Because members of the other ranks—choir, associate, lay—could not leave the enclosure without special permission except for duties in the academy, they relied on out sisters to handle tasks outside the cloister—answering the door, shopping at the market, accompanying students on walks and outings. A convent was supposed to have no more than three out sisters at any given time. Compared with other Visitation nuns, the life of an out sister must have been relatively lonely. An out sister inhabited a sort of earthly limbo, having renounced the profane world but lacking full acceptance into the sacred one. An out sister waited more than two years before taking vows, called an oblation in this case. As less than full members of the convent, out sisters entered their names in the back of convent vow books, making them more likely to be overlooked by researchers. Moreover, it is likely that the names of out sisters who left convent life before oblation were never put down in the vow books as members of the Visitation community. Some out sisters eventually gained full membership within the convent, almost always as lay sisters.

The contrasting cases of two early aspirants to Georgetown—Mrs. Mary Fenwick Neale and Margaret Connor—point to the linkage between a woman’s class origins and her rank in a Visitation convent. The former was a fifty-year-old widow who had been born Mary Fenwick, daughter of an old, elite Catholic family in St. Mary’s county in Southern Maryland and had married into the equally pious and prominent Neale clan of neighboring Charles County. In 1818, she petitioned to follow three of her daughters and a cousin into the Georgetown convent as a choir sister. She easily
gained acceptance for “her property far exceeds the portion of the house,” and her friend and relation, Father Benedict J. Fenwick of St. Mary’s County, could testify to her good character. Already the biological mother of three Georgetown nuns, Mrs. Neale in 1820 was elected Mother Superior of the entire community. She died in 1856 at age eighty-seven after nearly four decades with her second “family” in the Georgetown convent.

Unlike Mary Fenwick Neale, Margaret Connor was a former pupil in Georgetown’s benevolent school for girls from poor families. After rejecting several petitions by Connor, Georgetown finally accepted her in 1818 because “from the increase of the community we stand much in need of lay sisters.” Connor remained in Georgetown until her death in 1853 at age fifty-five. It bears noting that Connor had applied to become a lay sister; Georgetown did not arbitrarily assign her that rank because of her class affiliation. At the same time, convent authorities probably made clear to Connor her appropriate station based upon her qualifications and the community’s needs. Working-class females did not automatically serve as domestic sisters; some did gain admittance to the ranks of choir sisters if they had possessed the requisite skills.29

The membership of the Visitation order in the six convents sample reflected a strong association between ethnic background and social class. The vast majority of choir and associate sisters (82.5 percent) were native to the United States. The ranks of lay and out sisters, in contrast, chiefly enrolled women of foreign birth. Seventy-five percent of the sisters in the combined lower ranks were immigrants, mostly from Ireland. The Visitation order may have divided its members into unequal social ranks that reflected class and ethnic differences of the broader society, but those same members were to be united by a shared vision about the purpose and direction of a common religious life. This vision required not only obedience and deference to convent authority but also the mutual bonds of obligation and affection among its members joined in spiritual sisterhood, with every sister called to contribute to the communal whole according to her particular talents and abilities.

Expansion of the Visitation Order in America

Although each Visitation house was a self-governing, autonomous institution, the Georgetown convent strongly influenced the development of every new foundation, not only as an institutional and educational model but also as the source of most of the sisters establishing each colony. Beginning with the group of five women who set out for Mobile in fall 1832, Georgetown sent or lent an average of eight to twelve of its members to serve in each pioneering band of sisters. The group of nuns who provided the core leadership for Visitation foundations in Mobile, Kaskaskia, St. Louis, and Philadelphia, as well as for those in Maryland and Washington D.C., had professed at Georgetown and imbibed the Southern identity found there. Nuns from Georgetown transplanted this Maryland tradition to each of the new foundations.
and fostered it by dominating the office of superior, and probably other administrative posts, during the first generation after the founding. Such a pattern might be expected in the four Visitation foundations made in nearby Maryland (Baltimore, Frederick, Catonsville), and the District of Columbia, but it also held true for those convents far outside the confines of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. For example, from 1832 to 1855 each of the first six superiors in Mobile came from Georgetown, and four had been born in Maryland. Likewise, all four superiors of the ill-fated Kaskaskia foundation—which was forced to close after eleven years when the flooding Mississippi River inundated their convent building—had professed their final vows in Georgetown. After Kaskaskia was disbanded in 1844, its members united with the St. Louis Visitation monastery that had been established earlier that year. In St. Louis, three women who had professed in Georgetown—Agnes Brent, born in St. Mary’s County, Maryland; Genevieve King, born in Georgetown, D.C., and Isabella King, perhaps the natural sister of Genevieve—alternated holding the office of superior for the next nineteen years. Thus, the Georgetown convent culture was not only transplanted by the original founding bands of sisters but also sustained and reinforced for fifteen to twenty years by veterans of Georgetown occupying the office of superior. In this way, the continuity of the Maryland tradition originating in Georgetown was handed down and perpetuated in each new Visitation convent no matter how far it lay from the original monastery on the bluffs above the Potomac River.  

Visitation convent, Mobile, Alabama, 1937. Four of the six mothers superior assigned to Mobile from 1832–1855 were Maryland born. (Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.)
The life and career of Mother Michaella Jenkins offers a case study of the process by which the Maryland tradition was transplanted, nurtured, and disseminated by the Visitation order in these years. Born to a prominent Catholic slaveholding family in Baltimore, Jenkins attended both the St. Joseph’s Female Academy conducted by the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg and the Young Ladies’ Academy of Georgetown Visitation prior to entering Georgetown’s novitiate in 1827. After a decade in Georgetown Convent, in 1837 she served as the assistant superior in the group of eleven nuns sent to found the Baltimore monastery. Following two three-year terms as superior of Baltimore Visitation from 1844 to 1850, Michaella Jenkins acceded to the request of Bishop Whelan to take the helm of the struggling Wheeling foundation. Jenkins ultimately served four terms as its superior from 1851 to 1857 and again from 1866 to 1873, respectively, before her death from congestion of the lungs in 1881. Although she never again lived in Georgetown after her departure almost forty-five years before, her personal correspondence nonetheless shows that Jenkins maintained the close friendships she had established in her novice days, suggesting how formative had been her decade spent in that monastery. In her letters, for example, Jenkins always addressed her life-long friend Sr. Stanislaus Jones as “Sr. Stanny” and signed herself as “Sr. Mikey.”

Slaveholding Religious Communities in Maryland

Close ties of kinship, class, ethnicity, and friendship also bound the Visitandines of Georgetown to the Carmelites of Port Tobacco in Charles County, Maryland. Founded in 1790, the Carmelites were the first order of women religious to be established in the new American republic. In addition to welcoming female members from the same families, the Carmelites and Visitandines also had links through their respective clerical founders. Father Charles Neale, male founder and first chaplain of the Carmelites, was a brother to Leonard Neale, male founder and first ecclesiastical superior of Georgetown Visitation. Hailing from a distinguished slaveholding family of southern Maryland, both men joined the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits of Maryland not only accommodated themselves to the institution of slavery, they actually counted among the largest slaveholders in the state. Until the sale of the last of their human property in 1838, the Maryland Jesuits lived in what one visitor from Ireland identified as “splendid poverty,” as the owners of almost four hundred bondsmen toiling on six plantations of decreasing value and profitability.

The acceptance of and accommodation to the institution of slavery by the Carmelites and the Visitandines reflected both the social and ethnic origins of their members and their Southern base. A substantial percentage of the Carmelites and the Visitandines were the daughters of planters or other wealthy families. When these women entered religious life, some brought African American servants with them as part of their dowries. For example, when Martha Young (Sr. M. Ellen), a graduate of Georgetown Young Ladies’ Academy, professed in 1840, her father, Notley Young,
a wealthy neighbor of the Georgetown nuns, bestowed four of his slaves—Ignatius and Mary Elizabeth Tilghman, Benjamin Mahoney, and Thomas Weldon—upon the convent. After Margaret Neale (Sr. M. Regina) of Charles County, Maryland, professed her vows in Georgetown in 1841, her planter father made the convent a gift of the slave Joseph Dixon.34

At other times, these convents obtained slaves as gifts bestowed by some lay benefactor. Such bequests might come with stipulations preventing the nuns from manumitting their charges even had they been so inclined. In his correspondence with the Carmelites in 1797 and 1798, Bishop John Carroll reported that a Baltimore woman had willed their monastery a West Indian mulatto woman and her young daughter on the conditions that the mother who was “fit for coarse work and drudgery,” was never to be set free, while the girl, “who is said to be promising, excellent already with the needle, at ironing cloaths and washing,” was to be remain bound until age twenty-five. “If she behaved well till that time, then you can give her entire liberty, provided she can be married immediately . . . but if she behaves not well the community may keep her in bondage at their discretion.”35

As a result of such transactions in human beings, by the early nineteenth century the monasteries at Port Tobacco and Georgetown found themselves in possession of a number of bondsmen, women, and children whose unpaid labor they exploited while simultaneously looking after their spiritual and material welfare.
During the four decades they remained on their large farm in Charles County, the Carmelites found such arrangements not only economically indispensable but morally justifiable. There is evidence that these nuns, so many of whom had been raised in slaveholding families of southern Maryland, sought to be practical yet benevolent mistresses of their black folk. When the Carmelites faced relocation to Baltimore city in 1831, one of their stated objections to leaving their Port Tobacco home was “the disposal of our poor servants,” as their new urban surroundings would not permit them to keep their slaves. Nevertheless, they assented to the sale when Archbishop James Whitfield pointed out that their “servants” would bring the Carmelites about $9,000 of the $12,000 required to meet their financial debts, thus keeping them from having to sell their land in Charles County. The Carmelites sold their thirty or more slaves to a Mr. Mitchell with the understanding that he was not to break up any families if he should resell them, an agreement he broke after but a year’s passing.36

The Sisters of Charity, founded in 1809 by Elizabeth Ann Seton, also held some slaves in their Central House in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Charities appear to have been more socially egalitarian than the Carmelites and Visitandines because, as a community of American origin, they rejected Old World practices like living in cloister, assigning their members to convent ranks, and requiring a dowry from wealthy entrants. Apparently, though, even this community, whose members were so selfless in their myriad corporal and spiritual works of mercy, was not above considering the profit motive when engaging in the slave market, if through a third party. In 1839, Father Louis Deluol, ecclesiastical superior of the Charities, advised the community treasurer Sr. Margaret George that they could sell their “yellow boys” at a ten to twelve percent profit, “without doing an injustice to anyone. There is a nobbin of theology for you.” Whatever the guilt or cynicism in Deluol’s parting remark, two weeks later he reported having sold the slaves for ten percent premiums, adding that if they had been sent earlier, they would have brought up to $100 more.37

A Slaveholding Convent Culture

In common with the Carmelites and Charities, Visitandines registered few, if any, moral qualms about owning other human beings or about denying African Americans equal status with themselves. At the same time, like the communities of women religious in Port Tobacco and Emmitsburg, Visitandines in Georgetown and elsewhere did believe that black people possessed an immortal soul, and thus they felt obliged to provide them with spiritual as well physical care. For example, in 1818, Mother Teresa Lalor, first superior of Georgetown, obtained permission from Ambrose Marechal, third archbishop of Baltimore (1817–1826), to purchase the wife and children of one of their faithful slaves to prevent the breakup of the family and the members being sold away. Balancing her moral concern with business acumen, Lalor planned to hire the woman out.38
Thirty years later, concern for maintaining proper racial distinctions within the Wheeling Visitation Convent may have figured into the unwillingness of Mother Eleanora Walsh to accept an unnamed nun from Puerto Rico into her community despite strong recommendations. In a long letter to Baltimore about many other things, Walsh offered only the briefest mention of the rejected applicant. “The Porto Rico nun made an application to us . . . , but I must say, I have not felt the least attraction to receive her, altho so much was said in her praise.” This rather cryptic reference is problematic. Why was Walsh so disinclined to accept someone with good references? Walsh herself was the daughter of a wealthy merchant who had moved his family from Maryland to Philadelphia prior to her birth in 1806. She had been received into the Georgetown convent in 1834 and in 1837 joined the band that founded Baltimore Visitation before leading the group that established Wheeling. Was Walsh reluctant to receive a member from Puerto Rico because of concerns about the woman’s race and ethnicity, or was it simply because the latter failed to meet any needs of the Wheeling community? Since the woman in question was already a nun and was seeking a new convent, perhaps Walsh simply considered her a bad risk to remain in religious life. The extant evidence is not definitive either way, leaving us only to speculate.39

The existence of a slaveholding culture within Visitation monasteries is perhaps most evident in the terms of endearment the nuns used to describe convent authority figures. As was true in many communities of women religious, many Sisters of the Visitation developed a special bond with the nun who served as their Mistress of Novices. The depth of this attachment is suggested by a letter from Aloysius Pye of Wheeling to her former Mistress of Novices in Baltimore, Paulina Millard, whom she addressed as “My beloved + precious Sister Paulina,” but referred to elsewhere, more tellingly, as “my good old Mammy.” Seven years later, Sr. Aloysius continued to acknowledge Sr. Paulina as “her old Mammy,” while calling herself “your old child.” Pye’s use of the term “Mammy” drew upon the tobacco plantation culture of southern Maryland from which she and so many of the Visitandines came.40 Applying the same expression to a different personage, Sister Vincentia Broome, an out sister, used the “Mammy” term to refer to her former superior in Baltimore, Mother Michaella Jenkins. “And you must my dear Mother remember,” she promised, “that though I love my Wheeling Mother I shall never forget my dear ‘old Mammy.’ I have fresh in my memory the advice you gave me in the drawing room the day before I left.”41 When Mother Michaella herself later transferred to Wheeling, she revealed in a letter to Paulina Millard, her successor in Baltimore, how common the nickname was for the Mistress of Novices. “Is dear Sr. M. Leonard [Neale] really Mistress of Novices?” she asked in wonderment. “How I w[oul]d love to see Sr. M. Leonard acting the little Mammy to her little flock all so happy and fervent.”42 Michaella Jenkins, a native of Baltimore, Paulina Millard from St. Mary’s County, Maryland, and Mary Leonard Neale from Charles County, Maryland, had all first bonded in Georgetown, then
served in the band of fourteen sisters that founded the Baltimore monastery in 1837 before scattering in the Visitation diaspora.43

Visitandine Paternalism

While accepting the racial hierarchy of the Southern slave system, the Visitandines also demonstrated a decided paternalism toward slaves and free blacks.44 For example, like the Carmelites and Sisters of Charity, the Visitandines gave catechism lessons to their slaves. According to Visitation oral tradition, Georgetown nuns also provided schooling to Maria Becraft in the 1820s, a free woman of color and educator, who in 1831 became an early member of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.45 An 1871 federal government report on public education in the District of Columbia later supported Visitandine oral tradition that the nuns gave instruction to “aspiring colored girls, who sought instruction, withholding themselves from this work only when a depraved and degenerate public sentiment upon this subject of educating colored people had compelled them to a more rigid line of demarcation between the races.”46

An 1850 incident in Wheeling provides both further support for this tradition and a telling example of the complicated nature of Visitandine paternalism toward African Americans. In that year, a group of adult free black women approached Sr. Victoria Salmon to ask her to provide them with religious instruction. Salmon, a convert to Catholicism from Maryland who had professed at the Baltimore convent before coming to Wheeling, enthusiastically responded to their request. Motivated both by a zeal to save souls and a desire to take up the “white woman’s burden,” Salmon, who already conducted the Female Sunday School for children in the base-
ment of Wheeling Cathedral, eagerly petitioned the bishop for permission to hold a similar class for free black women, too. “I am begging him to let me form a class of darkies,” she wrote,

There are but few col[ored] persons in Wheeling—but there are some of a kind of mixed breed—and so genteel, some even so pretty—they seemed so very anxious for instruction that I felt obliged to make every exertion either to instruct them myself or procure it for them. . . . I told Father I was not willing to resign the merit. . . . And since they came to me, I think I ought to have them.47

In this passage, Salmon expresses a curious mix of racial superiority and condescension combined with a heartfelt compassion and genuine desire to serve the spiritual needs and concerns of the free women of color. This incident perhaps stands as a microcosm of the complex attitudes and behavior of the Sisters of the Visitation on race matters. Despite a willingness to instruct slaves and free blacks in religion, Visitation nuns, like most American Catholics, appear to have accepted without question the racial status quo in antebellum America. They might seek to bring African Americans to a greater spiritual awareness of heaven and its rewards, but not to reform secular society in any structural sense. Hence the Visitandines could organize a Sunday school in Wheeling without challenging the institution of slavery itself or prevailing cultural beliefs about the inferiority of black people. Indeed, such catechizing may have been tolerated by Southern whites normally fearful of the potential dangers of educating black folk, whether bound or free, precisely because traditional Catholic doctrine might be used to encourage blacks to accept their subordinate lot in this world, even as it insisted on their fundamental humanity and promise of salvation in the next. In this way, Catholicism could provide moral buttressing to prevailing Southern notions of racial hierarchy.48

Schools for Daughters of the Elite and the Poor

In addition to maintaining the racial hierarchy of the Old South, Visitation convents upheld planter notions of class and gender in the hierarchical organization of the kinds of education offered to its female students. Just as the Visitation order used traditional ranks to categorize convent members, so too did they follow a two-tiered educational system in their female schools.49 On the one hand, the highly popular young ladies’ academies created in tandem with each Visitation monastery appealed to elite Southern families, both Protestant and Catholic. On the other hand, most Visitation convents also opened a benevolent school for the daughters of poor Catholic families, mostly Irish or German immigrants, who could not afford much tuition, if any. Such an institutional arrangement helped reinforce the kinds of social distinctions that were so important to a planter class that saw itself as a kind of “natural aristocracy” providing the essential social and political leadership in an otherwise white man’s democracy.50
Moreover, the curriculum and training of young women in the elite academies promoted a Catholic version of true womanhood that was not only highly compatible with and adaptable to patriarchal ideals of Southern white womanhood but also refrained from challenging the racial and gender norms of planter society. Because all Visitation academies were modeled on Georgetown, they could offer a challenging course of study in science, mathematics, and history, among other subjects, to those families seeking a rigorous academic curriculum for their daughters. Planter patriarchs and other Southern elites, however, preferred an “ornamental” education for their daughters, one that stressed female “accomplishments” in foreign languages, music, and painting that would equip them to be genteel mistresses of the plantation and gracious hostesses in society. Bishop Whelan seems to have had an intuitive understanding of this point when planning the Visitation academy in Wheeling. “Music will be almost essential,” he told Archbishop Eccleston in 1848, “French will contribute to give character to the school.” Four years later the head of the Wheeling Academy’s music department confirmed Whelan’s judgment. She declared her subject to be that most desired by parents, as Wheeling had “so few teachers among a people, ravenous for Music.”

Since relatively few Catholics lived in the Old South outside of pockets in Maryland, Kentucky, and Louisiana, the financial success of any Catholic academy below the Mason-Dixon Line strongly depended on the kindness of strangers, that is, the patronage of non-Catholics. Upon arriving in Mobile on December 31, 1832, the five pioneering nuns from Georgetown put up in a rented house, their monastery not yet having been built. Mother Madeline Augustine D’Arreger, first superior of the Mobile Visitation Convent, testified to the welcome the nuns received from both non-Catholics and slaveholders in Alabama. On the generous hospitality from non-Catholics, she confided, “During our stay at the rented house, neighbors and friends, most of whom were Protestants, and had never laid eyes on a religious, were untiring in their attentions.” On the assistance and protection received from slaveholders, she acknowledged, “Numerous acts of delicate kindness shown by the Owen family deserve special mention. Col. Owen sent his servants to help us with our housework, and two trusty colored men to guard our premises.” On the appeal of their school for local elites, she marveled, “In spite of the fact that our rented house contained only five rooms . . . , parents hastened to confide their daughters to us. Before May, our school numbered forty pupils from the very best families of the South.” This extraordinary support she attributed “to the fact that the Georgetown Sisters brought with them an excellent reputation as teachers.”

Choosing Sides in the Sectional Conflict

Secession by seven states in the Cotton South and the outbreak of armed sectional conflict by spring 1861 put the Southern identity of Visitation Sisters to the test. Ironically, for all their presence in the slave South, only two Visitation monasteries, Mobile
and Wheeling, resided in states that joined the Confederacy. Moreover, in Wheeling’s case the situation would change in 1863 when the part of the state where the convent was located seceded from Virginia to form the new state of West Virginia, loyal to the Union. Four Visitation convents (Baltimore, Frederick, Catonsville, and St. Louis) were located in the “border states” of Maryland and Missouri, slave states of the Upper South that remained nominally loyal to the Union but provided numerous regiments to both Blue and Gray. Two convents (Georgetown and Washington) could be found in the District of Columbia, the federal capital, but only one (Brooklyn) existed in a free state. Because by 1860 a majority of Visitandines were still Southern-born, most of them, like most other Southern Catholics, probably favored the Confederate cause, but the actual location of their convents made it not only unseemly but also potentially dangerous for Visitation nuns to express their sectional sympathies openly. The Visitation convent in Wheeling, Virginia, for example, was located in the Confederate state’s northern panhandle, which found itself sandwiched between two Union states, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The nuns found that the “Community & school were torn by partisanship.” As a result, convent leadership prohibited the teachers and their students from speaking of the war.55

Situated as it was in the national capital, Georgetown Visitation had to be especially discreet about expressing its loyalties openly. Moreover, the wide geographical reach of its academy’s enrollment meant that Georgetown had numerous alumnae on both sides. Only ten days after the attack on Fort Sumter, Francis Kenrick, sixth archbishop of Baltimore (1851–1863), counseled the Georgetown nuns to “be cautious not to take sides in the politics which divide the country, but pray for peace, and respect the constituted authorities.”56 The Georgetown Convent Book recorded his warning against the nuns taking sides, as it might divide the convent community and endanger its existence, much like the nation itself: “It became the spouses of Christ to refrain from all that savored of worldly strife and, should we allow a sectional spirit to enter among us, our cloister would become the arena of discord like to that unhappily prevailing in the world. . . .” And “To rejoice for victory on either side would be most unbecoming, since the victory for the one was always gained by the defeat of the other.”57 For the Georgetown Visitandines, in this instance at least, their identity as Catholics and nuns and its attendant obedience to clerical authority trumped their identity as Southerners and slaveholders.

Georgetown Visitation retained its slaves until a year into the Civil War, relinquishing them only after passage of the compensated emancipation legislation for the District of Columbia in April 1862. Even then the Georgetown nuns protested that the government paid the monastery for only about half the estimated worth of their bondsmen. After submitting petitions to the District Board of Commissioners, Georgetown Visitation received $3,774.65 from the federal government for its twelve slaves (four adult males, one adult female, and seven children) whom the sisters had valued at $7,800. Joseph Dixon, one of the slaves for whom the Visitandines sought
compensation, had escaped “after the [First] Battle of Manassas and is now with the Federal Army,” whether as a laborer or as a soldier is not clear from the claim. The name by which the Visitandines referred to the battle may be a further indicator of their sectional allegiance, as Confederates called the engagement “Manassas,” while Federals called it “Bull Run.”

In their petition, the Sisters also describe the runaway slave Dixon as “rather sulky and has a bad countenance.” This description is noteworthy only because it is so typical of complaints by other white masters about fugitive slaves. Before and during the Civil War, Southern slave owners expressed their frustration and incomprehension over the “uncooperative,” “ungrateful” attitudes and “disloyal” behavior of runaways. In failing to fathom why their black servant might resent his chattel status and seek to remedy it, the Georgetown sisters showed themselves to be like many other Southern slaveholders when emancipation arrived.

The purpose in exploring the Southern identity and slaveholder culture of Visitation nuns is neither to condemn nor to defend them, but to understand them—to try to explain how and why they thought and behaved as they did. Indeed, scholarly recognition of the Southern distinctiveness of the Visitation Order in the antebellum period adds an important gender dimension to Thomas Spalding’s argument about the continuing influence of the Maryland tradition on American Catholicism well into the nineteenth century. As practiced by the Visitandines, the Maryland tradition meshed neatly with mainstream cultural assumptions in the Old South about race, class, and gender. This cultural congruence helps explain not only the predominance of their convents and academies in the slave states, but also the overall success of Visitation foundations below the Mason-Dixon Line. The Maryland tradition fostered
at Georgetown and then handed down to its daughter houses provided the Visitation Order in America with a Southern identity and culture by which its members managed the realities of religious life in an overwhelmingly non-Catholic Old South.

NOTES

Early versions of this paper were presented at the Ninth Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious, “Women Religious Through the Ages: Managing Individual and Institutional Realities,” St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota, June 23–26, 2013, and at the American Catholic Historical Association Spring Meeting, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 27–29. The author would like to thank Chris Anderson; Paul Arpaia; Ed Brett; Mary Ewens, OP; Dolores Liptak, RSM; Irwin Marcus; Maggie McGuinness; Diane Batts Morrow; and Annie Rose for their thoughtful comments, corrections, and suggestions.


4. Sr. Clare Agnes Jenkins to Sr. Clotilda [Smith], May 22, 1848; Sr. Clare Agnes Jenkins to Mother Michaella Jenkins, July 14, 1849, AMDC. “Coal Black Rose” was a popular song written in 1829, possibly by George Washington Dixon, who performed it regularly in minstrel shows. The song tells the story of Coal Black Rose and the two rivals for her affection, Cuffee and Sambo. Like “Jim Crow,” “Cuffee” and “Sambo” were the names for stock characters in minstrel shows of the nineteenth century. See Dale Cockrell, Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 25, 75, 96. Going back to the tobacco fields of colonial Virginia and Maryland, use of the name “Sambo” has usually been associated with a humorous, if demeaning, stereotype of the African American male in slavery and after. According to cultural historian Joseph Boskin, “It would not be an exaggeration to say that Sambo was the first truly indigenous humor character throughout the culture, transcending region and ethnicity.” For a full analysis, see his Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). The quotation is found on p. 8.


10. For a full discussion of this controversy among both contemporaries and in the subsequent historiography, see John F. Quinn, “‘Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope’: American Reaction to Gregory XVI’s Condemnation of the Slave Trade, 1840–1860,” *The Catholic
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14. Only one Visitation convent in antebellum America did not descend from Georgetown. Nuns from the Visitation Convent in Montreal, Canada, made a foundation in Keokuk, Iowa, a free state, in 1853. This convent moved to Suspension Bridge, New York, in 1866 and relocated in 1868 to Wilmington, Delaware, a former slave state. See “A Short Account of the Foundation of the Monastery of Wilmington, Del.” included in Book of Foundations of the Monasteries of the Visitation in the United States, with a little account from each, as a Souvenir of our Tercentenary, 1610–June 6–1910, 100–24 [handwritten manuscript in AMDC].
15. Sullivan and Hannan, Georgetown Visitation, 95–103.
16. The most recent general treatment of the subject is James M. Woods, A History of the Catholic Church in the American South, 1513–1900 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011). This volume, however, gives relatively little space to the role of women religious, failing even to list the Sisters of the Visitation in its index.
19. In making this argument, I do not mean to suggest that the residents of Old South were monolithic and static in their thinking or that there were no cultural alternatives to the planter class. The historian Johanna Nicol Shields offers a convincing argument to the contrary in her recent case study of urban, middle-class writers in what she calls “the rising South” of the Old Southwest. See her Freedom in a Slave Society: Stories from the Antebellum South (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). My point rather is that the Maryland Tradition as inherited, practiced, and extended by the Visitation order found itself highly compatible with the culturally dominant planter ethos of the antebellum period.
20. All statistics in this paper are taken from tables found in Joseph G. Mannard, “‘Wild Girls Make the Better Nuns’: Class and Ethnicity in Visitation Convents of the Upper South, 1799–1860,” unpublished paper presented at the meeting of the Southern Historical Association, 1999. The demographic statistics in this study were compiled from vital story data obtained from Visitation vow books and cross-checked against the federal manuscript
The qualitative evidence in this paper draws chiefly upon personal letters and official convent records found in or copied from the archives of various Visitation convents. No foolproof method exists for counting all the women who joined the Visitation Order before the Civil War. Convent vow books identify everyone who took formal vows as Visitation nuns. Vow books, however, only registered a woman upon her reception as a novice, the formal ceremony when a candidate took temporary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and received both the novice habit and her new name as a religious. Excluded from vow books, therefore, were those women who left during postulancy, the trial period of several weeks, sometimes months, when the community judged a prospect’s suitability for religious life before permitting her to become a novice. Nonetheless, by supplementing vow book lists with bits of information gleaned from convent chronicles and personal correspondence, as well as federal manuscript census records, the name, place of birth, and year of entrance of most members were discovered.

25. Ibid., 88–89.
26. Ibid., 90–91; “Constitution XLI,” Rule and Constitutions, 199–200. Of course, nothing prohibited wealthy and genteel young ladies from entering the rank of lay sisters—ideally such selflessness could be an edifying example of humility to the rest of the religious community. In practice this type of sacrifice seldom, if ever, happened. The Visitation order, like other sisterhoods, sought to employ the special talents of its members for the benefit of the convent and larger Catholic community. It would seem wasteful, therefore, to have a woman with unique administrative, pedagogical, or leadership talents serve in the convent kitchen or laundry. Of the combined total of 152 lay and out sisters in this study, at least 68 (44.7 percent) were illiterate. Nor did the Visitandines attempt to educate these women once they became members of the order. Examination of vow books shows that, when called upon to renew their vows, those nuns who originally could not sign their names continued to be unable to do so in subsequent years. The exigencies of establishing new Visitation colonies and of conducting elite academies and benevolent schools undoubtedly interfered with any opportunity to provide lay and out sisters with further education, even had that been a goal of the order, which it was not.
29. Both women are discussed in the letter of Mother Teresa Lalor to Archbishop Ambrose Marechal, January 12, 1818, #18A11, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore (hereafter AAB).

31. This biographical sketch is drawn from Jenkins, M. Michaella, “Lives of the Sisters,” Baltimore Visitation Vow Book, Volume I, 41, (AMDC); and from “Reminiscences of our dear first Sisters,” in *Annals of our Foundation from Baltimore Convent to Wheeling, 1848, and Removal to Mount De Chantal*, 1865, 67–70 (handwritten manuscript in AMDC); and *The Brief Accounts of the Deceased Sisters of the Georgetown Visitation Convents 1799–1974* 2 Vols. (typescript copy compiled from two handwritten volumes: “the Convent Book” . . . and “Records and Abridgments of the Lives and Virtues of the Members of this Community,”) AGVC.


34. Sullivan and Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation*, 131, 162n19.

35. Bishop John Carroll to Mother Bernadina Matthews, January 28, 1797 and June 7, 1798, Archives of the Carmelite Monastery, Baltimore (Hereafter ACMB).

36. Mother Angela Mudd, to Archbishop James Whitfield, September 14, 1830; Archbishop James Whitfield to Mother Angela Mudd, September 19, 1830; Rev. Francis Neale to [Ann Mudd?] March 23, 1832, ACMB.

37. Rev. Louis Deluol to Sr. Margaret George, November 15, 1839 and November 28, 1839, RG 7-10, LV3 #5, 6, Archives of the Daughters of Charity—St Joseph’s Provincial House (Central House) Emmitsburg, Maryland. (hereafter ASJPH).

38. Mother Teresa Lalor to Archbishop Ambrose Marechal, October 27, 1818, 18B22; Mother Teresa Lalor to Archbishop Ambrose Marechal, November 10, 1818, 18B23, AAB. One of the three founding members of Georgetown Visitation, Lalor was an immigrant from Ireland who, like Sr. Seraphina Coury several decades later, quickly assimilated the racial attitudes of her American-born sisters.

39. Mother Eleanor Walsh to Mother Michaella Jenkins, May 29, 1849, AMDC.

40. Sr. Aloysius Pye to Sr. M. Paulina Millard, December 10, 1849; Sr. Aloysius Pye to Mother Paulina Millard, addendum by Mother Michaella Jenkins, January 29, 1857, AMDC.

41. Sr. Vincentia [Broome] to Mother Michaella Jenkins, February 18, 1850, AMDC. Out sisters like Sr. Vincentia did not have a period of formation under a novice mistress as did choir, associate, and lay sisters.

42. Mother Michaella Jenkins to Mother Paulina Millard, January 11, 1854, AMDC.

44. With its gendered connotations, the term “paternalism” seems an awkward fit when applied to women religious, but no better alternative expresses the sense of noblesse oblige, deference, and reciprocity by which Visitandines conceived of their social relations with African Americans, whether slave or free.


47. Sr. Victoria [Salmon] to Mother Michaella Jenkins, April (?) 1850, AMDC.


52. Bishop Richard Whelan to Archbishop Samuel Eccleston, February 13, 1848; Sister Victoria Salmon to Sr. [?], August 22, 1852, AMDC.

53. Sr. Madeline Augustine D’ Arreger had been temporarily lent to Georgetown from the Visitation Convent in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1830. She returned to Fribourg in 1833. See Sullivan and Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation*, 95–97.


56. Francis Patrick Kenrick, AB, to the Sisters at Georgetown, April 22, 1861, as quoted in Sullivan and Hannan, *Georgetown Visitation*, 126–27.


58. See, for example, the reactions of slaveholders reported in James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 85–94.

The Department of Epidemiology, the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, 1935–1936. Miriam Brailey (1900–1976) is the lone woman in this group of distinguished scientists, men whose successors revered them and lauded their accomplishments. More than sixty years later, however, few people recognize Brailey amidst these public health luminaries. Pictured top row, left to right, are Harry Timbres, James Watt, William T. Clark, and Albert Hardy. Shown bottom row, left to right, are Miriam Brailey, Wade Hampton Frost, Ross Gauld, and Morton Levin. (Courtesy, Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.)
This is the story of Miriam Esther Brailey, M.D., Dr.P.H., an exceptional woman born with the twentieth century who graduated from both the Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Hygiene and Public Health. She went on to serve the citizens of Baltimore in both the public and private sectors and to meet life’s challenges with determination and faith, even at the risk of her own security.

Miriam Esther Brailey was born on January 28, 1900, to Edwin Stanton Brailey and his wife Florence Allen Brailey, in the village of East Barnard near the township of Pomfret, Vermont. Her early life was spent as the daughter of New England farmers. The town of Woodstock, the county seat of Windsor County, lies about ten miles to the south of Pomfret, and it is here that Miriam attended high school. She traveled by “stage”—an automobile used for transport between the towns—with other boys and girls her age, boarding in Woodstock during the week and returning to East Barnard on weekends. She graduated from Woodstock High School in 1918.

It was through the generosity of her aunt, Lucy Edna Allen, an instructor of mathematics and physics at the Thayer Academy in Braintree, Massachusetts, that Miriam and her siblings were given the opportunity to attend college. In September 1918, Miriam entered Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, not far from her father’s birthplace of Amherst, the home of another Mount Holyoke graduate, poet Emily Dickinson.¹

For her major, Miriam selected zoology, with a concentration in embryology. Miriam was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in March 1922, and graduated with an A.B. degree on June 13 of that year, with 210 other young women.²

At least two historical events took place while Miriam was at Mount Holyoke that undoubtedly had an impact on her view of the world: the First World War came to end with the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, and women were given the right to vote in 1920. Two of her brothers saw service in the war, which perhaps planted the seeds of pacifism within Miriam. Because she was an intelligent young woman with a tremendous desire for knowledge, one would assume that she was an advocate of women’s rights.³ From 1922 to 1924, she served as an instructor in embryology in the Department of Zoology at Mt. Holyoke, earning $1,000 a

This essay won the 2012 Joseph L. Arnold Prize for Outstanding Writing on Baltimore History.
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Bailey, front row left, served as vice president of the Students’ League, Mount Holyoke College. (Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.)
year. During that time, her manuscript “Conditions Favoring Maturation of Eggs of Asterias Forbseii,” was published in The American Journal of Physiology. That was quite an accomplishment for someone of only twenty-three years, and especially for a woman. Miriam left her position at Mount Holyoke in 1924 to serve as a medical technician and physician’s assistant to a Dr. Joslyn in Lynn, Massachusetts. Perhaps one reason was financial: her annual salary under Dr. Joslyn was $1,200.

In July 1926, the Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly carried the following announcement: “Miriam Brailey will enter Johns Hopkins Medical School in the fall. She has received a fellowship covering tuition and living for the four years of the medical course, and for a possible fifth year if she wishes to specialize in public health work.” Miriam never learned the name of the person responsible for financing her medical and doctoral training at Johns Hopkins. When Mount Holyoke officials summoned her to tell her of her good fortune, they said that her benefactor preferred to remain anonymous.

When Miriam arrived in Baltimore in 1926, she came to a city of more than 730,000 people living in a time of relative prosperity. The municipal government had grown tremendously in the first quarter of the twentieth century, as evidenced by huge improvements in sewage and drainage systems, and in the safety of the water supply. Major battles remained to be fought in the public health arena, though, and these would multiply with the onset of the Depression, which saw the rise of the black “ghetto” and the process of decay begin in the inner city. 

*Miriam Brailey’s graduation photograph, 1922. (Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.)*
The Johns Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine are located in an area—then and now—of economic disadvantage. Founded by its namesake, a Quaker businessman, the hospital soon achieved an international reputation, but still served the medical needs of the surrounding residents. This is the population Miriam would attend to for her entire professional life. From the time its doors first opened, the School of Medicine accepted qualified female candidates. In Miriam Brailey’s class, twelve of the sixty-nine students who went on to graduate as the Class of 1930 were women. Among the men in Miriam’s class was one who went on to become a celebrity of sorts: Frank G. Slaughter was twenty-two when he graduated with his medical degree in 1930, an amazing feat in itself. In addition to practicing medicine, he went on to write more than fifty novels in his lifetime, most with a medical or religious theme, and eventually turned to writing as a full-time career. Although Miriam’s literary efforts were limited to her own field, she would share with Slaughter a gift for intertwining science and faith.

Apparently Miriam had no intention of going into private practice following receipt of her medical degree. Adhering to the terms of her fellowship, she pursued a doctor of public health degree (Dr.P.H.) in the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. In doing so, she determined the path of her career for the next three

*The Baltimore Sun, October 7, 1941, announced Brailey’s appointment as the city’s director of the Bureau of Tuberculosis. (Maryland Historical Society.)*
decades. The first professor of epidemiology in the United States, Wade Hampton Frost, was chairman of the department during Miriam’s tenure as a doctoral student. Frost had recently become interested in applying epidemiological methods to tuberculosis, the number one killer in the early part of the twentieth century. He spent the last ten years of his life investigating and analyzing data from a number of TB studies, including material from the tuberculosis clinic at the Harriet Lane Children’s Home on the grounds of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Miriam Brailey would go on to direct that clinic later in her career.

Miriam began working with Frost on his tuberculosis studies, and her unpublished thesis, accepted in 1931, was titled “A preliminary analysis of certain records of the tuberculosis clinic of the Harriet Lane Home: I. Tuberculosis infection in children of tuberculous families; II. The history to adolescence of children shown to be tuberculous during infancy.” She received her Dr.P.H. degree in epidemiology that spring, again one of sixty-nine graduates but this time one of five women.

At the age of thirty-one, Miriam Brailey had reached an educational peak and begun a demanding and rewarding career. In appearance she was striking largely for her height, which was approximately six feet. She wore her dark hair in a bun, and her glasses—rimless with thick lenses—gave her a scholarly appearance, appropriate for a bluestocking but overshadowing her attractiveness. She carried a girlish voice well into middle age, along with a sharp sense of humor and an outspokenness that became etched into the memories of those who knew her. She enjoyed reading and attending concerts, and was active in her Presbyterian church. After rejecting a proposal of marriage in her early twenties, there was no hint of romance in her life, but she was the product of an era when a highly educated woman was still an anomaly and one who combined career and family was rare.
One of Miriam’s assignments as an intern at Johns Hopkins proved to be critical to establishing battery casings as sources of lead poisoning in Baltimore and elsewhere. Under the direction of Huntington Williams, director of the Baltimore City Health Department and a graduate of the first class of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, Miriam began investigating the origin of a mysterious illness affecting a number of Baltimore’s poorer residents. A 1933 article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (now JAMA) includes Miriam’s report of her neighborhood search for the source of lead poisoning in an unconscious seven-year-old black girl whose family had brought her into the Harriet Lane Hospital. As Miriam searched inside the patient’s house, she could not find the “fresh paint or plaster” that, following recent reports, she assumed was the probable source of lead poisoning in children. Melrose Easter, a neighbor “whose breath was strong with whiskey,” escorted her around the house, commenting that the child’s mother, too, “had not been herself” since moving into their present house. Easter wondered to Miriam if they could have gotten sick from “burning pieces of old batteries” for warmth and cooking. “The smell was bad, even made the food taste bad.” He thought they might be “breathing in the vapors.” In a 2003 article chronicling how medical experts and others investigated sources of lead poisoning, author Christopher Sellers noted that “This doctor’s own admission of uncertainty about the inner city’s impact on her patient opened her ears to Easter’s a-medical thinking. In the process, the American medical understanding of lead’s environmental pathways widened.”

Throughout the thirties—Miriam’s and the century’s—Miriam pursued her career at Hopkins. She continued her clinical work as well as her research on tuberculosis in children and was named an instructor in both the Department of Pediatrics in the School of Medicine and in the Department of Epidemiology in the School of Hygiene and Public Health. In the latter department she had the distinction of being the first female faculty member and of teaching epidemiology courses with Doctor Frost. She was promoted to associate in 1936. She published her research in peer review journals on occasion (Table 1), but an article published in the December 1936 issue of The Councillor, the quarterly publication of the Baltimore Council on Social Agencies, stands out. Entitled “The Needs of Tuberculous Children in Baltimore,” it illustrates how artfully Miriam incorporated science with her strong sense of social justice. Written with the cool, statistical logic of a scientist, the article nevertheless is a plea for fairness in treatment of tuberculosis patients in a segregated city:

Maryland has 305 tuberculosis beds for Negroes, yet in 1935 there were 614 fatal cases. In contrast to this, 1103 beds are assigned to white patients, there being 749 fatal cases in 1935. Although Negroes in Maryland have four times the death rate, sanatorium facilities are one-third as numerous as for the white race.
She went on to argue that an intelligent social approach could lessen the importance of poverty and race as factors in tuberculosis susceptibility, and recommended an increase in the number of hospital and sanatorium beds for African Americans of all ages, along with other strategies for combating the disease. She also noted that the closest sanitarium for African American adults—Henryton State Hospital in Marriottsville—was a long and expensive trip for the families of tuberculosis patients.

The article stands out for another reason as well. Despite her fierce battle against unequal health treatment for African Americans, she was not immune to the stereotyping of her time, and several phrases will strike modern readers as offensive. She referred to “the Baltimore negro, with his social temperament,” and asserted that “racial susceptibility, destitution, and irresponsibility combine to produce a death rate [in African Americans in Baltimore] four times greater than the white.” For her efforts, she was invited to speak at the first annual conference of Negro Tuberculosis Workers at Howard University Medical School in June 1939.

In 1941, Miriam was appointed director of two key institutions involved in Baltimore’s struggle to combat tuberculosis: the Harriet Lane Tuberculosis Clinic, and the Baltimore City Health Department’s Bureau of Tuberculosis. In an article in *Baltimore Sun*, she spoke of the work ahead of her in her new job at the Health Department: “We have known for a long time how to control tuberculosis . . . but rarely has there been money or public interest sufficient to put into practice what we knew. Our job will be to find the cases earlier, and to take better care of them when they are found.” She announced the opening of a new tuberculosis clinic to be run by the Health Department at 1313 Druid Hill Avenue, adding to the two clinics already in operation. She touched on the shortage of medical professionals available during wartime, and stated “Baltimore’s high tuberculosis death rate is largely attributable to the high tuberculosis rate among its large Negro population.” As director, she was responsible for a $22,000 budget, of which $7,000 would be used to open and operate the Druid Hill clinic. Her appointment was a sign of the growing interaction between the city’s health department and Hopkins; other bureaus with Hopkins-affiliated directors included Communicable Diseases and Child Hygiene.

At the Harriet Lane Tuberculosis Clinic, Miriam was directing one of the premier children’s medical facilities in the country. Funded largely by and named after the favorite niece and frequent hostess of the fifteenth U.S. president, James Buchanan, the home fulfilled William Osler’s plan to have a separate building on the Hopkins campus devoted entirely to the care of sick children. Harriet Lane Johnston had lost both of her sons to illness during their adolescence, and she herself did not live to see the opening of her legacy in 1912. The home came under the Department of Pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and its tuberculosis clinic was a natural laboratory for the observation and follow-up of children who fell victim to the disease. Miriam participated in and then conducted what was known as the Harriet Lane Study,
which involved following the same cohort of children and their families for years. Her warm, friendly manner won her a loyal following among her patients.\textsuperscript{18}

With two demanding positions to fill, Miriam was clearly driven by work. She shared a home in the Northwood Apartments at 4422 Marble Hall Road in the Waverly section of Baltimore with Dr. Harriet Guild, a New England bluestocking like Miriam. Doctor Guild was older by less than a year, and a product of Vassar College rather than Mount Holyoke. The daughter of a general practitioner in Windham, Connecticut, Harriet received her medical degree from Johns Hopkins in 1925.\textsuperscript{19}

In 1930, she was appointed director of the Pediatric Diabetic Clinic at the Harriet Lane Children’s Home, a position she held for thirty-five years in addition to teaching and maintaining a private practice. She shared Miriam’s traits of warmth and thoroughness, as well as her leadership ability, although she was less outspoken. Harriet Guild was a recognized international expert on nephrosis, which is a kidney disease in children, and diabetes in children, and she was one of the leading forces behind the founding of the Maryland chapter of the National Nephrosis Foundation, which went on to become the National Kidney Foundation. She was honored on several occasions for her work in kidney diseases.\textsuperscript{20} Their friendship continued after Miriam left Baltimore.\textsuperscript{21}

It may have been during this period that Miriam’s interest in the Quaker religion flourished. Certainly, the events of World War II would have contributed, if she already held pacifist beliefs. The *Baltimore Health News*, a publication of the Baltimore City Health Department, carried a statement in its April 1945 issue: “Dr. Brailey is a member of the Society of Friends and has a keen interest in interracial cooperation and in world organization to promote a durable peace.”\textsuperscript{22}

Miriam continued to be motivated by her commitment to poor children suffering from tuberculosis. The February 1949 edition of the *Mount Holyoke Alumni Quarterly* included the following item:

*Dr. Miriam E. Brailey* is still directing the Bureau of Tuberculosis Control for the Baltimore City Health Department. Remember the thrilling account of her work she gave at our reunion dinner last year? Miriam reports that last Election Day brought public approval in Baltimore of a hospital loan to be used in the construction of a new 300-bed tuberculosis hospital for Negroes. For the academic year, beginning Sept. 1949, Miriam will have a leave of absence permitting her to return to Hopkins where she will be working with Dr. Janet Hardy on a book about tuberculosis in children.

Miriam was clearly eager to publish the results of the Harriet Lane study, and apparently felt she should be at Hopkins full-time to write. In May 1949, the *New York Herald Tribune* announced that she was one of six scientists awarded a Tuberculosis Research Fellowship to support her research efforts.\textsuperscript{23} Her leave of absence from
her city job was officially scheduled to begin on September 15, 1949. The original termination date was June 15, 1950, but an extension was granted to December 30, 1950. The final date subsequently turned out to be irrelevant.

By this time, the political climate of the country had become clouded by a post-war wave of communist witch-hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. Fear of international communism, stemming from the Cold War and election-year charges by Republicans that President Truman and the Democrats were soft on it, was gaining momentum and spawning actions that in retrospect appear bizarre but which at the time were in fact legal, if not constitutional. In 1949, Maryland passed the Subversive Activities Act, also called the Ober Act, after Frank C. Ober, the Maryland lawyer who chaired the commission that drafted it. The measure called for state and city employees to sign an oath of loyalty that they were not and had never been involved in subversive activities.24

On July 29, 1949, the Homewood Society of Friends voted to oppose the signing of the loyalty oath.25 It is likely that Miriam attended the meeting. At some point during the month of August, she was told to sign the statement, but she refused.26 The law was suspended after a local judge ruled that it was unconstitutional, but was reinstated the following February when the Court of Appeals reversed the judge’s decision.27 On March 14, 1950, all state and city department heads were directed to ensure that all employees in their units had signed the required oaths of loyalty; those who had not done so would not receive paychecks. Three Quaker women, of whom Miriam Brailey was one, had not signed and refused to do so.28

The March 15, 1950 newspapers carried articles about the refusal of the three women, along with their pictures. Miriam’s photo was the one used in the 1941 article announcing her start in her Health Department position.29 The Baltimore Sun quoted Miriam as saying that her “conscience would be very uneasy if I purchased the continuation of my job at the price of cooperating with legislation which I think is dangerous and undemocratic and will accomplish nothing.” A separate article in that day’s Evening Sun carried the headline, “Williams to Ask Ober Act Rule on Brailey.” “Williams” referred to Health Commissioner Huntington Williams, under whom Miriam had conducted her lead poisoning investigation in 1931; he now said that he would discuss with members of the city’s law department whether Doctor Brailey had to leave now while on unpaid leave, or if her departure should wait until her leave terminated. A headline in the following day’s Sun read “Dr. Brailey Must Go Now, Office Rules.”30 On the seventeenth another read “Oust Dr. Brailey, Williams Warned.” The article carried a quote from J. Carl Oppen, chief examiner of the Service Commission, stating “If [Williams] doesn’t do it in a week’s time, I’m going after him.” It went on: “Dr. Brailey reiterated yesterday that she won’t sign. . . . To sign and thus comply with the Ober Act would mean co-operation ‘with a law which persecutes minorities,’ Dr. Brailey has said.”31

Miriam was discharged from her position on March 20. A letter to the editor
following her ouster protested that the citizens of Baltimore had been robbed of one of their most valuable servants.\textsuperscript{32} The personal cost to Miriam, in her defense of civil and personal liberties, must have been enormous. Although her future at Hopkins appeared unthreatened, Miriam was a single woman at mid-life for whom security must have been a paramount concern. Coming from a poor farming family, and having been self-reliant for so long, she would have been well aware of the precariousness of her situation. Moreover, her eyesight, never strong, would only weaken as she grew older, putting her entire livelihood at risk.

Miriam continued to work with Janet Hardy on her book on the Harriet Lane study, and to prepare a lawsuit against the City of Baltimore. News of the suit hit the newspapers on December 22, 1950, and Miriam was quoted as saying she “is not, and never has been as subversive person as those words are commonly understood.” In the suit, she argued that it was her “religious conviction that to sign the . . . statement required by the Subversive Activities Act would violate her religious principles and would be contrary to the fundamental principles of Christianity as interpreted by her and by members of the Society of Friends.”\textsuperscript{33} Filed by attorneys John H. Skeen Jr., Jess G. Schiffman, Eugene Feinblatt, and H. Warren Buckler, the suit also named Huntington Williams. It stated that “subversive activities,” as defined in the Act, were “unclear, ambiguous, obscure, vague, and uncertain.”\textsuperscript{34} The court was asked to rule that Miriam’s dismissal from her job was null and void and that the Ober Act was unconstitutional. The Maryland State Archives holds no record of the outcome of the case, but there is a demurrer filed by Dr. Williams, which, in effect, agreed that although the facts as stated in the lawsuit were correct, no legal action could be taken as the Ober Act had already withstood the test of constitutionality in earlier cases.\textsuperscript{35} It is likely that the court agreed. Miriam never returned to her job with the Health Department. Of note is the fact that the Ober Act was rendered ineffective by an ACLU Supreme Court case in 1967, but was not repealed until 1978.\textsuperscript{36}

In February 1951 Miriam was named Assistant Professor of Epidemiology. Soon after, she became Assistant Professor in Pediatrics and Medicine and Director of the Tuberculosis Section of the Chest Clinic at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. She worked to obtain money for the chest clinic and in 1954 the Maryland Tuberculosis Foundation awarded Hopkins $14,000 for the clinic’s newly organized tuberculosis program, which was cited for education, research, and consultation. The Baltimore City Health Department served as one of the program’s coordinators.\textsuperscript{37}

Miriam continued to work on her summary of the Harriet Lane Study, and she and Janet Hardy received money from the Commonwealth Fund to support their efforts. George W. Comstock, M.D., Dr. P.H., Professor of Epidemiology at Hopkins and a student in that department during the 1950s, remembered Miriam during those years and recalls, “It would have been impossible not to like and respect” her.\textsuperscript{38} In addition to her professional world, Miriam was a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (“working for a durable peace”), the Consumers Cooperative (“building
toward a more sound economic order”), and, of course, the Society of Friends, to which she stated she was “contributing all I can to civilian relief and to improved international relations.” By this time, Baltimore’s public schools were undergoing desegregation, and public transportation was no longer restricted, but hotels and restaurants were still segregated. In June 1957, *The Interchange*, the local newsletter of the Society of Friends, reported that she attended a conference on race relations in Wilmington, Ohio. Attending the conference with Miriam was Doris Shamleffer, who along with Miriam lost her job when she refused to sign the oath of loyalty required by the Ober Act.

In 1958, *Tuberculosis in White and Negro Children, Volumes I and II*, was published for the Commonwealth Fund by the Harvard University Press. Dr. Janet Hardy wrote the first volume on the clinical aspects of tuberculosis; Miriam wrote the second, subtitled *The Epidemiologic Aspects of the Harriet Lane Study*. The book retailed for $4.50. In her foreword, Miriam acknowledged that the tuberculosis era of the United States was passing, thanks to the emergence of antimicrobial treatment, but she noted that “Many countries . . . are still struggling with a high prevalence of tuberculosis for which little or no specific medication can be obtained. In both kinds of situations guidance is needed from long-term studies as to those factors and conditions which may be expected to alter prognosis in the tuberculous child.” She could not know the disease would reemerge as a consequence of AIDS.

During the spring or summer of 1958, Miriam began visiting the Bruderhof Community of Oak Lake, near Farmington, Pennsylvania. It is possible that she learned about the Bruderhof through the Society of Friends, as Bruderhof leaders occasionally visited other religious organizations with similar spiritual foundations or invited such visitors to their communities. The Bruderhof and the Quakers shared concerns for social justice and peace, as well as peace among races. The group was modeled after the first Christian churches, sharing property and work. Members focused their lives on the discipleship of Christ, serving God and humanity. The movement, with similarities to the Anabaptists, originated in Germany about 1920, moved to Britain, then to Paraguay, and finally to the United States. At the time Miriam became interested, there were eight Bruderhof communities in existence worldwide.

By now, Miriam had achieved a number of professional goals: she had witnessed the conquering of the disease—at least in the U.S.—that she had spent her working life fighting, she had published the findings of the twenty-year family study she had conducted, and she had proven herself to be a successful fundraiser for the clinic she directed. Perhaps now it was time to move on to personal goals. In a letter she shared with several friends, Miriam expressed her reasons for her plan to leave Hopkins and join the Bruderhof: “this group life would provide for me a plan for my old age, and at the same time allow me to participate in an ideal I have always believed in and never had the chance or the courage to try.”
It is interesting that someone so fiercely independent and with such strong leadership ability as Miriam had would choose to join a closed, male-dominated society. She had knowledge of the world and of the intricacies of science that would seem at odds with the more pastoral Bruderhof experience. But at this stage Miriam seems to have been determined to concentrate on her faith and her service to God. Although there is no reason to doubt its absence from her perspective in her previous work, faith was now her daily focus. In that same letter to friends, she went on to say:

For me this movement is a much-needed demonstration of unity among widely differing cultural groups where people with a deep motivation work for each other instead of competing against each other. I have for years longed to try such an experiment in living, and now I have found a group without cant or false piety which attracts me. As you probably know, I will be fifty-nine next January. My specialty is a narrow one and I can stay on here only as I succeed in getting the annual grant for my work in tuberculosis.

On April 1, 1959, Miriam formally resigned her positions at Johns Hopkins and left Baltimore to begin her new life at the Bruderhof Community at Oak Lake and the final chapter of her life.

In 1964, a Mount Holyoke classmate visited Oak Lake and wrote to their alma mater describing Miriam as “a rare spirit,” living in an atmosphere of “joy, peace, self-denial and love for fellowman,” who, in spite of her deteriorating vision, was “radiant with happiness and beloved by all the great family she serves.” She went on to write, “This is a classmate who has found her proper sphere.”

In early 1965 Miriam traveled back to Baltimore and Johns Hopkins for cataract surgery. A week or two after the operation, she suffered a vitreous hemorrhage in one eye and soon developed sympathetic ophthalmia in the other, despite removal of the first eye. Unable to provide medical care to the Oak Lake community any longer—“No longer practicing medicine,” she wrote to former Hopkins colleague Charlotte Silverman in December 1967—“and it’s a real relief to shed that responsibility.” Miriam was moved to Woodcrest, the Bruderhof community near Kingston, New York.

Miriam Esther Brailey died suddenly of pneumonia on April 8, 1976, in a nursing home near the Woodcrest community and she is buried in the cemetery there. Her obituary in the fall 1976 Mount Holyoke Alumni Quarterly states that “Miriam was a prominent Quaker, peace worker, a great scientist, and a practical philanthropist. 1922 regards her with affection and high esteem.”

But 1976 does not quite mark the end of Miriam Brailey’s story. Her work on childhood tuberculosis continues to be cited, as in the 1995 JAMA editorial: “In her famous studies in Baltimore, MD, in the prechemotherapy era, Miriam Brailey showed that 16% of black children and 8% of white children infected with M tuberculosis
before 3 years of age ultimately died of tuberculosis. In 2000, the Department of Epidemiology of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health established the Miriam Brailey Scholarship Fund to support student research. More recently—and as recently as 2013—her writings on childhood tuberculosis and the findings of the Harriet Lane Study are being still cited in peer-review journals.

A friend who visited Miriam in the months before her death said that while she was frail physically, she remained mentally alert. “My strongest impression of her was of a person who already had one foot in heaven. She seemed sad, but at peace.” One would suppose that a woman who, throughout her life, had demonstrated the courage of her convictions, would have little to fear from what death might bring.
NOTES

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1. Allen G. Brailey, nephew to MEB, personal communication, dated October 28, 1998. Information from the Mount Holyoke College registrar’s office records concerning Miriam Esther Brailey, Class of 1922, provided at the request of the author. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.

2. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. Candidates for Degrees, June 13, 1922.

3. Indeed, in a 1936 letter to Mr. Alva Morrison, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Mount Holyoke, she protests the board’s decision to appoint a man president of Mount Holyoke: “Is not a woman best suited to direct the intellectual development of women…A woman president is bound to care more deeply and constantly for women’s advancement than is a man president, however able and scholarly the man may be.” Brailey to Alva Morrison, July 20, 1936, from the Mount Holyoke Online Archives.


8. The Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Class of 1930.


12. Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, Class of 1931.


15. Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke College, Alumnae Biographical Record for Miriam Brailey, December 21, 1954, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.
27. “One Quaker Fired under Ober Law,” ibid., March 15, 1950. The other two women were Elizabeth Haas, an employee of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and Doris Shamleffer, a personnel examiner for the State of Maryland. Miss Shamleffer was the first of the three to have her job terminated for not signing the oath.
43. Brailey to Charlotte Silverman and others (excerpt). November 24, 1958, Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.
44. Some might argue that description fits the Hopkins that Miriam knew. A perusal of the 1951 issue of the *Johns Hopkins Magazine* honoring the university’s seventy-fifth anniversary includes no photographs taken specifically of women. *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, January–February 1951.

45. Brailey to Charlotte Silverman and others, November 24, 1958.


47. S. Milton Zimmerman, M.D., of the Catskill Bruderhof, personal communication, July 1, 1998. Dr. Zimmerman shared the responsibility for the health care of Bruderhof members with Miriam Brailey from 1959 until she retired from that position in 1965. In his letter he describes her as a “delightful person . . . quite a strong personality with humor, wit, and originality, was well as exhibiting humility and wisdom.”


Flight of the Phoenix: Fire and the Modernization of Salisbury, Maryland

JAMES R. HESEN

Though natural disasters have plagued cities and towns for thousands of years, fire was the most deadly threat in the nineteenth century, when cities were constructed mainly of wood. Twice within twenty-six years, fire struck Salisbury, Maryland. Two massive blazes, the first in 1860, and the second in 1886, nearly destroyed the town, and both could have been prevented. But following the 1860 fire, Salisburians, whose firefighting methods were already primitive compared to other areas and who had been caught unprepared once, failed to adopt any legislation or take preventive measures to protect their town against another ruinous conflagration.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Salisbury hardly qualified as a thriving town. Located beside the Wicomico River and numbering only five hundred residents, it resembled a “quaint village in the English countryside,” with the “town” comprising its business and shopping district.¹

Then, on the night of August 9, 1860, the bell in St. Peter’s Episcopal Church began to peal, signaling the start of the first great fire in the middle of town.² Residents rushed into the streets to witness the blaze that had begun in F. Newman’s building and soon spread from Oliver Tilghman’s on the south side to the corner of Boundary Street toward Charles Whitelock’s home. A dozen or so men tried to extinguish the fire with a manually operated pump drawing water from a wooden tank four feet high and three feet square, that had been purchased by private buyers, but they were so poorly trained that they placed the device too close to the flames, which quickly destroyed it. A bucket brigade formed to douse the flames, but not before Purnell Toadvine and Dr. William Rider, both substantial landowners, sustained heavy losses.³ Though both were insured, their insurance companies would not cover their losses. Those families that did not lose their homes “extended their hospitality to the homeless sufferers.” The fire eventually destroyed or damaged forty-seven homes, offices, and stores. The J. Byrd Hotel was leveled. Three of Salisbury’s drygoods stores were consumed, including but not limited to: William

The author teaches U.S. History at James M. Bennett High School and Salisbury University.
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Birkhead ($5,000), Rider and Toadvine ($8,000–$9,000), and S. C. Seabreeze ($5,000 insured). C. Whitelock's store was destroyed. After the fire subsided, looting began. Business owners like William Birkhead, Rider and Toadvine, and S. C. Seabreeze not only lost property in the fire, but most of their goods and produce not harmed by the flames were stolen. Businesses were left in ruins and several families were homeless. Fortunately, no lives were lost. All that remained of some dwellings were the stone chimneys and some wooden frames. Only St. Peter’s Episcopal Church survived, thanks to its stone exterior. Personal records and newspapers estimated the total losses at $500,000. After this unexpected disaster, Salisbury had only one thing to do—rebuild.

The introduction of the railroad to the Delmarva Peninsula played a large part in that rebuilding, for Salisbury could now ship and receive goods for reconstruction. As early as January 1860, the Eastern Shore Railroad Company was expanding towards Salisbury. Now furniture, clothing, farm equipment, construction tools, and household goods could be obtained quickly and at low prices, and businesses that had been confined to trade in Salisbury could now reach outside markets. Farmers could sell perishable goods such as poultry, strawberries, livestock, tomatoes, and potatoes to Wilmington, Philadelphia, and New York, greatly increasing revenue.

Another rail line, the Wicomico and Pocomoke Railroad Company (WPRC), completed its initial stages in 1868 with depots in Salisbury and Berlin, Maryland. After the Civil War, lines were directed through Salisbury to Berlin for better transportation of goods. With access to such cities, Salisbury would be able to get the goods it needed to rebuild. After the railroad was nearly completed, large cities like Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Detroit wanted to build factories on the isolated areas of the Eastern Shore. In 1870, appropriations were given to Colonel Leonard Malone, a local Salisbury attorney, “to entice capitalists to settle in this section with factories.” Unfortunately, the WPRC’s time in the Salisbury area would be short-lived. Eventually, the railroad failed and rail companies from New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk took over the area.

Salisbury began to rebuild itself immediately after the fire. Mass production of hardware, window sashes, and doors began. Sawmills in Wicomico County produced affordable lumber products and equipment. Items, like household goods and furniture, were now constructed by artisans in Salisbury, making those goods more affordable. The beginning of the Civil War, however, hindered Salisburyians in their efforts to reconstruct their town. Anything needed for the war effort, such as steel rods and manpower, was taken for military use, but even though men from Salisbury left to enlist in the armies, building continued.

Although plans for fire prevention and fire codes should have been enacted to prevent future fires from destroying Salisbury again, none were devised. The town government paid no attention to the condition of the streets and employed previous layouts in the rebuilding. According to 1870–1880 Wicomico County census
records, most residents were farmers and paid laborers. There is no mention of a fire marshal, fire department, or public works positions. Salisburyians ignored the opportunity to play an active role in fire prevention.\textsuperscript{14}

Salisbury needed an organized fire department but delayed creating one. In August 1872, volunteers who helped extinguish the 1860 fire reorganized the fire company and purchased a small hand engine with tax revenues. A minor fire at Jackson’s Mill in 1879 convinced the people of Salisbury the town needed an organized fire department. Residents realized that it was easier to extinguish a fire with modern techniques and showed interest in fire prevention measures. Using local funds, they created the town’s first hook and ladder company. George C. Hill was named fire chief. The new Salisbury Volunteer Fire Department also purchased a Silsby Steamer, the \textit{L. P. Almond}, which gave them the confidence to combat any fire.\textsuperscript{15}

Such confidence proved ill advised. On Sunday, October 17, 1886, as church bells rang, the bells quickened to that of a fire signal. People rushed into the streets to find Toadvine’s Livery Stable, located two blocks from the center of town, fully ablaze. Although the origins of the fire were unknown, witnesses claim the long drought on the Eastern Shore helped to ignite it.\textsuperscript{16} The volunteer firefighters brought out the \textit{L. P. Almond}, but, because it had been poorly maintained—it had not been oiled

\textit{Salisbury, 1886. This bird’s eye photograph was taken with the Wicomico River in the foreground and the town in ruins in the background. This photograph shows the fire’s devastation. With only chimney stacks remaining in some cases, the fire destroyed much of the town. Residents began to question whether or not to rebuild the town or to move elsewhere. (Richard Cooper Collection, Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture.)}
properly and the valves stuck—the steamer did not work. Oddly, no one watching this conflagration bothered to start a bucket brigade while it was small enough to contain. The fire reached Toadvine’s Livery Stable and spewed embers toward Booth's Carriage Shop across the street, making it impossible for a bucket brigade to succeed. Nevertheless, a bucket brigade did eventually form and began drawing water from the Wicomico River, but by then the fire had spread and increased in intensity, causing the brigade to retreat. When Seabreeze’s Livery Stable on Main Street burst into flames, “the destruction of at least part of Salisbury became a certainty.”

By about 7:30 p.m., the fire had moved across Dock Street and was heading toward the business district. Within an hour, thirteen buildings between Dock Street and the river had been destroyed. Belatedly, Alex Toadvine, president of the town commission, telegraphed the surrounding communities for assistance. Citizens thought the fire could be contained in the section that it had just destroyed, but a gunpowder explosion spread the flames across Main Street. By 9:00 p.m. the Opera House, National Bank, and other homes and stores were on fire. Division Street became “the primary means of escape.” In 1961, Dr. George Handy Wailes, witness to the “Great Fire,” stated that, “there was one big flame coming up Back Street.”

Shortly after nine, Crisfield’s fire department arrived and went into action with its 1884 Clapp and Jones Steamer, saving the courthouse. Volunteers from Pocomoke City arrived by special train and were assigned to control the fires in the lumberyards. (Pocomoke City did not have an organized fire department until 1888, yet they helped as best as they could.) Wilmington’s Reliance and Friendship, both modern steamers, arrived sometime after midnight to assist the struggling Pocomoke volunteers. The railroad had saved Salisbury by bringing in Crisfield, Pocomoke City, and Wilmington firemen. The following morning, the repaired L. P. Almond began putting out small fires along Camden Street. To help Salisburians who had lost their homes and belongings, a relief committee organized, to which Baltimore became a major donator of foodstuffs. According to local newspaper reports, no one was seriously injured, but some women went into convulsions from stress.

The fire destroyed more then twenty-two acres and 209 buildings, leaving little standing within the city except stone chimneys. Poplar Hill Mansion, the oldest structure in the town, aided several homeless families, “[taking] in more than it could hold.” Total damages were estimated at over one million dollars, with fire insurance covering less than half that amount. Most of the sawmills and lumber companies were not affected by the conflagration, but the Jackson Brothers steam saw and planing mill burned. When many businesses decided not to rebuild, threatening the town’s economic recovery, a commission made up of Salisbury’s trusted citizens—Jason Cannon, E. E. Jackson, William Tilgham, Thomas Humphreys, and Stanley Toadvine—formed to resurrect Salisbury, and met on Thursdays to accept building permit applications. Unfortunately the “Great Fire” of 1886 cost Salisbury not only homes and businesses but also its colonial heritage.
Along with the numerous businesses that did not want to rebuild, many townspeople moved to a nearby area called Newtown. Here they felt more at ease when rebuilding their homes. Many of the new houses reflected the change in architectural designs of the late nineteenth century. Houses in the northern side of town, in the newly developed area known as “Newtown,” were bigger and better. Wealthy merchants and shop owners imported “clothes, jewelry, fancy furniture, and all manner of goods from Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.”

The 1886 fire made it clear that Salisbury simply had to take measures toward fire protection. Insurance companies did not want to extend fire coverage. A year earlier, in 1885, representatives from the Sanborn Company, a New York business that created maps for fire insurance purposes, had come to Salisbury to survey the town and found several serious problems with its infrastructure. First, they deemed water facilities “not good”; Salisbury had no fire hydrants on either side of the street in the busiest section of town. With the expansion of business in that district, someone should have thought of installing hydrants, but the only water sources the Sanborn Company noted were the Wicomico River and Humphrey’s Branch, both too far away to protect the heart of the town. The Sanborn surveyors told Salisbury
officials they had to institute measures such as fireproof construction, firewalls, and increasing the space between buildings. Citywide water sources and pumps had to be considered.

After the fire of 1886, these recommendations led to the establishment of a public works department. New zoning laws required “inflammable materials for all buildings in the center of town.” Salisbury officials also tried to rectify the problem of the city’s narrow streets, some of which were less than thirty feet wide and contributed to the losses of 1886. Camden, Church, and High streets were less than thirty feet across, unlike Princess Anne, where some streets were as wide as seventy feet, making it much easier to contain a fire. Building safety was also addressed. Of all the buildings lost in the fire, only four had been built using brick. Those destroyed had been framed and built up with wood instead of being reinforced with brick or slate, and, worse, those along Main Street had been connected to one another. With few alleyways, fires could spread easily. Most of the structures had been one story, with no access to the roof, so that no one could escape to safety via the roof or other buildings nearby. Furthermore, looking at the Sanborn maps of 1885, one can see that very few roofs were peaked. If a building with a peaked roof caught fire, reinforcement on the adjoining sides of the roof would make a cave-in less likely. Most Salisbury roofs were flat, lacked structural support, and had let the fire spread easily.

Shortly after the fire, in late October 1886, Salisbury officials requested that the streets be widened and that special ordinances be enforced concerning buildings, chimneys, flues, and roofs. New building materials would also have to be located. Old growth pine, which surrounded Salisbury in a radius of thirty to forty miles, was in great demand. Lumber companies expanded. Before the fire only two lumber companies existed, L. E. Williams and E. E. Jackson. After the fire, in 1888, four more companies were established: G. H Toadvine Planing Mill, W. A. Washington Company Planing Mill, Mitchell and Merrell, and W. B. Miller and Company. The owners of these lumberyards wanted to capitalize on the rebuilding effort.

Sawmills also prospered. Built on various ponds in the eighteenth century, they were now gradually upgrading from water power to electricity. The importation of lumber from South Carolina and Virginia created “a commercial lumber business which sold locally as well as shipped to all points in the countryside.” Jackson Brothers became the leading manufacturer of lumber flooring and siding by the end of the nineteenth century. Providing 28,000,000 board feet of lumber to the Standard Oil Company alone, Jackson Brothers was a thriving business, employing three hundred Salisburyans to do the work.

The final problem that had to be dealt with was the establishment of usable water systems. Within days after the fire, town officials discussed straightening and broadening Main Street. Roads in downtown Salisbury today reflect this effort. At the time, heavily traveled roads were lined with oyster shells, which stabilized the sandy subsoil and established a hard base. The labor was overseen by the town’s
bailiff, who organized men into work groups. Thirty-five gas streetlights were purchased from the Washington Automatic Gaslight Company of Baltimore at ten dollars apiece and placed along the streets. Unfortunately, when the streets were widened, wars erupted over property barriers set up by landowners. Twenty years after the second fire, a commission headed by T. Chalkley Hatton began to design brick streets downtown.

The other project taken on by the townspeople of Salisbury was the construction of water systems and drainage lines. George W. Parsons headed the drainage system project along Main Street. Gutters were built along Dock Street that emptied into the Wicomico River. As early as 1888, a company from New York introduced a water system in Salisbury. Cast iron mains were laid in the streets and a water station on Mill Street pumped from shallow wells underground.

In 1894, the Maryland legislature helped Salisbury’s efforts to promote fire prevention by appointing a fire marshal, whose job was to investigate the causes and circumstances of all fires in Maryland. Headquartered in Baltimore, he traveled throughout the state with the power to subpoena witnesses and take their testimony. Fire insurance companies acted as a liaison between their assigned areas and the fire marshal. The companies informed the marshal of the amount of insurance, the value of the property burned, and the amount of the claim adjusted after each fire. Fire marshals, along with fire insurance companies, were now an important force in preventing fires throughout Maryland. Insurance companies had a large role in making improvements to Salisbury.

The Sanborn Company performed another survey on Salisbury in 1888. This time, the survey produced better results. The town, now home to 3,900 residents, owned one steam engine capable of extinguishing another fire, assuming it did not get out of control. Roads had been improved. Main Street was now forty-five feet across, Camden Street, thirty-five, and Church Street now measured a full thirty feet wide. An extensive water system placed underground contained five miles of piping and the city had a contract with the Waterworks Company to ensure that the system worked efficiently. The pump on Mill Street had a capacity of over 260,000 gallons. Newly constructed buildings were bigger and had space between them. Roofs and chimneys were inspected regularly and rooftops were pitched. Unlike other areas, Salisbury had had to face two disastrous fires before fire prevention and building codes were changed. Other regions in Maryland had also experienced fires, but they had learned from their misfortunes and were able to fight the fires effectively, with minor damages.

Crisfield, Trappe, Ocean City, and Baltimore were far more advanced in fire fighting skills and fire prevention than Salisbury was even after its two disastrous fires. Crisfield, which was nearly destroyed by fire in 1883, rebuilt using concrete and brick foundations for homes and buildings. J. P. Tawes and Brothers was the first building in Crisfield built solely of brick. Other buildings, like the Hodson Building, were
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[Text continues]

built of a mix of concrete and oyster shells. Salisbury, given its past experiences, should have followed Crisfield’s example and created new buildings out of the same materials used in the town. Above all, Crisfield, which assisted in the 1886 blaze, had an organized fire department, which helped save that town three years earlier.

In 1911, Trappe experienced a fire similar to those that had struck Crisfield and Salisbury. It began on August 1 at Clark and Kirby’s Farm Equipment store. Within minutes, a bucket brigade was formed. Those involved climbed surrounding buildings and stood atop roofs as they threw water down onto the fire, but because the area was so dry, the fire spread quickly. Unlike Salisbury, though, Trappe had a working water pump stationed across the street from the fire site. All told, the fire leveled three houses before it was extinguished and cost $30-50,000 in damages. The significance is that even though there was no organized fire department on site, the bucket brigade, with its brave members, extinguished the fire with the methods that they had available. Salisburyans had not been as quick to act as Trappe’s citizens had. Had Trappe not acted to extinguish the fire as quickly as it did, that town would have met the same fate that Salisbury did in 1886.

With the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Sinepuxent Bay to the west, Ocean City would seem to have been in a position to be carefree about a fire, but in December 1925 the Eastern Shore’s main tourist attraction suffered its first recorded fire. Beginning in the Eastern Shore Gas and Electric Company, the flames spread quickly, driven by strong northwest winds. Firemen from Salisbury, Berlin, Snow Hill, and Pocomoke City responded, only to find the town’s fire hydrants frozen. They had to rely on water from Sinepuxent Bay, but not before the fire consumed most of Ocean City’s seasonal businesses. “Candyland,” a popular attraction, alone suffered losses totaling $7,000, a significant amount of money at the time. But as in Trappe, inexperienced firefighters saved a town before it burned completely. Trappe and Ocean City had learned from Salisbury’s misfortunes and saved their homes and businesses with minimal loss.

In 1904, Baltimore experienced a conflagration that destroyed most of its business district. When rebuilding, Baltimore, like Salisbury, widened its streets—to at least fifty feet—replacing the former clutter of streetcar lines and traffic. Drainage systems were constructed along the sides of the streets. Before the fire, drainage systems had run under homes and businesses, causing buildings to begin to rot and decay.

Numerous examples of “trial by fire” existed throughout the United States in the nineteenth century, and because Salisbury is such a small town, it is possible to survey other areas and apply some perspective to its two fires. Rochester, New York, then a small city, was plagued multiple times by major conflagrations. Property regulations preceded the organization of a fire department. The first “Bye-Laws” were implemented in 1817, directing residents to keep their fireplaces and chimneys in “good repair” and to have water buckets readily available. In 1827, the Rochester city government compiled fifty-four ordinances, nineteen of which pertained to fire
safety and prevention. After the Steam Gauge & Lantern Works fire claimed thirty-eight lives, more amendments were passed in an effort to prevent further loss of life. The city fire marshal became a full-time paid city employee by the 1860s and his primary duties included routine inspections of livery stables, theaters, and factories. These were all places where people gathered to conduct daily business and had to be deemed safe for daily use. Most interesting is the fact that, when new building projects were in the works, the fire marshal had to obtain a copy of the building layouts to review, inspect, and approve for building to continue. This is a major step in early fire prevention and the role of the fire marshal, at least in Rochester, was a critical step in the right direction. Volunteer fire companies also formed in the mid-nineteenth century, but volunteer companies regarded fires as a competitive sporting event. With the Minerva Block fire on August 17, 1858, the volunteer presence diminished in Rochester.44

Cities and towns went through major changes after disastrous conflagrations destroyed parts of Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore. Christine Rosen, author of The Limits of Power, explains why cities and towns have or have not modified their traditional building methods. During the 1820s, Americans built small buildings of one to three stories, formed in a cluster style for better use of space, much like latter-day townhouses or rowhouses, which made them easy targets for fire damage. Later, as cities grew larger with more business, industry, and residents, their design changed. Buildings were now expanded horizontally to increase the amount of space inside, and vertically to accommodate changing land-use patterns. Most important to this study is that growth in cities also meant constructing buildings to protect against fires. Earlier crowding had made it easy for fires to spread. That is exactly why Salisbury had to be destroyed by fire twice before the lesson took root. Fireproof materials replaced flammable wood, and routes of fire escape were introduced.45

Rosen also offers some insight as to why cities were sometimes unable to protect themselves from fires and replace damaged or destroyed structures with better construction. Replacing buildings is an expensive process. Beginning around 1860, building codes and tenant laws required the use of expensive construction materials to protect against fires. A property tax added to the cost of improving structures in several cities. In areas like Salisbury, though, where reassessments were rarely performed, property owners could tear down old structures and build safer ones without necessarily increasing their property taxes.

Another hurdle in rebuilding Salisbury was the presence of a large group of wealthy landowners whose interest in renovating the land was minimal. Well-to-do families, after having lost significant property holdings in both fires, were reluctant to rebuild again downtown. New, Victorian-inspired communities like the Newtown and Camden neighborhoods were built close enough to downtown Salisbury that residents could conveniently conduct business, yet were far enough away to let them feel safe from another conflagration.
A lack of technological advancements also hindered rebuilding projects. There was always the risk that new materials like iron and steel would be unavailable. In many cities, wrought cast iron became an important building material, but in rebuilding modern structures steel was the material of choice. In other parts of the United States and in Great Britain, “fireproof” construction eased the minds of builders. In Britain, builders adopted “the iron and brick arch system of construction,” commonly associated with fireproof construction. In British mills, a popular method of construction consisted of an iron framework “filled in with large flag stone,” making the building less flammable in the event of a fire. Concrete also reduced a building’s vulnerability. The 1870s brought the wider use of steel to many parts of the United States, after which concrete reinforced with steel became an effective building material.46

Finally, the establishment of public water facilities made fire fighting in cities and towns easier. Public water sources were important not just for firefighting but in street cleaning and drinking as well. In older cities, old iron pipes, dating from the 1820s, had to be replaced with stronger materials. Pipes were also enlarged to increase water pressure, which was especially important when fighting fires in tall buildings. More fire hydrants were placed throughout cities for quick and easy use. In Rochester, during the 1870s, city engineers built two waterworks, a “network of high-pressure water mains supplying river water to 105 fire hydrants in the downtown section.” This “Holly System,” as it was called, enabled firefighters to throw a stream of water several hundred feet into the air. The Holly System let firefighters stand clear of the blaze, reducing the chance of casualties, and with more water disbursed at the heavy rate, fires could be quelled more rapidly, reducing the chance that a fire would spread and cause more damage. Like Salisbury, Rochester experienced a population increase during the later part of the nineteenth century and it “demanded constant expansion and refinement of its fire protection efforts.”47

The first fire in 1860 proved that Salisbury had to do something about fire prevention, but only in 1879 did the town attempt to create a fire department that could effectively fight fires. But that gave the town a false sense of security. The fire department was woefully unprepared to deal with the second fire, in 1886, that leveled the city. Other towns and cities throughout the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proved to be far better prepared to fight major fires than Salisbury was. Crisfield, Trappe, Ocean City, and Baltimore all proved to be better equipped and trained. Because of its lack of initiative and energy, instead of burning once Salisbury had to face fire twice before it could rebuild and become the economic hub of the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland.
NOTES

13. Ibid.


33. “Another Account,” Baltimore Sun, October 19, 1886, Wicomico County Free Library Collection, Folder 2000.08.12.08, Nabb Center; Cooper, Portrait of Salisbury, 216; Cooper, Profile of a Colonial Community, 235.

34. “Salisbury Fire of 1886,” Salisbury Times (Salisbury, Md.), February 27, 1954, Mel Toadvine Collection, Folder 1993.31.47.02, Nabb Center; Cooper, Portrait of Salisbury, 216.

35. Cooper, Profile of a Colonial Community, 235.

36. Cooper, Portrait of Salisbury, 139.


Ladies Union Relief Association, 1862. Loyal Baltimore women coordinated supplies and offered care, initially to the Massachusetts soldiers wounded during the Pratt Street riot. The women’s branch of the Union Relief Association continued their work through the war years and beyond. (Maryland Historical Society.)
On April 19, 1861, citizens brutally attacked the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment in the heart of Baltimore. Four soldiers died and scores were wounded. In reaction, many northern newspapers called for martial retribution against the apparently secessionist populace of Maryland’s largest and most important city. Sarah Mills, a Baltimore resident born in Massachusetts, defended the national loyalty of her fellow citizens to a relative living in the North:

I assure you there are many more loyal men and women in this city than many at the North are willing to believe. . . . When this war is ended in triumph . . . then you will find that Baltimore will have a record of heroism to show that may serve to hide . . . her blushes for the crimes of her unworthy sons.¹

Baltimoreans loyal to the Union rallied to the aid and comfort of United States troops within their city throughout the Civil War. More often it was women, prompted by compassion, benevolence, and a patriotic spirit, who spearheaded soldier relief activities.

Individual, spontaneous and small-scale efforts characterized the relief work of Baltimore Unionist women at the outbreak of the war. Nursing care, the sewing of clothing and other articles, and the provision of food and refreshment dominated their actions. During the riot of April 19, 1861, Anna Marley sheltered members of the Sixth Massachusetts regimental band within her modest alley house, binding their wounds and feeding them.² Marley and many other East Baltimore residents opened their dwellings as safe havens to Northern volunteers that day. In the riot’s aftermath, Adeline Tyler, an Episcopalian Deaconess and nurse, aided two injured

¹ Dr. Schoeberlein serves as the Archivist of Baltimore.
Massachusetts volunteers for a month. In May 1861, as the first Maryland Union regiments formed, women whose sewing circles had made clothing for the city’s destitute in the previous decades gathered to sew haversacks and other useful articles. Sometimes women greeted and offered water to thirsty Union volunteers. A soldier noted, “In several places women, generally Negroes, came out with pails of water.” When wounded Massachusetts troops borne on stretchers passed through Baltimore on route to a hospital, ordinary citizens bought oranges and other refreshments at a nearby city market and offered them to the men. These spontaneous gestures of goodwill and support continued throughout the war. A Connecticut volunteer stationed at Fort McHenry opined, “if the Secesh in Baltimore are the meanest . . . the union [people] are certainly the best and truest.”

Baltimoreans inaugurated their first formalized relief efforts for U.S. soldiers during June of 1861, when thirty-two gentlemen banded together to pledge their own funds and create the Union Relief Association. Though men initiated the effort, its inspiration was attributed to a “few [unnamed] benevolent ladies,” who
subsequently formed their own auxiliary. The association’s initial task consisted of distributing bread and drinking water to every passing regiment on the march between city railroad stations. In September the organizers opened the Union Relief Rooms, two warehouses that had been re-fitted with a kitchen and dining facilities to accommodate one thousand men. “One hundred and fifty thousand men were fed during the first year” and, by war’s end . . . “upwards of one million . . . soldiers, teamsters, refugees [displaced persons], newly released POWS, in addition to large numbers of disabled, discharged, and furloughed men, had been welcomed and relieved.”

The Ladies’ Union Relief Association initially focused its activities on the Union Relief Rooms and, later, the nearby National Hospital across from the Camden Street Railroad Station. Female volunteers played an integral role in the hospital’s efforts by running the site kitchen, assisting the nursing staff, sewing hospital garments, distributing reading and writing material, and occasionally organizing concerts and magic lantern shows.

Similar women’s groups eventually formed in all areas of Baltimore, especially near U.S. military care facilities. These temporary hospitals were placed in prewar open spaces within the city, often city parks or squares. Women from the surrounding neighborhoods, usually between fifty and seventy-five in number, supplemented the nursing efforts and made friendly visits. The East Baltimore branch, for example,
focused its activities at the Patterson Park Hospital and also provided refreshments to the soldiers de-training at the President Street Railroad Station.

A separate German Ladies’ Union Relief Association formed as well. In 1861, many male German immigrants, supporting both abolition and President Lincoln, volunteered for service with the newly organized Maryland regiments. German-American women favored picnics, chorales, and concerts to raise funds for soldier relief. More research is needed to characterize properly the full scope and extent of their actions.

African American women also were very active in relief activities, but their work is not nearly as well documented since Baltimore newspapers did not regularly report on their efforts. In 1863, with the first recruitment of the U.S. Colored Troops in Baltimore, at least two groups did arise. About the Colored Ladies’ Union Association we know very little other than the name of its president, Mary F. Gibbs, a middle-aged dressmaker, widow, and mother of nine. The second group, the First Colored Christian Commission, counted Mrs. Annetta Jordon as one of its leaders. Jordon, an educated and wealthy widow, previously had led the Dorcas Society of Baltimore’s Bethel A.M.E. Church, an organization whose members constructed garments for the poor. Both entities combined their efforts to host an 1864 Thanksgiving dinner for the African American soldiers at McKim’s Mansion Hospital.

Some Baltimore women took their nursing skills to nearby battlefields. Jane Boswell Moore, a white, fourth-generation Baltimorean, was descended from a
family line of women dedicated to nursing soldiers. In 1814, her great-grandmother assisted the wounded in the aftermath of the Battle of North Point. With the onset of the Civil War, the twenty-one-year-old Moore and her mother served as nurses at various battlefield hospitals surrounding Maryland. For four weeks after the Battle of Gettysburg, she toiled at a makeshift field hospital where she aided both the Union and Confederate wounded. During the siege of Petersburg, for two weeks she tended to the relief and suffering of African American soldiers, many of whom were Baltimore residents connected with the 39th Regiment, U.S.C.T.

Other Baltimore women aided the wives and dependents that Maryland soldiers left behind. In early 1862, the Maryland General Assembly passed “An Act for the Relief of the Families of Maryland Volunteers,” which set aside a sum of $50,000 to assist the dependents of Maryland Union soldiers. By May 1863, more than 2,300 individuals living in Baltimore were receiving payments that averaged between six to seven dollars per month.

Elizabeth Streeter, part of a husband and wife team that devoted all its energies to war-related relief, was the first to see the need of supplemental support for families of Union soldiers. In November 1863, Elizabeth assisted in the organization and later presided over the Ladies’ Aid Society for the Relief of Soldiers’ Families, which included in its efforts the relief of all destitute female refugees. The society’s twenty-five members, funded by private and municipal sources, rented a house to accommodate these women and visited more than 1,200 families of soldiers to distribute money, food, clothing, shoes, and fuel. One association officer wrote, “Mrs. Streeter . . . did more than all of the rest of us together. I did not visit much. All of it was disagreeable work. Not nearly so satisfactory as going to the hospitals.”

Some women chose morale-building activities. Elizabeth Graham, who had already organized and supervised the first kitchen at the National Hospital, continued to pursue this work at other Baltimore-based medical facilities until stricken by “camp fever,” which often proved fatal. Upon her recovery, she re-directed her energies toward organizing the Union Assemblies, an effort to promote friendships between Federal officers and the Baltimore citizenry. Military leaders and their wives or companions were the honored guests at a series of social events held in winter. The assemblies provided the occasion for light-hearted diversion and social conversation between citizens and the regimental commanders whose camps were situated throughout the city. The affairs were unlike those experienced before the war: no fancy dresses and the fare was quite modest, often nothing more elaborate than sandwiches and coffee.

Women did more than relief efforts, nursing work, or entertaining the troops. They organized and orchestrated patriotic activities within Baltimore. Flag presentations to Union volunteers from Maryland and elsewhere took place quite frequently. Sometimes, thirty-four teenaged girls, representing the number of states in the Union before the war, each dressed in white, with a red, white and blue sash, added to the
pageantry. They were students, also known as “The Young Misses,” from Baltimore’s Eastern Female High School.

On two separate occasions in August 1863, the city’s African American community made flag presentations to the 4th U.S. Colored Troops, a regiment whose ranks included many Baltimoreans. Ceremonies were held at Camp Birney, a segregated training facility located south of Druid Hill Park. A magnificent silk national flag (costing $75 in 1863—the equivalent of $1,200 in 2012 currency) was given to the regi-
ment in a ceremony that included some three thousand African Americans singing “John Brown’s Body.” In late August, a group calling itself “The Colored Ladies of Baltimore” bestowed a blue silk regimental flag in a program at which Baltimore’s Bethel A.M.E. choir sang “some of their choicest pieces on the occasion.”

Who were “The Colored Ladies of Baltimore?” Sixty-three-year-old Mary A. Prout appears to have headed the flag donation committee. The 1864 Baltimore City Directory lists her as a confectioner, but census sources describe her as a “preceptor” and a “doctoress,” terms that suggest she had some knowledge of medicine. Prout was also a skilled and dedicated fundraiser. “During the early days of Bethel [Church], when it was poor and in debt, she was constantly devising ways and means of relieving it; now leading off in a festival; now an excursion; and now [walking] the streets with a subscription book.” Prout and Annetta Jordon, mentioned previously, were among the all African American group of over five hundred Baltimoreans who presented an expensive pulpit-sized Bible to President Abraham Lincoln in appreciation of his issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

It was the 1864 Baltimore Sanitary Fair that provided the large-scale vehicle for many Unionist women to bring together both benevolent and patriotic impulses. Other cities across the Union previously had held such events. Proceeds from these affairs swelled the coffers of the U.S. Christian Commission and the U.S. Sanitary Commission, the two major national relief organizations for the Union armed forces.

Seventy-six women, many involved with prior soldier relief work, came together to shape and promote the Relief Fair. The fair committee was drawn primarily from white, upper-middle-class, merchant households of the Baltimore area. A sample of more than half the women reveals their median age to be forty-five years. Most were Maryland-born, but some came from states both North and South. Few foreign-born women participated during the early stages, though German women were eventually invited to take part and managed their own fund-raising tables. African American ladies appear to have been excluded. The opening of the Sanitary Fair took place on April 18, 1864, and ran for fifteen days. The great hall of the Maryland Institute in Baltimore was the venue.

Early popular appeals sought to generate widespread publicity for the fair while building momentum for the women’s efforts. Printed circulars requesting fancy goods as well as utilitarian items for sale or raffle at the fair were mailed out; ads were placed in the Baltimore dailies and newspapers elsewhere. The publicity evidently worked. One woman quipped, “Our Fair occupied the whole of the thoughts of every man, woman and child in the State. ‘Sanitary on the brain’ was the prevailing disease.”

Despite the apparent solidarity of the state’s loyal population, the Maryland fair could be termed only a modest financial success when compared with similar 1864 events. The final tally exceeded just over $83,000. In contrast, the New York and Philadelphia fairs each cleared over a million dollars. Yet, those other locales pos-
essed vastly larger and much less politically divided populations. Nonetheless, The Baltimore American newspaper lauded “the noble women of Maryland who have labored so long and so well . . . [they] deserve all praise and honor.”

Before the end of the event’s run, Baltimore’s own African American community expressed an interest in holding a similar fair for the sake of their own sons in uniform. A newspaper reported, “We have heard them express impatience at being held in dependence on their white brethren in this matter.”

The “Colored State Union Fair,” as it was known, was organized in the ensuing months and held in late November 1864. While the identities of the committee members are unknown, it is likely that key individuals belonged to the Bethel A.M.E. Church. With a prewar congregation numbering about 1,400, the third largest of Baltimore’s black churches, it had hosted soldier recruitment meetings and sent several companies of its own men into the ranks. Bethel’s lecture hall, just a few blocks away from the Maryland Institute, hosted the fair.

Notices for the Colored Fair appeared in several of the Baltimore newspapers in mid-November 1864. Solicitations for goods and donations from the general public to benefit sick and wounded soldiers stipulated that the proceeds would be distributed to the men “without distinction of color.” On November 17, Frederick Douglass, in Baltimore as part of a lecture tour, spoke at Bethel with proceeds earmarked for the fair’s coffers. African American women’s societies and church circles prepared their handiwork, and coordinated and ran their fair tables. Meals were provided by a “New England Kitchen,” likely modeled on those in previous sanitary fairs. While detailed descriptions or a report related to the event remain elusive, the whole enterprise netted just over $1,800 for soldier relief.

As the war progressed into its last year and Union victory appeared imminent, some women shifted their focus to caring for disabled veterans and orphans of deceased soldiers. In spring 1865, a women’s group formed called the Maryland Disabled Soldiers Relief Association to explore the prospect of founding a home for disabled, white Union servicemen. With funding from Baltimore City and the dissolved Baltimore branch of the U.S. Christian Commission, a building was secured and the Maryland Home opened that fall. Between twenty and thirty men came to reside in the facility. The female managers ran the place in a business-like manner and enforced strict rules for acceptable behavior, with temperance at the top of the list. Men who did not comply simply were removed. The federal government soon established its own facilities for disabled soldiers and the inhabitants of the Maryland Home were transferred elsewhere. By 1871 the facility had closed down.

Discussion about founding an orphanage for the children of white Union soldiers occurred sometime in 1864. In January 1865, fifteen women petitioned the General Assembly to fund a Union Orphan Asylum to be located in Baltimore. Initial monies came from a combination of state, municipal, and private sources. The orphanage, “under the management of ladies exclusively,” opened in November 1865. The asy-
In 1865, women founded the Maryland Disabled Soldiers Relief Association and opened a home later that year. (Maryland Soldiers Home Record Book, Maryland Historical Society.)
Volunteers petitioned the Maryland General Assembly for money to open a Union Orphan Asylum. (Union Orphan Asylum account book, Maryland Historical Society.)
In account with Emily Walsh, Tues.

18

By amount brought over:
- Cash through Miss Purnance.
- W. H. D. Purnace. $20
- Wm. B. D. Purnace. $5
- Wm. H. D. Purnace (in). $5
- Wm. H. Graham. $5
- Miss O'Hara. $5
- Mt. H. M. White. $10
- W. E. G. Kennedy. $10

Total through Miss Purnance. $60

34.70

Ticket money, Miss Albert. $12.50

2,762.07

Ticket money, Miss Purnance. $147.10

58.00

Ticket money, Miss Purnace. $183.00

82.00

Ticket money, Miss Purnace. $31.00

13.53

Ticket money, Miss Purnace. $20.00

20.00

Cash, Daniel Williams.

Total amount, tax money to date. $310.99
lum housed between seventy and ninety children, with roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. All attended city public schools with four-fifths at the primary level. Religious instruction was provided once a week.27

The Shelter for Orphans of Colored Soldiers and Friendless Colored Children can be counted as another enterprise. A group of white women, many of whom had been involved previously in soldier relief work, founded and managed the shelter, which opened in 1867.28 The children lived in a family-like setting under the supervision of a matron and received daily educational instruction. A female volunteer taught basic sewing lessons. All residents attended worship services as well as Sunday school.

African American organizations and individuals provided significant financial backing, moral support, and the material goods to keep the institution in operation. In September 1867, contributions from the community alone underwrote the entire month’s operating expenses.29 Church congregations, such as the Sharp Street, Orchard Street, and Bethel A.M.E. churches, gave Sunday offerings and held fundraising fairs. Even individuals of very limited means gave what they could. Serena Johnson, possibly a former slave, offered the orphans a simple gift of crackers and rice.30

Maryland Unionist women drew upon their domestic skills to support the physical well-being and morale of U.S. soldiers throughout the Civil War. The socially acceptable, traditional women’s roles of providing nursing assistance, sewing garments, and preparing food were an extension of their domestic and charitable work. Though barred from the political process and military service, they expressed their devotion to the federal government through the organization of patriotic activities and strengthened the martial spirit of Union volunteers and civilians alike. After the war they continued to use their organizational, business, and domestic skills to found orphanages, and a home for disabled soldiers.

The noble nature of their cause allowed women to place demands upon men and the larger unionist society without repercussions regarding their femininity or personal reputation. They stretched the boundaries of their traditional domestic sphere. Drawn into the political questions of the day, Maryland’s Unionist women expressed their firm allegiance to the Union through meaningful acts of benevolence rather than by the thrust of a sword.

NOTES

1. News clipping from the Boston Transcript, May 9, 1861, signed “Mrs. J. H. Mills,” presumably as an attribution. This paper printed Sarah Mills’s letter of May 6, 1861 describing post-riot Baltimore. Adeline Tyler Papers, MS 1450, Maryland Historical Society Library (hereinafter MdHS).


5. William Carey Walker, History of the Eighteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers in the War for The Union (Norwich: Conn.: “Published by The Committee,” 1885), 29.
7. Baltimore Sun, November 26, 1864. See also U.S. Census for 1860.
8. Ibid., November 22, 1864 and U.S. Census for 1860.
10. Some of the other coordinators included Henrietta Toomey, the wife of a barber and Julia Greatfield, a twenty-eight-year-old unmarried dressmaker’s daughter.
16. Baltimore Sun, August 22, 1863.
17. Benjamin T. Tanner, An Apology for African Methodism, 445–46. Other women mentioned include Mary Jane Cephas, a porter’s wife, Mary Jane Hill, a dressmaker, and Elizabeth Cox and Sarah Crane, whose husbands both worked as waiters. Three, possibly four, of the women lived on Raborg Street, just west of the city center.
18. See supplemental provenance material, including lists of subscribers/donors, relating to the “Lincoln Bible,” in the possession of the Franklin Library, Fisk University.
22. The New Era, April 26, 1864. (Souvenir newspaper from the Baltimore Sanitary Fair).
24. See M 1384-1 and M 1387-1, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, MSA SC 2562, Maryland State Archives, for proceeds of New England Kitchen.
25. Baltimore American, January 7, 1865. The final tally was $1,827.34.
26. Maryland Soldiers Managers Record Book, MS. 569, passim., MdHS.
27. Union Orphan Asylum Record Book, MS. 857, passim, MdHS. A review of entries reveals the names and activities of the women.
Hollyday’s route to Virginia in 1862 took him from his family’s home in Queen Anne’s County to Delaware and back through Maryland, where he crossed the Chesapeake Bay at Smith Island. (Detail, Johnson and Ward, Delaware and Maryland, 1864, Maryland Historical Society.)
Running the Blockade: Henry Hollyday Joins the Confederacy

FREDERIC B. M. HOLLYDAY, editor

Henry Hollyday (1836–1921) of Readbourne, Queen Anne’s County, was the son of Henry Hollyday (1798–1865) of Readbourne, who married in 1826 his first cousin, Anna Maria Hollyday (1805–1855) daughter of Henry Hollyday of Ratcliffe, Talbot County, and Ann (Carmichael) Hollyday.

The Hollyday families’ sympathies during the Civil War were on the Southern side. Henry Hollyday’s first cousins, William Henry (1834–1864) and Lamar Hollyday (1841–1934) both served in the Confederate Army, as did other cousins. William Henry Hollyday was killed at the battle of Cold Harbor, June 3, 1864, while serving in the Second Maryland Infantry under General Robert E. Lee. Lamar was perhaps the cousin who accompanied Henry in running the blockade. Henry Hollyday’s mother’s first cousin and brother-in-law was the noted Southern sympathizer, Judge Richard Bennett Carmichael.


The text was taken from the MS written by Henry Hollyday after the Civil War, now in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Robins Hollyday of Easton. It was published, in an abbreviated form, in the Baltimore Telegram and the Easton Star Democrat about two and a half decades ago. [c. 1920]

In the summer of 1862 . . . citizens . . . of the United States . . . were exercised over a Draft, which had been called by President Lincoln, to fill up the decimated ranks of the “Union” or “Northern Army.”

Hundreds of young men, who were liable to be drafted under this order rather than be forced to take up arms against those who were battling for “States Rights,” left their homes, the ease and luxury of social life, to enter the ranks of the “Confederate” or “Southern Army,” although well aware that they would have to endure hardships, and encounter dangers.

In order to reach the “Southern Confederacy,” or cross the line which divided

the two sections and which was disputed ground, during the war, it became necessary to “Run the Blockade.” This article is written in order to give an account of the incidents and dangers of one of these routes.

Among the class of young men, above mentioned, were two, one a resident of New York City; the other for many years a resident of Philadelphia though at the period now referred to he was living in the Town of C—e.1

On the evening of September [—] 1862, these young friends and cousins, met at their old family mansion, situated on Chester River, a fine old English building erected somewhere about the year 1720, one hundred and forty-two years before; here preparations were made for the journey which was to separate them from their friends and relations for many weary, toilsome, days.2 Every precaution had to be observed, to prevent suspicion, on the part of some of the servants of the house, as to what the unusual stir meant, for they were tampered with constantly by extra zealous supporters of the Northern cause, who were ever seeking an opportunity to entrap Southern Sympathizers. So cautiously were these preparations made, that friends visiting the house knew nothing of the movement until sometime after the Blockade Runners had left.3

The next morning, about nine o’clock, after bidding farewell to their loved ones, receiving in return blessings, and prayers for their success, they drove off full of hope for the future, but full of sorrow at leaving, not knowing for how long, or where, the journey would take them; neither of them returned until after the surrender at “Appomattox Court House” April 9, 1865 . . . one being but a wreck of his former self, caused by exposure and want of proper food and clothing while in active service, the other being marred for life at the Battle of Gettysburg July 3, 1863.4

From the hour of leaving these young men were liable to arrest, and if captured would have either been sent to prison, Fort Delaware being the nearest point, or released upon taking an oath of allegiance to the U.S. authorities, an oath which no honorable man could take, who was not in sympathy with its requirements. An ample supply of Gold and a limited supply of clothing were received for the trip and a trustworthy citizen had been secured to drive these travellers to the Town of [Smyrna] Del. where a staunch Southern Sympathizer would entertain them.5 The route to It was void of any interest, the country through which the route lay being thinly settled and not improved, . . . As Sy—a was approached the land showed a higher state of cultivation, and the surrounding country formed a very attractive framing to this village picture.

S—y—a was reached about sundown, when the hospitalities of the friend were

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1 Centreville.
2 “Readbourne,” built circa 1730.
3 The word “ever” is crossed out; emphasis on “extra zealous” is in the original.
4 Henry Hollyday.
5 Crossed out in original and Smyrna substituted.
enjoyed—and such information gained as would aid these travellers in their adventurous journey.

All the arrangements on the upper end of the “underground route” were in complete working order, this friend with whom our travelers stayed, being a volunteer agent, it was therefore safe for them to entrust the nature of their mission to him.

The next morning, the route was continued to Dover, the capital of Delaware, where a Political Convention was being held, and where strangers from all parts of the state had gathered, the presence of our young friends, therefore created no especial notice; being looked upon as visitors for the occasion. It was about midday when Dover was reached and as the train for Seaford did not leave until 3:00 p.m., the interval was taken up with visiting the Convention, the state buildings, and dining at the Hotel.

The citizen, who had driven them across from Md. to this point, being compelled to return to his home, bade adieu to his companions, returning over the ground just travelled. As the time for the cars to leave for Seaford, arrived, these young men approached the Depot, where a sight of “Boys in Blue” “Provost Guards” convinced them that the route had its dangers; these soldiers were stationed at the Depot to intercept suspicious characters; but little did they realize that the train, as it started off southward, contained two Rebels aboard. Great was the relief of our travelers

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6 Indistinct in original.
when they found the train rapidly carrying them away from immediate danger, and onward to Seaford where they would remain that night.

 Being strangers in this section, knowing no one, they depended entirely upon a password for safe transit, and comfortable accommodations; this password proved as valuable to them as the countersign to a picket, when doing duty on the outpost of Army lines.*

 Toward sundown the train reached Seaford and all the passengers had left. Except an elderly gentleman and our travellers, it was deemed most prudent to join [gain?] if possible, some information as to the location of the town—its surroundings, the character of its people, and their sympathizers in this great contest, for there was scarcely one man, woman, or child throughout the entire land, who had not become identified in some way with one or other of the contending forces. Fortunately this elderly gentleman proved to be “the right man in the right place” he being the father-in-law of the gentleman to whom our young friends were to introduce themselves that evening, and from whom such additional information was to be gained, as would insure the safety of their movements the next day.

 If the reader asks was it prudent to thus interview an entire stranger? Might not [it] arouse his suspicions? It is answered that this information was obtained by adopting the Yankee system of asking questions, but not answering any, what is understood by the word “pumping.”

 From the depot our travellers went to the hotel and there ascertained the exact location of Mr. M—u’s residence soon finding the way thither. Upon giving the pass word Mr. M—u cordially received them introducing them to his wife and several agreeable daughters, whose society added greatly to the enjoyment of a first rate supper. This was the last of its kind they were permitted to enjoy for several years.

 About 10 oc on returning to the town, in order to carry out instructions received from Mr. M—u they called on a Doctor, who was agent at this point, he at once responded to the pass word given inviting them into his office where he related many interesting incidents which as agent had come to his notice; as a number of men, who bore an active part in the Southern ranks, had passed over this route.

 They were informed by this agent that in the morn[in]g, a reliable citizen would call on them and invite them to join him in a ride, which invitation they must accept, nothing doubting.

 Returning to the hotel they soon sought rest for the night, not however without doubts as to their perfect security—for so long as they were within reach of telegram and railroads they were liable to arrest but the next day found them safe, ready for whatever arrangement had been made:—true to the word the invitation for a ride was given, and accepted. Mine host of the hotel served [as] a friend and when the

*Soldiers reentering their own lines had to pass through a line of pickets, or sentries, who would softly call out a password challenge for identification and demand a countersign or password before allowing reentry.—Ed.
hour for parting arrived he “speeded the parting guests” and many wishes for their success, slipping into the hands of each a buckshot, which would prove a talisman of safety for the rest of the day.

The gentleman selected as escort and guide for the ensuing day or two was thoroughly acquainted with a . . . route to be taken and into a one horse buggy and our travellers and companions, started off westward, for Dorchester Co. to find a retired spot away from the gaze of Provost Guards to remain their [sic] until a party had been collected sufficiently large to justify the Blockade Captain in setting sail for Virginia.

The road from Seaford to Crotcher’s Ferry, in Dorchester Co—where the Nanticoke River is crossed by all travelers passing between Seaford and Vienna, and where our friends remained several days, passed through a very unattractive section of the Peninsula. “Johnson’s Cross Roads being the only point of note on the route, here the counties of Sussex Del. and Caroline and Dorchester Md. join. Our friend halted here to refresh man and beast, among the persons whom they met was the Sheriff of one of the above mentioned counties and had he known the character of his new acquaintances, would have found accommodations for them in the County Jail for a while at least, he being a violent Union man —

It was not intended that a Sheriff’s authority should check these young men’s steps so onward they went, until a farmhouse was reached just across, the Ferry, this farmer was to be guardian over them during the time they remained in Dor. Co. One fact which presented [prevented] suspicion on the part of those whose duty it was to arrest all doubtful characters was our friends. Both of them had lived so long in Northern Cities that they had acquired both the manners and speech of that section. From observation the writer learned that persons’ homes at least as far as states are concerned can be ascertained by simply noting their manners and speech.

This farm house which gave shelter to our friends was on the public road. And whenever persons were noticed approaching it, from either direction; safety was sought in a neighborly cornfield.

The guide remained, so as to secure their safe passage . . . , over the river to Somerset Co. now Wicomico; but he mist [sic] asking [about] the roads in this section; came very near running himself and companions into the enemy’s camp.

Starting early the next morning, after doing many miles and not reaching the point to which they had been directed, enquiry was made by the way side for Mr. R—h. A house was pointed out but it proved to be the residence of another Mr. R—h who was not the active agent of the “Underground route” and late in the war arrested and placed in prison—for aiding Rebels. On driving up to the house the lady of the [house] being the only person at home, received our friends, and from them learned that her husband was a Union man of the Ultra-Stripe. This lady had

7 Crossed out in original. 8 Raleigh. 9 Her.
a son in the Southern Army, so long therefore as the husband was absent they had nothing to fear.

Having introduced themselves, one as a merchant from N.Y. one a merchant from Phila. on their way to New Market, Cambridge and other points to solicit trade, the escort being a dentist from Salisbury who was known by reputation . . . in the surrounding country, as it was necessary to seem to be on the way to the towns named and the horse’s head was turned in that direction. But as soon as they were out of sight, screened by a cornfield, they turned about and drove rapidly back to Crotch’s Ferry where they had started in the morning and now a new difficulty presented itself. The husband of the servant at the place where our friends were staying belonged to Gov. Hicks’s brother and was a weekly visitor to this house. It was feared he might mention to his master the fact of strangers being in the neighborhood and then arouse his suspicion and lead to the arrest of the merchants . . . it was therefore deemed most prudent to move quarters which was done in the afternoon, the driver and escort returning to Seaford[.]

Another farm house having been selected our friends walked to their new place of retreat[.]. While on their way thither an incident occurred which inspired them with feelings of almost certainty as to the success of their “On to Richmond” movement. They were going along the main road leading to Vienna, enjoying the quiet of a summer’s evening when a solitary rider was seen coming towards them. His appearance indicated that he was a well-to-do farmer, and well advanced in life; something suggested to them that this was the man of all others they most wished to meet. And he too seemed to have had an impression that the persons he was approaching were just the ones he was in search of.

When in speaking distance he halted and as our friends inquired of him was [he] not Mr. R—he replied by simply informing them that they must be at his house “tomorrow evening.” His keen perception had lead [sic] him to a quick and correct conclusion; he seemed to know at a glance that these travellers were passing over [the] “underground route “ and needed his assistance.

It was most prudent to anticipate his orders in view of the risk this colored man’s movements might subject them to, accordingly Sunday night about 8 oc p.m. in a close covered wagon our friends having been joined by several others who were on the same mission, passed through Vienna, and beyond several miles to Noah Raleigh's house situated immediately on the north bank of the Nanticoke River—they were not driven to the house but several hundred yards below where a “dug out” was in waiting to convey them across to Somerset Co. The tide being very low it was some time before the canoe could be gotten off shore into deep water, this delay caused considerable anxiety for the slightest noise might have caused the servants at the house to enquire into [the] meaning of it and lead to the arrest of the entire party, Mr. Raleigh included. Having been safely paddled across the River they were landed in a thicket of briars and were compelled to tramp over sandy ground, through woods,
and swamps to a farm house, not far from Quantico[. ] Here food was furnished and sufficient rest, to enable them to proceed onward to the marshes below, where a place of perfect security could be found, the party consisting of fourteen had assembled, and everything made ready for a sail across “The Bay.”

A Dry Spot was found, in a potato Bin, a place used to store Sweet Potatoes during the winter. Here our friends could avoid the searching eye of Provost Guards and the scorching rays of a summer’s sun, but the mosquitoes had undisputed sway—These Potatoes Bins or Holes are like “Bomb Proofs” built during the war by soldiers, as protection against cannon Balls, and shells from Mortar Guns. They are dug under the ground like vaults, deep enough to enable persons to stand erect, at the same time having sufficient thickness of covering to prevent being broken in by heavy weights.

Fortunately the stay here was not long, or the mosquitoes would not have left blood enough in our friends to have made them of any use as soldiers. These mosquitoes are voracious feeders. The Party had assembled—about sundown to share the dangers of a trip across the Chesapeake[. ] It was composed of our friends; two stout Irishmen from Dor. Co., and two young farmers from the same Co. all of whom bore an active part in the war as members of the “Second Maryland Battalion of Infantry C.S.A.” one of the farmers having been killed during the Battle of “Pegram’s Farm” on the Weldon R. R. Also of a citizen from Washington City who figures as a hero, in his own estimation; but who proved to be a miserable coward; and finally of six citizens of Delaware, whom our friends lost sight of after reaching Richmond; all under command of a brave little Captain named Turpin. The Boat which was to convey this party across to the Va. Shore was a canoe about thirty-three feet long, such as can now be seen on the tributaries of the Chesapeake, in use by that class of oysterman known as tongermen. Capt. Turpin owned the boat and was regularly engaged in the “Blockade” business running passengers and contraband goods, though a very hazardous business, it was very profitable—twenty dollars in gold being the fare each passenger had to pay added to which was whatever profit could be made out of the freight.

The sun was just setting when Captain called his passengers on board and made ready for the cruise, pushing off from shore the boat was rowed along until broader waters were reached and night had thrown a mantle over it so that sails could be used without being seen from land. The route selected was out into the Nanticoke into Tangier Sound thence out into the Chesapeake by way of Smith’s Island and across the Bay in a S.W. course for Little River on the Va. Shore, a point immediately opposite Point Lookout on the mouth of the Potomac River.

Tangier Sound is a broad, shallow expanse of water laying [sic] between the western border of Somerset Co. and several small Islands which skirt along the Eastern side of the Chesapeake. As the Sound was entered, a dark cloud hove up in the west causing Egyptian darkness which was soon followed by a Thunderstorm
and the boat which had been sailing along so smoothly was brought to a sudden halt aground upon the flats miles from either shore.

All hands had to leave the boat and assist in getting her off, for the Virginia Shore had to be reached before daylight. Although the water was shallow, the mud was deep and the passengers found themselves nearly waist deep in water before the boat could be depended on. This however was but a foretaste of the trouble in store for them. After some delay, and much labor and patience the boat was sliding smoothly and rapidly across the broad waters of the Chesapeake about twenty miles wide at this point. The passengers occupied the interval after getting out of the Sound with learning somewhat of the lives of each other and the time passed pleasantly without incident to mar its pleasure; until a light was seen in the distance which seemed to be bearing down upon them and caused some anxiety, all agreeing that it proceeded from a Government Gun Boat on the lookout for Blockade Runners. As the race would be between steam and sail, the danger seemed great and all felt it keenly, fully expecting to be captured or drowned. The Washingtonian seemed more alarmed than the rest for to use his own language “I am too well known in Washington and have recently left there to avoid arrest, if caught would meet a traitor’s death Captain! oh Captain! for God’s sake don’t let them capture us. Any where Captain; up the Bay, down the Bay, only don’t let them capture me.” This supposed danger proceeded from a Norfolk steamer plying her regular route between Baltimore and Norfolk. Once more this party was permitted to sail on smoothly and undisturbed, but the trip was not destined to be free from excitement and danger.

The Virginia Shore was approached just as day was breaking and the shades of receding night might make objects ahead appear dim and indistinct, while those behind stood out clear and against the horizon. The boat was steering for Little River, one of the many streams which course inland from the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River. A dark object was observed ahead, a little to the right just emerging from the cover of the Va Shore. Slowly but surely it was making towards Capt. Turpin while he trimmed his sails and handled his rudder with so much skill that with the aid of a friendly breeze his little boat, with its human cargo, was rapidly sailing for land—the sound of Muffled oars and hushed voices told of danger and that this would be a race for freedom. Capt T. understood thoroughly the situation, knew the qualities of his boat, the navigation of the surrounding water and that land would soon be reached. He advised the men to screen themselves as best they could which could only be done by lying down in the bottom of the boat spoon fashion, a very cramped position.

Soon was heard the call so familiar to all sailors “Boat ahoy” [and] “Heave to” coming from the officer in charge of the Gov’t Barge manned by oarsmen and marines armed with a small howitzer. Again and again this call was made but Captain Turpin feigned deafness in order to gain time. When his boat was crossing the bow of the enemy’s boat about one hundred yards from it came the preemptory order
“Heave too or we’ll fire.” [This] was replied to by one of the men “Fire and be d-m-d to you” and fire they did. The sharp report of the howitzer followed by the whizzing of the leaden missiles which it sent forth told that while the canoe could sail rapidly out of reach, its passengers would be battling with the bold waters of the Chesapeake as well as an armed enemy. The damage from the first shot was very slight only a hole cut in the sail. The race now became intensely exciting, the canoe having the advantage of wind while the Barge had to rely upon oars. The position of the two, canoe and barge, had now changed. Those on the former canoe could plainly see the Barge stand out distinct against the Eastern Sky while those on the canoe were scarcely visible from the Barge. Capt. Turpin had succeeded in gaining considerable distance on the Barge before the second shot could be fired, a solid shot which fell sufficiently near the canoe to splash water on the men. Before a third shot could be made the canoe had reached the River and turning a point of land was soon out of sight and range of the Enemy’s fire. So that this last messenger of death went over and beyond harmless, and our little band was once more safe. Some of the men as the canoe rounded the point preferred to trust to their own strength and jumped overboard, reaching land as best they could. Among this number was our Washington

Hollyday was seriously wounded on July 3, 1863, during the fighting on Culp’s Hill at Gettysburg. (Lithograph, A. C. Redwood, “Charge of the Maryland Infantry (C.S.), Gettysburg. July 3rd 1863.” Maryland Historical Society.)
friend. He must not be slighted in such an account of the encounter with real danger for here his true character was developed whereas before when only supposed danger presented itself, he begged that the Captain would make his escape so that he might not be captured and shot. Now that there really was danger present he begged Capt. Turpin to surrender. “Surrender Captain or we’ll all be killed” forgetting in his great fright that a “traitor’s grave” awaited him.

The men having abandoned the canoe scattered in different directions some to find protection as they thought in a cornfield near by[]. Among this number was the writer of this sketch.

As day broke more fully so that objects could be seen some distance off, A Gun Boat which was stationed at this point and sent out on picket duty was discovered not two hundred yards from this place of retreat sufficiently near to make it dangerous to remain[]. Accordingly it was soon decided to move further inland, following what seemed to be a public road the party was brought out to a sudden halt by the cry of “There they are now, the Yankees.” [The] Washingtonian saw danger on every hand. This time what he supposed to be the enemy, some dark objects which seemed to be advancing toward him, proved to be an old black Sow with a litter of half-grown pigs.

If some of the men had met these dangerous porkers a few years later in the War they would have been quickly slaughtered for daring to put themselves in a soldier’s way. And now the Washington hero (?) disappears from this scene. What became of him the writer never learned but it is quite certain that he never added any strength to the Southern cause.

The young friends and cousins, who were introduced to our readers at the outset, having been separated the entire day met at a farm house where food was furnished, then scouting parties had scoured the country around for stragglers and [...] position of the Yankees. The entire number of passengers assembled here where preparations were made to proceed as far as Heathsville on the way to Richmond.

Heathsville, the county seat of Westmoreland Co. is an old English settlement showing evidence of its age in the weather beaten buildings scattered here and there. The Citizens were full of such hospitality as a war ridden people possessed, for although they had not been visited by [several words undecipherable] the ravages of contending armies nor witnessed the terrible carnage and destruction which nearly every other portion of the state became familiar with the effects of war, were visible in scarcity of young able bodied men, only old men and cripples, women and children were to be seen. Our tired travellers were refreshed by a beverage quite famous in this country but new to them, “Peach and Honey” made from home-distilled Peach Brandy and Honey.

A night was spent here and in the morning arrangements made for the “On to

10 Several words undecipherable.
Richmond” move. Wagons and teams were secured and guides who knew the route for danger still hovered around this party and not until they were within Confederate lines where they were entirely free from danger of capture. The Union Gun Boats controlled most of the rivers and were constantly plying up and down the York and Rappahonick [sic] Rivers which had to be crossed by this party. As the Party were about starting the Sheriff of that County requested that they would take as Prisoners of War, to Richmond two Yankees who had been captured by some citizens, a short time previously. It seems that while our travellers were pushing their way inland, Men in charge of Govt. Barge after capturing Capt. Turpin’s boat carried it to Point Lookout and two soldiers had taken it out into the Potomac to catch some oysters. A stiff wind springing up they were unable to manage the boat and drifted onto the Virginia Shore where they were captured and brought to Heathsville. The Canoe was returned to Captain Turpin minus its contents and doubtless he made many more Blockade Trips in her. The presence of the Prisoners added very much in the onward movements the citizens being rejoiced to see their invaders rendered harmless.

The route selected was via C H crossing the Rappahannock at —— The York at

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11 The localities were left unnamed by the writer.
It required ten days and nights to make the entire trip from Centreville, Md. to Richmond, Va. On the evening of Sept [—] our young friends entered Richmond having passed over a portion of the Battle fields made memorable in the contest between McClellan for the possession and R. E. Lee, for the defense of Richmond. After delivering the Prisoners to the Provost Marshall of Richmond, they repaired to the Spotswood Hotel for rest until the morn[in]g when they enlisted under the Banner of the Red and White in the rank[s] of the 2nd Md. Batt Infantry C.S.A. Co. H Capt Wm. A. Murray commanding.
Maryland History Bibliography, 2013: A Selected List

ANNE S. K. TURKOS, JEFF KORMAN, and ELIZABETH CARINGOLA, Compilers

From 1975 on, the Maryland Historical Magazine has published regular compilations of books, articles, and doctoral dissertations relating to Maryland history. The following list includes materials published during 2013, as well as earlier works that have been brought to our attention.

Bibliographers must live with the fact that their work is never finished. Please notify us of any significant omissions so that they may be included in the next list. Send additional items to:

Anne S. K. Turkos
University Archives
2208 Hornbake Library
University of Maryland
College Park, Md. 20742

Previous years’ installments of the Maryland History Bibliography are now searchable online. Please visit http://www.lib.umd.edu/dcr/collections/mdhc for more information about this database and to search for older titles on Maryland history and culture.

With this installment, we bid farewell to long-time co-compiler Jeff Korman, who retired from his position in the Maryland Department of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and welcome Elizabeth Caringola, Historic Maryland Newspapers Librarian at the University of Maryland, to the bibliography team. We are grateful to Jeff for his annual contributions to this resource for the last twenty-one years and are delighted to begin work with Liz.

General
African American


“Lydia’s Story (1804): A Dorchester House Servant Sold to the Negro Buyers and Transported to South Carolina.” *Shoreline*, 20 (December 2013): 8–9.

Maddox, Lucy. “‘A Local Question’: Kent County Quakers, the Underground Railroad, and a Woman Named Harriet.” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 108 (2013): 4–27.


Agriculture


“Plants with a Past.” A Briefe Relation, 34 (Spring 2013): 1, 5.


Archaeology


Hurry, Silas. “Art-N-Facts” *A Briefe Relation*, 34 (Spring 2013): 3. [glass beads found at St. Mary’s City]

**Architecture and Historic Preservation**


“Endangered Maryland List.” News and Notes of the Prince George’s County Historical Society, 42 (July–August 2013): 5.


“Look Forward to the 36th Annual Holiday House Tour.” The Legacy, 49 (Fall 2012): 4–5.


Biography, Autobiography, and Reminiscences


Hoptak, John David. “‘Hallo, Sam. I’m Dead.’” Civil War Times, 52 (December 2013): 58–65. [biography of General Jesse Lee Reno, who died at the Battle of Antietam]


Pearl, Susan G. “The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863.” *News and Notes of the Prince George’s County Historical Society*, 42 (January–February 2013): 1, 4. [comments from the diary of John William Burroughs]


**County and Local History**


“Battle of Bladensburg Memorial Monument.” *News and Notes of the Prince George’s County Historical Society*, 42 (January–February 2013): 5.

Blumber, Jess, Ken Iglehart, John Lewis, Suzanne Loudermilk, Amy Mulvihill, Ron


“The Glory that was Port Tobacco.” *The Record*, 107 (January 2013): 2–3.


“Maryland Public Television Highlights Prince George’s County.” *News and Notes of the Prince George’s County Historical Society*, 42 (January–February 2013): 7.


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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

My article, “The Master of the Ark,” describing the voyage of the ship Ark of London that brought Lord Baltimore’s first settlers to Maryland, stated in note 54 that the will of Richard Lowe, the Ark’s master, was proved May 2, 1639/os. That is wrong. The correct date is two years and forty-three days earlier, on March 20, 1636/os (March 30, 1637/ns) as a recent translation of the Latin probate document shows:

The above-written will was proved at London before the venerable master lord Henry Marten, knight, doctor of laws, master, guardian or commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, lawfully appointed, on the 20th day of the month of March in the year of the lord (by the stile of England) 1636, by the oath of Jane Lowe, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in this will. To whom was committed the administration of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the holy gospels to administer the same well and faithfully, before Master Edgworth, clerk, by force of a commissi- 
on otherwise issued in this regard.”

This correction leads to a better understanding of Richard Lowe’s life, death and what happened to his family afterward.

On August 15, 1635/ns a Trinity House Warrant named him as master of the Ark and authorized the addition of ten carriage-mounted guns, “viz’ eight saker and two cuts,” to the fifteen already aboard “for better defense of the said ship in this her nowe intended voyage.” It is reasonable to assume the destination for the “nowe intended voyage” was Chesapeake Bay, for which a battery of twenty-five guns was appropriate as discussed in my letter to the editor this journal of 2007. Richard Lowe had previously sailed there four times as a shipmaster: twice on Ark, once on Ann of London, once on Charity and perhaps two or three times before that as a seaman. He had been Ark’s master since she was built in 1631 and knew well the ship, the route, the destination and the dangers.

For this third voyage, Ark would typically depart in summer 1635 from Blackwall, a few miles downstream from London, to make a first landing two months later at the fortified English port of Bridgetown on the island of Barbados in the West Indies. Then she would go north to call briefly at the islands of Martinique, Nevis, and St. Kitts and enter Chesapeake Bay in December 1635 to stay five months. In early May 1636, when risk from North Atlantic winter storms abated, she would depart and arrive at Blackwall by June or July 1636. Somewhere on this route Richard Lowe died. His undated will reads in part:
In the name of God Amen, I Richard Lowe being of perfect memory and understanding of minde though sick and weake in body doe ordaine this my last will and Testament. . . . I desire and will that my part of the Shipp Arke . . . be sould and reducd into ready moneys with the moneys due to me for the hyer of the sayd shipp this voyage. . . . I give and bequeath also to my Cosen Richard Lowe all his wages accruing of this voyage. . . . I alsoe will that my Clothes be sould at the mast and the most made of them.

The words “this voyage” in the present tense and “that my clothes be sould at the mast” show the will was written aboard Ark on its third voyage. No records have been found in the West Indies, Maryland, or Virginia that show him to be either alive or dead. All that can be said is that he died on Ark’s third voyage, which started in spring 1635 and normally would have ended in the summer of 1636 at Blackwall where cargo would be offloaded and crew paid off.

But, in summer 1636 nothing was normal in London. Bubonic plague (Black Death), the most feared of all diseases, held the city in a lethal grip. The city was quiet but for church bells tolling the departure of souls. When the plague ended, ten thousand dead had been buried, most in plague pits dug as mass graves because there were so few to carry and bury them. Each incoming ship and its crew, Ark among them, would be quarantined in an isolated anchorage for forty or more days with cargo holds open whether or not any of their crew was or had been sick. There they would stay until the plague abated with cooler weather in October or November and commercial activities resumed in London.

Plague probably was not what killed Richard Lowe. Its swift progression is inconsistent with his “being of perfect memory and understanding of minde” when he made his well-thought-out will. Its victims were quickly disabled by chills, high fever, delirium, excruciatingly painful carbuncles from hemorrhaging under the skin, and painful swelling of lymph nodes that became black buboes (hence the name bubonic plague). Seventy to eighty percent died within four to seven days from first symptoms. A more likely cause was “marsh fever,” also known as “intermittent fever” or “ague.” Its repeated cycles of chills and fever followed by periods of remission killed a quarter or more of those afflicted. It was malaria, a parasitic infection transmitted by the bites of anopheles mosquitoes. The fenlands, swamps, and marshes of the West Indies, Chesapeake Bay, and the marshy peninsulas formed by the meandering Thames River swarmed with mosquitoes. One marshland was within a mile of Richard Lowe’s house in Ratcliff, and others surrounded the Blackwall yard and docks where Ark departed and returned from voyages.

What killed Richard Lowe will never be known, but disease most likely determined important events of his life. His first command came when James Carter, his sister’s brother-in-law, died and Lowe took over as master of Carter’s 130-ton ship, Ann of London. Three of his six children died young; John buried in 1632 at age
seven months, Mary in 1634 at age three years nine months, and his son Richard at age twenty in Virginia.

In the seventeenth century nothing useful was known about causes, cures, or transmission of diseases. Churchmen said they were God’s punishment for sin. Fatalists said they were God’s will. They were named for symptoms: bloody flux, burning fever, childbed fever, chills or swellings. Now causes and cures are known. Typhoid fever is transmitted in food or water contaminated by the feces of people infected with salmonella bacteria. Cholera, the scourge of infants with mortality rates of a quarter or more, is an infection of small intestines by the bacterium vibrio cholerae, causing potentially lethal dehydration by diarrhea and vomiting. “Childbed fever,” now known as puerperal fever, is a staphylococcus infection that made pregnancy a life-threatening risk for every mother and child. Bubonic plague was a summertime disease caused by Yersinia pestis bacteria transmitted by the bite of fleas that multiplied in the warm home provided by millions of rats flourishing in filthy towns and cities.

Normally London was not what bubonic plague made it in summer 1636 when Ark returned from its third voyage. During the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1604) and her successor James I (r. 1604–1625), it was the rough, exuberant, noisy, crowded, and physically filthy center of the English renaissance, enlivened by talented philosophers, playwrights, architects, actors, seafaring explorers, merchant adventurers, artists, and musicians. Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the father of the scientific method that led to the Industrial Revolution, declared that the three most important inventions were the printing press, gunpowder, and the magnetic compass. William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) plays enthralled commons and nobility alike. John Milton (1608–1674) made impassioned defense of free speech and freedom of the press. Londoners could see a continuous parade of exotic creatures, plants, food crops, and people brought by ships from faraway places. Improvements in ships, their weapons, crews, and navigation made global trade feasible, and burgeoning capitalism financed a race to find gold, silver, and spices (pepper, nutmeg, cloves) that could be bought for a song in the Far East and sold for a fortune in London or Amsterdam. Trade wars erupted especially between the English and Dutch.

Richard Lowe was alive while much of this was happening. Circumstances suggest he might be the Richard Lowe (c. 1598-7-30), son of John Lowe (d. ~1612) and Susan Serles of the prominent maritime family of Saint Clements Parish, Ipswich. If he was born in 1598 he would have been 4 when Queen Elizabeth died, 25 when married, 27 when first a shipmaster, 35 when he landed Lord Baltimore's first settlers on St. Clements Island in Maryland, and 37 or 38 when he died. And he would have been 12 when he no doubt heard the sensational sea story that excited all of England.

In June 1609 a nine-ship “Third Supply” departed Portsmouth to replenish Jamestown colony in Virginia. The flagship, Sea Venture, with most of the leaders and supplies, vanished. Nine months later 140 souls who had been aboard, but not
the ship, reappeared. Their story inspired Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*, a sunny comedy written in 1611. But for sailors it was a long, complicated and cautionary tale full of surprises.

“Third Supply” left Plymouth England with 500 to 600 people on seven ships, *Sea Venture, Blessing, Lion, Falcon, Unities, Diamond, Virginia of Sagadahoc*, and two pinnaces, *Swallow, and Catch*. The 300-ton burden *Sea Venture* launched earlier that year was the only armed English merchant ship afloat with a single-timbered hull. The hull was considered strong enough and it left more room for passengers because all guns were on the main deck. Other armed English ships were double timbered to strengthen the hull and protect gun crews in an enclosed gun deck below the main deck like the *Ark* built twenty-two years later.

On July 24, “Third Supply” encountered a violent storm that lasted forty-four hours. Thirty-two people with yellow fever were thrown overboard to lighten two ships, and *Diamond*’s crew was diminished by bubonic plague. *Sea Venture*, separated from the rest, fought the storm for three days, and then, as caulking between the hull timbers began to work loose, leaks exceeded what exhausted hands could pump out. With water in the hold at nine feet and rising, land hove into view and the ship was deliberately run aground on reefs three quarters of a mile from shore. All 150 souls aboard and the ships dog were brought safely to land. They named the uninhabited island Somers Isle for their admiral, Sir George Somers. In fact it was Bermuda, discovered by the Spaniard Juan de Bermudez in 1505.

The storm-damaged ships *Blessing, Lion, Falcon*, and *Unitie* and perhaps the *Virginia Sagadahoc* struggled on to Jamestown, followed a few days later by *Diamond* and *Swallow*. Most of their crews and passengers were sick, and much food aboard had spoiled. The pinnace *Catch* was lost at sea. In October 1609, *Diamond, Falcon, Blessing, and Unitie* departed Jamestown for England with thirty unruly youths and John Smith, the aggressive knight errant and swashbuckling international soldier, writer, and third president of the Jamestown Council who sought treatment for burns on his thighs and groin caused when a spark from his pipe ignited a gunpowder pouch in his lap.

Lacking Smith’s ability to deal with Indians, the three hundred settlers left in Jamestown in October angered the Indian chief Powhatan who besieged them in their walled fort where they began to starve. Through the winter of 1609–1610 they ate horses, snakes, rats, boiled boots and finally human corpses. In May 1610 those marooned in Bermuda, numbering about 140, finally arrived at Jamestown in two vessels commanded by Captain Christopher Newport: the eighty ton-burden *Deliverance* and the thirty-ton *Patience* that were built in Bermuda using local cedar and rigging and timbers from the *Sea Venture* wreck. They found only sixty sick and emaciated settlers of the three hundred who had been there in October 1609.

Those from Bermuda had brought only enough provisions to serve themselves for a sea voyage. When the combined group was down to sixteen days’ rations and
were prevented by natives from getting more, the governor with council decided to abandon Jamestown and head for the fishing grounds off Newfoundland in the pinnaces **Discovery** and **Virginia** and the two Bermuda built boats, **Deliverance** and **Patience**. They departed on June 7, 1610. When they had anchored for the first night they spotted a longboat that brought news: three supply ships were arriving from England, commanded by a new governor, Thomas West, Third Baron De La Warr. The two groups met on the James River on June 9, 1610 and returned to Jamestown. This unexpected and highly improbable coincidence saved Jamestown to become the first sustained English settlement in North America. This was the sensational story that circulated throughout all England and no doubt fascinated twelve-year-old Richard Lowe.

Twenty-four years later as master and part owner of **Ark** he must have viewed with gimlet-eyed scrutiny the activities of the English East India Company, which in 1634 had his ship surveyed as one of three it might buy. The company was founded in 1599 by merchant adventurers who defied influential members of Queen Elizabeth’s court to establish a company for trading to the Far East. As they met in London’s Founders Hall the crowd outside in Lothbury Street included weather-beaten sea dogs with calloused hands and gold earrings and a few of Sir Francis Drake’s crew. These were the predecessors by one generation of Richard Lowe and his crew. They were needed if voyages of the company were to have any chance of success. They knew how to find fresh water and provisions on the route to the Spice Islands, were familiar with the sailing and fighting qualities of Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch ships, and knew of the Spanish and Portuguese trading ports and posts scattered from Madagascar to Japan. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth, who favored formation of the company, granted it a total monopoly for fifteen years in trade to the East Indies, and countries, ports and towns of Asia, Africa and America with a flag of its own that had a blue field and a background of thirteen red and white horizontal stripes. It was still flying for the company 175 years later when the Continental Congress adopted an identical one as the first flag of the United States.

On December 12, 1639, two years and eight months after Richard Lowe’s will was probated, his widow, Jane Hunte, married William Allen, a ship owner, at St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury in London. They had three children, Jane christened December 21, 1640, Thomas christened March 20, 1643 and Susanna christened April 19, 1644. Thomas died when he was four months old. So by age thirty-nine Jane Hunte had lost four of her nine children and her first husband. In 1655 her son Richard from her first marriage died and she was appointed to administer his affairs:

On ye 13th day [of Sept. 1655] issued forth Letters of Administration. To Jane Allen ails [alias] Low ye natural and lawful mother of Richard Low, late of Virginia in ye parts beyond the seas Decd [deceased] a Batchelor To administer
all ye goodes and letts and debts of ye said Decd shee being first sworne Prively to Administer.35

Jane Allen's daughter Jane from her marriage to Richard Lowe was the wife of Nathaniel Chesson who at age twenty-nine was killed during the Battle of Portland in March 1653 while commanding the ship William and John in the First Dutch War.36 She at age twenty-four was left with seven-month-old infant Nathaniel and two young daughters,37 the grandchildren of Richard Lowe, master of the Ark. As Jane Allen and her daughter Jane faced the reality of loss and early death by disease, warfare, accidents at sea and coastal raids, it was their religion that sustained them.

Religion was a vital part of everyday life in England. The law required everyone to be a member of the Church of England. A progression of holy days, movable feasts and saints' days was their calendar. Church bells rang the hours of each day and night, called parishioners to worship, and celebrated good news or danger with lengthy clanging.38 London was a forest of steeples.39 Religious disputes and rigid intolerance were also one cause of the English Civil War that lasted from 1642 until it ended in 1651 with the execution of King Charles I for treason.40

For Richard Lowe and his family, the bells of St. Dunstan, Stepney, known as the Church of the High Seas, tolled the time. The King James Bible of 1611 was their religious story.41 The 1652 Book of Common Prayer provided their rituals for birth, marriage, death and the “churching of women” who were excluded from church for forty days after bearing a child and then on the first holy day or Sabbath thereafter were allowed to rejoin regular church services starting with a thanksgiving:

Forasmuche as it hath pleased almyghtye God of hys goodnes to geve you safe delyveraunce, and hath preserved you in the great daunger of childbyrth: ye shal therfore geve heartye thankes unto God and praye.

William Lowe

NOTES

“WLC” in the following notes refers to the William Lowe Collection.

2. A date followed by “os” means it is in the “old style,” i.e., it is in accordance with the Julian calendar that was used in England until officially discontinued in 1752. All dates not followed by “os” are “new style,” i.e., the modern Gregorian calendar. In 1752 the Gregorian calendar was adopted and September 3 was changed to September 14 by adding eleven days and January 1 instead of March 25 was set as the civil and legal New Year’s Day. However, when converting dates before 1700 to the Gregorian from the Julian calendar, only ten days are added.
3. The incorrect date in note 54 of the original article was from a mistaken interpretation of an ambiguous secondary source.

4. Last page of PROB 11/173, FOLIO 327, Right Hand, translated from Latin by Simon Neal, MA of Feltham Middlesex, UK,

5. The first voyage departed England in November 1633 and returned to London in July 1634. The second departed in September 1634 and returned in summer 1635.


7. As indicated by the following events it is likely that Richard Lowe made two voyages to Virginia on ships commanded by James Carter, his sister's brother-in-law, one on the 50-ton-burden *Truelove* in 1622–1623 and one in 1624–1625 on the 130-ton *Ann of London*. On June 15, 1626 he witnessed Carter’s will that was proved on April 21, 1627. He was master of the *Ann of London* when she cleared London for Virginia on July 18, 1627 and returned by July 1628. These circumstances suggest that between 1622 and 1628 he had made three voyages to Virginia and back. On May 14, 1630/ns letters of marque were issued for the 160-ton-burden *Charity of London* commanded by Richard Lowe and in 1633 an Admiralty Court case dealt with tobacco brought to London by the *Charity*, Richard Lowe Master. (Lowe, “The Master of the *Ark*,” note 5). This implies Lowe made two voyages to America as master of the *Charity*, one in 1630–1631 and one in 1631–32. Then he made two to Maryland in 1633–34 and 1634–35 as master of the 340-ton *Ark of London*. So by the time he left London for his third voyage as master of the *Ark* he had made seven voyages to America as master on four increasingly large ships.

8. Evidence that the *Ark* was built in 1631 is in my letter to the editor published in the *MdHM* 102 (2007): 101


10. Large uncertain numbers are rounded. None are precise.

11. Quarantine of ships (WLC 944-14-7C, p. 3, § 4)

12. Plague killed 25 million people, half the population of Europe and England, between 1347 and 1351. It struck London in 1603 when James I, the new King of England, arrived with some 40,000 followers. The influx of strangers increased the already overcrowded population from 140,000 to 180,000. Before that plague abated, 30,000 had died. The outbreak was repeated with the accession of King Charles I in 1625 with the loss of 35,000 lives. Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), chap. 2. An outbreak in 1665 left 68,000 dead in London.

13. *An Actual Survey of the Parish of St. Dunstan Stepney, Poplar and Blackwall*, 1703, map showing the hamlet of Poplar and Blackwall (WLC 944-14.2B-3B); *Plan of the River Thames from THE TOWER to BLACKWALL taken by the Corporation of the TRINITY HOUSE in the year of 1750 number 19A*. (WLC 944-14.2B-3B-4) *Blackwall East India Dock’s, London Map, 1830* (WLC 944-14.2B-3B-5).


15. In 1626, Richard Lowe witnessed the will of James Carter, whose will was proved April 11, 1627. On July 8, 1627/os, the ship *Ann of London*, with Richard Lowe, Master, left London for Virginia where Lowe was to collect the debts of James Carter, late master and owner of the *Ann of London*. PRO-K, PROB 11/151, Will of Jacobi (James) Carter, 1627-04-11, PCC 41, Skynner (WLC 518-121B-1b, 140B-3a); Will of James Carter, owner and Master of the Ship *Anne of London* (WLC Prime Documents Transcriptions, 626-09-05).

17. Some historians think typhoid killed 6,000 or more people in Virginia between 1607 and 1624. (WLC-944-14-7 J)


19. Circumstantial evidence suggests the master of the *Ark of London* may be Richard Lowe (c. 1598/7/30), one of the five sons of John Lowe (d. ~1612) and Susan Serles of Saint Clements Parish, Ipswich, Surrey. The will of Susannah Lowe (will signed November 13, 1623), widow of John Lowe (will signed December 3, 1612), names eight children; William, John, Thomas, Robert, Richard, Susan, Margaret and Elizabeth. Records confirm that two sons, John (c. 1586-9-11) and Robert (c. 1603-12-27), were masters of Ipswich ships but none have been found for a Richard Lowe unless he is the Master of the *Ark of London*. John Lowe was master of the *Ambrose* that was among the ships of Winthrop’s fleet of nine ships that in 1630 brought over 1,000 settlers to the Massachusetts Bay colony. In 1636, Robert appears as master of the *Ursula and Elizabeth of Ipswich* as shown by the following order:

Lords of the Admiralty to officers of the Navy and others. Complaint is made by the Governor and others of the Eastland Merchants that having entertained the *Supply* of Ipswich, Zephany (Zephaniah?) Parker, master, and the *Ursula and Elizabeth* of Ipswich, Robert Low, master, for transportation of cloth into Prussia, the *Supply* is pressed for weighing the *Ann Royal*, whereby the Company are like to be prejudiced being now straitened in time, and the Commonwealth by not vending the said cloth. They are to discharge the above-mentioned ships.


28. Captain Newport in Deliverance and Patience arrives at Jamestown (WLC 922-2D-13-15 p. 3 ¶ 1).
29. Baron De La War arrives at Jamestown June 9, 1610 (WLC 4004NE-20, p. 75, 76).
37. Ibid., 262, 281.
39. Vissichers view of London, 1616. Pictorial map of London 1616. In 1658 there were thirty-nine churches in the one square mile that lay within London’s walls. Also see Mervyn Blatch, A Guide to London’s Churches (Constable and Company, Ltd., 1978), xii, xiii.
41. Nicolson, God’s Secretaries: “The English Language had come into its passionate maturity. Boisterous, elegant, subtle, majestic, finely nuanced, sonorous and musical, the English of Jacobean England.”