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THE PRATHER FAMILY OF  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND:  
FREEDOM'S JOURNEY, PART I

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By Robyn N. Smith

*Telling the stories of enslaved African American ancestors requires  
advanced problem-solving skills and an understanding of the  
legal, political, and social struggle for equality.*

The Prather family is one of the oldest African American families in Montgomery County, Maryland. Like many African American families with surnames long associated with the county—like Riggs, Griffith, and Snowden—their roots trace back to enslaved ancestors. The Prathers descend from an enslaved couple, Harriet and Rezin Prather. This examination of their family illustrates the history of African Americans in Montgomery County. It also demonstrates a methodology for researching the lives of enslaved people.

THE BELT/WILLIAMS FAMILIES

The enslaved woman Harriet last belonged to Dorothy “Dolly” Williams. Dorothy was the former Dorothy Belt, daughter of John Belt.<sup>1</sup> The 1810 U.S. census shows John living in Montgomery County, Maryland, and owning 22 slaves.<sup>2</sup> John died sometime before January 1814, when his will was probated.<sup>3</sup> He left some combination of land, money, and slaves to several

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of his children.<sup>4</sup> His will, dated 26 August 1811, left daughters Dorothy and Ann, and sons Otho and John Smith Belt “real and personal property.”<sup>5</sup> That personal property included slaves. No inventory or distribution of John’s estate has been found.<sup>6</sup> However, the county first taxed Dorothy on three slaves in 1813.<sup>7</sup> When Dorothy married Walter Williams on 6 January 1819,<sup>8</sup> the slaves she brought to the marriage became the property of her husband.<sup>9</sup> Later that year, Walter received two slaves from his father Leonard’s estate: 60-year-old Sarah and 26-year-old Harry.<sup>10</sup> By 1820 Walter Williams owned 11 slaves.<sup>11</sup> Although Walter may have purchased slaves from local estate sales or slave traders, no known record documents those purchases.<sup>12</sup>

In March of 1822 Walter sold Harry to notorious slave trader Isaac Franklin<sup>13</sup> for \$400, consigning him to the dreaded domestic slave trade.<sup>14</sup> Between 1790 and 1860, over 1 million African American slaves—including many children and young teens—were sold to the Deep South and the West.<sup>15</sup> Harry likely never saw his relatives again.

Walter Williams died in 1822; his will named his wife Dorothy his “sole executrix” and left her his “plantation lying and being in Montgomery County known by the name *Spring Garden Resurveyed* ... containing one hundred sixty acres of land.” Their son James received a “lott of land and house thereon in Clarksburgh.” Dorothy also received one-third of the rest of Walter’s real and personal property, with the remainder bequeathed to James.<sup>16</sup>

Walter’s 1823 estate inventory names 11 slaves, including those Dorothy had brought to the marriage.<sup>17</sup> Dorothy’s brother William Belt purchased the 11 slaves at Walter’s estate sale. Harriet’s name first appears in records in the estate inventory. Her valuation suggests she was in prime childbearing years,

probably in her late teens or early twenties. The document also lists the elderly woman Sarah, inherited from Walter's father:<sup>18</sup>

<b>Table 1. Slaves Purchased by William Belt</b>		
<b>Estate Inventory, Sep. 1823<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Price at Sale, Aug. 1825<sup>20</sup></b>
Harriet & female child	\$250	\$310
Sarah	\$ 1	\$1
Boy Nelson	\$180	\$222
Boy Wesley	\$150	\$213
Boy Tobias	\$100	\$171
Boy Vachel	\$75	\$90
Boy Isaac	\$80	\$110
Boy Elie	\$50	\$53
Lucy Jane	\$65	\$53
Man Hatch		\$362

Although no known record documents their transfers, Dorothy came into ownership of the slaves purchased by her brother William.<sup>21</sup> Dorothy's claim for compensation from the federal government, filed when slaves were emancipated in Washington, D.C., in 1862, supports this.<sup>22</sup> She noted in her claim that the 41-year-old Lucy J. Butler was "living and working in D.C.," and that she had "bought Butler from the estate of her late husband, Walter Williams."<sup>23</sup> Dorothy's slave ownership can be tracked over time:

<b>Table 2. Dorothy Belt's Slave Ownership</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b># Slaves</b>	<b>Document</b>
1813	Dorothy Belt	3	Tax Assessment <sup>24</sup>
1817	Dorothy Belt	4	Tax Assessment <sup>25</sup>
1820	Walter Williams	11	Census <sup>26</sup>
1823	Walter Williams	11	Estate Inventory <sup>27</sup>
1828	Walter Williams Heirs	10	Tax Assessment <sup>28</sup>
1829	Dorothy Williams	2	Tax Assessment <sup>29</sup>
1831	Dorothy Williams	14	Tax Assessment <sup>30</sup>
1840	Dorothy Williams	18	Census <sup>31</sup>
1850	Dorothy Williams	17	Slave Census <sup>32</sup>
1853	Dorothy Williams	24	Slave Tax Assessment <sup>33</sup>
1855	Dorothy Williams	24	Slave Tax Assessment <sup>34</sup>
1860	James Williams	18	Slave Census <sup>35</sup>
1864	Dorothy Williams	11	Slave Tax Assessment <sup>36</sup>

*Note: The 1830 population census for Montgomery County, Maryland, is not extant.*

Dorothy was personally involved in managing her slave property before and after her marriage. In September 1815 after her brother Otho Belt died, she purchased a 17-year-old boy named Hally from his estate.<sup>37</sup> In May 1824, she manumitted and freed 44-year-old Lucy Richerson.<sup>38</sup>

With advancing age, Dorothy handed over some responsibilities to her son James. In 1860, as head of household, he appears in the federal census slave schedule as the owner or manager of Dorothy's slaves.<sup>39</sup> One slave, Haller McBu, identified as belonging to James Williams when drafted into the Civil War in 1864, was almost certainly the same Hally whom Dorothy had

purchased in 1815.<sup>40</sup> After emancipation his surname appears in the 1870 census as Mockabee.<sup>41</sup>

Eighty-eight-year-old Dorothy was living with her son James in 1870.<sup>42</sup> She probably had died by April 1880, when she does not appear in her son's household.<sup>43</sup> Her son took out a mortgage that April on property "inherited from his mother Dorothy Williams."<sup>44</sup>

#### REZIN AND HARRIET PRATHER

Enslaved people lived within their own communities. Those on neighboring farms and plantations married each other and socialized together on the few days they had to themselves—usually Sundays and Christmas.<sup>45</sup> Henry Bibb, a former slave, said he was:

*Very fond of visiting our neighbors slaves, but had not time to visit[,] only Sundays, when I could get a permit to go, or after night, when I could slip off without being seen.*<sup>46</sup>

Most slaves embraced the institution of marriage, although it was not legally recognized and did not guarantee a sale would not break up a union.<sup>47</sup> Because their owners both lived in the Cracklin District of Montgomery County, Harriet probably met and married Rezin Prather there as was the custom for many slaves.<sup>48</sup> Harriet had several children and sons Levi, Tobias, and Wesley were likely fathered by Rezin as they used his surname after emancipation.<sup>49</sup> The enslaved couple likely had more children whose names are unknown.<sup>50</sup>

#### THE MAGRUDER FAMILY

Rezin Prather, born in about 1800, was enslaved by Dr. Zadok Magruder Jr.<sup>51</sup> Dr. Magruder was the son of Revolutionary War veteran Zadok Magruder Sr., a descendant of a Scottish immigrant who had settled in neighboring Prince George's County. Zadok Jr.'s home, called The Ridge, was built by his

father in the mid-1700s. The Magruder family became one of Montgomery County's most prominent families.<sup>52</sup>

When Dr. Magruder died without a will, his 1810 estate inventory listed 16 slaves, including 7-year-old Rezin.<sup>53</sup> Like most estate inventories that name slaves, it does not indicate family structures.<sup>54</sup> Rezin's father is unknown; documents rarely named enslaved fathers. His father may have been a slave of Magruder or of a neighboring plantation owner.

Dr. Magruder's estate was probated and eventually divided among his wife and ten children, in accordance with Maryland inheritance laws.<sup>55</sup> Twenty-seven years later, when Zadok's widow Martha died, she owned five slaves who had earlier belonged to her husband.<sup>56</sup> Barring any sale, it seems that at least 11 of his slaves were divided among his children. Their son John W. Magruder eventually purchased shares of the estate from all of his siblings until he owned their father's land in full.<sup>57</sup> He lived at The Ridge and continued farming with slave labor until his death in 1849.<sup>58</sup>

Although no known document names the division of Dr. Magruder's slaves, Rezin Prather apparently went to Zadok's daughter Elizabeth Magruder. She married Nathan Cooke in 1825.<sup>59</sup> Nathan Cooke also came from a slaveholding family.<sup>60</sup> The couple built their home, called Gray Rock, upon 700 acres that Nathan had inherited from his father.<sup>61</sup> Without a prenuptial agreement, Elizabeth—like Dorothy Belt and other married women in that era—had no personal property rights. Thus, Rezin and other slaves that Elizabeth had inherited from her father Zadok became Nathan Cooke's property upon their marriage.<sup>62</sup> Over the years, the number of slaves Nathan owned increased dramatically.

<b>Table 3. Nathan Cooke Slaves</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b># of Slaves</b>	<b>Document</b>
1825	9	Tax Assessment <sup>63</sup>
1827	9	Tax Assessment <sup>64</sup>
1831	18	Tax Assessment <sup>65</sup>
1838	18	Tax Assessment <sup>66</sup>
1840	18	Census <sup>67</sup>
1841	18	Tax Assessment <sup>68</sup>
1850	22	Slave Census <sup>69</sup>
1853	27	Slave Tax Assessment <sup>70</sup>
1855	27	Slave Tax Assessment <sup>71</sup>
1860	35	Slave Census <sup>72</sup>
1867	40	Slave Statistics <sup>73</sup>

Nathan Cooke was a prosperous farmer and businessman, well known in the local community. In 1863 and 1864 respectively, he paid taxes on \$1,500 and \$1,300 in income,<sup>74</sup> when the first federally mandated income tax was imposed to help fund the Civil War.<sup>75</sup> In 1865 and 1866, he paid taxes on two carriages and 15 ounces of silver plate.<sup>76</sup> By 1864, when Maryland's new Constitution freed all the state's slaves, Nathan owned 40 slaves, placing him among Montgomery County's largest slaveholders.<sup>77</sup> Nathan Cooke and his wife died in 1869.<sup>78</sup>

#### CIVIL WAR COMES TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY

When the Civil War began in April 1861, Maryland, a slave state, remained part of the Union. Both Union and Confederate troops marched and skirmished through Montgomery County.<sup>79</sup> In 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation allowed black men to join the Union Army. Almost 200,000 former slaves and free black men eventually served in Union forces.<sup>80</sup> Many were runaway slaves who saw the war as a fight for their freedom.

More than 100 black men from Montgomery County became Union soldiers and witnessed some of the war's seminal moments.<sup>81</sup> For example, David Addison, husband of Lucy Prather, daughter of Wesley Prather, participated in the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg, marched into Richmond when it fell, and was at Appomattox when General Lee surrendered. Surely such experiences were life-changing for former slaves.<sup>82</sup>

Even though the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 did not free slaves in Maryland, it nevertheless had an impact on slavery in the state.<sup>83</sup> Its effects can be seen in Dorothy Williams's tax records; the 24 slaves she paid taxes on in 1853 and 1855<sup>84</sup> were reduced to 11 by 1864.<sup>85</sup> In November of 1864 Maryland's new state constitution freed slaves by the narrowest of margins.<sup>86</sup> Montgomery County citizens voted overwhelmingly against the new charter, with 422 votes for and 1,367 against.<sup>87</sup> Still, slavery in Maryland, which had existed for more than 200 years, was over.

During Reconstruction, which lasted from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until about 1877, the nation began to grapple with what freedom meant for the roughly four million newly-freed slaves. How would southern states be "reconstructed" back into the Union and at what cost? What rights did the new freedmen have? What defined citizenship? What kind of labor system would replace slavery? How would southern social relationships be conducted without slavery? Republicans, who lost their party leader President Lincoln to assassination just after the war, launched into an ugly battle with Democrats over what would happen next. Although Maryland was never under federal Reconstruction, the state struggled with these questions.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, in the U.S. Congress, Radical Republicans who won overwhelmingly in the elections of 1866 were desperate to define and secure key rights for former slaves. They battled for control of Reconstruction with then-President Andrew Johnson, who did not believe in equality for blacks.

Between 1865 and 1870, Congress passed, and the required number of states ratified:

- the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery
- the Fourteenth Amendment, promising equal protection and due process to all citizens, and
- the Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing black men the right to vote regardless of “race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

In 1870, passage of the Fifteenth Amendment gave Maryland black men the right to vote for the first time since it had been taken away from free blacks in 1802.<sup>89</sup> Black men in Maryland responded in droves to register and vote. Representing nearly one-quarter of eligible Maryland voters, they were seen as threats by the Democratic leadership.<sup>90</sup> Multiple legislative attempts over the next few decades aimed to disenfranchise blacks. Fortunately, none of them passed.<sup>91</sup> However, the battle for equal rights for African Americans would continue for almost 100 more years.<sup>92</sup>

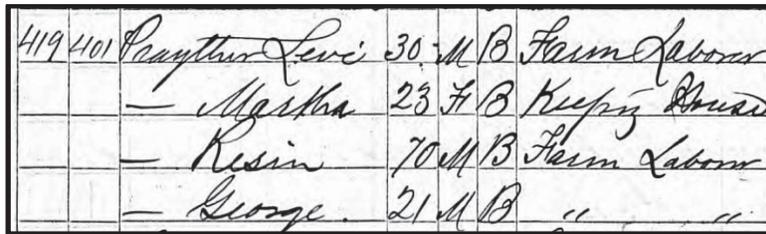
#### POST-EMANCIPATION LIFE IN MARYLAND

The decade after emancipation was a time of flux for many newly-freed African Americans. Looking for work, many from Montgomery County traveled to Washington, D.C., or Baltimore where they could pick up odd jobs, mostly as laborers. Those who stayed in the county primarily worked on land owned by local whites. Many worked for their former owners.

While they lost their slaves, white landowners retained social and economic power. In Maryland they won back political power as well within a few years. That reality cast a long shadow over the black community as *actual* freedom was severely circumscribed. Freedmen had few choices; the end of the Civil War provided

them no land, but they still needed to make a living to support themselves and their families.

Locally, blacks carved out hard-won free lives after the war. Reuniting with spouses and children who had been sold was their first concern. Harriet Prather, likely the mother of Tobias, Levi, and Wesley, was alive in 1855 but she probably died by 1864 when she no longer appears in Dorothy Williams's tax assessment.<sup>93</sup> Rezin Prather was in his mid-60s at emancipation and by 1870 he was living with his son Levi, and Levi's new wife, the former Martha Simpson in the First Election District, later called the Cracklin District.<sup>94</sup>



419	4101	Prather Levi	30	M	B	Farm Labour
		— Martha	23	F	B	Keeping House
		— Rezin	70	M	B	Farm Labour
		— George	21	M	B	" "

**Figure 1.** Rezin Prather [Rezin Prather] in 1870 Census in the household of his son Levi.

They presumably cared for him until his death on 8 January 1872. The date was lovingly written into the family Bible.<sup>95</sup> Wesley Prather settled in the same community, with his wife Alice.<sup>96</sup> Tobias Prather reunited with his wife, the former Patience Hall, and lived in a neighboring community.<sup>97</sup>

The freedmen continued living in communities composed of other former slaves—black families surnamed Chase, Riggs, Dorsey, Claggett, Warfield, and others.<sup>98</sup> Some were farmhands in the households of former owners. In Montgomery County's First District, where Rezin Prather lived, there were many former Union soldiers, including David Addison, Charles Claggett, Heskiah Dorsey, and Warren Riggs. After the war,

some local men, like Nelson Brown and Benjamin Snowden, opened bank accounts at the Freedman's Bank branch in Washington, D.C.<sup>99</sup>

The federal government created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, better known as the Freedmen's Bureau, in March 1865. The Bureau's mission was to assist the destitute four million newly freed slaves to find work and to provide them with food, medical care, and housing. The bureau also built schools.<sup>100</sup> R. G. Rutherford ran the Rockville office, and was responsible for submitting status reports to his superiors in Washington. In part of his report on 27 October 1867, he provided this description of the post-emancipation climate in Montgomery County:

*The difficulties encountered in obtaining justice for the Freedmen are those incident to the opposition of a large majority of the community as well as to that of all the civil officers of the county (with the exception of two magistrates) who will do no more for the Freedman than they are forced to, and that with a very bad grace, they also use their influence to dissuade Freedmen from prosecuting cases against white men and endeavor to counteract my influence with them—intimidation and misrepresentation are resorted to by the people to prevent Freedmen from bringing their complaints to this office, and where complaints have already been entered, to prevent them from testifying.<sup>101</sup>*

In this climate, those who had been freed before emancipation or who had been skilled slaves, such as blacksmiths or carpenters, were more able to secure a stable life for their families. Some former slaves were eventually able to purchase land, but many remained tenant farmers or sharecroppers. Landowners were always in a better economic position in an agricultural society. Those farming for others were susceptible to abuse by unscrupulous whites. Former slaves were especially vulnerable because most were illiterate. Black farmers did, however, gain a small concession: they demanded their wives be

freed of field work so that they could care for their own homes and children.<sup>102</sup>

Only a few black men in the Cracklin district were able to buy land during this time. Fortunately, Wesley Prather was a skilled carpenter.<sup>103</sup> In November 1879, he purchased six-and-one-half acres for \$180 from Henry and Verda Griffith.<sup>104</sup> In 1883, Tobias Prather's descendants purchased the first of several acres.<sup>105</sup> That area became known as *Prathertown*, a historically recognized site in Montgomery County today.<sup>106</sup> After Levi Prather's death, his wife Martha purchased 10 acres for her family in 1897.<sup>107</sup> Her daughters later added more than 75 acres of land to that initial purchase.<sup>108</sup>

Tobias, Wesley, and Levi had large families to support. Wesley had at least eleven children, Tobias had at least ten, and Levi had thirteen. Men of their community built their own homes, mostly log cabins initially and later more frame homes. Even with few resources, they excelled at institution building. African Americans put great effort and sacrifice into building churches, schools, and social and benevolent societies. They constructed numerous churches in the county; most were Methodist.<sup>109</sup> African Americans were finally given access to public education in 1872, rudimentary and insufficient though it was. According to *The History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, 1872–1961*, “the colored church at Laytonsville” was used as a schoolhouse in 1879 and “the trustees had paid \$25 for its use.” That church was Brooke Grove, which the Prather family helped found. Later that year, land for a separate schoolhouse was acquired. James Hall received \$35 as partial payment for erecting the building.<sup>110</sup> The county opened several “colored” elementary schools in the decades after emancipation, although they were woefully underfunded and deficient.

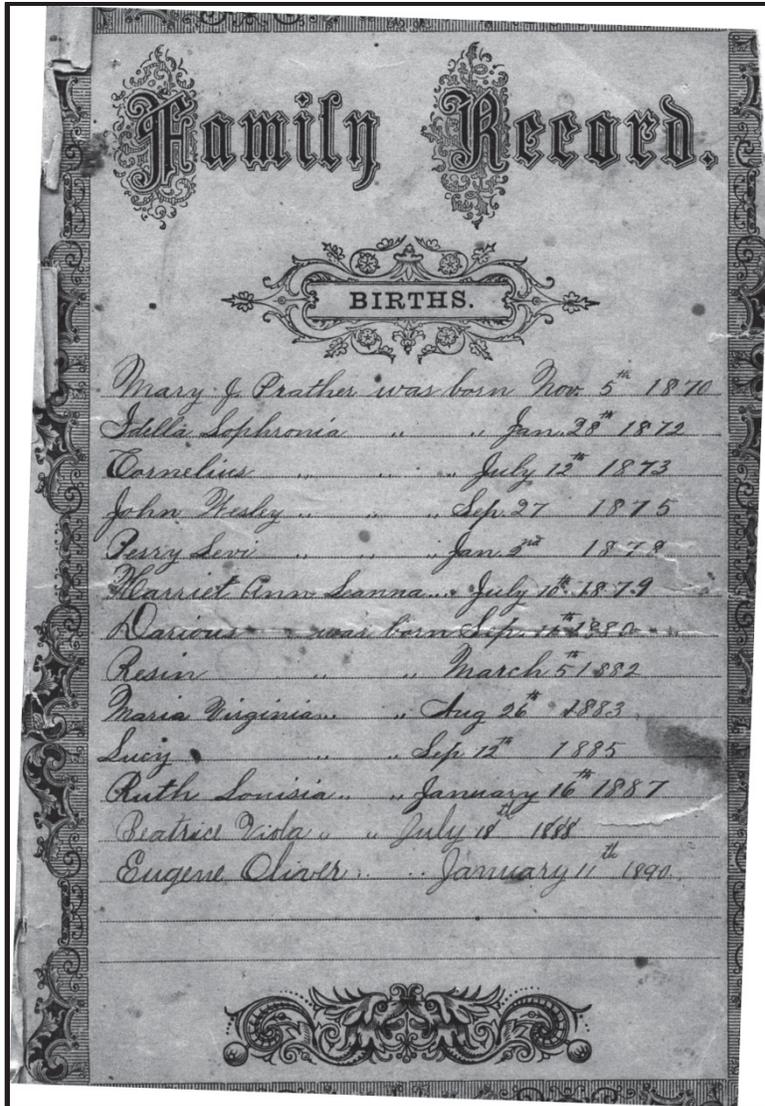


Figure 2. Bible records; children of Levi and Martha Prather.<sup>111</sup>

Some African Americans attended the white Methodist church in Goshen while enslaved. During the Civil War the church split into northern and southern factions and sued one another over ownership of the building.<sup>112</sup> In a report dated 2 October 1867, the Rockville Freedmen's Bureau superintendent, R. G. Rutherford noted:

*At Goshen, there is an old brick church which the trustees want the colored people to buy, the price is \$1,000, the property is in litigation, however, and there is no telling when the case will be decided. I have advised the colored people not to wait, but to try to buy ground (which can be had there at \$50 a parcel) and promised the assistance of the bureau, in putting up a school house, they have determined, however, to await the verdict of the suit now pending and if gained by the party who want to sell to them, endeavor to raise the money and buy it. N. Lorenzo Snowden, preacher, and Wesley Prater are the leading colored men.*<sup>113</sup>

Time proved Rutherford's advice wise. The men in the community eventually purchased land and built Brooke Grove Church. On 6 July 1870, trustees Wesley Prather, Levi Prather, Wesley Randolph, Vachel Duffie, and James Ross purchased two acres from Vachel Duffie for \$150. The deed stated that the land "shall be used, kept and disposed of as a place of divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church."<sup>114</sup> Wesley Randolph had been free before the war;<sup>115</sup> James Ross was a carpenter.<sup>116</sup>

Throughout the hardships, former slaves and their descendants seemed determined to carve out meaningful lives within the confines that white society allowed them.<sup>117</sup>

## 1900s: SOME SUCCESSES, MORE CHALLENGES

The late 1800s ushered in virulent racism and decades of abuse, violence, and hatred directed against African Americans. Black Marylanders were increasingly victims of lynch mobs and criminal prosecution. Lynchings continued in Maryland into the 1930s.<sup>118</sup> Little more provocation was needed than a rumor and an accusation. Three Montgomery County men were lynched—two in 1880 and another in 1896.<sup>119</sup> Local papers reported every grisly detail for their readers. Such incidents struck fear in the black community, underscoring the lack of due process of law for black Americans. They would not be afforded the protections that white citizens enjoyed.

More ominous developments occurred over the decades after the Civil War. As white soldiers from both sides reconciled, their newly formed narrative of the Civil War discounted slavery as a cause of the conflict.<sup>120</sup> Their reconciliation all but erased the memory of black soldiers.<sup>121</sup> In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was legal. Ku Klux Klan membership exploded with the 1914 release of the blatantly racist film, *Birth of a Nation*. Throughout the nation, but especially in the South, segregation laws were enacted to cover almost every avenue of life. Schools, hospitals, restaurants, theaters, libraries, courthouses, the military, restrooms, and cemeteries all required separate accommodations for blacks.<sup>122</sup> In 1904 Maryland mandated separate areas for colored and white passengers on trains, and later on steamboats. In 1911 Baltimore City passed one of the country's earliest zoning laws segregating housing by race.<sup>123</sup>

Throughout the assault, blacks did not sit idly by. They fought back with intensity and purpose and won small successes. Blacks in Montgomery County focused on building schools. Julius Rosenwald, the millionaire Jewish co-owner of Sears and Roebuck, Co., partnered with Booker T. Washington to open more than 5,000 black schools in the South.<sup>124</sup> Rosenwald

contributed seed money to build scores of schools in Montgomery County, throughout Maryland, and in other southern states. Even so, the Montgomery County School Board discriminated against black schools, which received sub-par supplies, were crowded, had shorter school terms, and lacked funds for maintenance, transportation, and teacher salaries.<sup>125</sup> In 1927 Montgomery County built Rockville High, the first high school for “colored” students. Until then blacks had to leave the county to continue schooling after the seventh grade. Celestine Prather was in Rockville Colored High’s first graduating class.<sup>126</sup>

The battle to secure access to equal education for black children continued through the 20th century. In 1936 William Gibbs, principal of Rockville High, brought a historic lawsuit regarding teacher salary against the Montgomery County School Board and was represented by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) lawyers, including future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Black teachers in Montgomery County with the same, or better, credentials earned about half of what white teachers earned. Dr. Edwin Broome, the superintendent of schools, settled the case out of court, effectively ending race-based differences in teacher salaries by August 1938. Unfortunately, the school system retaliated and Mr. Gibbs lost his job. Nevertheless, after the settlement in Montgomery County, the NAACP challenged unequal teacher pay in counties all over the country.<sup>127</sup> Later, they attacked segregation directly. That led to the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling.

At the turn of the century, some members of the Prather family left Maryland, primarily in search of better opportunities. By 1900, Lucy Prather, daughter of Tobias Prather, relocated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her husband, Washington Riggs, was a coachman.<sup>128</sup> Wesley’s son, Rezin R. Prather, who became a preacher, had moved to Blackwood, New Jersey, likely assigned there by the Methodist church.<sup>129</sup> In the early 1890s,

Rezin had worked as a hostler and lived in Queens, New York.<sup>130</sup> His sister Lucretia migrated with her husband Thomas Claggett to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.<sup>131</sup> However, the generation that came of age in the early decades of the new century really took flight. Three children of Jane Prather and David Addison—Gertrude,<sup>132</sup> Weddington,<sup>133</sup> and Cora<sup>134</sup>—all moved to Youngstown, Ohio. Rezin R. Prather's unmarried daughter Lucy moved to Ithaca, New York, where she was a cook at Cornell University.<sup>135</sup> At least six of Tobias Prather's grandchildren went to Pennsylvania cities to work in the burgeoning mill industry.<sup>136</sup>

Although some left, most Prathers stayed in and around Montgomery County, keeping their parents' and grandparents' tradition of institution building as a way to solidify the community. They established beneficial societies and lodges, in addition to churches and schools. Prathers and other local men were active in Grace Lodge #8975 of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows,<sup>137</sup> the Lodge of Moses,<sup>138</sup> and the Brooke Grove Lodge #12, an Order of the Good Samaritans.<sup>139</sup> The church played as central a role then in the lives of the county's African Americans as it does today.

#### PRATHER DESCENDANTS TODAY

Levi, Tobias, and Wesley Prather died before the turn of the century. Levi died on 12 April 1894 at about age 55;<sup>140</sup> Tobias died on 28 July 1873 at about age 53;<sup>141</sup> and Wesley died sometime between 7 December 1899 and 1900,<sup>142</sup> having lived the longest, and dying at roughly age 85. None had a death certificate. Only Levi and his wife Martha have a surviving headstone at Brooke Grove Cemetery, but Tobias, Wesley, and Rezin are all likely buried there, at the church their family helped found. Many of their descendants are also buried there, along with others in the community—bound together by marriage, family, social life, worship, and slavery.<sup>143</sup>



**Figure 3.** Levi and Martha (Simpson) Prather Marker, Brooke Grove Cemetery. Photo by author.

Harriet likely spent her entire life enslaved. Rezin Prather survived the cruelties of slavery and won freedom, as did some of his children. Today, hundreds of Prather descendants remain in Montgomery County and the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. Others live all over the country. They were farmers and merchants, teachers and ministers, carpenters and bricklayers, soldiers and government clerks. Like other African American families, they were an important part of Montgomery County's history and heritage.

A genealogical summary will appear in Part II of this article.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> "Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999," digital images, *FamilySearch* ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) : accessed 30 November 2017), Montgomery County, John Belt will, Liber H: 321–324, 26 August 1811 (written); John Belt codicil, 5 October 1812 (written), 4 January 1814 (will and codicil proved); citing Montgomery County Orphans Court Records. The original marriage records for Montgomery County, 1798–1866, are no longer

extant. However, the Maryland State Archives hosts a digitized copy of the record books duplicated by the Montgomery County Historical Society, see “Montgomery County Historical Society Collection;” digital images, *Maryland State Archives*, Special Collection no. 3985-1-1

([www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc3900/sc3985/000000/000001/000000/pdf/mdsa\\_sc3985\\_1\\_1.pdf](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc3900/sc3985/000000/000001/000000/pdf/mdsa_sc3985_1_1.pdf) : accessed 24 September 2017), entry for marriage of Walter Williams to Dolly Belt, 6 January 1819.

<sup>2</sup> 1810 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, p. 976 (written), line 24, John Belt; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M252, roll 14. This census record is alphabetized.

<sup>3</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” John Belt will, Liber H: 321–324, 26 August 1811 (written); John Belt codicil, 5 October 1812 (written) 4 January 1814 (will and codicil proved).

<sup>4</sup> John transferred some of his property to sons Evan and William before his death, see Montgomery County, Md., Land Records, John Belt to William Belt, P: 118, 3 January 1811 (recorded); John Belt to Evan Belt, P: 431, 13 January 1812 (recorded); John Belt to Evan Belt, Q: 21, 3 May 1813 (recorded); digital images, Maryland State Archives (MSA), *MdLandRec.net* ([www.mdlandrec.net](http://www.mdlandrec.net) : accessed 27 November 2017).

<sup>5</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, John Belt will, Liber H: 321–324, 26 August 1811 (written); John Belt codicil, 5 October 1812 (written) 4 January 1814 (will and codicil proved).

<sup>6</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” searched Montgomery County, Vol H (1811–1814) through Vol 3 (1848–1851) for John Belt’s estate.

<sup>7</sup> In 1813, Dorothy was taxed for 3 slaves, two children between the ages of 8 and 14 and one woman between the ages of 14 and 36. Dorothy’s siblings Evan, John Smith, and Otho also appeared for the first time in 1813 paying taxes on slaves. By 1817, Dorothy paid taxes on four slaves., see Montgomery County, Maryland, Commissioners of the Tax, Tax Ledgers, 1st election district, Dorothea Belt, 1813, p. 2, 3 slaves; 1817, p. 133, 4 slaves; Montgomery County Historical Society (MCHS), Rockville, Maryland.

<sup>8</sup> No pre-nuptial agreement was found that would have allowed her to maintain the ownership of her slaves.

<sup>9</sup> “Montgomery County Historical Society Collection,” *Maryland State Archives*, Special Collection no. 3985-1-1, marriage of Walter Williams to Dolly Belt, 6 January 1819.

<sup>10</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, Accounts, Inventories and Wills, Leonard Williams will, Liber L: 109–110, 5 July 1819 (written), 3 August 1819 (proved).

<sup>11</sup> 1820 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, 1st election district, p. 576 (written), line 12, Walter Williams; digital images, *Ancestry.com*

(www.ancestry.com : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M33, roll 44.

<sup>12</sup> Montgomery County and neighboring Anne Arundel County Land Records Grantee indexes for years 1815–1822 were searched for Walter Williams.

<sup>13</sup> Isaac Franklin and his partner John Armfield became one of the largest and wealthiest slave trading firms in the country, see “National Historic Landmarks Program: Isaac Franklin Plantation,” *National Park Service* (www.nps.gov/nhl/find/withdrawn/franklin.htm : accessed 15 January 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Walter Williams to Isaac Franklin, W: 26, 26 March 1822.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 4. See also The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, “The Domestic Slave Trade,” *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience* (www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/landing.cfm?migration=3 : accessed 12 February 2015).

<sup>16</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, Walter Williams will, Liber N: 293–294, 4 November 1822 (written), 19 November 1822 (proved).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Walter Williams inventory, Liber O: 112–114, 27 September 1823.

<sup>18</sup> Sarah’s \$1 valuation implies that she was past working age.

<sup>19</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, Accounts, Inventories and Wills, Walter Williams inventory, Liber O: 112–114, 27 September 1823.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Walter Williams estate sales, Liber N: 341, 16 August 1825.

<sup>21</sup> See Table 2. Dorothy was taxed for two slaves in 1829 and 14 in 1831.

<sup>22</sup> Slavery was abolished in Washington, D.C., in April 1862. Slaveholders were compensated by the federal government for their enslaved property, see “Featured Documents: The District of Columbia Emancipation Act,” *National Archives*

(www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\_documents/dc\_emancipation\_act/: accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy S. Provine, *Compensated Emancipation in the District of Columbia, Petitions under the Act of April 16, 1862* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2005), entry for Dorothy Williams, p. 207, 1 July 1862, docket #838, for slave Lucy J. Butler.

<sup>24</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Commissioners of the Tax, Tax Ledgers, 1st election district, Dorothea Belt, 1813, p. 2, 3 slaves; MCHS.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1817, p. 133, 4 slaves.

- <sup>26</sup> 1820 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, 1st election district, p. 576 (written), line 12, Walter Williams. No census records exist for Montgomery County in 1830.
- <sup>27</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Books, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, Accounts, Inventories and Wills, Walter Williams inventory, Liber O: 112–114, 27 September 1823.
- <sup>28</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Commissioners of the Tax, Tax Ledgers, 1st election district, Walter Williams Heirs, 1828, p. 73, 10 slaves; MCHS.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Dorothy Williams, 1829, p. 99, 2 slaves; MCHS.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1831, p. 91, 14 slaves; MCHS.
- <sup>31</sup> Dorothy’s husband bequeathed her a plantation and house and left another plantation in Clarksburg to their son James. Dorothy was to manage the property until James was of the legal age of twenty-one. Two entries for Dorothy in Montgomery County in 1840 probably reflect slaves at both locations, a total of 18 slaves. See 1840 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, Cracklin District, p. 9 (written), line 21, Dorothy Williams, 11 slaves; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M704, roll 168. See also 1840 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, Clarksburgh and Cracklin District, p. 489 (written), line 17, Dorothy [*sic*] Williams, 7 slaves; citing NARA microfilm M704, roll 167.
- <sup>32</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, slave schedule, Cracklin District, p. 449 (written), line 11, Dorothy Williams; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M432, roll 301.
- <sup>33</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Tax Assessment Book, Slaves 1853–64, 1st election district, entries for Dorothy Williams, 1853, pp. 11–12, 24 slaves.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1855, pp. 87–88, 24 slaves.
- <sup>35</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, slave schedule, 1st election district, p. 8 (written), line 1, James Williams; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M653, roll 485.
- <sup>36</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Tax Assessment Book, Slaves 1853–64, 1st election district, entries for Dorothy Williams, 1864, pp. 323–324, 11 slaves.
- <sup>37</sup> “Maryland, Register of Wills Books, 1629–1999,” Montgomery County, Accounts, Inventories and Wills, Otho Belt estate sales, Liber I: 579, 23 September 1815.
- <sup>38</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Dorothy Williams, manumission, X: 275, written 1 May 1824. At about the age of 43, “Lucy Richerson” may have been the “Lucy Jane” referred to in Walter Williams 1823 estate inventory. Her valuation of \$65 would be about right for a woman past childbearing years.

<sup>39</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Montgomery Co., Md., slave schedule, 1st election district, p. 8 (written), line 1, James Williams.

<sup>40</sup> "The Draft in Maryland," *The Sun* (Baltimore), 23 March 1864, p.1, entry for Montgomery County, 1st District, "Haller McBu, slave of James Williams"; digital images, *GenealogyBank* ([www.genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com) : accessed 10 October 2009).

<sup>41</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery Co., Md., population schedule, 1st election district, Brighton PO, p. 257B (stamped), dwelling 482, family 466, Haylor Mockabee in Philip Sedgewick household; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA M593, roll 591. Haylor lived only a few households over from his former owner James Williams, see 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 1st election district, Brighton PO, p. 257B (stamped), dwelling 472, family 456, James Williams.

<sup>42</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 1st election district, Brighton PO, p. 257 B (stamped), dwelling 472, family 456, James Williams.

<sup>43</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, Cracklin District, p. 208B (stamped), dwelling 252, family 270, James Williams; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm T9, roll 512.

<sup>44</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, James Williams, et al., to Basil B. Crawford, mortgage, EBP 21: 148–150, written 12 April 1880. The deed suggests other siblings for James, as the mortgage was held by "David J. Reinhart, Annie Williams Reinhart, his wife, Margaret Virginia Williams and James Walter Williams."

<sup>45</sup> Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Bibb, "Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself," typescript, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Documenting the American South* ([www.docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/bibb.html](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/bibb.html): accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Ira Berlin and Leslie S. Rowland, editors, "Husbands and Wives," *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 155–192.

<sup>48</sup> James Williams lived in close proximity to the farms of Nathan Cooke, in Cracklin District, see Martenet, Simon J., "Martenet and Bond's Map of Montgomery County, Maryland," 1865, *Library of Congress* ([www.loc.gov/item/2002620533](http://www.loc.gov/item/2002620533): accessed 20 June 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Dorothy Williams' 1853 slave tax assessment reflects her ownership of a 57-year-old "Harriet," as well as 15-year-old Levi, 33-year-old Tobias, and 35-year-old Wesley. The large age gap suggests Harriet likely mothered other

people in the tax assessment. It was common for enslaved women to have birthed children from their late teenage years through their early forties. Levi, Tobias and Wesley also used the surname Prather after emancipation, lived in close proximity to one another and associated with one another. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that the enslaved younger man named Darius, owned by Dorothy, is also a son of Harriet. The naming patterns of these men also are a strong indicator of familial relationship. Wesley named sons Rezin, Levi and James Darius, Tobias named sons Darius and Rezin, and Levi named sons Darius and Rezin. The female slaves in Dorothy's tax assessment had very common names like Mary, Susan and Lucy. They may have married, obscuring their maiden names. Nevertheless, no African American women with those names could be located in 1870 with the surname Prather and matching the age descriptions in Dorothy's tax records.

<sup>50</sup> In the estate inventory for Walter Williams, "Harriet and [her] infant child" are valued at \$250. The name of the infant child is unknown. Also, the values given for "boys" Nelson, Isaac and Elie suggest young children whom Harriet may also have mothered. See "Maryland, Register of Wills Books, 1629–1999," Montgomery County, Accounts, Inventories and Wills, Walter Williams inventory, Liber O: 112–114, 27 September 1823.

<sup>51</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Orphans Court Proceedings, MSA microfilm CM736, item 1, Liber G: 176–180, inventory of Zadok Magruder, 4 April 1810. His name is spelled variously as Zadoc, Zadock or Zadok in the historical records. For Rezin's approximate birth year, see 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery Co., Md., pop. sched., 1st election district, PO Brighton, p. 253 B (stamped), dwell. 419, fam. 401, Resin Prayther.

<sup>52</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Conolly and Eileen McGuckian, "National Register of Historic Places Form," *Maryland Historical Trust Inventory of Historic Properties*, property no. M: 22-15, The Ridge, 19000 Muncaster Road, Derwood, Montgomery County, Maryland, 15 September 1987, section 8, pp. 1–3.

<sup>53</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Orphans Court Proceedings, MSA microfilm CM736, item 1, Liber G: 176–180, inventory of Zadok Magruder, 4 April 1810.

<sup>54</sup> Two of the three women shown in the 1810 inventory, Milly and Nelly, are old enough to have been Rezin's mother, but without more information no definitive determination can be made of her identity.

<sup>55</sup> In 1786, primogeniture ended in Maryland and all children, both male and female, would inherit equally upon decease of their parent without a will. See Virgil Maxcy, compiler, "Chapter XLV: An Act to Direct Descents," *The Laws of Maryland: 1786–1800, Volume II* (Baltimore: Philip H. Nicklin, 1811), 16–17.

<sup>56</sup> "Maryland, Register of Wills Books, 1629–1999," Montgomery County, Martha Magruder inventory, Volume V (1837–1838): 204–208, 28 November 1837. Dick, York, Nelly, Milley and Leah had been owned by Martha's

husband; their names appeared in the inventory along with their ages, which makes their identification reasonable. One man, Jerry, was 19 years old when Zadok died and he was supposed to be freed at the age of 30. However, a 47-year-old man named Jerry was also listed in Martha's inventory. He was likely the same man, which leaves us to wonder why his freedom was not granted.

<sup>57</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Jonathan W. Magruder to John W. Magruder, BS 4:277, recorded 17 March 1831; Robert P. Magruder to John W. Magruder, BS 5:111, recorded 1 May 1832; William B. Magruder to John W. Magruder, BS 5:555, recorded 7 May 1833; William O. Lumsden to John W. Magruder, BS 6:133, recorded 16 October 1833; Thomas P. W. Magruder to John W. Magruder, BS 6:1335, recorded 16 October 1833; Rebecca D. Cooke to John W. Magruder, BS 6:354, recorded 29 March 1834; Nathan Cooke to John W. Magruder, BS 6:374, recorded 19 April 1833; Basil Barry to John W. Magruder, BS 7:342, recorded 7 October 1835.

<sup>58</sup> "Maryland, Register of Wills Records, 1629–1999," Montgomery County, John W. Magruder inventory, Volume 2: 225–228, 12 April 1849.

<sup>59</sup> "Montgomery County Historical Society Collection," *Maryland State Archives*, Special Collection no. 3985-1-1, images ([www.speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/pages/speccol/unit.aspx?speccol=3985&serno=1&item=1&subitem=-1](http://www.speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/pages/speccol/unit.aspx?speccol=3985&serno=1&item=1&subitem=-1) : accessed 24 September 2017), marriage of Nathan Cook to Elizabeth Magruder, 17 November 1825. In the Slave Statistics, created in 1867,

slaveholders recorded the names of enslaved persons they owned at the time Maryland emancipated slaves in 1864. Owners hoped for compensation from the state but never received it. See *Journal of the Proceedings of the State of Maryland, January Session* (Henry A. Lucas, 1867), Volume 133, pp. 347-350, Chapter 189; "An act to provide by law for taking and perpetuating the evidence of the number of persons held to labor and service in the State of Maryland and emancipated by the Constitution adopted in the year eighteen hundred and sixty-four, and by whom such persons were so held"; digital images, *Archives of Maryland*

*Online* ([www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000812/html/index.html](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000812/html/index.html) : accessed 20 November 2017). The act was passed on 22 March 1867. The Slave Statistics are a particularly valuable set of records since many of the names of former slaves include surnames, see "Highlights from Government Records," *Maryland State Archives*

([www.msa.maryland.gov/msa/homepage/html/whats\\_new.pdf](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/msa/homepage/html/whats_new.pdf) : accessed 24 September 2017.) Rezin Prather appears in the 1867 list of slaves that belonged to Nathan Cook, see "Montgomery County Slave Statistics, 1867–1868," entry for Nathan Cooke, *Archives of Maryland Online*, Volume 812 ([www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000)

812/html/index.html : accessed 21 December 2017). Nathan's ownership of Rezin must have come through his wife.

<sup>60</sup> His father, also named Nathan Cooke, owned 24 slaves in the 1800 census. He died intestate only 5 years later. See 1800 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, 1st election district, p. 38 (written), line 11, Nathan Cooke; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 2 December 2017); citing NARA microfilm M32, roll 11.

<sup>61</sup> Egbert Watson Magruder, editor, *Year Book of American Clan Gregor Society: Tenth Annual Gathering, 1919* (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, 1919), 48.

<sup>62</sup> For a broad discussion and analysis of the evolution of women's property rights in the nineteenth century, see Carole Shammas, "Re-Assessing the Married Women's Property Acts," *Knox College* (courses.knox.edu/hist267/shammasproperty.pdf : accessed 21 December 2017); from the *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring).

<sup>63</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Commissioners of the Tax, Tax Ledgers, 1st election district, Nathan Cooke, 1825, p. 1, 9 slaves; MCHS.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1827, p. 46, 9 slaves.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1831, p. 85, 18 slaves.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1838, p. 39, 18 slaves.

<sup>67</sup> 1840 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, Cracklin District, p. 1 (written), Nathan Cooke.

<sup>68</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Commissioners of the Tax, Tax Ledgers, 1st election district, Nathan Cooke, 1841, p. 101, 18 slaves; MCHS.

<sup>69</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, slave schedule, Cracklin District, unpaginated, line 10, Nathan Cooke.

<sup>70</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Tax Assessment Book, Slaves 1853–64, 1st election district, entries for Nathan Cooke, 1853, pp. 1–2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1855, pp. 77–78.

<sup>72</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, slave schedule, District 1, p. 9 (written), line 33, Nathan Cooke Sr.

<sup>73</sup> "Montgomery County Slave Statistics, 1867–1868," entry for Nathan Cooke, *Archives of Maryland Online*, Volume 812 (www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000812/html/index.html : accessed 21 December 2017). In this document, Nathan named forty people who had been his slaves and included their surnames.

<sup>74</sup> "U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862–1918," database and images, *Ancestry.com*, entry for Nathan Cooke, 1863, line 23, District of Columbia; Nathan Cooke, October 1864, line 36, District of Columbia; citing NARA microfilm M760, roll 3.

<sup>75</sup> “Lincoln Imposes First Federal Income Tax,” *History.com* ([www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lincoln-imposes-first-federal-income-tax](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lincoln-imposes-first-federal-income-tax); accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>76</sup> “U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862–1918,” database and images, *Ancestry.com*, entry for Nathan Cooke, May 1865, line 26, District of Columbia; Nathan Cooke, May 1866, line 28.

<sup>77</sup> National Historical Geographic Information System, U.S. Geographic Summary Data and Boundary Files; database, *IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System*. ([www.nhgis.org/](http://www.nhgis.org/) : accessed 19 October 2017), custom table with county-level breakdowns for number of slaves per slaveholder held in 1860.

<sup>78</sup> Rachel Frazier, “Nathan Cooke, Sr.,” *Archives of Maryland* ([www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5496/sc5496/035300/035312/html/035312bio.html](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5496/sc5496/035300/035312/html/035312bio.html); accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Charles T. Jacobs, *Civil War Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland* (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery County Historical Society, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> “Black Soldiers in the U.S. Military During the Civil War,” National Archives Educator Resources ([www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war/) : accessed 15 March 2016).

<sup>81</sup> “U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations, Records 1863–1865,” database and images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 1 December 2017), Montgomery County, Maryland, 1st district, entries for African-Americans in Montgomery County; citing Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registrations, 1863–1865, Records of the Provost Marshal General’s Bureau, Record Group 110. Also, owners included notations about which of their slaves enlisted or were drafted into the army in the 1867 Slave Statistics, see “Montgomery County Slave Statistics, 1867–1868,” *Archives of Maryland Online*, Volume 812 ([www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000812/html/index.html](http://www.msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000812/html/index.html) : accessed 21 December 2017). Specifically, most of the black men from Montgomery County served in the 1st, 23rd, 30th and 39th U.S. Colored Troops.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel W. Young testified that David was “hurt by a tree limb falling on him at Petersburg,” see Deposition of Daniel W. Young, 25 April 1896, David Addison (Pvt., Co. C, 23rd United States Colored Troops Infantry, Civil War), pension no. S.C. 576,653; *Case Files of Approved Pension Applications of Men Who Served in the Army and Navy Mainly in the Civil War and the War with Spain, 1861-1934*, Washington, D.C.; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington, D.C. For marching into Richmond and presence at Appomattox, see James S. Price, “The 23rd USCT, Then and Now,” *Freedom by the Sword: A Historian’s Journey through the American Civil War Era*

([www.sablearm.blogspot.com/2011/03/23rd-usct-then-now.html](http://www.sablearm.blogspot.com/2011/03/23rd-usct-then-now.html) : accessed 21 December 2017). This blog post details the activities of the 23rd USCT, David's unit.

<sup>83</sup> Library of Congress, "Emancipation Proclamation," *Primary Documents in American History* ([www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/EmanProc.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/EmanProc.html) : accessed 2 December 2017).

<sup>84</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Tax Assessment Book, Slaves 1853–64, 1st election district, entries for Dorothy Williams, 1853, pp. 11–12; 1855, pp. 87–88.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 1864, pp. 323–324.

<sup>86</sup> The 1864 Maryland Constitution states in Article 24: "That hereafter, in this State, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted; and all persons held to service or labor as slaves, are hereby declared free." See "Volume 666-The Constitution of the State of Maryland, 1864," *Archives of Maryland Online*

([www.aomol.msa.maryland.gov/000001/000666/html/index.html](http://www.aomol.msa.maryland.gov/000001/000666/html/index.html) : accessed 29 September 2017).

<sup>87</sup> Miranda S. Spivack, "The Not-Quite-So-Free State: Maryland Dragged its Feet on Emancipation During Civil War," *The Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) : accessed 26 August 2014, originally published 13 September 2013).

<sup>88</sup> Barbara Jeanne Fields, "In Lieu of Reconstruction," *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 131–166. See also Eric Foner, "The Meanings of Freedom," *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House, 2005), 76–106.

<sup>89</sup> Maryland State Archives and University of Maryland College Park, Maryland, *A Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland* (Annapolis, Md.: Maryland State Archives, 2008), 28, 31. Interestingly, Maryland did not ratify the Fourteenth Amendment until 1959 and the Fifteenth Amendment until 1973.

<sup>90</sup> Fields, "In Lieu of Reconstruction," *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century*, 131–137. See also Richard Paul Fuke, "The Confines of White Racial Attitudes," *Imperfect Equality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 148–171.

<sup>91</sup> David S. Bogen, "The Forgotten Era," *Digital Commons, University of Maryland Law School*, article, ([www.digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac\\_pubs/642/](http://www.digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs/642/) : accessed 21 December 2017), pp. 12–13.

<sup>92</sup> Eric Foner, "An American Crisis," *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House, 2005), 107–127.

<sup>93</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, Tax Assessment Book, Slaves 1853–64, 1st election district, entries for Dorothy Williams, 1853, pp. 11–12; 1855, pp. 87–88; 1864, pp. 323–324. Although surnames are not given, Dorothy paid taxes on an enslaved woman named “Harriet” age 57 in 1853, and “Harriet” at age 60 in 1855. Harriet was not among Dorothy’s taxable slaves in 1864. She also does not appear in the 1870 census, see 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 1st election District, PO Brighton, p. 253 B (stamped), dwelling 419, family 401, Levi Prayther.

<sup>94</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery Co., Md., pop. sched., 1st election district, PO Brighton, p. 253 B (stamped), dwell. 419, fam. 401, Levi Prayther.

<sup>95</sup> Simpson Bible Record, 1839–1852, loose “Family Record” pages, photocopies held by author, [address for private use], Elkridge, Maryland, 2009. There is no publication date available since the images had been separated from the original book. This Bible likely belonged to Martha Simpson Prather (1845–1910), as it records information about her Simpson siblings and her father, as well as her children with husband Levi Prather (1839–1894). Original pages were in the possession of Theodore Prather, Gaithersburg, Maryland, and were probably passed to him from his father Darius Prather, a son of Martha Simpson Prather. There are at least two types of penmanship used, and while several entries appear to have been made in groups which suggest copying from another source, others appear to have been recorded at the time the event occurred. Both sets of penmanship are clear, although one is particularly neat and ornate. Martha came from a family of literate free blacks and at least two of her siblings and several of her children were educators.

<sup>96</sup> Wesley and Levi Prather lived in very close proximity to one another in 1870, see 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery Co., MD, pop. sch., 1st election district, PO Brighton, stamped p. 253 A, dwelling 417, family 399, Wesley Prayther. See also 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 1st election district, PO Brighton, p. 253 B (stamped), dwelling 419, family 401, Levi Prayther.

<sup>97</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 2nd election district, PO Brighton, stamped p. 294 B, dwelling 399, family 402, Tobias Prayther. Patience had tried to run away from her Montgomery County owner, William W. Blunt, in September 1858 but was captured in Washington, D.C., see Jerry M. Hynson, *District of Columbia, Runaway and Fugitive Slave Cases, 1848–1863* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 2012), entry for Patience Prater, p. 75, committed 22 September 1858, released to Blunt on 18 November 1858. Two of her fellow slaves, Basil Hall in 1850 and Jim Hall in 1857, also ran away and were recaptured, see entry for Basil Hall, p. 11, committed 7 March 1850, released to W.W. Blunt and James Williams

on 11 March 1850; Jim Hall, p. 62, committed 11 March 1857, released to Mr. Blunt on 20 March 1857.

<sup>98</sup> Brooke Grove Cemetery (770 Brink Road, Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, Maryland); personally read and photos taken by author on 12 September 2013. Hundreds of headstones still stand in this historic cemetery and death certificates reveal that hundreds more were buried there.

<sup>99</sup> Nelson Brown, bank card no. 1235, Washington D.C. branch, dated 14 December 1867; Benjamin Snowden, bank card no. 1219, Washington D.C. branch, 5 December 1867; “Freedman’s Bank Records, 1865–1874,” database and images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 2 June 2007); citing “*Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman’s Savings and Trust Company, 1865–1874*,” M816, 27 rolls [exact roll not cited].

<sup>100</sup> It also provided assistance to destitute whites.

<sup>101</sup> Letter to Commissioner Howard, pp. 24–28, October 1866, Rockville Office, Roll 41, Letters Sent, Volume 53, “Maryland and Delaware, Freedmen’s Bureau Field Office Records, 1865–1877,” digital images, *FamilySearch* ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm M1906, *Field Offices for the States of Maryland and Delaware, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands*, Roll 41.

<sup>102</sup> Some black women would still work as domestics in white households.

<sup>103</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, Cracklin, enumeration district (ED) 107, p. 208 B (stamped), dwelling 253, family 271, Wesley Prather. The census notes his occupation as a “carpenter.”

<sup>104</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Henry and Virda Griffith to Wesley Praither, EBP 22:48, written 15 November 1879.

<sup>105</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, William H. Benson Sr. to Moses and Marshall Praither, JA 40:29, written 27 December 1883, sold 4 acres for \$240; William H. Benson Sr. to Ann Praither, JA 11:106, written 27 September 1883, sold 1½ acres for \$90; William H. Benson Sr. to John Praither, 192:169, written 6 October 1884, sold ¾ acre for \$45; William Benson to Rezin Prather, JA 13:203, written 27 December 1883, sold 1 acre for \$60; John E. Benson to Amanda Prather, TD 19:298, written 2 September 1895, sold 1 acre for \$56.

<sup>106</sup> Sebastian Montes, “Family Opens an Unbroken Link to Prathertown’s Past,” *Maryland Gazette*, ([ww2.gazette.net/stories/020806/olnew210430\\_31917.shtml](http://ww2.gazette.net/stories/020806/olnew210430_31917.shtml) : accessed 21 December 2017). See also Joanne E. Atay and Georgianne Mitchell, *The Heart of Gosben, Maryland: Celebrating 300 Years of History* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2005), 35.

<sup>107</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Nicholas and Harriet Mockabee to Martha Prather, JA 180:422, written 22 February 1897.

<sup>108</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Mattie and John Slater to Mamie J. Prather, JLB 210:239, written 2 December 1909; Mattie and John Slater to

Edward Prather, JLB 222:488, written 9 March 1911; Mattie and John Slater to John W. Prather, JLB 222:223, written 9 March 1911; Frank Higgins, trustee to Maria V. Howard, PBR 258:80, written 28 April 1916; William C. and Grace McCord to Harriet L. and Lucy E. Prather, PBR 258:224, written 20 June 1916; Ardella L. Jackson to John W. and Fannie Prather, PBR 298:346, written 9 September 1920; James Wallace to Darius and Sarah Prather, 344:140, written 15 February 1924.

<sup>109</sup> “Community Cornerstones: A Selection of Historic African-American Churches in Montgomery County, Maryland,” *Heritage Montgomery*, ([www.heritagemontgomery.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/community-cornerstones-brochure.pdf](http://www.heritagemontgomery.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/community-cornerstones-brochure.pdf) : accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>110</sup> Nina H. Clarke and Lillian B. Brown, *The History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1872–1961* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Bartleby Press, 1978), 2–4.

<sup>111</sup> Simpson Bible Records, 1850–1914, family pages only, entry for death of “Rezin Prather.”

<sup>112</sup> Evelyn Ripps, “Maryland Inventory of Historic Property Form,” *Maryland Historical Trust Inventory of Historic Properties*, database ([www.mdihp.net](http://www.mdihp.net) : 20 April 2014), Goshen United Methodist Church, 8410 Brink Road, Montgomery County, Maryland, August 1979, section 8.

<sup>113</sup> Letter to Commissioner Howard, p. 111–114, 2 October 1867. Rockville Office, Roll 41, Letters Sent, Volume 53, “Maryland and Delaware, Freedmen’s Bureau Field Office Records, 1865–1877.”

<sup>114</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Vachel Duffie and wife Ann E. to Wesley Prather, et. al., EBP 7:424, written 6 July 1870.

<sup>115</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, Cracklin District, page 318 A (stamped), dwelling 164, family 166, Wesley Randolph.

<sup>116</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, population schedule, 1st election district, PO Brighton, p. 253 A. (stamped), dwelling 349, family 330, James Ross.

<sup>117</sup> Fuke, “The Confines of White Racial Attitudes,” *Imperfect Equality*, 218–246.

<sup>118</sup> Sherrilyn A. Ifill, “Mob Rule on the Shore, 1930–1933,” *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 24–56. See also “An American Tragedy,” *Underbelly* ([www.mdhs.org/underbelly/2017/10/12/an-american-tragedy/](http://www.mdhs.org/underbelly/2017/10/12/an-american-tragedy/) : accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>119</sup> Emily Clare Newby Correll, “Crimes in Montgomery County,” August 1998, *The Montgomery County Story*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 37–47.

<sup>120</sup> Edward H. Bonekemper III, “Was Slavery the Primary Cause of Secession and the Civil War?,” *The Myth of the Lost Cause* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery History, 2015), 31–95.

<sup>121</sup> Blight’s prize-winning book discusses in depth the process by which whites created a new narrative of the war during reconciliation, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>122</sup> C. Fraser Smith, “Suing Jim Crow,” *Here Lies Jim Crow: Civil Rights in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 58–112.

<sup>123</sup> “Jim Crow Laws: Maryland,” article, *Jim Crow History* ([sourcesfinding.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/jimcrowlawsmaryland.pdf](http://sourcesfinding.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/jimcrowlawsmaryland.pdf) : accessed 21 December 2017).

<sup>124</sup> “Rosenwald Schools,” database, *Fisk University* ([rosenwald.fisk.edu/](http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/) : accessed 21 December 2017). A search on ‘Maryland’ and ‘Montgomery County’ results in data and photographs for the Laytonsville school.

<sup>125</sup> Nina H. Clarke and Lillian B. Brown, *The History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1872–1961* (Bartleby Press, 1978).

<sup>126</sup> Warrick S. Hill, *Before Us Lies the Timber: The Segregated High School of Montgomery County* (Bartleby Press, 2003), 117.

<sup>127</sup> Mark V. Tushnet, “Marshall and the Maryland Connection,” *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925–1950, Volume 2* (University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 49–69.

<sup>128</sup> 1900 U.S. census, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, population schedule, Cambridge City, precinct 8, ED 722, sheet 6 [no letter], p.133 A (stamped), dwelling 88, family 112, Washington Riggs; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 31 December 2017), citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 657.

<sup>129</sup> 1900 U.S. census, Camden County, New Jersey, population schedule, precinct 6, ED 74, sheet 2 B, p. 32 B (stamped), dwelling 39, family 42, R. R. Praither; citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 959.

<sup>130</sup> “New York, State Census, 1892,” digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 2 December 2017); entry for Resin Prather, age 16, living in Oyster Bay, Queens, 10th election district, p. 1 (written); citing New York State Education Department, Office of Cultural Education. *1892 New York State Census*, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

<sup>131</sup> 1920 U.S. census, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, precinct 3, ED 81[?], sheet 11 A, p. 104 A (stamped), household 501, dwelling 269, family 332, James Clogett [Clagett]; digital images, *Ancestry.com* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 31 December 2017), citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1521.

<sup>132</sup> “Ohio, Deaths, 1908–1953,” index and images, *FamilySearch* ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) : accessed 30 November 2017), entry for Gertrude Lyles, 29 June 1946; citing FHL microfilm 2,372,811.

<sup>133</sup> 1900 U.S. census, Mahoning County, Ohio, population schedule, Youngstown, precinct A, ED 70, sheet 5 A., p. 240 A, dwelling 89, family 106, Wade H. Adison; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 30 November 2017), citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 1300.

<sup>134</sup> "Ohio, Deaths, 1908–1953," entry for Cora V. Walker, 6 May 1953; citing FHL microfilm 2,246,506.

<sup>135</sup> 1920 U.S. census, Tompkins County, New York, population schedule, Ithaca City, ED 191, sheet 10 A., p. 144 A (stamped), dwelling 206, family 262, Lucy J. Prather; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1265.

<sup>136</sup> They include two of Marshall Prather's children Fannie and Hamilton, Moses Prather's daughter Florence, and three of John W. Prather's children, Darius, Elgie and Alonzo.

<sup>137</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Shadrack Riggs to Grace Lodge #8975 [Trustees of], 234: 136, written 28 January 1913.

<sup>138</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Abraham Lancaster to Lodge of Moses [Trustees of], JA 34: 468, written 31 October 1892.

<sup>139</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Richard Dorsey to Brooke Grove Lodge # 12 [Trustees of], EBP 36: 191, written 9 November 1885.

<sup>140</sup> Simpson Bible Records, 1850–1914, family pages only, entry for death of Levi Prather.

<sup>141</sup> Simpson Bible Records, 1850–1914, family pages only, entry for death of Tobias Prather.

<sup>142</sup> Wesley Prather died after the date of a deed written 7 December 1899, see Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Wesley Praither to James D. Praither, TD 12:330, written 7 December 1899.

<sup>143</sup> Montgomery Co., Md., Land Records, Vachel Duffie and wife Ann E. to Wesley Prather, et al., EBP 7:424. The group of men who formed the second part of the deed—Wesley and Levi Prather, Wesley Randolph, Vachel Duffie and James Ross—are referred to as "Trustees." Two acres of land were sold for \$150, expressly to be "used, kept, maintained and disposed of as a place for divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church."