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Harriet Tubman--White Paper

INTRODUCTION

The Harriet Tubman 2013 Centennial year was momentous. Both the State of Maryland and the President of the United States publicly recognized and unveiled lasting commemorations of this inspiring larger-than life African American woman. Born enslaved on Maryland's Eastern Shore, she was a daring and heroic transnational conductor of the Underground Railroad, a fearless Civil War freedom fighter and a leading post-war human rights advocate. In recognition of Harriet's extraordinary social justice contributions, the State of Maryland will established the 17-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center near Cambridge, in Dorchester County. Hundreds of community supporters and officials joined Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley and U.S. Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar for the Park's groundbreaking on Saturday, March 9, 2013. Following this event, a ribbon-cutting ceremony kicked-off the designation of a Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, that will trace the freedom paths and the landscapes that Harriet once trekked. The

Harriet Tubman Park will be the trailhead of this 125-mile byway that will contextualize and bring Harriet's world to the public. The Park, to be opened in 2015, will house a visitor center; exhibit hall, theater, memorial garden, trails and a picnic pavilion.

On March 25, 2013, President Barack Obama proclaimed Maryland's Eastern Shore the site for the Harriet Tubman Underground National Monument. "We are grateful to President Obama," stated Governor O'Malley. "Thanks to the hard work and commitment of many, Harriet Tubman's legacy will live on forever."

(www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/eastern/tubman.asp)

As President Barack Obama's Proclamation maintains, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument, commemorates her life and work in its broadest civic scope. Designating the Eastern Shore as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Landmark site with essential cultural, environmental, material, and geographic influences, lends itself to interpretive creativity and imaginary reconstruction based upon actual evidence. "It was in the flat, open fields, marsh, and thick woodlands of Dorchester County that Tubman became physically and spiritually strong. . . . Many of the places in which she grew up and worked still remain." (www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/25/presidential-proclamation-harriet-tubman)

In fulfilling the Presidential Proclamation mandate from *an historical perspective*, the National Park System's charge involves striving to interpret the world of Harriet Tubman so as to connect visitors to her larger Eastern Shore experiences; to attract visitors to the living themes of a bygone era, encourage identification with appreciation for her natural surroundings; and essentially to *feel* Harriet's sojourns. The sojourn through the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument will conduct visitors along a scenic byway whereby they vicariously and viscerally sense its transformation into a protest trail. Through landmark sites, while visitors experience the Eastern Shore's picturesque beauty, they also confront a slavery system that nurtured Harriet's longing for liberty that compelled her, as a young woman, to embark on a

protracted precarious, danger-filled flight to the North. Indeed, the National Monument itself will be a trek through the Underground, acquainting the public with the ambiance, the actors and a regional story of national historical portend. These significant features of the National Monument are the sub-texts that highlight the ingenious leadership qualities, unflappable courage, life skills and humaneness of a great American hero. In her own time, Harriet Tubman was called “the most remarkable woman of this age.”

**LET THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN:
THE WORLD OF ARAMINTA (“Minty”) ROSS
Or
THE MAKING OF HARRIET TUBMAN**

I. Building Communities

A. Importance of African Influences.

Born in Dorchester County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Harriet Tubman, called Minty, was nonetheless connected to her African heritage. Her maternal grandmother, "Modesty," came to America before the Revolution, when forty percent of Maryland’s population was African descended. As the fifth of her mother Rit's eleven children, Minty may have known her grandmother Modesty and heard stories of Africa first hand. She recalled that Eastern Shore black folk likened her to the "Shante" people--Africans from the Gold Coast (presently Ghana) known as bold warriors. However, several West African regions supplied the British trade. Colonial Marylanders purchased captives either directly from the deck of slave ships along the Chesapeake Bay or went to Oxford, (Talbot County), second only to Charleston, South Carolina in international trading and shipping. Modesty was probably captured as a girl. Planters preferred pubescent captives, “the younger the better,” said one merchant, “if not quite children.” Modesty survived the atrociously brutal *Maafa*--a Kiswahili word meaning "great disaster" or African Holocaust. Europeans called the forced journey from Africa to America the

"Middle Passage". In any terms, it was a death canal. Millions perished en route and survivors were forever separated from their homeland and kin. But the Maafa was also a birth canal--a cultural highway whereby frightened African girls such as Modesty became griots of the slave community. In the Old World, griots chronicled and interpreted the community's history. In the New World those with first hand knowledge of the Motherland became griots--sagacious teachers, diviners, healers, counselors, and keepers of customs. Hence Modesty transmitted her worldview to her daughter, called Rit but named Harriet. Rit named her daughter Araminta and called her "Minty." When Minty "took" her freedom she renamed herself Harriet. Indeed the issue of naming in cultural transmission is instructive.

B. Naming.

African descended people attached huge significance to naming and commonly recycled names. Harriet Tubman's given name, "Araminta" was unusual and has two possible origins. A close derivative is "*Aramita*", the name of a city in the Oyam area of Uganda, from which captives were taken on the Maafa. Hence, Araminta may have been imitative of an African name. However, Araminta also has a Hebrew history, meaning "lofty," "worthy," "noble" and "exalted." Since black Americans drew from two cultures, Rit may have borrowed the name from biblical references. Rit also had an older relative called Minty and a one named Ritty, after whom Rit was called. Whatever the cultural origins of Harriet Tubman's given name of "Araminta," Rit followed the West African tradition of connecting her baby to a beloved family member, thereby keeping the circle. Equally contemplative is the fact that Araminta, as a self-emancipated woman, claimed Rit's name and that of the absent relative. Minty certainly admired her mother's strength, love of family, faith and warrior spirit. Moreover, reprocessing family names kept the circle, just as changing names upon obtaining freedom symbolized separation from bondage.

C. It Takes a Village to Raise a Child.

Enslaved African Americans came from a heritage that embraced concepts of solidarity in a descending order from the larger ethnic group, to the communal village, to the extended family to the nuclear family. Individualism (as opposed to individuality) was considered selfish and antithetical to the broader interests of a unit. Whether societies were matrilineal or patrilineal, nearly all were patriarchal (power rested with men). Nonetheless, the glue that bound the communal circle was the woman, considered the life giving force, the bearer of culture, essence of aesthetic beauty and key to a community's longevity. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters etc. had oversight of children until puberty, when male and female rites of passage prepared them separately for their gendered communal roles. West African women were spiritually strong, morally respected, valued for their economic propensity, important in governance and in some cultures (Ashanti, Kongo, Ibo) powerful warriors. However devalued and exploited in America, Modesty, Rit and Minty exemplified how enslaved women resisted a sense of futility or fatalism and refashioned African attributes of beauty, dignity, self-worth and ethics. Enslaved women combed the waterways, forests and woods to obtain roots, herbs, leaves, sap, barks and other medicinal products for healing, amulets and even conjuration. Rit certainly used such remedies to nurse Minty back to health after extreme exhaustion, illnesses, beatings and her near fatal blow on the head. Rit learned these remedies and poultices from her mother Modesty and Harriet Tubman used them on the Underground Railroad. Their example reveals the significance of women to the community and that despite the assaults on the black family; it remained an institution, which even separation could not sever.

The Atlantic and domestic slave trades' displacement of millions created within black communities an extended arrangement of blood relatives, in-laws, orphans and strangers. Around these circumstances, enslaved people formed attachments and relationships involving accountability and responsibility born of affection, morality,

heritage and condition. Hence, the American ambiance expanded concepts of kinship to include fictive kin. After the initial elation of gaining her own freedom, Harriet Tubman's victory felt empty without her loved ones. And in the spirit of fictive kinship and communalism, besides her own family, she willingly conducted anyone ready to risk the freedom trek.

Minty was fortunate to have developed strong ties with her father, Ben Ross, as well as her mother. The couple came together when Ben's owner, Anthony Thompson Sr., married widow Brodess, Rit's owner. Minty was born in her father's cabin and her earliest recollections are of lying in the cradle, which Ben made. Such simple remembrances grounded enslaved children with an awareness of parental love. When widow Brodess died, Thompson raised her son Edward to adulthood. Then the black family was forced to separate; some were sold. Minty, as a little girl, was hired out, often to cruel employers. As a teen, following a long recovery from her near fatal head injury, Minty was hired out to John Stewart in nearby Caroline County. Here Minty often worked with her father, who was responsible for superintending the Stewart' timber and preparing it for the Baltimore shipyards. It was hard work but Minty vastly preferred this out-door labor and communal camaraderie to working under the cruel critical eyes of white women. Ben's valued skills, the respect he earned from blacks and whites slave and free, and the things he could teach Minty were crucial in her leadership development. As an outdoorsman, Ben Ross knew the natural environment, could determine time by the sun and moon, and knew the constellations and particularly the North Star.

Growing to womanhood, Minty did "all the work of a man." She worked in the forests with the timber gang, in the marsh and swamp and trapped muskrats in waist deep water. She was tied to Dorchester County by birth and family connections but her work for the Stewarts connected her to Caroline County's enslaved and free black community. Here she participated in Methodist worship; was probably baptized; formed friendships and in 1844 fell in love with John Tubman. Thrifty and independent, enslaved Minty saved enough money to purchase two oxen and work for herself. Minty's father Ben was

her example; he had been freed in 1840 and given ten acres of Caroline County land to cultivate. The young couple may have lived in Ben's cabin. Joining her father in Caroline County was probably Minty's first long term black communal experience. Minty's familial and communal connections kept her on the Eastern Shore despite slavery's oppression. But when word came that those bonds would be severed by her sale, probably thanks to Ben, she knew how to follow the North Star.

Thus, thanks to both parents and despite bondage and hardships, Minty's life on the Eastern Shore nurtured physical heartiness, a sense of community and devotion to things of the spirit. Under Rit's care Minty overcame illnesses and the head trauma that could have disabled her for life. Rit employed powerful healing remedies, much prayer and love to literally will her daughter back to life and usefulness when whites considered her hopelessly handicapped. The injury reportedly occurred in her teens around 1834. By 1840 twenty-year old Minty was working with her father in the timber forests. She cut, floated, and hauled timber; maneuvered skiffs; loaded and unloaded cargoes; drove oxen and plowed. Although only five feet tall she must have been a striking figure when she married or "took up" with John Tubman in 1844. Later images reveal Harriet Tubman as a full-bodied, shapely, handsome woman, physically muscular and powerful. Even her owner Eliza Brodess described Minty Ross in the runaway notice as "fine looking." She was also as tough as leather.

II ANCHORING THE SPIRIT

A. The Hidden Church: An African-Christian Synthesis.

If community was the base of African and African American life and culture, spirituality was the superstructure. Certainly enslaved people ultimately embraced Christianity. But for generations Southern whites feared exposing blacks to Christianity. The Bible's Old Testament militant nationalism and New Testament's spiritual

egalitarianism were not lost on African Americans, a few of whom were literate and the majority of whom felt that baptism was one kind of freedom.

Like most enslaved children, young Minty grew up outside of a church. However, since Ben Ross's owner Anthony Thompson Sr., was a practicing Methodist, Minty's family heard Christian sermons. But Edward Brodess was not devout and when he separated the Ross family, little Minty was hired out and did not receive white religious benevolence. But a tradition of black religion and spirituality existed independent of whites. In African culture, sacred worship embedded every aspect of life (rites of passage, marriage, funerals, child birth, etc.). Divine reverence was not confined to a building, a single ceremony or a specific day of the week. Spirituality was pervasive, expressive, emotional and evocative. Although the religious culture developed in America had African roots, the ravages of bondage created more social-spiritual convergences. In Minty's world, spirituality was wrapped in temporal concerns affecting the individual, the family and the community. Worship was praising, praying, lamenting, hoping and drawing strength from each other. Long before Minty's birth, Africans in America had created a "hidden church" where enslaved people gathered clandestinely (the woods, in cabins, in boats, in white people's kitchens and even in the fields). In the hidden church they recounted religious and secular experiences; gave testimonies and created a space where women such as Rit could express the pain of having children sold or of trying to bring Minty back to life after her head was bashed in. In the hidden church, enslaved people created subversive songs, prayed for spiritual salvation, heavenly retribution and freedom.

Africans traveling the Maafa brought an ethos that merged the sacred and secular worlds. Enslaved African Americans embraced Christianity but also selectively *adapted* it to previous traditions and to their historical circumstances. Above all, they rejected incongruous white teachings meant to relegate blacks to perpetual slavery. Rather than being converted to Christianity as taught by whites, enslaved people converted Christianity to their own needs. Moreover, some significant African and Christian

traditions had noteworthy commonalities.

Africans, like Christians believed in one God (Nzambi among the Bantu, Onyame among the Akan-Ashanti for example) who was the apex of all existence just as humanity was the center of earthly life. While gendered concepts of the African Supreme Being varied, like Jehovah, Africans' God was revered, all-powerful and approachable. However, unlike Jehovah, the African Supreme Being was not feared, jealous nor wrathful. Other spirits exist in the African pantheon, like saints in Catholicism. But there was only one God. Hence, when whites spoke of a Supreme God, Africans understood. Harriet Tubman's God was an all-powerful friend. According to Thomas Garrett, her close friend and a beloved Quaker Underground Railroad Conductor, Harriet spoke to God every day of her life. "I never knew anyone so confident of her faith," said Garrett. (Letter in Bradford)

Africans, like Christians, believed in a soul, sometimes called the "heart" or "voice." The soul was responsible for human behavior in life and was one's spiritual existence after death. Some ethnicities had complicated concepts of the soul; others simply recognized the soul as the "little me in the big me" which lived on. Africans believed in honoring this life after death, especially as part of the kinship spiritual connection (ancestor reverence), which brought protection to the living. The curse of the dead was much dreaded in Africa and in America. Hence the importance of burial and funeral rites throughout the Diaspora, even today. A woman such as Harriet Tubman who embraced Christianity, also blended a spiritual syncretism that constructed a concept of the soul around moral ethics and faith imparted through the word of God, "as spoken to her soul" according to her friend Garrett. "She is a firm believer in spiritual manifestations . . . she never goes on her missions of mercy without his (God's) consent." (Garrett to Eliza Wigham, in McGowan, 135)

Water was a life giving force in African culture and the spirit world was under water. Throughout the African Diaspora, water represented divine transformations—birth, death, baptism and rebirth. For many enslaved people, accepting Christianity

carried implications reminiscent of older traditions that surpassed what whites intended. In African cultures, an initiate received a "sacred bath" following a special protracted rite of passage symbolizing acceptance and integration into the community. Similarly, with Christianity enslaved people sought salvation through isolation, prayer, meditation, and communication with God through visions and signs from the natural environment. Baptism by total immersion represented final acceptance into the "ark of safety." Although Methodists baptized by sprinkling, enslaved people insisted on going "down under" the water. They also equated spiritual transformation with secular change. Such thinking was Christian because the New Testament upheld spiritual egalitarianism. It was also African: One traveled briefly into the watery world of the ancestors as an uncivil "little spirit of the bush" full of individualistic anti-communal tendencies. One emerged from the water as a citizen of the community able to partake of all rights and privileges. The change was both divine and temporal; it was fervent, overwhelming and thoroughgoing. Canals, marshes, swamps and rivers surrounded African descended people on the Eastern Shore. Here they labored as slaves. Here they were baptized and hence constantly reminded of water's spiritual and liberating significance.

Minty's Christian conversion experience probably happened while working for the Stewarts in Caroline County. Whether because of that experience or her blow on the head, Minty insisted she spoke to God, had trances and saw visions that foretold future events. As a clairvoyant, Minty believed that she inherited this second sense from her father, Ben. Africans and African Americans believed that a clairvoyant person was born with a "caul" or "veil," a portion of the birth membrane that remained on the head. They were seers and visionaries who communicated with the supernatural world and were under a special spiritual dispensation. Visions sometimes came while Minty worked, were accompanied by music and articulated in a different language. Minty also claimed exceptional power. When Edward Brodess sent slave traders to Ben's cabin to inspect Minty, she prayed for God to cleanse Brodess's heart and make him a good man or kill

him. Brodess' death convinced Minty that she had "prayed him to death."¹ Since his death put her in eminent danger of sale, Minty knew it was a sign from God to flee.

Northerners called Ben "a full-blooded Negro." His parents were probably African born and told him the old Maafa adage that he passed on to Minty: some Africans could fly. Indeed, captured Ibo people committed suicide believing that their spirits flew back to Africa.² Similarly, as Minty envisioned her escape, "She used to dream of flying over fiefs and towns, and rivers and mountings, looking down upon them 'like a bird.'" When it appeared as if her strength would give out and she could not cross the river, "there would be ladies all dressed in white over there, and they would put out their arms and pull me across." Listening to Ben's stories, predictions and sharing his faith convinced Minty that an omniscient force protected her. In visions, she became a disembodied spirit observing earthly and heavenly scenes. Harriet Tubman told friends that God "called" her to activism against her wishes. She begged God to "get someone else" but to no avail. Since God called her, she depended on God to guide her away from danger.

B. Christianity on the Eastern Shore.

Maryland Quakers were colonial leaders in opposition to slavery and in advocating black emancipation. Methodist founder John Wesley followed their example. After the War for Independence, Wesley sent staunchly antislavery clergymen from England (Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke) to establish a denomination. The 1784 Christmas Conference in Baltimore, which created the American Methodist Church,

¹ Enslaved African Americans who merged Africanity and Christianity believed in this process. See, Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: 1988), 320-21.

² On Georgia's St. Simons Island ("Ibo Landing"), legend says that an entire shipload of Ibo or "Callabar" (Nigeria) Africans marched right back into the sea after they disembarked, believing that when they touched the water, their spirits would fly back to Africa. Flying Africans is a significant theme in black culture. See, Marquetta L. Goodwine, *The Legacy of Ibo Landing: Gullah Roots of African American Culture*, Atlanta, GA., 1998) and Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York, repr. 2013) chapter 1.

denounced members who owned slaves and also provided an emancipation blueprint in the Discipline (rules of order and conduct). Negative reaction to the Discipline's antislavery clauses was immediate and most strong from the heavily slaveholding southern region and Eastern Shore. As Southern white membership increased the measures were watered down and often ignored. But even in 1840, the year of Ben Ross's emancipation, Methodist Discipline continued to query: "What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery?"

Essentially then, and unlike Maryland Quakers, the Methodist Church remained a slaveholding denomination but made some effort at religious instruction of the enslaved. Both races attended the massive camp meetings so Rit and Ben experienced these sporadic evangelical upsurges. They also heard Methodist circuit riders ("knights of the saddle bags") and sermons from Anthony Thompson Sr., Ben's owner. After 1830, the Methodist Church also set up preaching stations in many parts of the rural South, where traveling white "missionaries to the slaves" made sporadic appearances while local black preachers regularly appropriated the spaces. The two black churches established in Dorchester County after the Civil War on wooded sites were probably preaching stations during slavery. Certainly the most meaningful spiritual contact came from free and enslaved self-styled black preachers though they were always under suspicion. Far away from white purview, black preachers put their own "spin" on Christianity, transforming the message from one of reinforcing slavery to black community building and hopes of liberty. Rather than a doctrinaire religion, Christianity got retranslated into a faith suitable to an enslaved rural people two generations removed from Traditional African Religion. Hence Harriet Tubman's Methodism was profoundly intermingled with Africanity and African American spirituality born of oppression.

III PATHS TOWARD FREEDOM AND RESISTANCE

A. Free Black Presence.

Maryland's free black population had swelled after the American Revolution thanks to black wartime participation, the spirit of liberty among whites stirred by philosophical rhetoric, the Quakers' long-held challenges to slavery and the Methodists. Two black ministers were at the 1784 Baltimore Christmas Conference. Richard Allen was the future founder of Philadelphia's Mother Bethel, the first African Methodist Episcopal Church. Harry Hoosier was a famous and electrifying itinerant minister from Baltimore. Although not allowed to vote, both former slaves observed the newly formed Church take a stand against slavery. Maryland blacks also seized the moment through petitions, freedom suits in court and taking flight. Nonetheless, slavery continued to thrive in southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. In 1830 there were over 19,000 free blacks on the Eastern Shore, but nearly 31,000 enslaved people. Yet the free black presence enhanced the expectations of those in bondage. And the Methodist Church's antislavery directives tweaked the conscience of Marylanders including Anthony Thompson Sr. who never sold slaves and made provision (which his son often ignored) for their eventual emancipation. Thompson provided valued men such as Ben with land to use during his lifetime. And Minty was certainly influenced by his status when she chose John Tubman a free man, instead of one who could be sold. Harriet Tubman relied repeatedly on free blacks on her escape routes.

B. Underground Networks.

The steady flow of people fleeing Eastern Shore bondage helped Minty get to know the black and white underground networks. Besides free blacks, enslaved people risked being sold deeper South to help. The white woman who helped Minty

in her freedom quest was a Quaker, but some Eastern Shore white Methodists also took an interest in black emancipation. For example, before Minty fled, she hired a white lawyer to search deeds, which proved that her mother was a free woman. The Methodist Church, which split North and South in 1844 over slavery, still paid lip service to manumission but left such issues up to regional conferences and state laws. Nothing so much reveals Methodist equivocation as the fact that Anthony Thompson, Sr. who owned Ben Ross, looked to free his slaves, while Edward Brodess who owned Rit and her family thrived on bondage, and Thompson, Jr. ignored his deceased father's wishes about emancipation. Essentially, Eastern Shore white Methodists did as they pleased depending upon individual proclivities. Some elected to help fleeing bondspeople.

“Slavery is the next thing to hell,” Harriet Tubman proclaimed from her Canadian refuge. Whiplashes covered her back and neck; she saw two sisters “carried away in a chain gang” (Drew, 30) and she would take to the grave physical and neurological effects of a blow on the head. She had a right to liberty or death, Harriet said, and she meant to have one or the other. If it was death she reasoned, she could only die once.

Harriet Tubman certainly knew of previous slave conspiracies and rebellions not only in Haiti, but in the United States. A Christian motif ran through black American resistance. In 1800 a Richmond, Virginia blacksmith named Gabriel Prosser planned a rebellion in which he directed his men to spare the Methodist ministers. In 1822 in Charleston, South Carolina, Denmark Vesey helped enslaved and free blacks plan a rebellion in the African Methodist Church. As a child in 1831, Minty felt the shockwaves running throughout the South and the fear in Eastern Shore

slave communities. About 200 miles away in Southampton, Virginia, a black preacher named Nat Turner led a killing spree under a banner of liberty that felled 70 white men, women, and children. Turner used both the Old and New Testaments to support his rebellion and compared his doom to Christ's crucifixion. For these black rebels, the price of freedom was death.

Minty's individual flight was also expressed in clandestinely prophetic terms although she meant to hurt no one. She was hired out to Anthony Thompson, Jr. who, unlike his father and although a Methodist preacher, caused much bitterness and heartache by selling black family members. Before fleeing, Minty walked by Thompson singing. He eyed her suspiciously but did not react to the double entendre message of the African American spiritual:

"I am sorry I am going to leave you,
 Farewell, oh farewell.
 But I'll meet you in the morning.
 Farewell, oh, farewell.
 I'll meet you in the morning,
 I'm bound for the Promised Land,
 On the other side of Jordan,
 I'm bound for the Promised Land.

She was soon gone, but would return to the dangerous land of pharaoh for others. Harriet Tubman's father Ben also arranged her meetings when she appeared on the Eastern Shore. Eventually Ben was forced to flee Maryland himself. One of Harriet's major Eastern Shore black contacts was Samuel Green. A literate free black

minister, Green was imprisoned for reading *subversive* Uncle Tom's Cabin, but mainly because authorities suspected him of helping people escape bondage. The successful planning, assistance, knowledge and good fortune involved efforts from a number of people. And the danger of black and white betrayal was real. Most successful runaways were men, which makes Harriet's feats all the more amazing. She had probably traveled to Baltimore previously with her father and made contact with conductors; certainly memorized land and water routes; studied the weather patterns and the stars. Although Thomas Garrett became one of her closest friends, her first trip involved nerves of steel, individual self-reliance and courage. Besides her network, Harriet Tubman's uncanny know-how and her unflappable faith guided her movements successfully. Once, with four male charges, she changed her planned route because "God told her to stop," leave the road and "go left," across a small stream. The men reluctantly crossed the cold stream only after seeing that it reached her shoulders. They then crossed another stream and soon reached a black family who hid them.

Harriet knew how to confound two and four-legged bloodhounds, how to quiet a baby, how to use a weapon and she knew that following the North Star led due North with certainty. She knew that the Big Dipper's two stars on the outer portion of its bowl *always* point directly to the North Star, which is actually the smallest end of the Little Dipper's handle. She knew that while other stars wheel around, the North Star hardly moved. "Follow the drinking gourd," was instruction given to every underground passenger. "Whites can't catch Moses," Harriett's re-settled friends in

Canada told black novelist and activist William Wells Brown. “Cause you see she’s born with the charm. The Lord has given Moses the power.” (Brown, 578)

By the eve of the Civil War, Harriet Tubman was a leading figure in abolitionist circles. But her heroic display in the name of freedom on April 27, 1860, became legendary. She was in Troy, New York when a commissioner apprehended a nearly white self-emancipated man named Charles Nalls. Gaining access to the commissioner’s office disguised as an old cleaning woman, Harriet sent signals back to the agitated throng of waiting black people. As deputies took Nalls out, Harriet signaled the crowd, grabbed Nalls and refused to let him go. Both were dragged while she literally fought the sheriff and deputies attempting to wrest Nalls from her grasp. The crowd followed, loudly harassing the pistol-carrying authorities. In the ensuing struggle wrote the newspapers, the “Colored woman rushed into the thickest of the fray; the venerable Moll Pitcher of the occasion fighting like a demon, . . .” Harriet and Nalls were dragged to a waiting boat and she was forced to release him. But the melee continued across the river where a much-reinforced antislavery crowd forced open the judge’s chamber doors. Harriet and a group of women rushed in; she grabbed Nalls “like a bag o’ meal” and ran down the stairs with “bullets whistling past.” Nalls escaped on a “borrowed” horse and wagon while Harriet slipped back into the crowd, bloody, badly beaten and her clothes torn nearly off. But it was a national story, with the focus on the ferocious black woman and the black rank and file. “African fury”, wrote the antislavery press, “is entitled to claim the greatest share of the rescue.” The leader of African fury was Harriet Tubman.

(Larsen, 179-83, from Bradford)

Annotated Bibliography

Boone, Sylvia (1986) *Radiance in the Waters: Ideals of Feminine Beauty in Mende Art*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. I love this book! It examines the female world of the Mende women of Sierra Leone and Liberia; especially by interpreting the masks women priests wore in directing the universal initiation rites (Kpanguima) called the Sande of young girls. Through interviews, the author documents Mende concepts of female beauty, aesthetics, spirituality and socialization. It is an excellent source of information on African physical and metaphysical concepts of feminine beauty.

Bradford, Sarah Hopkins (1869), *Scenes from the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Auburn, NY. W. J. Moses. This is the first full narrative of Tubman's life. It was told to the author, Sarah Bradford in 1868, and is an oral history. Bradford claimed that she published only what could be corroborated. She also solicited letters, testimonials and used documents Tubman had in her possession. Future biographers have relied on Bradford's account. Future editions, in 1886 and 1901, are not considered as reliable.

Clinton, Catherine, (2004) *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*. New York, Little Brown. This volume is just over 200 pages and hardly scratches the surface of Tubman's life. There is little on her life on the Eastern Shore, a great deal about abolition and abolitionists, and a cursory treatment of the Civil War and post Civil War years. Much of the documentation is based on secondary rather than primary sources.

Conrad, Earl, (1943) *Harriet Tubman*. Washington, D.C. Associated Publishers. This book is Conrad's original publication although he wrote a revised work later. It initial volume still an excellent biography of Tubman as an activist. It is very well documented and historically accurate. There is little on Harriet's life on the Eastern Shore.

Drew, Benjamin (1856), *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. Boston, MA, John P. Jewett and Company. This collection of interviews features men and women in Canada-West communities. There is one interview with Tubman and several with her brothers as well as others who came from the Eastern Shore. The interviews are brief but very interesting.

Fields, Barbara J. (1985) *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. This is a good book and there are very few on Maryland. It begins around 1850 and goes through the 1880's. Unfortunately, the main focus is on the Baltimore area and on Maryland during

the Civil War. However, there are some good sections on the Eastern Shore and the problems regarding the duality of slaves and free people living among each other.

Gomez, Michael A. (1998) *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press. The subject of this volume is the complex development of African American society in the South, especially focusing on culture, ethnicity, religion and community formation. Gomez examines the process of Africans becoming African Americans which involves relinquishing ties of African ethnic identities in exchange for an identity with the enslaved black American collective while retaining their African spiritual and cultural traditions. Excellent read.

Humez, Jean M. (2003) *Harriet Tubman, The Life and the Life Stories*. Madison, WI. This is a compelling literary biography. It has a section on Tubman's life; a section of stories by and about Tubman from childhood to old age, and a section on Tubman documents. It is a useful source of information.

Larson, Kate Clifford (2004) *Bound for the Promised Land. Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*, New York, Ballantine Books. This biography is the gold standard. It is well researched, well documented and thorough. The chapters on Tubman and the Eastern Shore are significant. Although we learn more about white family connections than is of interest, this is how Larson tracks down black people. The way in which Larson follows Tubman from one exploit to another throughout her long life is both interesting and enlightening. If there is a weakness, it is the lack of more Canadian information and in the author's reluctance to analyze black life and culture. But one should not quibble with this book. Compared to the other Tubman books published around the same, it is the best. No author has done the work on Tubman that Larson has done.

Matthews, Donald (1965) *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845*, Princeton, Princeton University Press. This is a useful book as a summary of early Methodism in the South. There is no book (to my knowledge) on Methodism in Maryland. It does paint Methodism with a broad and positive brush and ignore many contradictions. Matthews ends in 1845, when the Methodist Church South is organized as a slaveholding denomination.

Mbiti, John (1970) *African Religions and Philosophy*. Garden City, NY, Doubleday. The author is an East African theologian and his approach is more theological than historical or anthropological. African ideas about God are placed in Christian theological terms rather than Traditional African Religion. Nonetheless, it is a useful and often cited work.

McGowan, James A. (1997), *Station Master of the Underground Railroad: The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett*, Moylan, PA. This book has letters that refer to Harriet Tubman. For example, Garrett writes about Harriet to women of the Edinburgh (Scotland) Ladies Emancipation Society.

Sernett, Milton, (2007), *Harriet Tubman, Myth, Memory and History*, Durham, Duke University Press. This book on Tubman has a very interesting twist—studying her from the perspective of her place in black and white iconography, memory and history. Sernett uncovers very interesting information. He has thoughtful analyses about how Tubman is remembered and commemorated.

Recommendations

1. Highlight the historical significance of the Eastern Shore; for example the black leadership who hailed from that region:
 - Frederick Douglass
 - Henry Highland Garnet
 - James W. C. Pennington
 - Samuel Ringgold Ward
 - HARRIET TUBMAN

2. Highlight the historical significance of the Methodist Church's early influence on antislavery :
 - American Church was founded in Baltimore in 1784.
 - American Church incorporated antislavery in its Discipline.
 - Major leaders such as Maryland's Freeborn Garrettson was a slaveholder who converted to Methodism and freed his slaves.
 - “Black” Harry Hosier was probably the most popular Methodist preacher who loudly proclaimed against slavery.
 - Highlight the opposition to early the Methodist Church's preaching against slavery in Maryland.

3. Emphasize African American worship. For example, they did not need the physical presence of a church or white approval. Sermons deemphasized some scripture and focused on certain biblical freedom narratives, baptism as transformative, expressiveness, oral culture, the “hidden church” as a sort of town hall, etc.

4. Emphasize counties other than Dorchester that had significant influence on Tubman’s story. In particularly Caroline County should be included.

5. Geography: Use cartography information in the Maryland Archives to determine old county boundaries, which probably changed. For African Americans these boundary lines were very fluid. Check and see whether Stewart’s Canal was finished while Harriet was still enslaved. Some of the wording in the Presidential Proclamation may conflict with the historical record.

6. Educational Outreach Component: This may be a significant means of bringing in New York and nationalizing, publicizing and popularizing the Park. Examples:

- a. Consider organizing teacher workshops over the next two years that would link the Eastern Shore, where Harriet was born and nurtured with New York, where she was based as an activist, made her home and died. This orientation could be artistic, environmental, historical, etc. For example, the “Freeing Charles Project” is part of “Geographies of Slavery” sponsored by John Brown Lives! and has a North-South emphasis. Such a project could easily focus on Harriet, who was the leader of the Charles Nalls rescue, which received widespread national attention.

- b. Partner with public school(s) in New York (Auburn/Troy) and one in Dorchester/Caroline County, (and the educational wing of John Brown Lives!) around some significant aspect of Harriet Tubman’s life that links North and South.