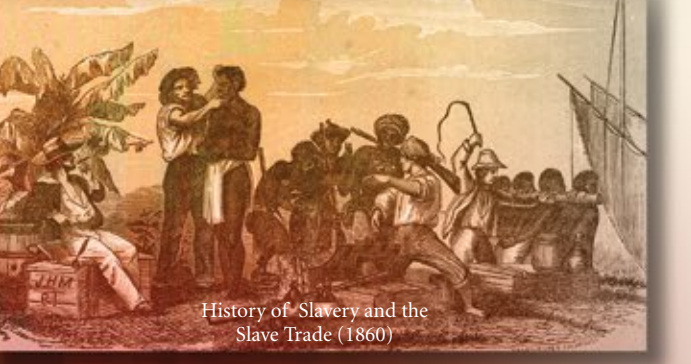


Free black planters were a small minority of the lower Shore population during the 17th and 18th centuries. By 1755 the population of free blacks had risen to 243 for Somerset and Worcester counties, while the numbers of slaves had grown to 4,175. During the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, slaves worked and lived within the rural plantation and small town environments as they evolved over the course of the first century and a half of Anglo-American settlement and cultivation. The most tangible link to these past landscapes are the plantation dwellings that have survived to modern times, which include a small collection of brick or brick and frame structures, whether in the cellar, attic, or in detached kitchens or purpose-built housing adjacent to the plantation yard or along field edges.



History of Slavery and the Slave Trade (1860)

Joining the first generation of Anglo-American settlers who look up parents along Somerset County's rivers and creeks were African-Americans, Anthony and Mary Johnson of Northampton County, Virginia, who as a free black couple, immigrated into Maryland around 1676 with their son John, his wife, Bessama, their children and the family servant John Caster. Upon arrival Anthony Johnson negotiated a long-term lease for a 300-acre tract known as "Tonies Vineyard," located on the south side of Wicomico Creek in the vicinity of Folks Road northwest of Princess Anne. Although the exact site of the Johnson plantation has not been excavated or researched in depth, the couple's material wealth is evident from land and livestock ownership in Maryland and Virginia, which attests to remarkable successes the Johnsons enjoyed as a black planter family in a white dominated society.

The history of the African-American experience on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, spanning close to three-and-a-half centuries, consists of a complex fabric of written fact and oral traditions tied to numerous sites scattered across the rural and urban landscapes of Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico counties. This brochure is designed as an effort to explore prominent themes within African-American history and present in a brief, accessible way the meaning and contributions that many properties have in the overall history of the lower Eastern Shore.

John Wesley M. E. Church (Chippm Cultural Center)

Research Destinations

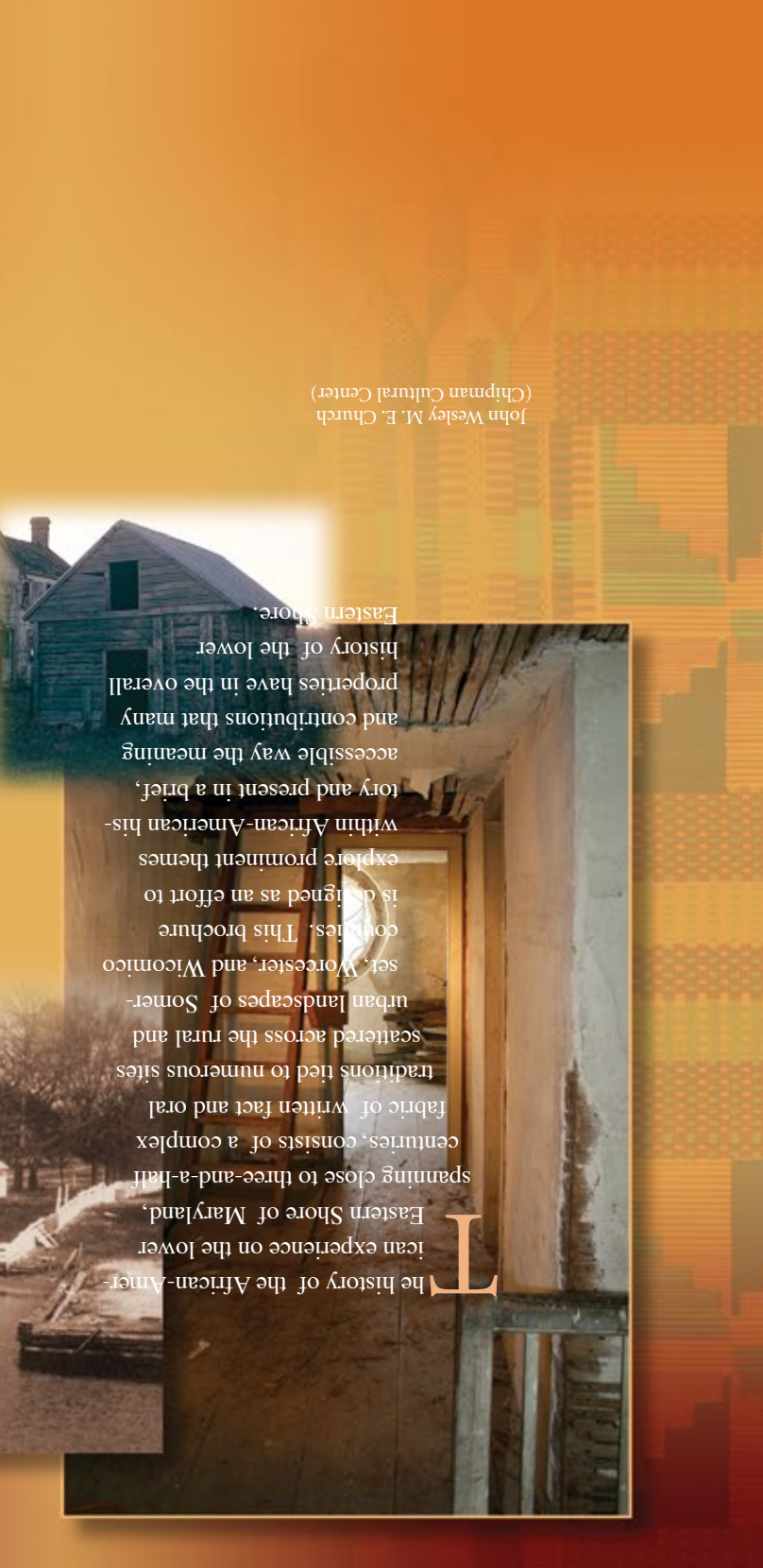
- Calvin B. Taylor House Museum - Berlin 410-641-1019
- Frederick Douglass Library - University of Maryland Eastern Shore 410-651-6622
- Julia A. Purnell Museum - Snow Hill 410-632-0515
- Maryland State Archives - Annapolis 800-235-4045
- Edward H. Nabb Research Center For Delmarva History & Culture - Salisbury University 410-543-6312
- Wicomico County Library - Salisbury 410-749-5171
- Worcester County Library - Snow Hill 410-632-2600

For Further Reading: Sources Consulted

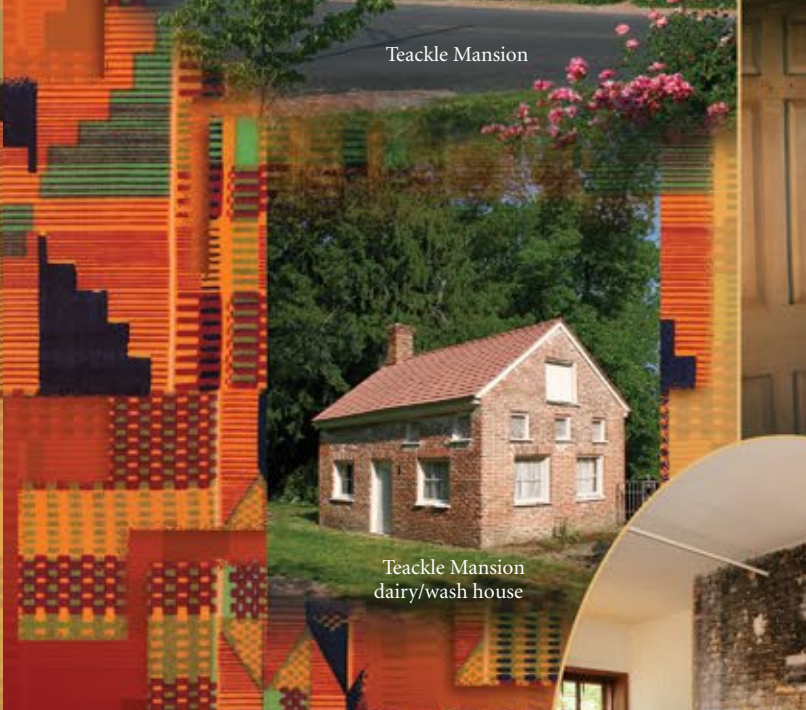
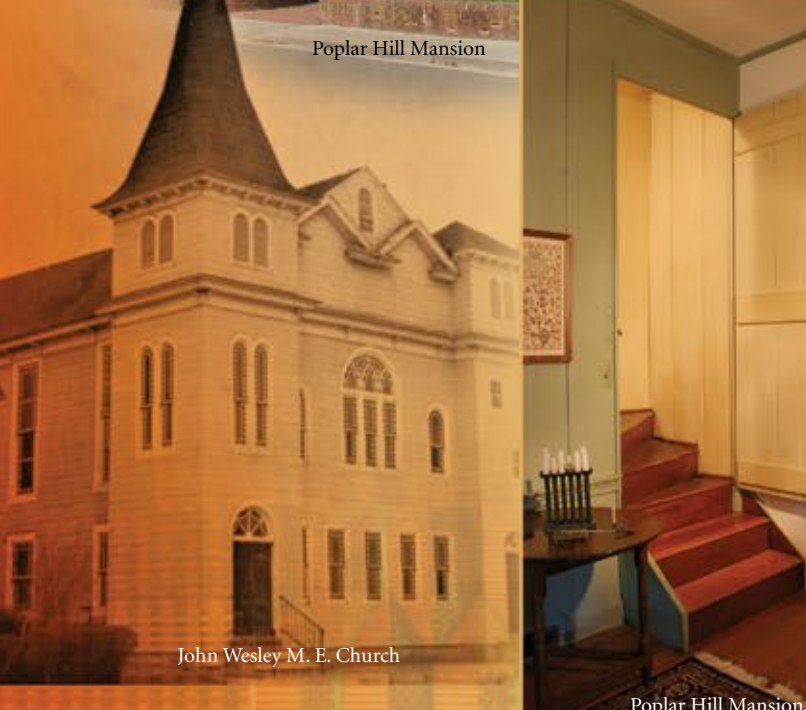
- *Along the Seaboard Side: The Architectural History of Worcester County*, Paul Baker Touart, Worcester County Commissioners (1994)
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- *My Business Was to Fight the Devil: Recollections of Reverend Adam Wallace, Peninsula Circuit Rider, 1847-1865*, Joseph F. DiPaolo (1998)
- *Myne Own Ground, Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore*, Breen and Innes (1980)
- *Slavery & Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865*, William H. Williams (1996)
- *Slavery & Freedom on the Middle Ground*, Barbara Fields (1985)
- *Somerset: An Architectural History*, Paul Baker Touart (1990)
- *The Free Negro in Maryland, 1634-1860*, James Wright (1971)
- *The Underground Railroad*, William Still (1872)
- *Unlocking the Past: A History of Poplar Hill Mansion, 1795-2005*, Master's Thesis, Salisbury University, Jason Illari (2006)



Production, Photography & Designed by Gerlitzki Design, Inc. Research & Copywriting by Paul Baker Touart



LOWER EASTERN SHORE



LOWER EASTERN SHORE

Pemberton Hall stands on the western periphery of Salisbury along the Wicomico River. Its surrounding fields, orchard, outbuildings, cellar and yard, as well as the plantation wharf at Mulberry Landing on the Wicomico, comprised the working and living domains of 17 slaves during the ownership of merchant-planter Isaac Handy, who financed the construction of Pemberton Hall in 1741.

Beverly, located on the Pocomoke River, stands out as one of the region's most elaborate and best preserved late colonial dwellings. Erected during the 1770s, the large Georgian style brick house is distinguished by many unusual features. Attached to the south end of the Flemish bond brick main block are the kitchen and colonnade; spaces where the Dennis family's domestic slaves worked down till dusk in the preparation of the daily meals as well as a host of other chores. One of the most distinguished architectural features is the wrought-iron arch that accents the riverside entrance. Dennis family tradition holds that the decorative iron archway, incorporating hand-hammered griffin heads, was crafted in part by Haitian slaves in an attempt to ward off evil spirits that would endanger the plantation family.

During the last decade of the 18th century, Poplar Hill Mansion was erected by Colonel Levin Handy on the northeast side of Salisbury. The finely appointed two-story Federal style frame plantation house, centerpiece to a several hundred-acre property, was started in 1795, but at the time of his death was incomplete. The next owner, Dr. John Huston and his family, finalized the finishing of the house. He owned 19 slaves who worked the plantation fields or accomplished domestic chores in and around the dwelling. Both the cellar and attic were spaces clearly used and probably occupied by John Huston's slaves. Unusual to the floor plan of Poplar Hill is a segregated staircase that rises from a rear service hall which joined the original kitchen to the second floor drawing

room or chamber, thereby alleviating the need for slaves to enter the more formal center passage and staircase. Dr. John Huston died in 1828, and the following year his wife, Sarah, manumitted their servant Levin, who at the time was around 39 years old. Levin Huston continued to reside in the neighborhood, and his name surfaces in 1838 as one of the trustees purchasing land for the Hill Church, which later became the

suspicion as natural allies of the remaining slave population. As a result, the decades leading up to the Civil War found free blacks across the region segregating themselves in distinct communities with the obvious plan that strength in numbers would offer some measure of protection. In northern Somerset County, later Wicomico, the village of Santo Domingo surfaced during the early to mid 19th century as a free black community that developed largely on the land of a relatively wealthy free black landowner, James Brown and his wife Lydia. James Brown's first recorded purchase of land in this area dates to October 1820. In October 1855, Brown and his wife sold a small parcel to trustees, Robert Twilley, John Melson, Hiram B. Cooper, John Robinson, James Robinson, Robert C. Windsor and Levin Wright, colored members of the Methodist Episcopal church.

James Brown free negro from Betsy Dutton free negro Somerset County Land Record, 14 April 1829

Somerset County Tax Assessment, 1817

John Wesley M. E. congregation. Due to hard work and perseverance, Levin Huston accumulated enough cash to purchase his wife, Esther and daughter from George Parsons in 1849 for \$550.

One of the most elaborate Federal style dwellings built on the lower Eastern Shore is Teackle Mansion in Princess Anne. Erected in stages between 1802 and 1819, the two-story, five-part plan brick dwelling outdistances most other structures of its time for enclosed space and attention to high-end architectural finishes. Financed by Littleton Dennis and Elizabeth Upshur Teackle, the couple occupied this expansive house and town estate with their only child, Elizabeth Anne, and a score of black servants who worked in and around the house or at large agricultural holdings across the lower Shore. Tax assessments record the ownership of 20 servants who

are recorded by name, age and value, while personal letters and other documents shed light on the work they performed day-to-day. Two female servants, Nanny, aged 38 and probably her daughter, Sally, aged 10, were brought up from Accomack County, Virginia when the Teackles relocated to Princess Anne; the documentation for which was recorded in the Somerset County land records. The construction of Teackle Mansion was an immense undertaking divided into two principal construction programs. The center two-story temple-front house, started in 1802, took dozens of skilled workers and laborers to build; Elizabeth Teackle wrote to her sister Anne Eyre in Northampton County that "the greatest part of this summer we have had from 23 to 24 white persons in family & very nearly as many blacks in the kitchen." Once the house was completed in 1819, the complex included one of the largest kitchens of its time as well as a complex of support buildings. The Teackle's family servants lived in various spaces inside and outside the house, and four partitioned rooms in the main attic were clearly intended for servant occupation. Two front houses marking the entrance to the estate as well as frame or log "quarters" were used for servant housing as well.

Emerging as an increasingly important part of the lower Shore populace during the first half of the 19th century were free blacks. Numbering 1035 for Somerset and Worcester counties in 1800, the population of free blacks had expanded over 8 times that total by 1860. While a few free blacks living on the lower Shore could trace their ancestry back to free black colonists, the larger part descended from ex-slaves who had been freed during the years

between the American Revolution and the Civil War. Pressure from anti-slavery societies in the North and Methodist and Quaker congregations throughout the country encouraged the manumission of slaves at increasing rates during the 1850s.

Despite the overwhelming odds against them, a few former slaves were able to establish remarkably large personal estates during the first half of the 19th century. As tensions surrounding the issue of slavery escalated during the 1840s and 1850s, free blacks were viewed with

Somerset County Tax Assessment, 1817

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