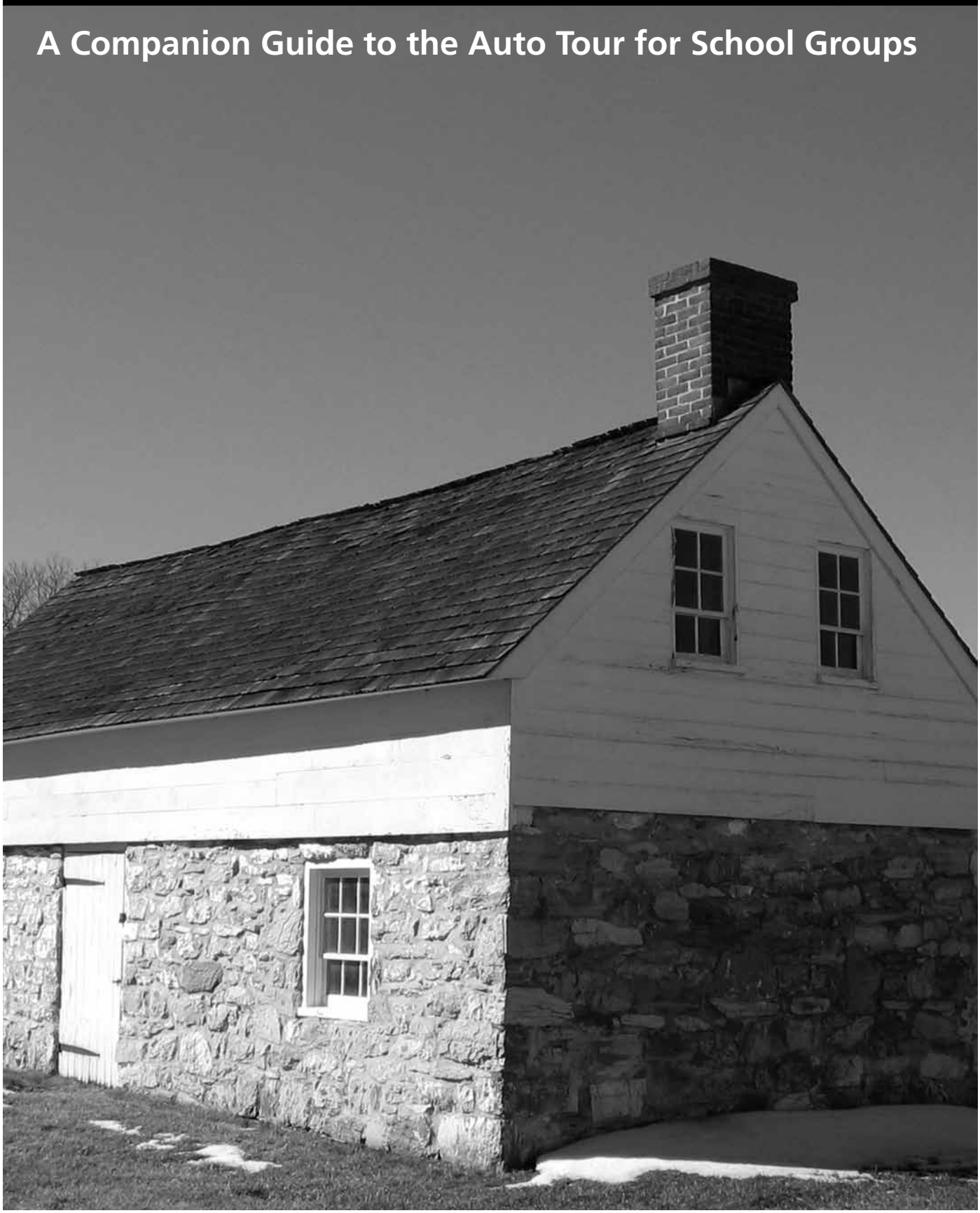
Contradictions and Divided Loyalties
Slavery on the Antietam Battleground

Antietam National Battlefield
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

A Companion Guide to the Auto Tour for School Groups



Spring house/slave quarters located on the Piper Farm

Introduction

America's Civil War was a complicated period of contradiction and divided loyalties. Divided by the south's economic dependence on slave labor, desire in the north to limit the institution of slavery, and the issue of the rights of states to pursue their chosen path, the heated debate of decades degenerated into war in 1861.

Straddling the opposing sides both politically and geographically was the border state of Maryland.

Maryland, of all the states, was a puzzle. Despite the legislative efforts of the powerful slave holding minority, the majority of Maryland's population was less committed to the institution of slavery. Yet among that majority could be found numerous individuals who took advantage of slave labor, including many who would declare themselves loyal to the Union. Reluctance among Maryland's southern sympathizers to support secession placed the state somewhere in between north and south politically as well.

The institution of slavery is still one which is shrouded in mystery. Though information is often scarce, research has uncovered fragments of the lives of those who held slaves and those who were enslaved. With this we can begin to develop a broader picture of the people who were affected by slavery in Maryland.

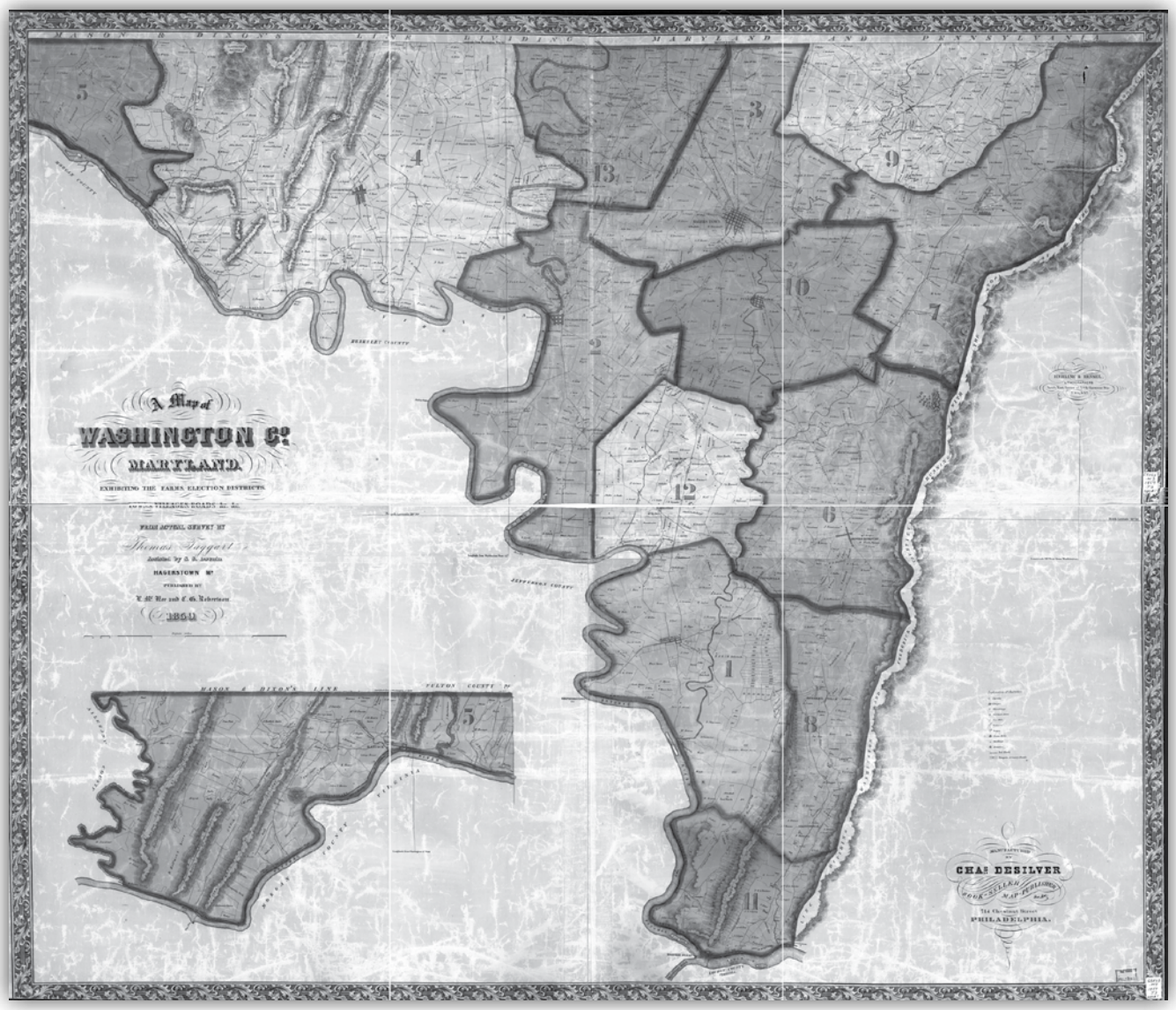
Maryland Monument (This photo and cover photo, Park Ranger Mannie Gentile)

Washington County

Washington County serves as a case study of Maryland as a "middle ground." Directly bordered by both northern and southern states, its population was politically divided between Union supporters and southern sympathizers. Slavery was practiced on a small but significant scale in a population generally assumed to be anti-slavery.

In 1850, about 9% of Washington County's population was enslaved. The farms around Sharpsburg were typical of the region where the primary crop was wheat, supplemented with corn, oats, and rye. Seasonal crops like wheat and corn did not require the year around labor that slavery provided. Most farmers relied on seasonal hired labor.

By comparison, in southern Maryland the St. Mary's County population was 43% slave in 1850. The tobacco farms there resembled the large plantations of their southern neighbors, reliant on the labor of slaves to tend to the longer growing season of the demanding tobacco plant.



Washington County, Maryland, 1859, Library of Congress

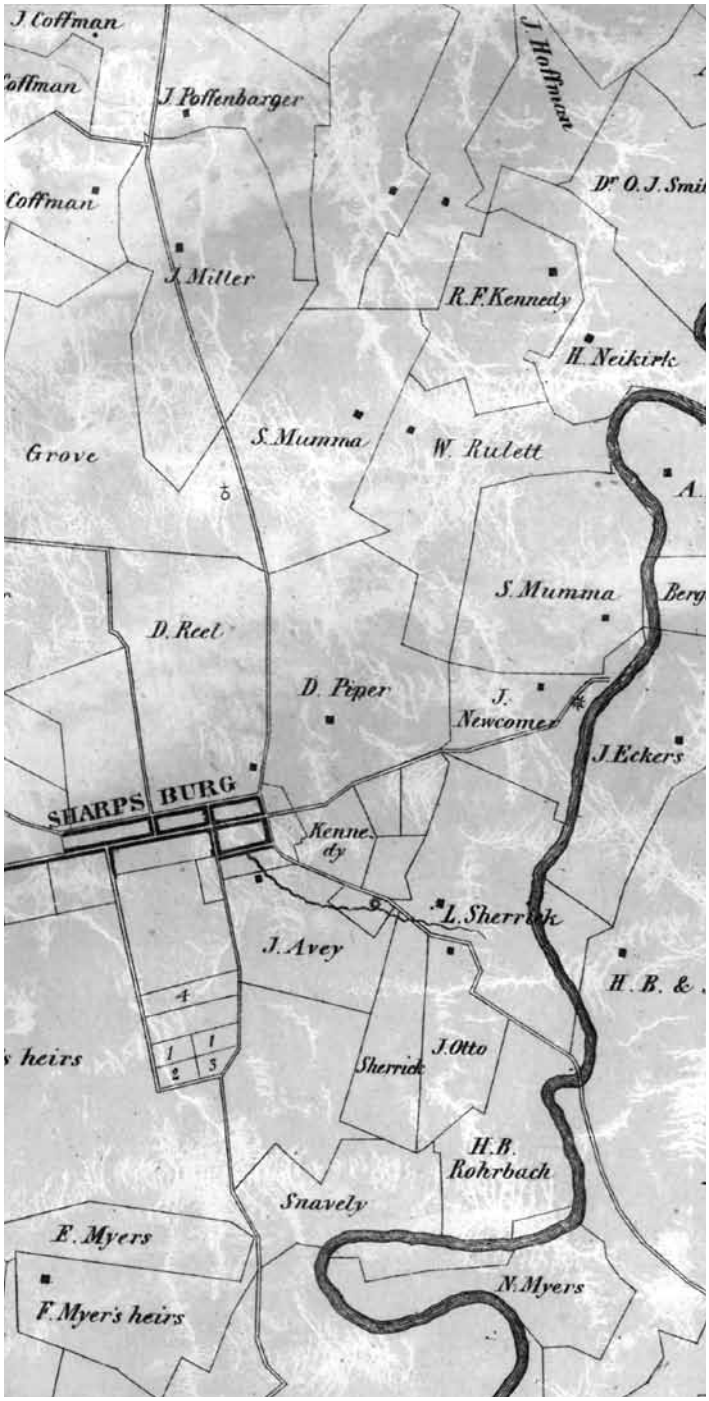
The Farms of the Antietam

The Antietam Battlefield was the scene of one of the bloodiest battles in United States history. The Union victory at Antietam in September 1862 precipitated Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in the rebellion states.

Living on the farms which served as the bloody battlefield, were respected men and women, their children, and their slaves. The lives of all were impacted by the September 17, 1862 battle.

These are the stories of some of the farmers of the Antietam Battlefield. Despite close family relationships among neighbors and despite common religious backgrounds generally opposed to slavery, they each developed widely different approaches to slavery.

These are the stories of the African-Americans both slave and free who lived on the Antietam Battlefield. While Lincoln's proclamation freed the southern slaves, it did not free the slaves in the border state of Maryland. They would continue to live in bondage until 1864, when they were freed by the state of Maryland. In the years after their emancipation several of the freedmen stayed as employees of their former masters, others moved away in search of work.



Sharpsburg district, Washington County, Maryland, 1859, Library of Congress

Stop 1: The Dunker Church

One of the great ironies of the Battle of Antietam was the location of the Dunker Church as the focal point of the two opposing armies. The Dunkers, or Church of the Brethren, were a pacifist sect, steadfastly opposed to the war.

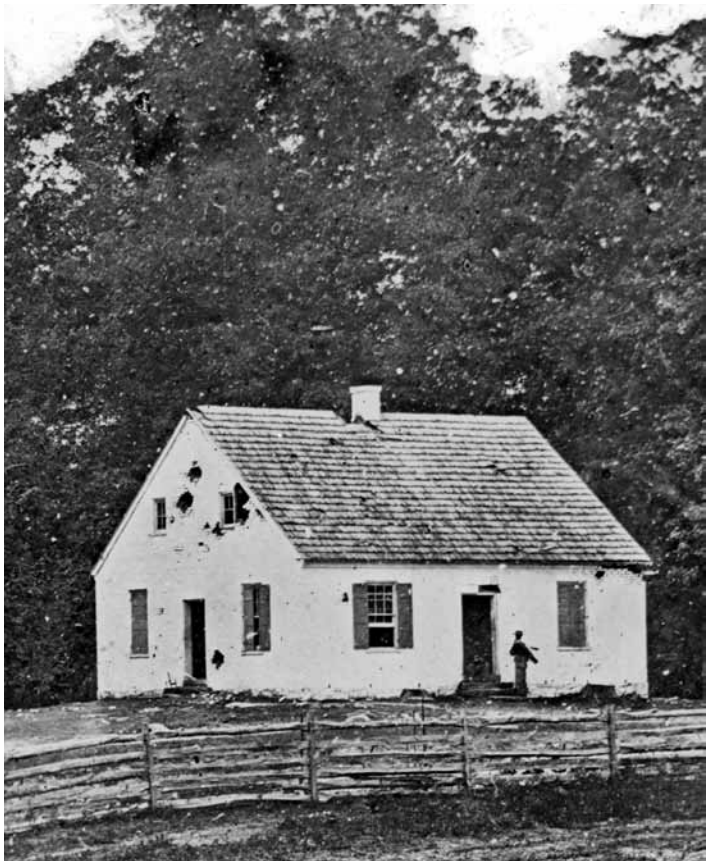
The Dunker's strong stand against slavery created an irony as well among their brethren farming in the Sharpsburg area. The official church position stated:

. . . that no member, neither brother nor sister, shall purchase or sell negroes, and keep none for slaves.

. . . if there were members having slaves, . . . that they might hold them in a proper way. . . for the slaves to earn the money they had cost, and then, with the counsel of the church, they are to be set free, with a good suit of clothing . . .

Several prominent Washington County Brethren owned slaves, including Samuel Mumma, Sr. who donated the land on which the little Dunker Church stood. David Long, an active member in the Manor Church congregation, was reported to have purchased slaves at Hagerstown auctions for the purpose of manumission (to be set free). It may be that Samuel Mumma was similarly motivated.

No church membership in the Sharpsburg area was without slaveholders in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Among the leading members of the Sharpsburg Methodist congregation was Dr. Augustin A. Biggs, physician, Union supporter, and owner of three slaves in 1860, all of them over the age of 65. Daniel Piper, a member of the German Reformed congregation in Sharpsburg, owned five slaves in 1850. Among the Sharpsburg Lutherans was Henry S. Blackford, owner of three slaves in 1860.



1862 Gardner photograph of the Dunker Church, Library of Congress

Note: As you continue along the auto tour, note the farm of David R. Miller on your right along the Old Hagerstown Pike. D. R. Miller's farm included the famous Cornfield and West Woods, scene of much of the fighting in the morning phase of the battle. Miller was also the owner of one female slave in 1860.

Stop 6: The Mumma Farm

Samuel Mumma, Sr., his wife Elizabeth (Miller) Mumma, and their eleven children lived on this 150-acre farm. Samuel inherited the farm from his father Jacob around 1850. He donated the land on which the Dunker Church stands in 1851. Also living on the Mumma farm in 1850 were two slaves, Lucy Young, age 28 and Lloyd Wilson, age 2. In 1856, Samuel set free his two slaves. Samuel was known as a pious man and well loved among his brethren. His reasons for owning slaves, despite his Dunker beliefs, are unfortunately not revealed by the historic record. Due to the apparently short period of ownership however, it appears that manumission may have been his motivation.

The boy, Lloyd Wilson, was required by Maryland law to stay with his owner until the he reached the age of 18. In 1862, at the time of the battle, Lloyd was 13 years old. He was freed by the new Maryland constitution in 1864, at the age of 15. Whether he continued with the Mumma family is unknown. By 1870, he had left the Sharpsburg area.

Although it seems unlikely that young Lloyd would have lived alone in separate slave quarters, it appears that slave quarters may have been located on the Mumma farm. The stone spring house, located behind the Mumma farmhouse, originally had two rooms with a loft above. It is similar in design to the stone spring house/slave quarter found in the neighboring Roulette farm.

When Confederate troops set fire to the Mumma farm on the morning of the Antietam battle, the wooden upper story of the spring house was destroyed.

Despite the massive damage done to their farm by the battle, the Mumma's returned to rebuild their home, barn and other buildings.

Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma and photograph of their destroyed farm.

Stop 7: The Roulette Farm

John Miller lived on this 180-acre farm from around 1820 until his death in 1856. He was the brother of Elizabeth Mumma. In 1840, John Miller owned three slaves. The slave quarter located on the Roulette farm was probably added to the stone spring house around 1820 to house the Miller slaves.

In 1856, William Roulette married Margaret Ann Miller, daughter of John Miller. He purchased his father-in-law's farm, adjoining the Mumma farm and the Piper farm, in 1857. William Roulette never owned slaves. In 1860, Roulette reported two free blacks living in his household, Robert Simon a 15 year old farm hand, and Nancy Campbell a 40 year old woman employed as a servant.

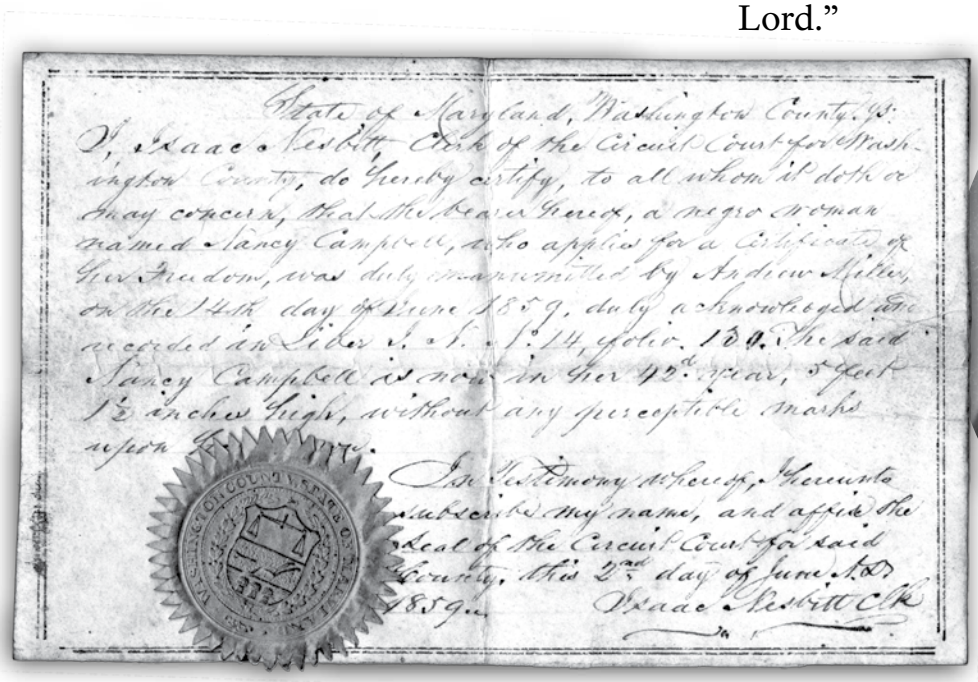
Nancy Campbell (later changed to Camel) was the former slave of Peter Miller, uncle of Margaret Ann Roulette. When Peter died in 1856 he owned "1 Colored Woman" worth $250.00. According to Peter's will, Nancy became the property of his son Andrew Miller.

In June 1859, Andrew Miller freed Nancy Campbell. Her Certificate of Freedom, issued by the county as proof that she was no longer a slave, described Nancy as "5 feet 1 ½ inches high, of a dark complexion, without perceptible marks upon her person." Nancy appears to have immediately taken employment in the Roulette home, where she remained for the rest of her life.

Nancy Camel, as she was later known, was a member of the Manor Church, a Dunker congregation north of Sharpsburg. She was buried in the Manor Church cemetery after her death in 1892.

At the time of her death, Nancy's total worth was $867.04 in cash. Having never married, in her will she left most her money to Susan Rebecca Roulette, William's daughter, and to the children of both Peter and Andrew Miller.

Nancy Camel lived an industrious and pious life. Her gravestone was inscribed with the words "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."


State of Maryland, Washington County, ss:
I, Isaac Nesbitt Clerk of the Circuit Court for Washington County, do hereby certify, to all whom it doth or may concern, that the bearer hereof, a negro woman named Nancy Campbell, who applies for a Certificate of her Freedom, was duly manumitted by Andrew Miller, on the 14th day of June 1859, duly acknowledged and recorded in Liber J. S. No. 14, folio 189. The said Nancy Campbell is now in her 42d year, 5 feet 1½ inches high, without any perceptible marks upon her person.
In Testimony whereof, I hereunto subscribe my name, and affix the seal of the Circuit Court for said County, this 2d day of June A.D. 1859.
Isaac Nesbitt Clk

Nancy Camel and her manumission certificate.

Stop 8: The Piper Farm

Daniel Piper purchased this farm in 1846. Although his sons were already grown, his son Henry lived and worked on the farm with his father. The Piper farmhouse served as the headquarters for General Longstreet during the mid-day phase of the Antietam battle.

The Piper family described themselves as Union supporters. However, Henry and his father Daniel held numerous slaves, some born on the farm as slaves-for-life. In 1850, Daniel Piper owned five slaves, probably a family. Henry owned four slaves, ages 6 months to 24 years, again probably a family.

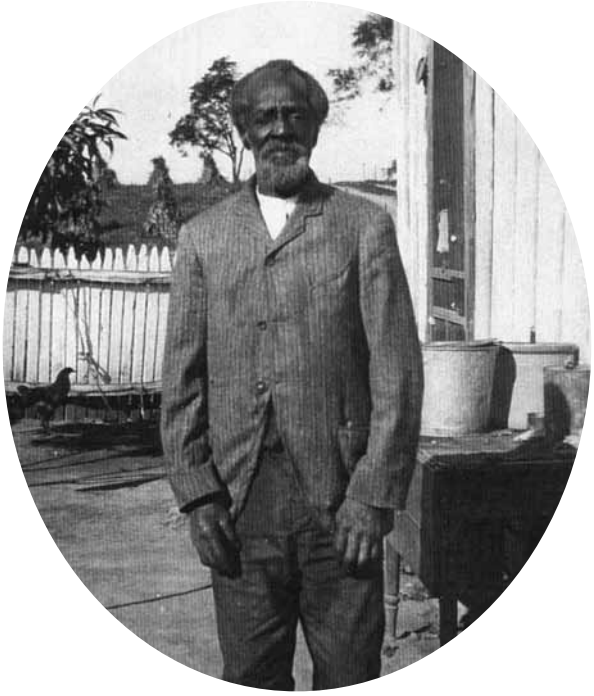
To accommodate the two families, the stone slave quarter building on the Piper farm was divided into two sections. Each section had one room with an outside door and a loft above.

In 1854, Henry Piper inherited the farm from his father Daniel. By 1860, only three of Henry's children remained on the farm, all daughters. A sixteen-year old free black farm hand named John J. also lived with the family.

Henry owned six slaves in 1860, five of them children. Eleven-year old Jeremiah (Jerry) Cornelius Summers was born a slave in 1849 on the Piper farm. At age 13, Jerry accompanied the Piper family when they abandoned their home in September 1862, as the Confederate army began to set up their line of defense across the farm's fields and orchard. After his emancipation in 1864, Jerry continued working and living on the Piper farm.

In 1922, Fred W. Cross, a visitor to the Antietam Battlefield, took a photograph of Jerry Summers at his home located on Bloody Lane near this spot. Cross described Summers as "the last of the slaves of Sharpsburg."

Jeremiah Cornelius Summers died in 1925 at the age of 76. He was buried in the cemetery of Tolson's Chapel in Sharpsburg.



Fred W. Cross photograph of Jerry Summer, 1922. (Courtesy of Doug Bast)

Stop 10: The Otto Farm

John Otto's 60-acre farm near the Lower Bridge (Burnside's Bridge) was the site of much of the final phase of the Antietam battle. After the battle, he found his house and barn filled with wounded and dying soldiers. When the Union army finally cleared out in November of 1862, Otto found little left of the food, wood and animal feed he had carefully laid up for the coming winter.

John Otto lived and worked on his home farm with the help of two slaves in 1860. One, a 54-year old woman, probably worked in the house. The second, a 27-year old man, assisted John Otto in the fields.

Otto's slaves lived in the main house, according to his former slave Hilary. It is likely they lived in the room above the kitchen (the right-hand section of the house as you look from the Stop 10 overlook). Hilary recalled that, even while a slave, Otto paid him for harvest work and for work while hired out to other farmers. He remained to work for John Otto following his emancipation in 1864.

In 1870, Hilary Watson and his wife Christina lived on High Street in Sharpsburg. In the graveyard of the Tolson Chapel nearby, stands the marker of Hilary Watson, aged 85 years, who died on September 20, 1917.

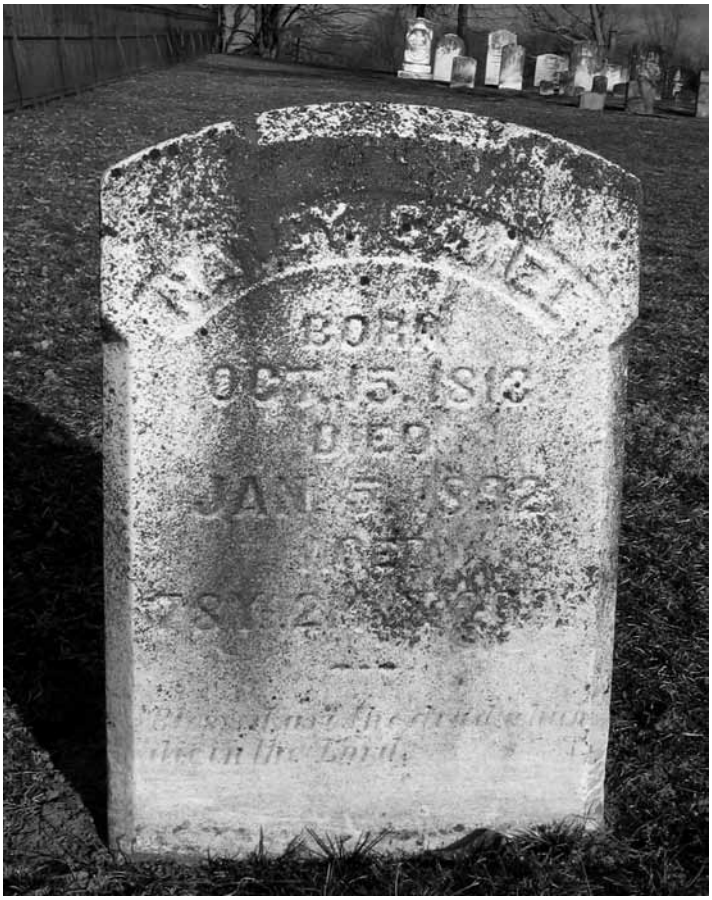
Grave marker of Hilary and Christina Watson, Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg

Conclusion

The Maryland families of the Antietam Battlefield were ordinary people living in an extraordinary time. Drawing on their religious and political beliefs, they approached the much-debated issue of slavery in very different ways.

The slaves of the Antietam Battlefield suffered the greatest irony of the war. The freedom given to their southern counterparts by Lincoln following the battle in 1862 was denied the Maryland slaves until 1864. Although a few stayed to work on the farms they knew, a large number of the newly freed and born-free black citizens left Washington County for work elsewhere.

The Civil War was a quagmire of contradictions and divided loyalties. The confusion of the time may have been most strongly felt on the middle ground of the Border States like Maryland. The stories of the people of the Antietam Battlefield serve as a reminder that slavery was not an impersonal institution. It was individual men and women making daily decisions about their lives and the lives of those deprived of the right of self-determination.



Grave marker of Nancy Camel, Manor Church cemetery. (Photo-Mannie Gentile)

Stone spring house/slave quarter located at the Roulette Farm, (Photo-Mannie Gentile)

Antietam National Battlefield would like to thank Edith B. Wallace for graciously allowing us to reprint this companion guide to the park auto tour, excerpted from -Wallace, E. B. (2003). Reclaiming Forgotten History: Preserving Rural African-American Cultural Resources In Washington County, Maryland (Master's thesis).