

Antebellum Plantations in Prince George's County, Maryland A Historic Context and Research Guide



Early Period Plantation



Colonial Period Plantation



National Period Plantation



***The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
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The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the MarylandWashington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (MNCPPC):

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect and manage the county's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decisionmakers, citizens and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change.

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Executive Summary

Recognizing that antebellum plantations represent a significant historical tradition in Prince George's County and aware that development projects posed a threat to understanding the architectural and archeological characteristics of these resources, planners sought a device to assist researchers with the identification and understanding of them. In 2006 the M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland, Planning Department engaged The Ottery Group to compile this antebellum plantation historic context and research guide.

This document is intended as a tool for cultural resource managers, county planners, and other researchers studying antebellum Prince George's County. The document begins with a brief introduction, explaining its various components. Next, a research design chapter is provided that details the methods and approaches utilized in preparation of the document. A review of the literature consulted during research follows. It should prove useful to researchers in Prince George's County by providing an understanding of the available primary and secondary literature.

The next three chapters represent the results of the research. An agricultural context for Prince George's County provides details about the county's agricultural past including the significance of certain crops, demographics, political organization, and the role of slavery. The context introduces thematic and temporal divisions that are important to understanding the historic development of Prince George's County. The next chapter presents an analysis of known antebellum plantations and documents stylistic changes in antebellum plantation architecture as well as the character of the plantation landscape over time. The final component presents spatial model plantation layouts. Though not reflective of any particular plantation, and not intended as a predictive tool for the presence or absence of structures on a specific plantation site, the models serve as a means to understand how the footprint of a plantation varied relative to the period of its occupation, the size of its workforce, and its product.

During the course of research and document preparation, several research questions and possible directions for intellectual pursuit became apparent. Some of these questions are presented in the final chapter. These questions do not represent all potential avenues for research and may not be applicable to specific research projects; rather, they represent some of the issues considered important, unresolved, and worthy of professional scrutiny. Bibliographic entries are divided into primary resources, secondary resources, and technical report categories. The appendices include graphic and statistical information not included as part of the text as well as maps and samples of primary sources.

A companion document entitled *List of Free Blacks in Prince George's County 1790–1860*, is a list of free black and mulatto persons in Prince George's County copied from the 1790 to 1860 federal census records. This document is being published separately. These lists can help to identify where antebellum free black and mulatto communities developed and assist in determining if any of these early community sites will be affected by future development.

As the research of antebellum plantations in Prince George's County continues, our understanding of plantation society will advance. *Antebellum Plantations in Prince George's County: A Historic Context and Research Guide* strives to provide researchers a starting point from which to contribute to the discussion.