

Agriculture and Slavery: A Context for Prince George's County, Maryland

Founded in 1696, Prince George's County has a rich history marked by distinct economic, social, and cultural developments through time. From the arrival of the first European settlers until the era of suburbanization in the mid-twentieth century, nearly every aspect of life in Prince George's County has been affected or influenced by three major themes: agriculture, labor, and wealth. An understanding of these factors, and their historical relationship to one another, is essential to an understanding of life in modern Prince George's County.

The first European settlers arrived in Prince George's County sometime during the mid- to late-seventeenth century and for the next 300 years the county retained an agricultural nature. Historically, agriculture in the Chesapeake Bay region centered on one cash crop, tobacco. Prince George's County proved no exception. Although by no means the only crop cultivated in the county, economically tobacco was the most significant. For most of the period discussed in this context slaves were the backbone of the agricultural labor force. Although a system of white indenture preceded the widespread use of slave labor, by the time of the founding of the county, planters had already begun the transition and quickly black slaves all but replaced white indentured servants. In many regards, the final theme, that of wealth, represented success in agriculture and the maintenance of a labor force. More specifically, the ability to accumulate wealth rested in the ability of a plantation's slaves to produce tobacco.

The role each factor played changed through time. In the earliest years of the county, slaves were relatively few but their actions enabled a relatively small number of individuals to accumulate wealth by cultivating huge tracts of land in comparison to other contemporary landholders in the county. This group would ascend to economic and social prominence during the eighteenth century, creating an economic and social elite during that period. From the middle-to late-eighteenth century, this elite defined itself through the accumulation of wealth made possible through extensive slaveholdings and its position in the tobacco market; others strived to acquire good tobacco lands and a slave labor force so that they too could produce tobacco and thereby gain wealth and status.

Into the nineteenth century agriculture, labor, and wealth remained integral to the social character of Prince George's County. Although markets ebbed and flowed, as did the value of real and personal property, the county remained rural and largely dependent on tobacco and slaves. Even as non-

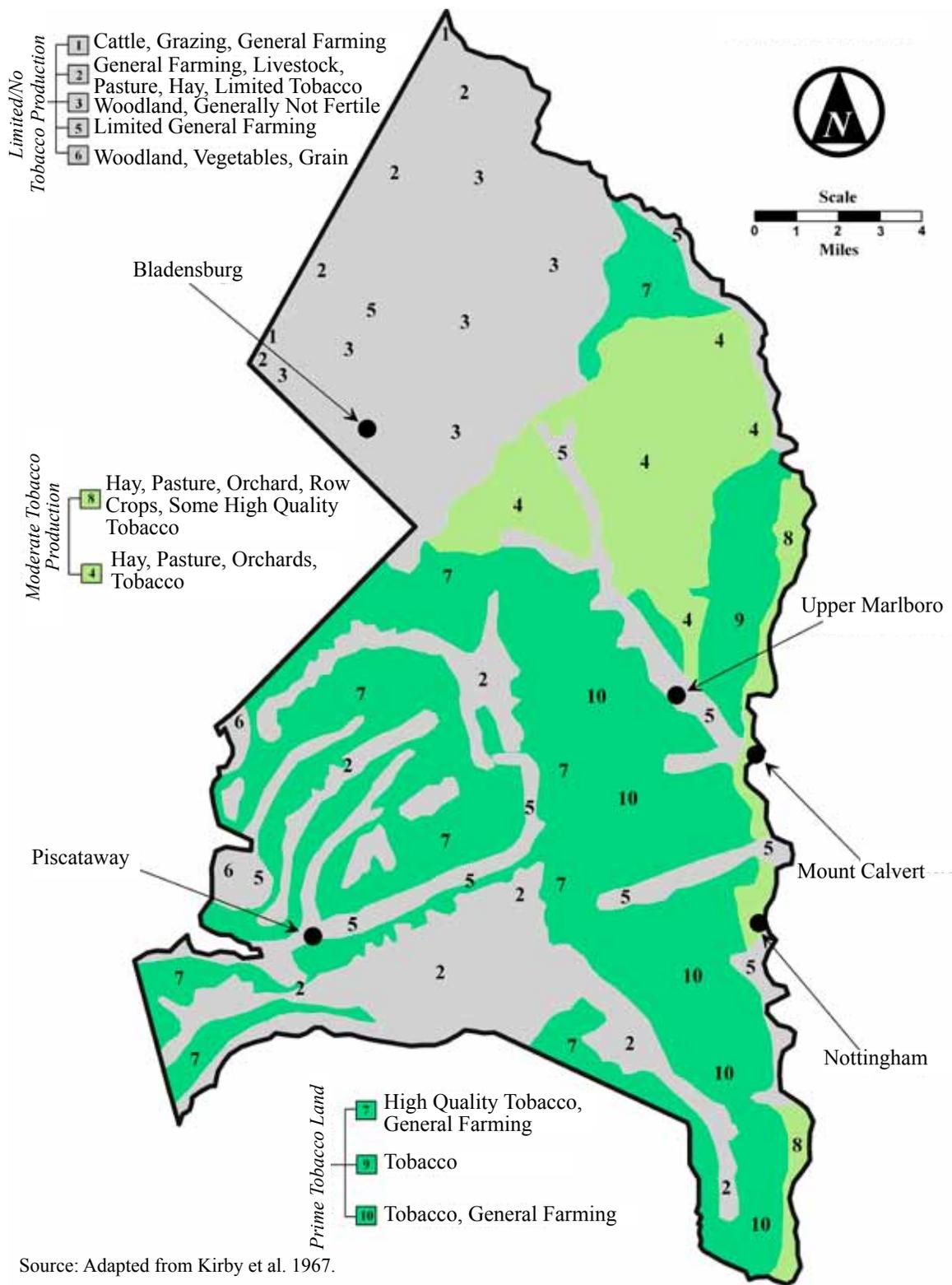
tobacco crops gained importance during the nineteenth century, they never replaced tobacco as the socially and economically premier crop, although these alternate forms of agriculture also required labor in order to be profitable endeavors. The type of agriculture determined the type of labor necessary, the degree of labor demand, and the profit potential.

The most significant determinant of the interplay between the three overarching components central to the historic development of Prince George's County is basic—soil—or, more specifically, the sandy soils necessary for the production of tobacco. Its distribution largely determined which lands were settled first, which were the most economically viable, and which required the most slave labor. Within the agricultural framework of the county, soils determined what was grown and where, and, as a result, in what labor activities slaves were engaged. A cursory look at the distribution of soils in the county illustrates that the best tobacco growing lands occur primarily toward the southeastern stretches of the county, along the Patuxent River, and to a much lesser degree along the Potomac (Figure 3). From the late seventeenth through the middle of the nineteenth century, the geologic particulars of Prince George's County figured centrally in the everyday lives of wealthy and poor, free and slave alike.

Early Period—1696–1730

Slaves of African descent were present in what is now Prince George's County prior to its official separation from Charles and Calvert Counties, but it is difficult to ascertain how many and exactly where these slaves lived, worked, and died in the county. Various researchers in the recent past have attempted to piece together available data specific to Prince George's County in order to provide a glimpse into the lives of freemen, white indentured servants, and black slaves during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Furthermore, regional studies provide broad generalities which future research, in particular archeological studies, has the potential to explore. The primary records available from the Early Period have enabled historians to estimate demographic trends.

Changes in demography transformed both the social and economic character of Prince George's. Thus, demographics provide the basis for defining distinct historical periods in which the county shifted from a “society with slaves” (or indentures) to a “slave society,” referring to the exclusivity of bound labor within the local economy and its social and wealth implications (Berlin 1998). During the Early Period the colonial legal system became highly complex as population increased and more land was improved for agriculture. Legal or court documents from the Early Period support the notion of codifying economic relationships along racial lines. Agriculture figured centrally in many if not all of the developments that occurred during this nascent period of Prince George's County history. Specifically, the cultivation of tobacco resulted in the forced importation of individuals of African and West Indian origin to supply a



Source: Adapted from Kirby et al. 1967.

Figure 3: Simplified Soils Map of Prince George's County, Maryland, showing agricultural suitability and the locations of some former port towns.

labor force. Tobacco, as the cash crop, molded the character of the county for subsequent generations.

Agriculture

Since its first commercial production at Jamestown around 1612, tobacco rapidly became the cash crop of the Chesapeake Bay region. Initial experiments at tobacco cultivation utilized local varieties but shortly thereafter South American seed replaced the native plant. In general, two distinct types of tobacco were grown in Maryland and Virginia. The more delicate and milder, sweet-scented variety grew best in the tidewater region of Virginia, south of the Potomac River Valley, in particular in soils of “The Peninsula,” located between the York and James Rivers. Throughout Maryland and in the Northern Neck of Virginia, the Oronoco variety dominated (Walsh 1999:54). Although favored by smokers in England, merchants exported little sweet-scented tobacco to the European continent. The demand for Oronoco throughout Europe rendered the inferior quality leaf more profitable for Chesapeake planters (Middleton 1984:109).

In most regards, the tobacco crop dictated the day-to-day life of those engaged in its cultivation. Growing tobacco was labor intensive. In Prince George’s County, work began in March or April, nearly a full month later than tobacco growers started in the Virginia Tidewater (Middleton 1984:111, n.23). Tobacco cultivation required numerous steps: seed beds, transplanting seedlings, “hilling and rehillng,” regular tending, weeding, worming, topping, “suckering,” picking, curing the tobacco, “sweating,” forming into “hands,” packing into hogsheads or “prizing,” and finally exporting (Middleton 1984:111). During the Early Period, planters stored the hogsheads awaiting the arrival of an English trading vessel. Smaller planters or those without direct access to navigable waterways likely sold their crop to larger planters. Trading vessels, operating out of the growing towns or directly with larger plantations, served as the main conduit, linking remote Chesapeake plantations with the English world. They transported tobacco out of the region and imported English manufactured goods, products such as rum from England’s colonial possessions, as well as servants and, as the seventeenth century progressed, an increasing number of slaves from Africa and the West Indies. The time-consuming cultivation, preparation, and transportation of tobacco meant that preparation of one year’s crop necessarily started before that of the previous year had been sold. A peculiar economic situation evolved in which the region’s planters relied on the extension of credit, a precarious arrangement that figured significantly in the history of the region during the later Colonial Period.

Maryland and Virginia officials encouraged economic activities other than tobacco cultivation. For example, the Maryland Assembly twice during the seventeenth century established penalties for the exportation of raw, untanned hides (Middleton 1984:172). Officially, the goal of the 1662 and 1681 legislation was to encourage tanners and shoemakers to operate within the colony.

However, the earlier law clearly defined the motivation. The measures hoped to establish an avenue “by which means the number of Planters would be much lessened,” causing the price of tobacco to be “much raised to the apparent advantage of the trades-man who is to be paid with Tobacco, as well as of the planter who plants it” (MD Arch. III:457). In other words, the acts still centered on the production and export value of tobacco.

The value of tobacco affected the planter’s willingness to diversify his agricultural output. When tobacco prices remained high, or at least reasonable, Chesapeake growers dedicated themselves to its cultivation. When prices depressed, some planters shifted, reluctantly, to other pursuits such as flax or hemp. However, slumps in the tobacco market had a greater impact on small planters and those situated on lands less productive for tobacco. The excellent tobacco soils of Prince George’s County likely shielded planters in the county from price fluctuations provided they produced enough tobacco to remain profitable or at least weather market stresses.

Planters grew some grain, most importantly corn, which was the region’s main subsistence crop (Berlin 1998:32). However, grain was also exported. Regionally, planters increasingly utilized depleted tobacco fields for wheat production toward the early-eighteenth century. For example, it is estimated that, calculated by value, in 1701 tobacco accounted for 99.4 percent of all Virginia exports. By 1727, grain exports increased, although tobacco still represented 87 percent of the value of exports (Walsh 1999:55). Evidence suggests some individuals produced a surplus of grains for other pursuits. For instance, Thomas Addison’s 1727 inventory included a “copper still,” suggesting the production of grains beyond consumption levels (PG Inventories Liber TB 1: Folio 56). Similarly, some early residents cultivated apple orchards. Cider casks appear regularly on inventories from the period indicating local processing and consumption. Unlike the Eastern Shore, Prince George’s County does not appear to have tapped into the lucrative English market for supplies for warships, resin, pitch and turpentine (Berlin 1998:135; Middleton 1984:172–177). Despite minor diversification, tobacco remained the single most important cash crop in the young, predominately coastal, county (Table 1, Figure 4).

Labor

Unlike other crops that require only limited attention during specified periods in the growing season, the rigors of tobacco cultivation generated year-round labor demands. From the advent of tobacco as the cash staple through the last quarter of the seventeenth century, white indentured servants supplied the majority of the field labor force. Between 1654 and 1686, more than 10,000 servants departed for America from the Port of Bristol alone (Horn 1979:53). The social composition of this labor force reflected a broad range of English society. Overall, more servants arriving in the Chesapeake came from agricultural backgrounds than any other occupation; however, numerous unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled professions were also represented (Horn

1979:59). Although servants departed from a small number of larger port cities, they originated from across the British Isles.

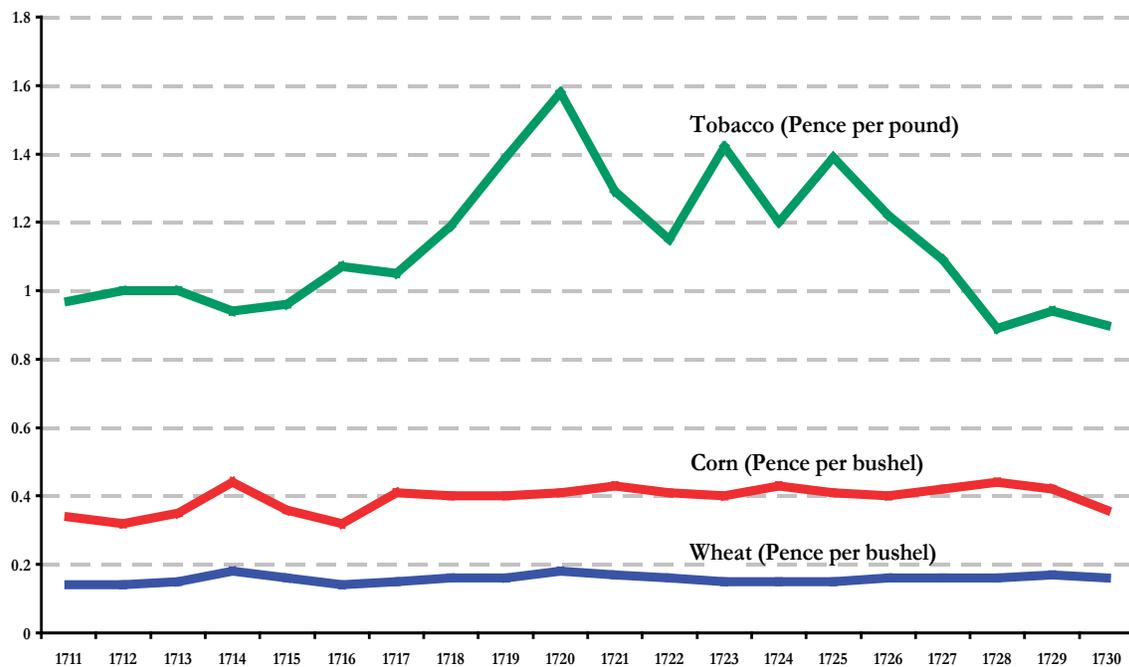
Initial demands for labor in the tobacco-producing colonies coincided with stresses in the English economy. England experienced a drastic population increase during the early-seventeenth century resulting in depressed living conditions and widespread unemployment. The circumstances of the English economy encouraged emigration to the colonies despite the detachment from the familiar and entrance into the unknown which it entailed. However, as conditions in England stabilized, committing oneself to an indenture in the colonies became less attractive (Carr and Menard 1979:238); at the same time, the demand for labor in Maryland and Virginia steadily increased and planters sought outside sources.

Table 1: Commodities Price Index for Tobacco, Wheat, and Corn, 1710-1730

Year	Tobacco (pence per pound)	Wheat (pence per bushel)	Corn (pence per bushel)
1710	--	.18	.42
1711	.97	.14	.34
1712	1.00	.14	.32
1713	1.00	.15	.35
1714	.94	.18	.44
1715	.96	.16	.36
1716	1.07	.14	.32
1717	1.05	.15	.41
1718	1.19	.16	.40
1719	1.39	.16	.40
1720	1.58	.18	.41
1721	1.29	.17	.43
1722	1.15	.16	.41
1723	1.42	.15	.40
1724	1.20	.15	.43
1725	1.39	.15	.41
1726	1.22	.16	.41
1727	1.09	.16	.42
1728	.89	.16	.44
1729	.94	.17	.42
1730	.90	.16	.36

The first African slaves in the Chesapeake are suspected to have arrived in Jamestown in 1619 when John Rolfe commented about a Dutch ship offloading, “20. odd negroes” (Boles 1985:9). As previously noted, slaves counted among the first residents of Prince George’s County and their numbers steadily grew throughout the Early Period. Culturally, it is often suggested that Africa provided most of the slaves during the Early Period. However, by the time Europeans began exporting African slaves to the Chesapeake, a long history of European interactions on the African continent already existed (Thornton 1998:67, 134). One historian asserts that “[a]lthough some of the new arrivals hailed directly from Africa, most had already spent some time in the New World, understood the languages of the Atlantic, bore Hispanic and occasionally English names, and were familiar with Christianity and other aspects of European culture” (Berlin 1998: 29). Other research indicates that slave imports in Maryland during the late-seventeenth and eighteenth century derived primarily from the Upper Guinea region of Africa with lesser contributions from West Central and Bight of Biafra regions (Walsh 2001:170).

Figure 4: Commodity Price Index for Tobacco, Corn, and Wheat, 1711 – 1730¹
(Calculated in Pounds, English Currency)



Source: Adapted from Kulikoff 1976: 485–504.

¹The data presented in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 4 derive from *Tobacco and Slaves: Population, Economy, and Society in Eighteenth Century Prince George’s County, Maryland*. Kulikoff (1976:493-504) collected this information from Probate Inventory records. Although more prominent residents were more likely to have probates taken of their belongings, the records remain a valid means of determining fluctuations in the value of a range of commodities.

By the early-eighteenth century, black slavery began to overtake white indentured servitude as the preferred and pervasive labor source in the Tidewater Chesapeake. By the third quarter of the seventeenth century, the number of African slaves started to outnumber white servants. This occurred when relatively small farms developed into large plantations that depended primarily on black slaves as their main source of labor (Ferguson 1992). This shift also coincided with a general improvement of economic conditions in England that lessened the appeal of emigration to the Chesapeake as an indenture (Carr and Menard 1979:238).

As the Early Period progressed and the institution of slavery became more rigidly defined, it is less likely that masters treated slaves as servants with indefinite indentures. As life expectancy increased it became more likely that white indentured servants would survive their term and attain the social status of freeman, and potentially rise to the planter class, rendering them social equals of their former masters. Nonetheless, close social interaction resulting from shared working spaces, shared living spaces, and generally shared experiences, occurred with great frequency between white servants and black slaves and this very likely contributed to a transmission of cultural and ideological characteristics. The cultural transition of black slaves from Atlantic creoles to African Americans began during this period.

Colonial legislation also affords some insight into slavery in Prince George's County during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. For example, in 1695, less than one year before the official formation of Prince George's County, the Maryland Assembly passed, "An Act Restraining the frequent Assembleing of Negroes within this Province." The law decried "the continual concourse of Negroes on Sabbath & holy days" and accused slaves of trading goods stolen from their masters and plotting escape. Fear of these congregations plotting uprisings that would result in "much bloodshed" at least partially inspired the legislative process. Lawful punishment for being caught traveling without the master's permission included anything short of killing, dismemberment, or anything that would prevent the slave from laboring, and could be administered by anyone (MD Arch. XXXVIII:48).

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the legislation is its perceived need. The very act of attempting to preclude the movement and assembly of slaves indicates its regular occurrence. In other words, even during the Early Colonial Period black slaves who resided on dispersed plantations maintained social networks exclusive of, and apparently causing concern to, their white masters. At a minimum, drafting of the law suggests that slaves in Maryland congregated during their available time in numbers adequate to cause concern.

Demographics

Although few records survive from the earliest period of settlement in Prince George's County when it represented the frontier of Charles and Calvert Counties, estimates suggest that the population of Prince George's, including

servants and slaves, reached approximately 2,000 in 1698 (MD Arch CCII:xii). Efforts to determine the slave population in early southern Maryland between 1658 and 1730 (Menard 1975) suggested that during the beginning of this period, fewer than 100 slaves resided in Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties, combined. By 1710, the number of slaves grew exponentially to an estimated 3,500. Demographically, this represented an increase of the proportion of slaves in Southern Maryland from three to nearly 25 percent of the total population (Menard 1975:33).

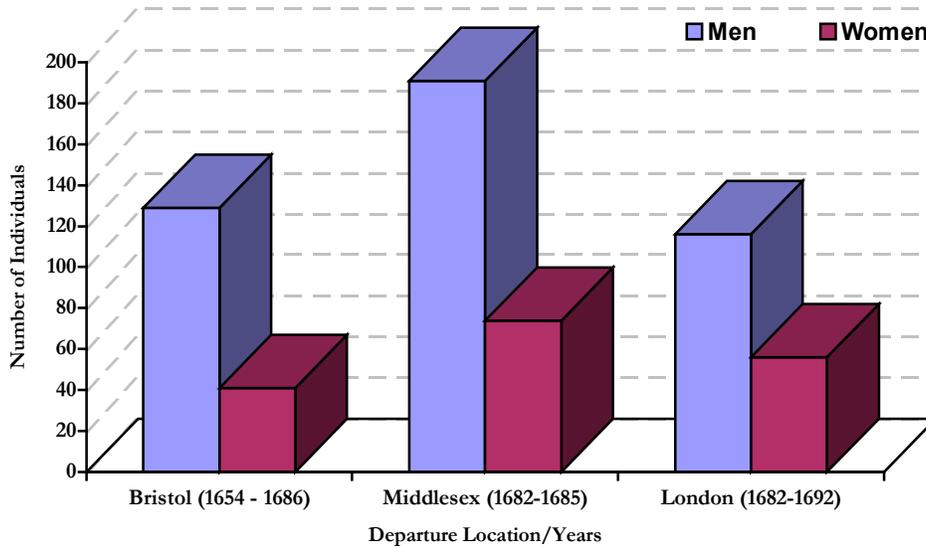
During this period, men significantly outnumbered women in the white population, in particular for the more remote, frontier regions. Studies of early Colonial Virginia estimated a ratio of approximately 2.5 men for every woman during this period (Menard 1975:33); a cursory search of the register of indentured servants leaving Bristol (1654–1686), Middlesex (1682–1685), and London (1682–1692), specifically bound for Maryland indicates a ratio of slightly over 2.5 men to every woman (Figure 5). This trend appears replicated in the enslaved population, but to a lesser degree. Although the ratio of men to women appears nearer to equal for the enslaved black population than for white indentured servants, the records also indicate a greater number of older women than men in the slave sample, suggesting that higher morbidity rates for men skew the sex ratios (Menard 1975:33).

Neither Prince George's County white nor black populations naturally increased during the late-seventeenth century; the increasing population resulted from (voluntary and forced) immigration. Short life expectancy coupled with trends in family formation and child birth rates at least partially accounted for the inability of the white population to sustain its numbers. Approximately 70 and 85 percent of individuals arriving to the Chesapeake during the seventeenth century arrived as servants (Horn 1979:54). Because servants could not marry until they satisfied their service commitment, people did not marry until their late twenties and consequently produced few offspring. Among the black population, susceptibility to new diseases and a shortage of available partners are commonly cited reasons for the low reproduction rates.

Political Organization and Infrastructure

Both religious and secular lines divided early Prince George's County. The Church of England created parishes within the county for church administration. The justices of the county created political units, termed "hundreds," for secular administration. At its formation in 1696, Prince George's County consisted of six hundreds: Mattapany, Piscataway, Mount Calvert, New Scotland, Collington, and Patuxent (Figure 6). As the population of the county grew, justices redrew boundaries and created new hundreds. At the time, Prince George's County extended north and westward to include all the land within the present-day boundaries of the State of Maryland, north of Mattawoman Creek and west of the Patuxent River. On December 10, 1748, Prince George's County acquired its current boundaries, for the most part,

Figure 5: Male and Female Indentured Servants Bound for Maryland from Bristol, Middlesex, and London²



Source: Adapted from Virtual Jamestown 2000.

as the General Assembly established Frederick County from the northern and western portions of the county (Hienton 1972:37-46). By this point, the original six hundreds had been subdivided into 11 hundreds, with the addition of Eastern Branch, Rock Creek, Western Branch, Prince Frederick, and King George's.

Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, the Maryland and Virginia governments promoted the formation of town centers. Situated on the western banks of the Patuxent River, Charles Town, present-day Mount Calvert, represents the first town established in what is now Prince George's County. Created by acts of assembly in 1683, 1684, and 1686, Charles Town was then located within the boundaries of Calvert County (MD Arch. VII:609; MD Arch XIII:111-112, 217-220; Pearl 1991:1). The subsequent 1706 Act for advancement of trade and erecting ports and towns established the following town and port sites:

“In Prince Georges County at the Land of William Mills in Petuxent river [Mill Town] at Mattapany Landing on the Land of Thomas Brooke Esqr [Nottingham] at Mount Calvert where the Court house stands [Charles Town] and at the upper Landing

² Figures used in Figure 5 derive from a search of the Registers of Indentured Servants Sent to Foreign Plantations (Virtual Jamestown 2000) for individuals specifically bound for Maryland from the Ports of Bristol (1654–1686), Middlesex (1682–1685), and London (1682–1692). Although the records do not offer a complete account, they nonetheless indicate a disproportionate number of men relative to women immigrated to the Maryland Colony.

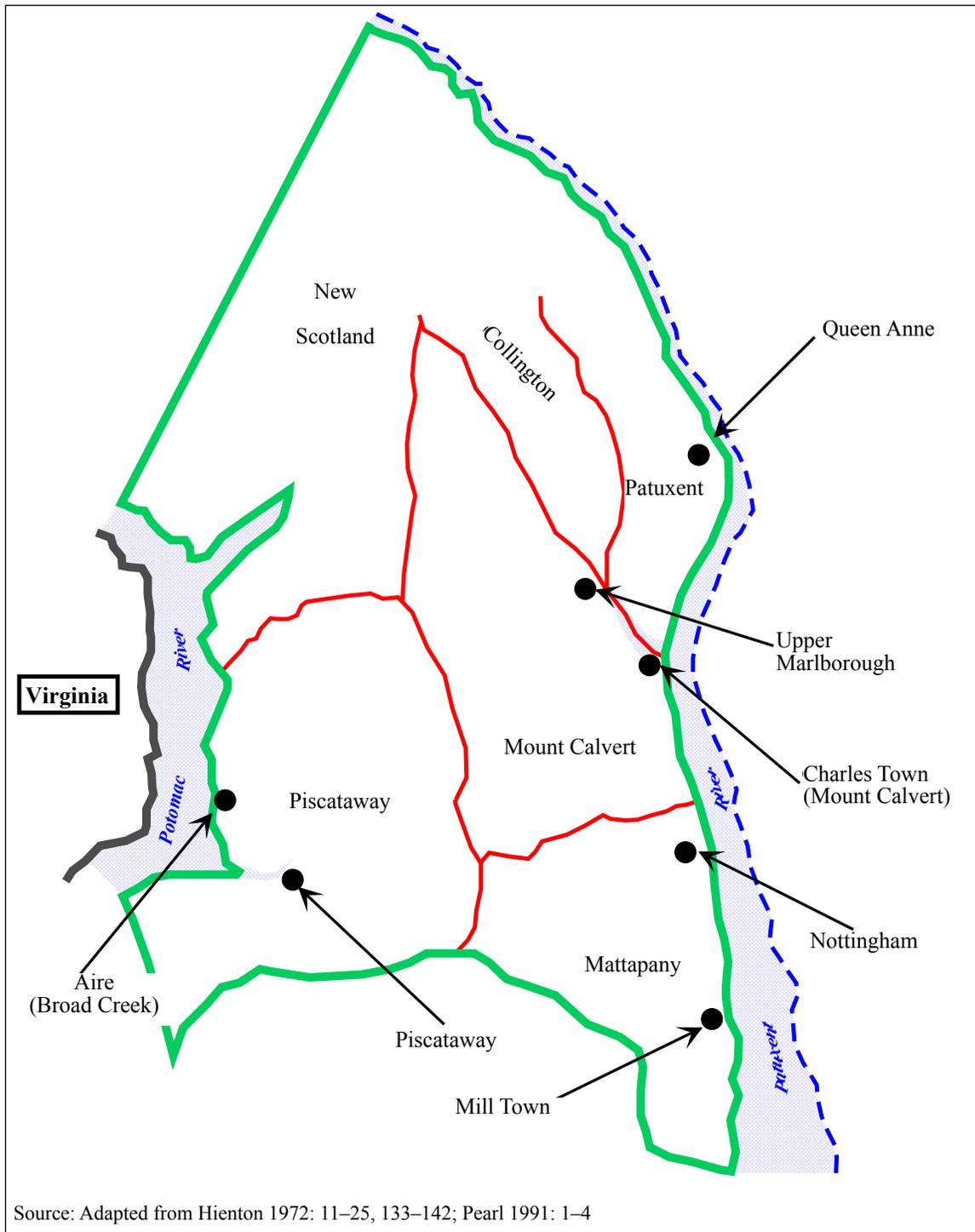


Figure 6: Map of Prince George's County Showing Hundreds and Port Towns, 1707

in the Western branch Comonly called Col Belts Landing [Upper Marlboro] at the upper Landing in the Northern branch on the West side of the said branch Comonly called Andersons Landing [Queen Anne] and at broad Creek in Potomack river on the south side off the said Creek at Thomas Lewis's Landing [Aire]" (MD Arch. XXVI:637).

Charles Town (Mount Calvert) provided the location of the first county seat. A small, wood frame building served as the first county courthouse (Pearl 1991:1). Beginning in the 1680s, it proved the most important town in early Prince George's County and the only one within the county borders when it was formed. Situated conveniently at the confluence of the Patuxent River with the Western Branch and in the heart of the most productive tobacco lands in the county, Charles Town attracted merchants and wealthy, influential planters. Charles Town became the social, economic, cultural, and political center of Prince George's County. Several of the most prominent Prince George's County families kept residences there. Joseph and Jane Addison, Jane Beall, Clark and Ann Skinner, and Mary Gwynn all operated ordinaries; Thomas Hollyday and Thomas Claggett served as justices (Hienton 1972:11-17). These surnames persisted among the most notable in the county through the twentieth century.

Charles Town quickly yielded influence to Upper Marlboro; in 1721, the county seat moved (Hienton 1972:23-25). With the exceptions of Mill Town and Aire, the other port towns developed into commercial areas, if not to quite the same extent as Charles Town and eventually Upper Marlboro (Pearl 1991:2). The 1707 Supplement to the Town and Port Act established Piscataway on Piscataway Creek (MD Arch XXVII:160). The locations of these towns expose the riverine infrastructure of the period; all the town locations are along navigable waterways in or with easy access to the county's highest-yielding tobacco lands. Prior to the establishment of an interlocking network of overland roads, water provided the best means to transport people and goods.

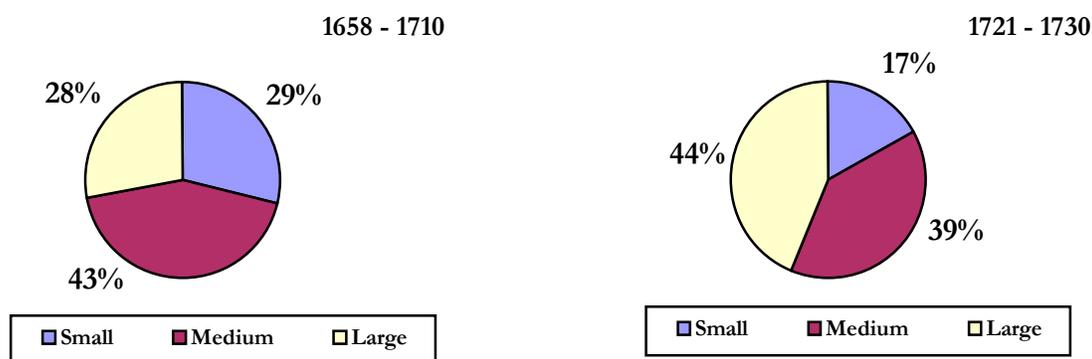
Towns served several roles. They provided a marketing center where merchants exchanged locally grown tobacco for imported slaves and manufactured goods. As such they linked what was then the colonial hinterland with the sugar plantations of the West Indies, the slave forts of West Africa, the textile centers in England and Ireland, as well as England's manufacturing and political centers. The Colonial governments of Maryland and Virginia actively encouraged the formation of towns and ports through legislation such as the 1706 act. Population centers were seen not only as beneficial, but necessary components to their concept of civilized society. Their efforts met with only limited success in the tobacco colonies. The demands of the tobacco crop rendered planters hesitant to remain away from their plantations for extended periods. Nonetheless, these towns deserve the "bustling" adjective often assigned, if considered in the frontier context that defined the Early Period of Prince George's County.

Plantation Organization

As a trend, small slaveholders predominated in the greater coastal Mid-Atlantic area during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Generally, it is believed that most slaves in the region during this period resided on geographically dispersed estates with the master and family, perhaps one or two other slaves and possibly some white indentured servants. More recent and continuing research challenges many of the previous assertions regarding slavery during the Early Period, in particular the distribution of slaves on early Prince George's County plantations. Original, ongoing research conducted by Michael Lucas (2006) in preparation of his doctoral dissertation revealed that, unlike the accepted model for the Chesapeake Bay region, Prince George's County contained several large slaveholders during the Early Period; a small number of individuals increasingly held large numbers of slaves. For example, it is likely that the majority of slaves in Prince George's County resided with several other slaves, the sexual gap notwithstanding, as well as their master, and possibly one or more white servants.

Data regarding specific slaveholdings in Prince George's County during the Early Period are sparse. Research based on inventories taken between 1658 and 1710 in Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties indicate that 29 percent of slaves in Southern Maryland resided on small slaveholdings (Menard 1975; Kulikoff 1976:185). Data from Charles and Prince George's County indicate that this proportion decreased to 17 percent for the two decades between 1710 and 1730 (Figure 7). Throughout the course of the

Figure 7: Proportion of Slaves Living on Small, Medium, and Large Holdings, 1658–1710 and 1721–1730³



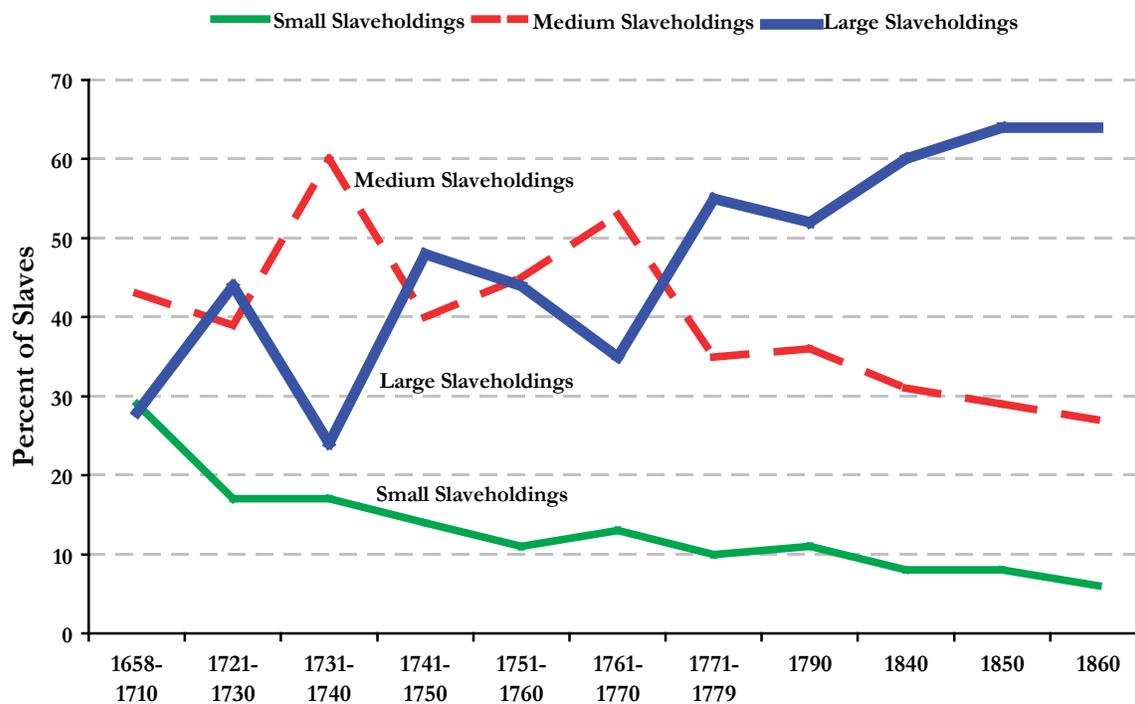
Source: Adapted from Kulikoff 1976: 185; Menard 1975.

³ The numbers used in Figure 7 are taken directly from Kulikoff (1976:185) and Menard (1975). Of necessity, the data for the years 1658 – 1710 include Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties. The data for the years 1721–1730 include both Charles and Prince George's Counties. Although information from other counties is included, they nonetheless illustrate the trend toward larger slaveholdings during the course of the Early Period.

Early Period, the average size of slaveholdings increased. By the end of the period, a plurality of slaves lived on holdings containing over 20 slaves (large-sized holdings); the proportion of slaves kept in slaveholdings of greater than 20 would not become the majority until late in the Colonial Period (Figure 8).

Almost nothing is known about the living conditions of Prince George’s County slaves on small holdings during the Early Period. No known examples of slave architecture or slave quarters dating to this period remain extant; no relevant archeological sites have been identified within the county. Therefore, any assertions regarding the lives of Prince George’s County slaves during the Early Period are speculative.

Figure 8: Trends in the Percent of Slaves Living on Small, Medium, and Large Plantations 1658–1860



Source: Adapted from Kulikoff 1976: 185; Menard 1975; U.S. Census 1840, 1850, 1860.

Colonial Period—1731–1790

Dynamic social, economic, and cultural shifts characterize the Colonial Period of Prince George’s County slavery. The beginning of this period witnessed explosions in both the black and white populations. During this period, an elite planter class emerged. The prominence of this new class depended on cultivating their large estates, primarily with tobacco. Planters increased their slaveholdings in order to meet labor demands. The net effect was that slaves increasingly found themselves laboring on plantations with larger numbers of fellow slaves. Essentially, larger planters acquired more slaves, consolidating their wealth.

Several factors probably contributed to the increase in the population of Prince George's County, not the least of which relates to the general health of residents and, in particular, their reproductive health. Simplistic though it may be, part of the population increase in Prince George's County stemmed from the fact that, on average, people lived longer than their predecessors. This trend contributed to changes in the social composition of the county. Whereas a white servant who arrived during the previous generation could expect only a reasonably short period of life as a freeholder, a servant who arrived during the early eighteenth century, if he survived his indenture, could expect a comparably long period of existence free of indenture. This additional time allowed for greater accumulation of wealth and assets. Accordingly, his freeborn progeny inherited considerably more than his forefathers, in particular in land and bound labor.

Agriculture

The actual processes involved in the cultivation of tobacco remained relatively unchanged throughout the Colonial Period; the scale of production, however, steadily increased. Perhaps the most important agricultural development of the Colonial Period in Prince George's County stemmed from legislative action. In 1747, the General Assembly mandated an inspection system for tobacco exports (MD Arch XLIV:596). The measure aimed to reduce the amount of trash tobacco entering the market, thereby driving down the overall price. By inspecting and grading exportable tobacco, it was believed that the price of tobacco would rise, resulting in better revenues for Maryland tobacco planters. Similar tobacco inspection laws, enacted in Virginia in 1730, met with success. An English tobacco merchant asserted in 1738 that the inspection regimen was the only thing that made Virginia tobacco worth importation (Middleton 1984:136).

Despite common interests, the inspection laws were viewed differently in Virginia and Maryland. In Virginia, efforts to regulate the quality of exported tobacco began during the late-seventeenth century. Regulation enjoyed the support of large planters for whom the additional costs of transportation to central warehouses and payment of tobacco inspectors would be easily offset by the increased value of their crop. Small planters, however, opposed the measures and they retained control of the lower houses in the Virginia assembly (Middleton 1984:133). The smaller planters grew more low-grade tobacco and could not afford even marginal increases in overhead. Eventually, the inspections gained acceptance and the value of Virginia tobacco increased. Across the river in Maryland, legislation was passed in 1728 regulating the number of tobacco plants a household could cultivate, but the proprietor rejected the law two years later. This and subsequent acts in 1733 and 1735 failed to increase the value of tobacco.

Finally, tobacco inspection laws passed the Maryland Assembly in 1747. These laws closely resembled those passed 17 years earlier in Virginia. The legislation established public warehouses and inspectors at locations significant

to the export of tobacco. Inspectors had the authority to open hogsheads, evaluate the tobacco, and burn any trash, thereby guaranteeing the quality of the product. Inspectors issued receipts, called either a “crop note” or a “transfer note.” Transfer notes were used for the payment of domestic debts. These notes were issued for a certain grade and amount of tobacco deposited by a planter in a warehouse. They were not issued for specific hogsheads. Transfer notes were often used as local currency to pay debts, levies, or taxes, or to purchase merchandise. Crop notes were issued for tobacco not used for the payment of debts. These notes were connected to specific hogsheads that were stored until they were ready for export. Crop notes were usually transferred to English merchants who would retrieve specific hogsheads for export. (Middleton 1984:137-140). The 1747 act established inspection stations at Upper Marlboro, Bladensburg, Nottingham, Aire (known as Broad Creek in 1747), Queen Anne, and Piscataway (see Figure 6).

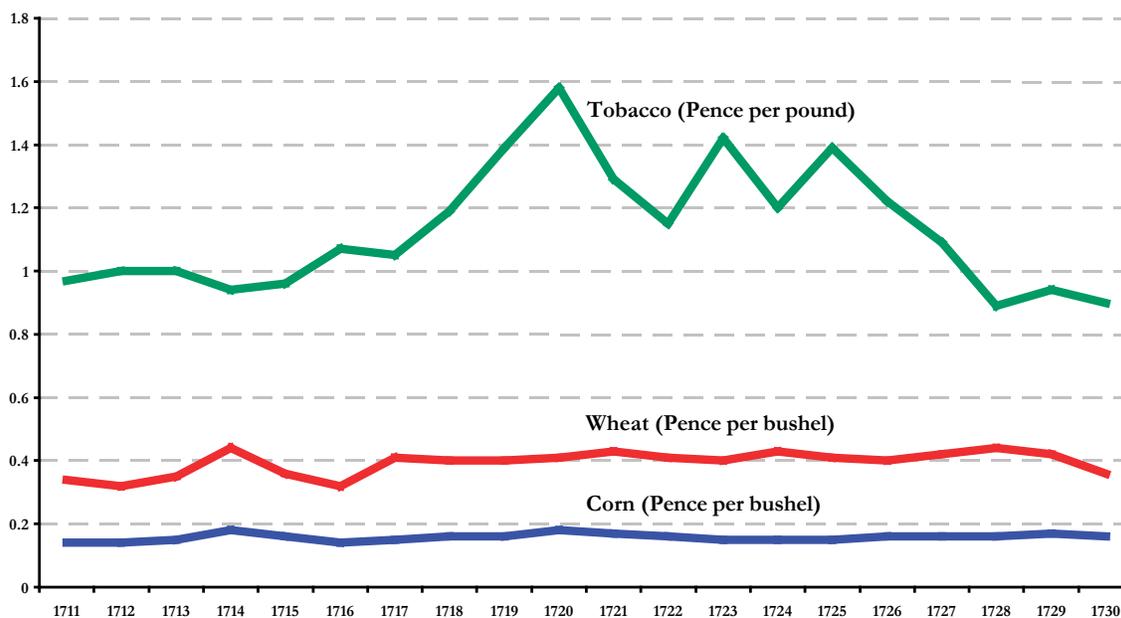
Throughout the Middle Atlantic region, planters increasingly diversified their crops. As settlement expanded westward, soils became less suited for tobacco cultivation. Accordingly, areas further away from the sandy soils of the coastal plain tended increasingly to emphasize grain agriculture, in particular wheat. There is little information regarding the degree to which Prince George’s County planters shifted away from tobacco as a cash crop. Kulikoff (1976:493-504) examined inventories from Southern Maryland counties in order to determine fluctuations in the value of tobacco; he utilized the same methods to calculate the values of corn, wheat, prime field slaves, and overall wealth. The data indicate that Southern Maryland tobacco planters also cultivated grains as a subsistence crop.

Because of the methods used and primary documentation available, it is unclear whether Prince George’s County planters grew grain for export to other crown colonies and the home islands, and if so to what degree, or whether the grains were destined for intra-plantation consumption and perhaps limited, local distribution. The data also suggest that the value of wheat and corn remained relatively constant throughout the Colonial Period. By comparison, the value of tobacco oscillated dramatically, often from year to year. Despite this volatility, the potential profits from tobacco far outpaced that of the consistently valued grain markets. Despite the year-to-year uncertainty of the tobacco market, the broad trend line shows steady increase (Table 2, Figure 9). The frequency of cider casks on a majority of Prince George’s County probate inventories strongly suggests local production and consumption. The large number of cider casks owned by some further suggests cider production for resale or distribution. The inventories of Charles Clark (1767) and John Hepburn (1776) contained 27 and 21 casks, respectively; Henry Hilleary’s 1783 inventory documents enough casks for 2,900 gallons of cider. Some evidence suggests that animal husbandry expanded during the Colonial Period (PG Inventories Liber DD1). Probate inventories from the Early Period indicate that Prince Georgians kept small numbers of sheep and cattle along with their horses and pigs; the size of these herds grew during the eighteenth century.

Table 2: Commodities Price Index for Tobacco, Wheat, and Corn, 1731–1770
Calculated in Pounds, Current Money (From Kulikoff 1976:493-504)

Year	Tobacco (per pound)	Wheat (per bushel)	Corn (per barrel)
1731	.87	.14	.38
1732	.99	.16	.36
1733	1.12	.15	.35
1734	1.29	.16	.37
1735	1.24	.16	.39
1736	1.36	.18	.44
1737	1.24	.19	.46
1738	1.36	.19	.52
1739	1.34	.18	.47
1740	1.61	.18	.44
1741	1.23	.21	.55
1742	1.33	.26	.62
1743	1.35	.23	.58
1744	1.25	.19	.50
1745	1.12	.19	.45
1746	1.21	.18	.47
1747	.90	.17	.42
1748	1.33	.19	.52
1749	1.53	.22	.52
1750	2.32	.21	.52
1751	2.03	.20	.57
1752	2.21	.19	.46
1753	1.74	.20	.51
1754	1.56	.19	.42
1755	1.28	.19	.48
1756	1.76	.16	.47
1757	1.83	.16	.37
1758	2.12	.17	.40
1759	3.07	.16	.45
1760	2.40	.20	.52
1761	2.30	.20	.46
1762	2.08	.19	.52
1763	1.65	.20	.56
1764	1.68	.17	.47
1765	1.77	.16	.45
1766	1.93	.16	.53
1767	2.18	.19	.52
1768	2.41	.18	.42
1769	2.98	.18	.46
1770	2.75	.17	.49

Figure 9: Commodities Price Index for Tobacco, Wheat, and Corn, 1731–1770



Source: Adapted from Kulikoff 1976: 485–504.

Labor

Although the tobacco cultivation process underwent no significant changes during the Colonial Period, the dramatic increases in the free white and enslaved black populations and the passing of the 1747 tobacco inspection laws translated into economic opportunities for tobacco growers, especially the large planters. As a result, “a new gentry class emerged” (Kulikoff 1986:117); in Prince George’s County, this class clustered in the prime tobacco lands toward the Patuxent and, to a lesser degree, Potomac Rivers. As agricultural output increased so did the need for labor, and by the beginning of the Colonial Period this demand was filled almost exclusively by slaves, who included both native born and imported individuals. This would have a profound impact on the institution of slavery in Prince George’s County. The consolidation of wealth and the growth of the slave population meant that the average size of individual slaveholdings increased.

During the Colonial Period, the established elite families of the county clustered in the tobacco rich areas along the Patuxent River drainage system. Population increases forced settlement north and westward. As previously noted, not all soils in Prince George’s County supported tobacco agriculture (see Figure 4). Significant stretches of land in the northwestern and non-Potomac southern portions of the county generally lacked the soils that were suited for profitable tobacco growing, and these areas were used primarily for livestock and general subsistence farming. Therefore, Prince George’s County conforms to the broad, regional model for diversification. Because tobacco cultivation demanded substantially more labor than other forms of agriculture, the productive capacity of the land also dictated where slaves were concentrated

(Figures 10 and 11). The geographic distribution of slaves across Prince George's had dramatic effects on the daily lives of slaves, particularly within the kin networks that solidified during the Colonial Period.

Among Prince George's planter class, marriage served as a primary means of wealth consolidation. Even basic genealogical research of the most prominent Prince George's County families of the eighteenth century demonstrates that, by and large, members of the burgeoning gentry married their social equals. As a result, the relationship between agriculture, labor, and wealth was entrenched in the social structure of the county. Inheritable real estate equated to agricultural potential for the future generation. Likewise chattel property also passed hands and guaranteed a source of labor and continuance of wealth potential. To further divide the burgeoning class structure, it is during this period that an overseer class, the intermediary between master and slave, became more prevalent.

Prince George's County, like many other slaveholding regions that focused on production of a single cash crop, transformed from a "society with slaves" into a "slave society" (Berlin 1998) during the Colonial Period. Whereas slavery contributed to and arguably built the foundation of the overall economic and social character of the county in the Early Period, the institution of slavery developed during the years following 1730 into the prime determinant of wealth and social standing. During the Colonial Period slaves increasingly lived on larger plantations with larger slaveholdings than in the previous period (see Appendix A). As slaves concentrated in greater numbers and in specific portions of the county, "[m]ore blacks lived in separate quarters, away from the master's house and supervision; and most Afro-Americans could associate with more blacks at their quarters than their Afro-American ancestors" (Kulikoff 1976:201).

Towns grew in size and political and social importance, though none developed into major population centers during the Colonial Period. In particular, the establishment of the tobacco inspection system mandated export through a select number of port towns. Traffic through these towns increased, requiring a range of services for travelers and residents. The variety of occupations necessary in a town environment may have resulted in diversified labors for slaves, such as tavern maintenance, smithy operations, wheelwrights, and carpenters. As a whole, however, it is important to remember that despite the likelihood of agricultural diversification and the corresponding smaller slaveholdings, increasing numbers of Prince George's County slaves lived on large slaveholdings and engaged exclusively in tobacco agriculture as the period progressed.

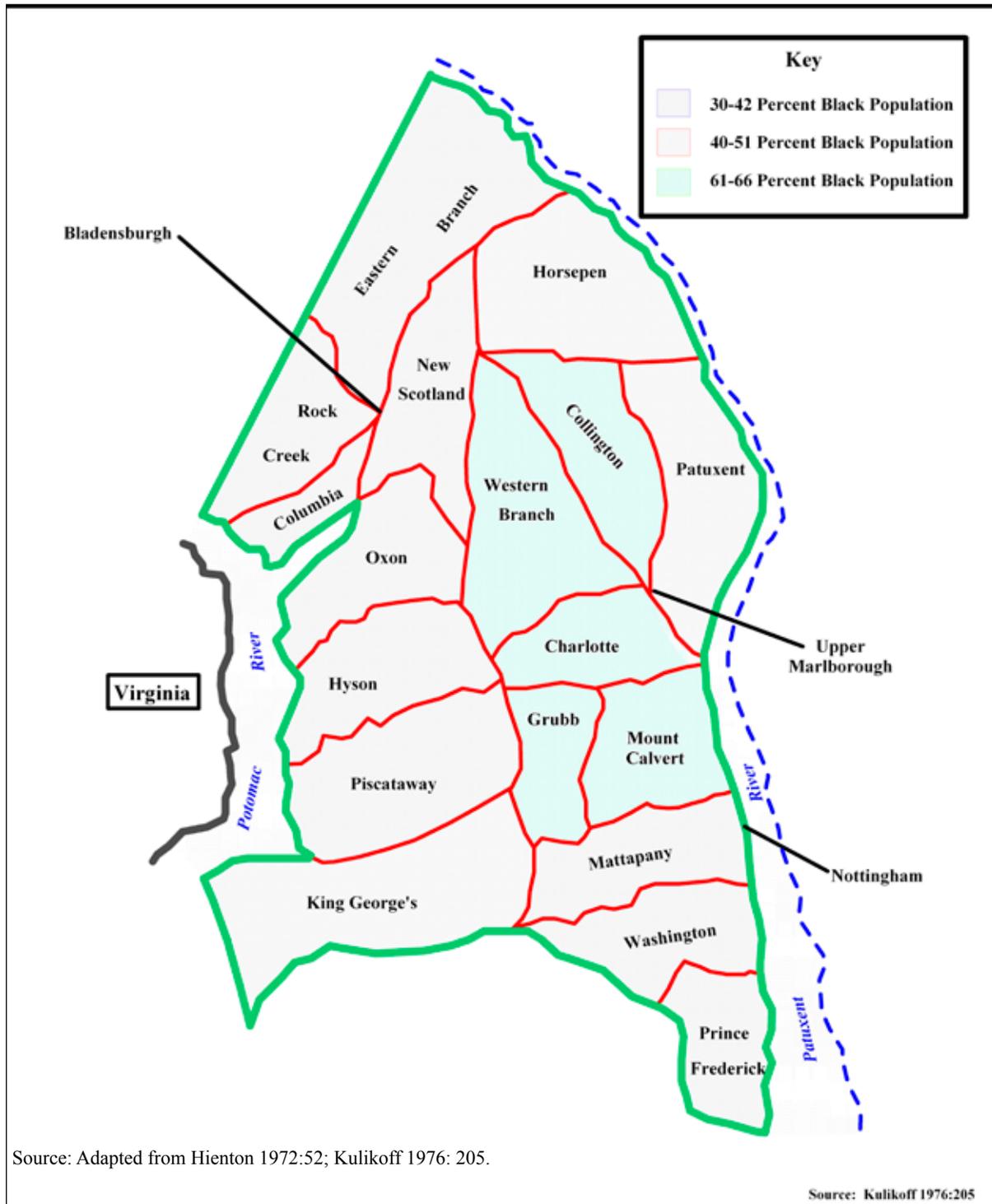


Figure 10: Slave Population Across Prince George's County Hundreds, 1783-1786..

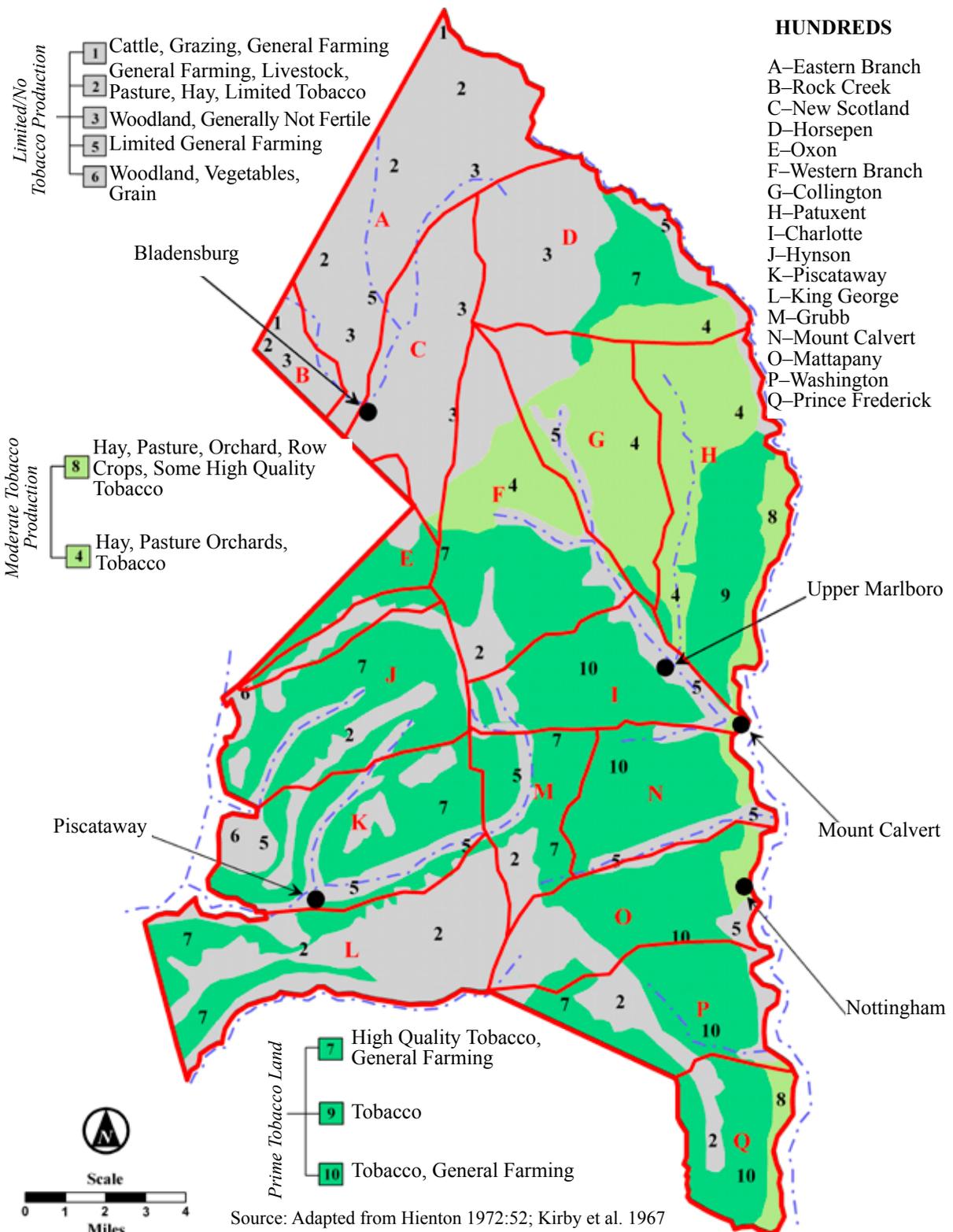


Figure 11: Simplified Soil Types Across Prince George's County Hundreds, 1783–1786 showing showing agricultural suitability and the locations of some former port towns and major river branches.

Demographics

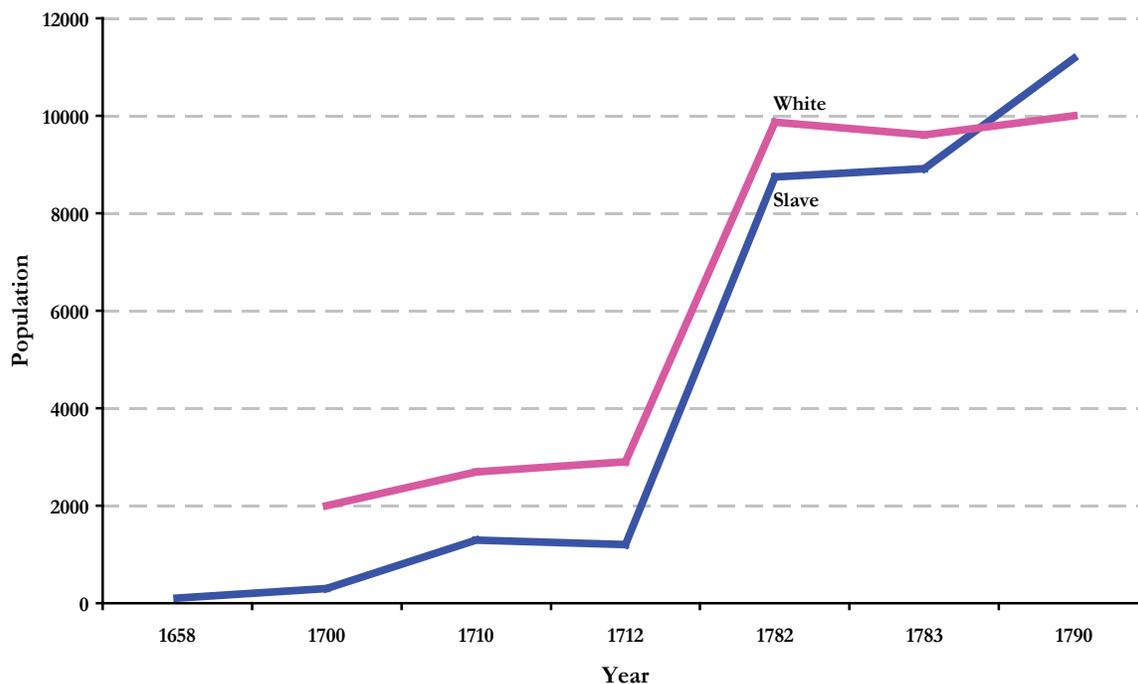
Improvements in the general health, as well as the increased numbers of freeborn whites, resulted in dramatic changes in the rate of childbirth within Prince George's County. In the Early Period, terms of indenture determined the age at which persons were legally permitted to marry. Similarly, the need to assemble a degree of wealth subsequent to completing one's indenture in order to support a family served as a social control on the age at which persons married. The freeborn population of the Colonial Period, by and large, lacked these restraints. As a result, women married at a considerably younger age that, when combined with generally better health, drastically increased the number of births per household (Kulikoff 1976:65). Later in the Colonial Period, this trend reversed, the average age of women at time of marriage again increased, resulting in a rise in the age of first conception. This later trend, which occurred toward the end of the Colonial Period, acted as a control on the earlier population boom.

Demographic trends among the enslaved black population of Prince George's County mirrored that of the white population, only occurring slightly later, nonetheless corresponding roughly with the beginning of the Colonial Period (Figure 12, Table 3). Like the white population, increased life expectancy, birth survival rates, and an increase in the number of births per woman, had the effect of equalizing the ratio of women to men, further alleviating the reproductive strains of the earlier period. Unlike Prince George's County's white population, however, the age at which black women bore their first child remained approximately 17 years throughout the Colonial Period (Kulikoff 1976:69). As a result, although the importation of slaves from Africa and the West Indies continued, it slowed towards the end of the Colonial Period as the native-born slave population increased.

National Period—1791–1864

The Revolution transformed America from a collection of distinct colonial territories under British rule to an independent and sovereign nation. Independence resulted in several significant changes to the institution of slavery in the newly formed United States. Among the most important of these changes was the abolition of the foreign slave trade. In 1805, and again in 1806, the Maryland General Assembly resolved that the Maryland delegation to the United States Congress be instructed to legislate the termination of the slave trade with Africa and the West Indies (MD Arch. DCVII:100; DCVIII:57). The American government formally prohibited the importation of slaves into the United States effective January 1, 1808 (H.R. 77). This legislation coincided with a period of increased demands for slave labor in new southern states such as Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. In fact, "more slaves entered the United States between 1787 and 1807 than any other two decades in history." To meet this demand, the internal slave trade expanded and slaves predominately from the tobacco-growing regions of the Middle Atlantic were purchased by slave traders

Figure 12: Slave and White Populations of Prince George’s County, 1658–1790



Source: Adapted from Kulikoff 1976: 185; Menard 1975; U.S. Census 1840, 1850, 1860.

Table 3: Free White and Slave Populations in Prince George’s County, 1658–1790⁴

Year	Free White	Slave
1658	--	100
1700	2,000	300
1710	2,697	1,297
1712	2,897	1,202
1782	9,864	8,746
1783	9,608	8,919
1790	10,004	11,176

⁴ For the year 1658, data derive from information provided in Russell Menard’s (1975) article, “The Maryland Slave Population, 1658–1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties”; sources for later years include *Tobacco and Slaves* (Kulikoff 1976), and the Maryland State Archives (CCII:xii). The data for 1790 derive from the U.S. federal census records for that year. Although the early dates include populations of other Southern Maryland counties, they nonetheless capture the explosion of both the white and black populations from the Early Period through the Colonial Period.

for resale in cotton-growing regions. It has been approximated that this forced migration displaced more than one million enslaved people (Berlin 2003:161-169; Boles 1984:65). This relocation greatly impacted slaves and slave families from the Chesapeake region generally and Prince George's County, specifically (Johnson 2001; see PG Chattel).

This transformation necessitated, among other issues, a new consideration of political boundaries. Election districts gradually replaced hundreds as the principal county-level political unit. Certain acts of government continued to utilize the hundreds divisions. Tax assessments, for example, remained organized by hundred into the 1830s. Like the former hundreds, electoral districts mostly followed natural boundaries such as streams. However, their organization differed considerably and, as a result, there is very little correlation between the two.

Prince George's County contained eight electoral districts in 1850: Aquasco, Bladensburg, Marlborough, Nottingham, Piscataway, Queen Anne, Spauldings, and Vansville. Census-driven reorganization created one additional district for 1860, the Surrats District located in the south-central portion of the county (Figure 13). These divisions are significant to understanding agricultural activity in Prince George's County during the National Period. Nottingham, Marlborough, and Queen Anne districts contained the most productive tobacco lands in the county. Accordingly, large slaveholdings clustered in these areas. By comparison, the other districts included stretches suited to general agriculture, produce, orchard crops, and livestock. Slaveholdings in these areas tended to be smaller.

In some respects, the history of slavery in Prince George's County during the National Period mimics that occurring throughout the State of Maryland at the time. Northern and western Maryland, and, to a lesser extent, the Eastern Shore, developed economies more closely related to those of the north; Southern Maryland, in particular Charles and Prince George's Counties, developed more along the lines of the slave-dependent South. Agricultural production in northern and western Maryland increasingly trended toward the small family farms engaged in grain production. Soils in these areas did not favor a tobacco cash-crop economy. Likewise, farms on the Eastern Shore increasingly diversified their product despite significant exceptions (Douglass 1855). Combined with the rise of urban areas, namely Baltimore, and a burgeoning manufacturing sector, dependence on slave labor waned in these portions of the state (Fields 1985).

Conversely, Southern Maryland, consisting of Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties, retained a largely tobacco economy. Reliance on slavery as a labor source continued in the region. At the beginning of the National Period, approximately 44 percent of the population of Southern Maryland consisted of slaves; that number remained relatively unchanged by 1850. The percentage of free blacks increased from two percent

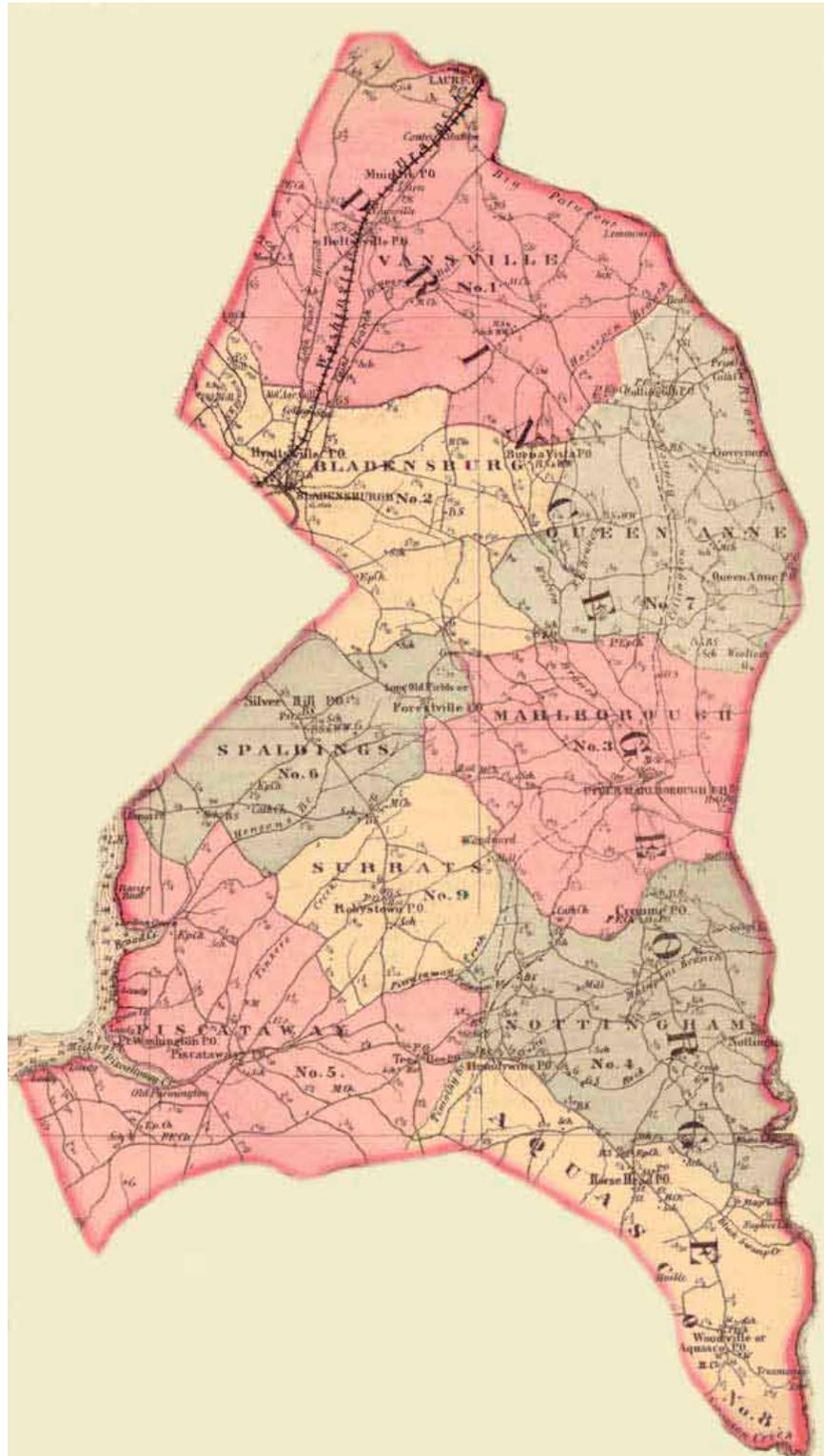
in 1790 to ten percent in 1850. These figures fail to account for county-specific conditions. For example, the white population of Anne Arundel County grew approximately 42 percent while the slave population increased only 11 percent; in Charles County, the white population declined by nearly 44 percent, while the slave population declined by only five percent. (Fields 1985:13). The free black population concentrated in the urban areas in and around Baltimore and Annapolis. Relatively few free blacks resided in Prince George's County, and the percentage of free black to slave remained relatively low compared to other parts of the state (see Research Topics chapter)⁴

Agriculture and Plantation Organization

The primary record includes a wealth of information regarding nineteenth-century agriculture in Prince George's County and its relationship to slaveholdings. However, the countywide data prove inadequate to understanding the relationship between agriculture, labor, and wealth as it was manifested during the National Period in Prince George's County. Significant differences existed within the county and become apparent when examined at the district level. These differences appear primarily driven by soil capacity. As previously noted, soils in the eastern and southern portions of the county were better suited for tobacco cultivation. Accordingly, slaves represented a greater portion of the population in those districts with Patuxent River frontage; in particular, plantations toward the southern part of the county possessed a disproportionate amount of the slave population. In 1860, the four Patuxent River fronting districts of Queen Anne, Marlborough, Nottingham, and Aquasco encompassed less than half the total land within Prince George's, but contained over 60 percent of the slave population (Figure 14). Nottingham and Queen Anne, two of the most productive districts for tobacco, alone accounted for approximately 42 percent of the slave population, while the Vansville district, which lacked good tobacco-yielding soils, contained only about seven percent of the 1860 slave population (Figure 15). Districts such as Surrats and Spauldings possessed some lands suitable for tobacco; however, these districts generally produced subsistence crops and held only eight percent of the county's slaves in 1860 (Slave Schedules 1860).

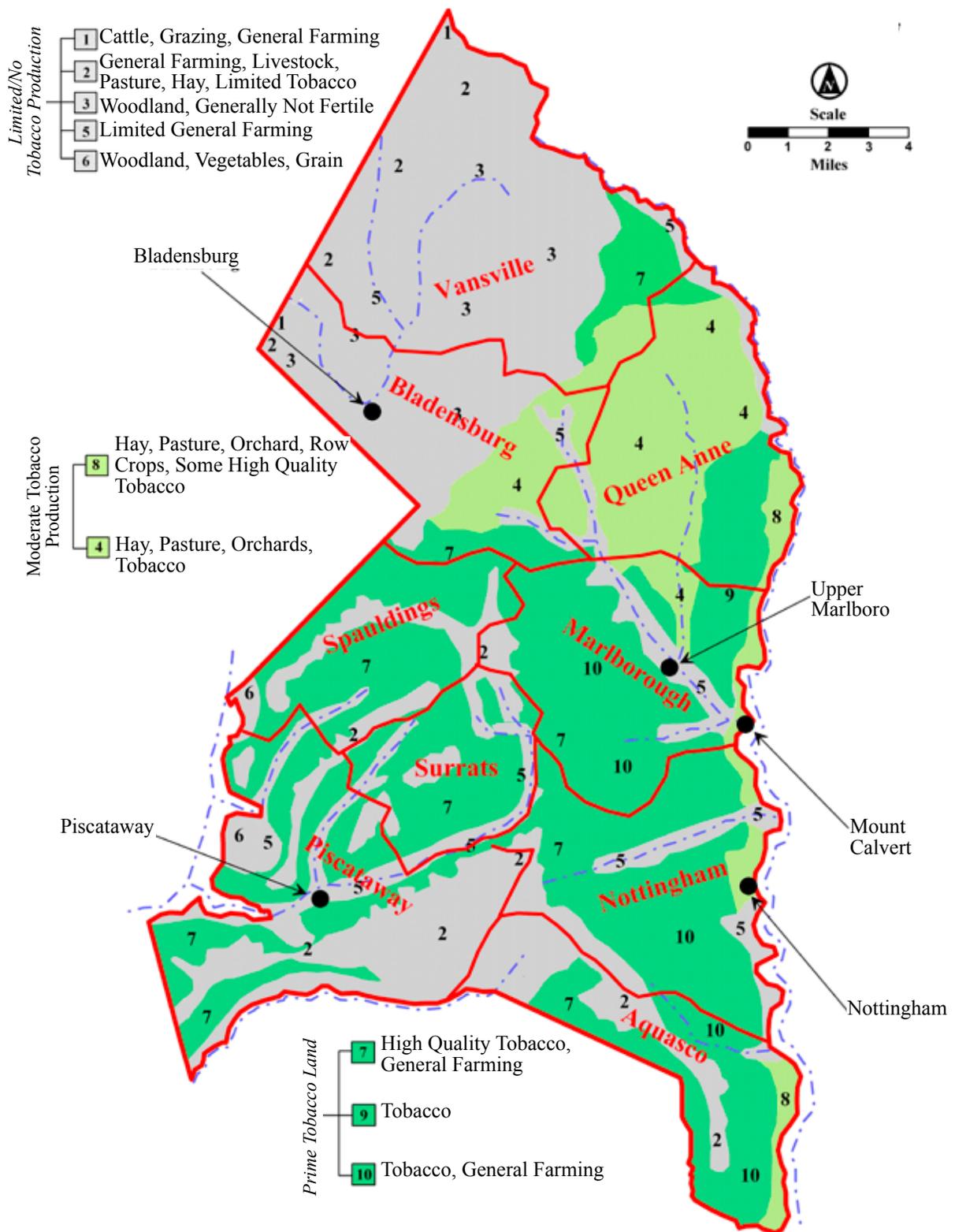
Differences in soil productive capacity are reflected in the types of slaveholdings within each district. For instance, only four of the 34 (12 percent) slaveholdings listed in the Spaldings District in 1850 qualify as large holdings that contained 20 or more slaves. Of those, the largest slaveholder, Thomas Berry with 54 slaves, is not listed in the Agricultural schedule (1850) as owner, operator, or manager of a plantation within the district. This suggests that although they were counted in the Spaldings District, Berry's slaves worked and likely lived in another district. The next largest holder, Henry Tolson, owned 22 slaves; A.H. Tolson and Henry Callis barely qualified as large slaveholders, each owning exactly 20 slaves.

⁴ For more information regarding the free black population in Prince George's County relative to other counties in Maryland, see Slave Community in Research Topics chapter



Source: Martenet 1865 from Maryland State Archives 2007

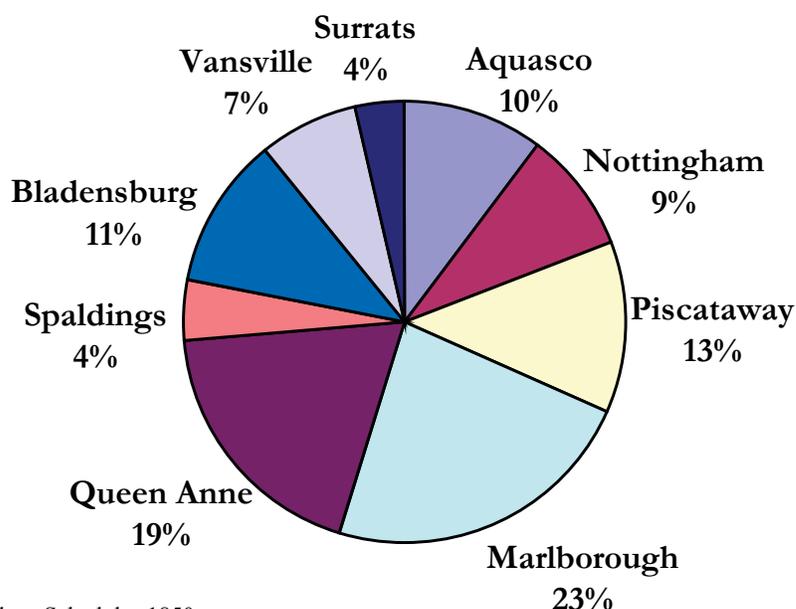
Figure 13: Martenet's 1861 Map of Prince George's County, Maryland



Source: Adapted from Kirby 1967 and Maryland State Archives 2007.

Figure 14: Simplified Soil Types Across Prince George's County Electoral Districts, 1860 showing agricultural suitability and the locations of some former port towns.

On the other extreme, 46 of the 124 (37 percent) slaveholdings reported in 1850 for the Nottingham District counted more than 20 slaves. Of the 46 large slaveholders in the Marlborough District in 1850, 16 contained between 20 and 29 slaves, 18 contained between 30 and 50 slaves, and 12 contained more than 50 slaves. Charles Hill, resident of the Marlborough District and the largest slaveholder in mid-century Prince George’s County, owned 198 slaves (Slave Schedules 1850). Agricultural output varied with slaveholdings and



Source: U.S. Census Slave Schedules 1850.

Figure 15: Distribution of Slaves by District in Prince George’s County, 1850

location within the county. The largest slaveholding regions of Prince George’s County produced the most tobacco. Conversely, districts with smaller average slaveholdings tended to produce a greater diversity of products.

The geographic trends in slaveholdings sizes resulted from soil crop suitability and held significant agricultural implications. Based on a sampling of the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Census Agricultural Schedules for Prince George’s County (PG Ag Schedules), agricultural productivity related directly to the number of slaves held. The information collected seemingly confirms expectations regarding the relationship between agriculture and slavery. However, it also suggests a strong link between the size of slaveholdings and agricultural productivity potential.

In order to determine the relationship between slave ownership and agriculture, entries sampled from the Agricultural Schedules were organized into small (1–5 slaves), medium (6–19 slaves), and large (20+ slaves)

slaveholdings. As might be expected, the data indicate that large slaveholders, on average, owned larger tracts of land. Likewise, they improved a larger proportion of their real estate, probably owing to their command of larger labor forces. Finally, the lands possessed by large slaveholders were more valuable than those of small and medium slaveholders (Table 4). Again, this trend conforms to the history of Prince George's County wherein the first settlers claimed the best parcels of tobacco land; as time progressed, these prime tobacco plantations frequently changed hands, but often stayed within families and almost always remained properties of the elite class. Accordingly, the largest slaveholders would own the most prized fields in the county.

Trends indicative of a relationship between slave ownership and agriculture extend beyond land use and property values. Expectedly, large slaveholders produced more tobacco and more subsistence crops, such as corn and wheat as well. Unsurprisingly, larger land tracts tended by larger labor forces produced larger yields. Likewise, large slaveholders owned larger sheep herds that provided more wool than those of small or medium slaveholders; large estates contained more milk cows and churned more butter. However, the data also indicate that large slaveholders exploited their land and labor with greater efficiency. Large slaveholders extracted not only a greater volume of tobacco, corn, and wheat from their acreage, but more from each acre; they recovered more wool from each sheep and produced more butter from each milk cow (Tables 5 and 6). Collectively, the sample of Agricultural Schedules suggests that not only were large slaveholders wealthier but that ownership of more slaves increased productivity at the base unit level.

Labor and Demographics

As a whole, the demographics for Southern Maryland seem relatively stagnant with a very slight decrease in the percentage of slaves in the population and a small increase in the percentage of free blacks. However, this was not the case for Prince George's County. In 1790, a total of 11,176 (52 percent) of the 21,394 residents of the county were slaves, 10,004 (47 percent) free white, and 1 percent free black. By 1850, the white population declined to 8,901 (41 percent), while the slave and free black populations grew to 11,510 (54 percent) and 1,138 (5 percent), respectively (Fields 1985:13). In other words, across this entire period, enslaved people represented an increasing majority (Table 7, Figure 16). Within the six southern Maryland counties, only neighboring Charles County contained a higher percentage of slaves in the overall population than Prince George's County. Numerically, slaveholdings in Prince George's County exceeded those of every other Maryland County for the entire period between 1790 and 1850.

Table 4: Land Utilization and Value Statistics, 1850–1870⁵							
	1850 Slaveholding Group			1860 Slaveholding Group			1870
	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Medium	Large	N/A
No. of Cases	59	61	50	84	73	47	173
Total Improved Acres	7,068	12,956	26,676	7,393	15,085	21,381	34,375
Total Acres Not Improved or Wooded	4,491	7,176	11,952	4,941	7,774	9,330	20,513
Total Acres	11,559	20,132	38,719	12,334	22,859	30,711	54,888
Percent Improved	61.15%	64.36%	69.13%	59.94%	65.99%	69.62%	62.63%
Total Farm Value	\$203,610	\$346,842	\$911,866	\$385,295	\$726,405	\$1,665,008	\$1,761,335
Farm Value Per Total Acreage	\$17.61	\$17.23	\$23.55	\$31.24	\$31.78	\$54.22	\$32.09
Farm Value Per Improved Acre	\$28.81	\$26.77	\$34.07	\$52.12	\$48.15	\$77.87	\$51.24
Average Total Acres Per Farm	195.92	330.03	774.38	146.83	313.14	653.43	317.27
Average Improved Acres Per Farm	119.80	212.39	535.34	88.01	206.64	454.91	198.70

⁵ The data used in this table derive from a sampling of the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Schedules for Prince George's County. As such, this is not a comprehensive accounting of land use and property value, but rather provides indications of trends. The sampling included 170 entries from the 1850 Schedule, 204 entries from the 1860 Schedule, and 173 entries from the 1870 Schedule. In order to compensate for geographic differences, roughly equal samples were taken from each district; likewise, an attempt was made to record roughly equal numbers of small, medium, and large slaveholders. As elsewhere, small slaveholders (S) are those owning between 1 and 5 slaves, medium slaveholders (M) owned between 6 and 19 slaves, and large slaveholders (L) owned more than 20 slaves. Data recovered for nonslaveholders, or slaveholders without property, were excluded entirely from this table. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest hundredth; values have been rounded to the nearest cent.

Table 5: Tobacco, Wheat, and Corn Statistics, 1850–1870 ⁶							
	1850 Slaveholding Group			1860 Slaveholding Group			1870
	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Medium	Large	N/A
No. of Cases	59	61	50	84	73	47	173
Total Tobacco (Pounds)	200,400	373,300	1,454,000	337,000	791,700	2,404,000	1,149,310
Pounds of Tobacco per Improved Acre	28.35	28.81	54.32	45.58	52.48	112.44	33.43
Total Wheat (Bushels)	7,961	16,990	42,616	5,595	13,683	66,804	24,258
Bushels of Wheat Per Improved Acre	1.13	1.31	1.59	.76	.91	3.12	.71
Total Corn (Bushels)	21,869	40,165	92,850	22,145	46,195	99,625	142,040
Corn Per Improved Acre	3.09	3.10	3.47	3.00	3.06	4.66	4.13

⁶ The data utilized in Tables 5 and 6 derive from the same sample as those used in Table 4. In order to determine the relationship between slave ownership and agricultural productivity, the data were reduced to base units: tobacco, wheat, and corn per improved acre, pound of butter per milk cow, and pounds of wool per sheep. The goal was to equalize, to the extent possible, the advantages in acreage and in the raw number of cows and sheep that large slaveholders possessed over smaller slaveholders. Again, these numbers represent a sampling of the available data, not a comprehensive evaluation.

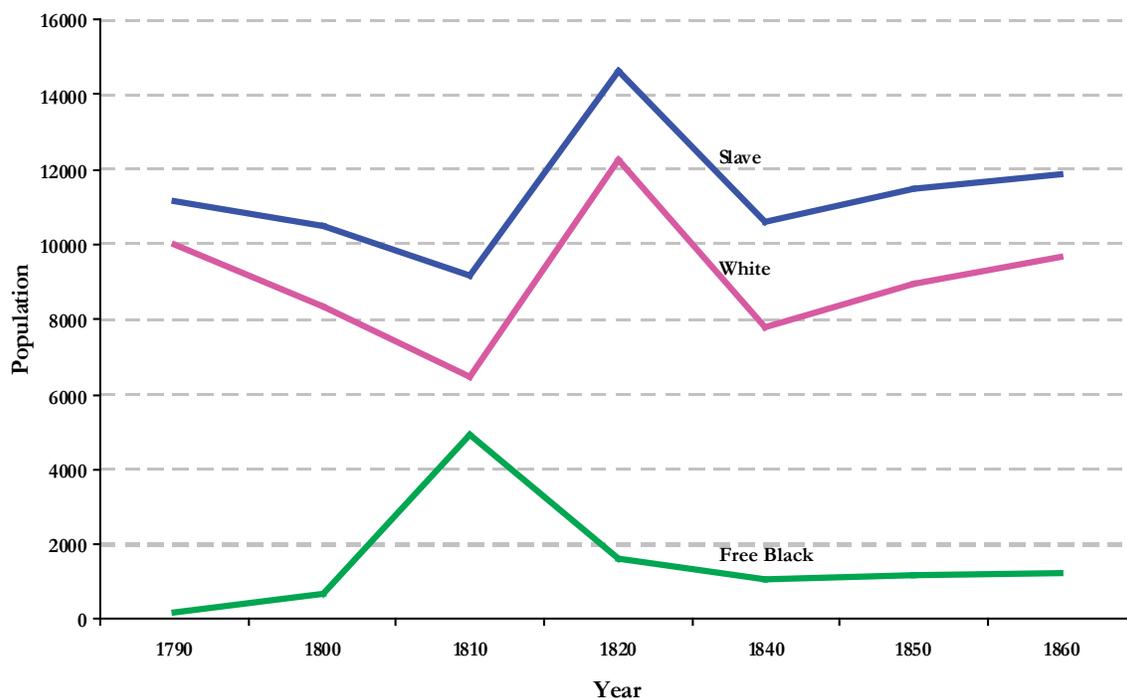
Table 6: Husbandry Statistics, 1850–1870							
	1850 Slaveholding Group			1860 Slaveholding Group			1870
	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Medium	Large	N/A
No. of Cases	59	61	50	84	73	47	173
Total Number of Milk Cows	237	287	519	173	348	451	650
Total Butter (Pounds)	4,175	8,616	12,540	2,060	5,889	11,440	17,221
Average No. Cows	4	5	10	2	5	10	4
Butter (Pounds) Per Cow	17.62	30.02	24.16	11.91	16.92	25.37	26.49
Total Sheep	200	736	1,784	312	618	1,421	1,873
Total Wool (Pounds)	341	2,270	7,425	591	1,492	5,095	5,571
Average No. Sheep	3	12	36	4	8	30	11
Wool (Pounds) Per Sheep	1.70	3.08	4.16	1.89	2.41	3.58	2.97

Interestingly, an increase in the ratio of manumissions to slave sales corresponds closely with the years when slaveholding declined (Figures 17 and 18). This trend is not an anomaly. Census figures for 1800 and 1810 indicate a 750 percent increase in Prince George’s County free black population, from 658 to 4,929 individuals respectively (U.S. census 1800, 1810). The rates in manumission, the drastic increase in the free black population, and a decrease in the slave population all occur at the same period between 1800 and 1815. Furthermore, primary accounts from this period indicate devaluation of real estate and broader economic stresses (Callcott 1991:98). Combined, these factors suggest economic downturns between approximately 1800 and 1815 with a fairly rapid rebound.

Large, free black populations characterized urban centers in slave states. Over its entire history, Prince George’s County lacked a large free black community (see Sperling et. al 2008). With the exception of the 1810 census, the number of free blacks in the county never approached that for slaves (U.S. census 1810). The anomaly of 1810 may have resulted from economic depression that forced masters to manumit; the proportion of free blacks to slaves returned to pre-1810 levels in subsequent censuses. Nonetheless, a small but significant freeman population lived in Prince George’s County during the nineteenth century. The order of recordation in the censuses suggests that

Table 7: Slave, White, and Free Black Populations in Prince George's County, 1790–1860 ⁸			
Year	Free White	Free Black	Slave
1790	10,004	170	11,176
1800	8,339	658	--
1810	6,481	4,929	9,189
1820	12,283	1,594	14,661
1840	7,793	1,081	10,631
1850	8,925	1,178	11,506
1860	9,650	1,205	11,876

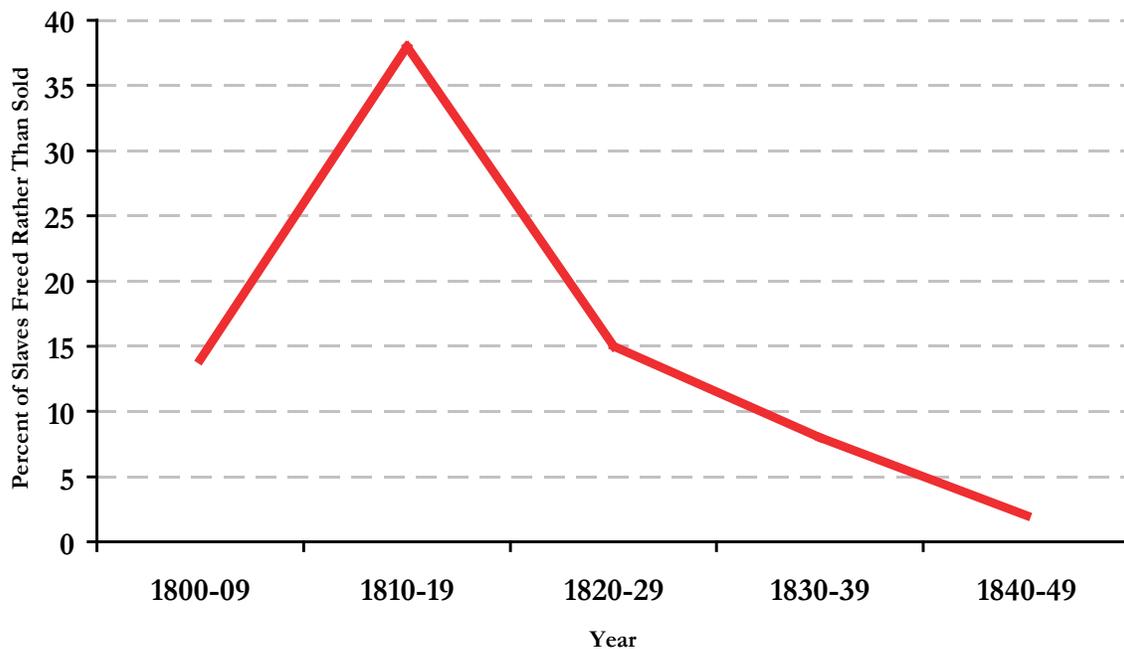
Figure 16: Slave, White, and Free Black Populations of Prince George's County, 1790–1860 (from U.S. Census)



Source: U.S. Census 1790–1860.

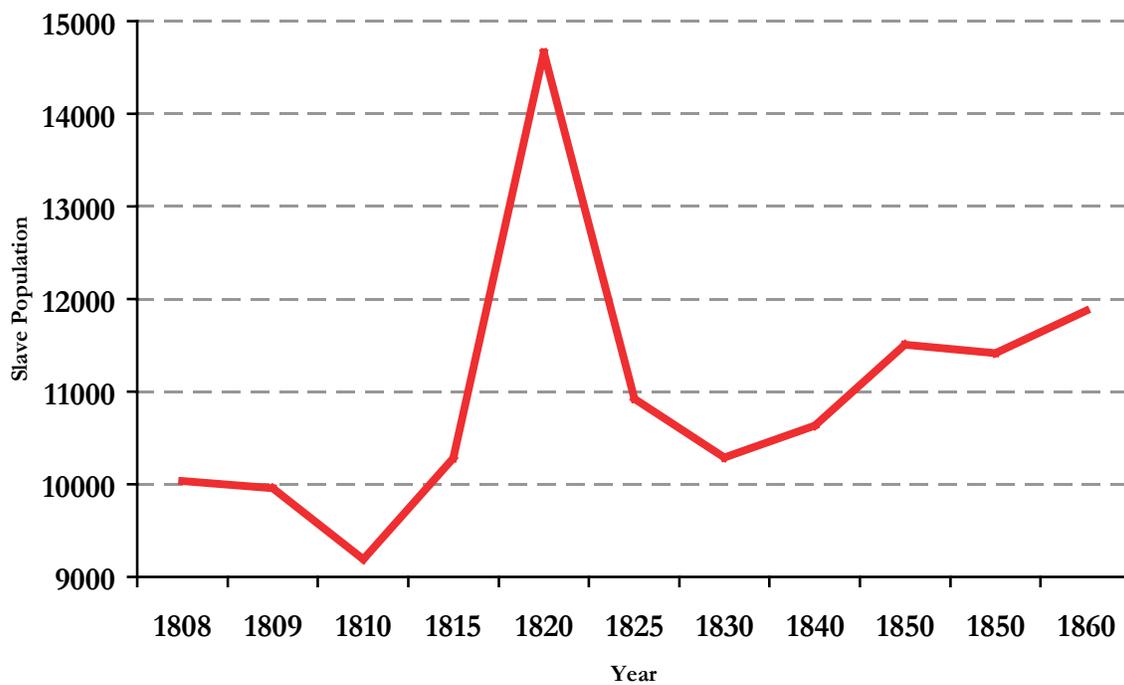
⁸ The data for Table 7 and Figure 16 are derived primarily from the U.S. federal census. The census for 1830 is not available at the Maryland State Archives and has been removed from this dataset. Data on the free black population in 1790 was not collected. Likewise, the census information for 1860 was attained online from the Maryland State Archives, Slave Commission site, which does not have accounts for the white population. Additionally, year by year, data regarding the slave population is available in county tax assessments which better chart changes over time.

Figure 17: Manumission Rates, 1800–1849 (from PG Chattel Records)



Source: Prince George’s Chattel Records (PG Chattel).

Figure 18: Prince George’s County Slave Population, 1808–1860 (from PG Taxes; U.S. Census)

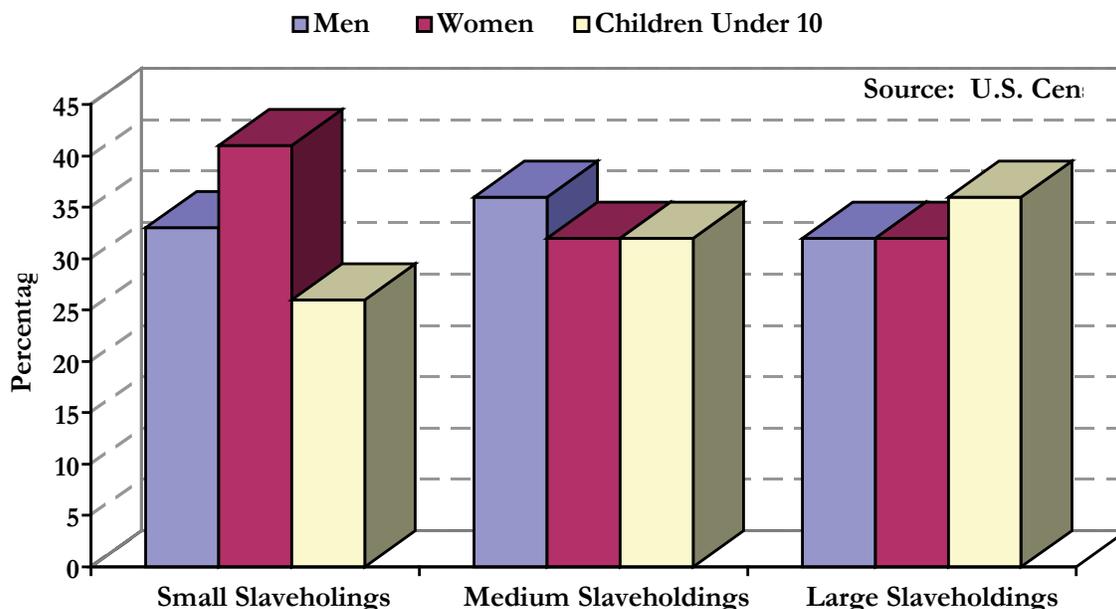


Source: U.S. Census 1810–1860, Prince George’s County Tax Assessments 1808–1820

the residences of free blacks tended to cluster; it is likely that these served as centers for the post-emancipation African-American communities. The available information suggests that free blacks often performed similar duties as slaves. Commonly recorded occupations among the free community included farm hand, laborer, and servant.

Broadly, the slave population in Prince George's County grew during the National Period with some notable declines during the early nineteenth century followed by increases in the mid-century. In 1840, 607 of the 761 (80 percent) slaveholdings listed in the census contained less than 20 slaves. However, it does not follow that the majority of slaves lived in holdings of less than 20 individuals (U.S. Census 1840). In fact, the opposite is true. As a whole, almost two-thirds of slaves in Prince George's County lived on large slaveholdings, i.e., slaveholdings of more than 20 slaves. Another way to think of this statistic is to say that in 1840, large slaveholders represented 20 percent of the slaveholding class (154 of 761 total slaveholdings) but owned 60 percent of all slaves. This distribution holds significant implications not only for the types of activities in which most slaves labored, but also for the social organization of the Prince George's County slave community. Small slaveholdings tended to contain a high ratio of enslaved women to men and, in particular, to children. Men slightly outnumbered women and children on medium slaveholdings. Large slaveholdings, by contrast, contained an equal percentage of men and women with children outnumbering both (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Distribution of Men, Women, and Children on Small, Medium, and Large Slaveholdings



Source: U.S. Census 1850 and 1860.

Reconstruction—1864–1870

The most obvious change in agricultural output in the years following emancipation was a reduction in the amount of tobacco produced. A sampling of agricultural records indicates that several individuals completely abandoned tobacco cultivation; others greatly reduced their operations (Agricultural schedules, 1870). Although it is the most obvious product, tobacco was not the only crop affected by changes in the labor force. In fact, many farms produced fewer grains, made less butter, maintained smaller livestock herds, and produced less wool than before emancipation (see Tables 5 and 6). The overall reduction in the agricultural output mandated an emphasis on alternate economic pursuits. Broadly speaking, former Prince George's County planters turned toward orchard fruits, market vegetables, forested goods, and other less labor-demanding activities than they had before the Civil War.

Generally, emancipation had the greatest impact on those who held the greatest number of slaves. The former elite class witnessed the greatest loss of land or allowed greater proportions of their land to go uncultivated. The county's former planter class was unable to maintain the agricultural productivity which slavery afforded them. Several former medium slaveholders increased their real estate and actually experienced an increase in their farm value, although few of the county's large slaveholders experienced this phenomenon (Agricultural schedules, 1860, 1870).



“The barn is abandoned and in a deteriorated condition; it is scheduled for demolition; it is scheduled for demolition the week of 23 September 1996 for a private housing development.”⁹

⁹ From MIHP Capsule Summary for the Bowie Tobacco Barn (PG:71A-36) in Collington

