

## *Suspended between Memory and Hope*



**O**n the Fourth of July in 1828, Marylanders strikingly juxtaposed past and future in christening two monumental projects. Up the Potomac from Georgetown, at Little Falls, President John Quincy Adams, literally the son of a Founding Father, took up ceremonial shovel to begin work on the C&O Canal. His first thrust hit a stubborn tree root, as did his second. Adams, who strongly supported federal aid to economic and cultural projects, stripped off his coat to the crowd's cheers and kept struggling until the ground yielded. At almost the same moment, on what was left of the Mount Clare plantation southwest of Baltimore, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, took part in laying the first stone of the B&O Railroad. Then ninety-one, Carroll luckily had no trouble turning his own spadeful of soil. Verse written for the occasion had predicted as much: "The hand that held the pen / Never falters, but again / Is employed with the spade, to assist his fellow-men." A crowd of five thousand people—dignitaries, groups of skilled workers, merchants, common people, and children waving flags—watched as brothers of the Masonic Lodge put the stone into place.

Across the bay in Talbot County a black youth spent that summer learning his place in slavery—a labor system rooted in colonial necessity and staple-crop agriculture. The son of a white father and slave mother, Frederick earlier had left his grandmother's cabin on an outlying farm and begun work at Edward Lloyd's Wye River plantation. There he first saw a windmill "with its wide-sweeping white wings" and a boat with sails. He also saw his first whipping—punishment meted out to a young woman for seeing a man her master disapproved of. "When let down she could hardly stand," Frederick recalled. "I was terrified, hushed, stunned, and bewildered." He doubtless joined other hungry slaves in filching apples and pears from Colonel Lloyd's fine orchard (during the summer months people came from Baltimore, Easton, and Annapolis to see the lush gardens at Wye River). Lloyd finally

had the fences surrounding the trees spread with pitch; any slave found with tar on his clothing got an immediate lashing from the chief gardener. Frederick played with one of the Lloyd children, ran errands for the master's family, and enjoyed the "gala days" when slaves from all the Lloyd farms gathered to collect their monthly allowances of cornmeal and pork. Later, having escaped slavery, he admitted that Maryland bondage might deserve its reputation for comparative mildness. He told, too, of overseers named Severe and Gore, whose names befit their regimes, a poor farmer named Covey who boasted of being a slave breaker and whose beatings and kickings almost killed Frederick, and the unpredictable whippings stable slaves got from gentlemen who had trouble with the spirited Lloyd horses. The slave's songs, so far from proving contentment, Frederick Douglass wrote, "represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears."<sup>1</sup>

After 1815 no American state portrayed as vividly as did Maryland the contrast between slavery and steam power, past and future, convention and change—between what Ralph Waldo Emerson called the party of memory and the party of hope.

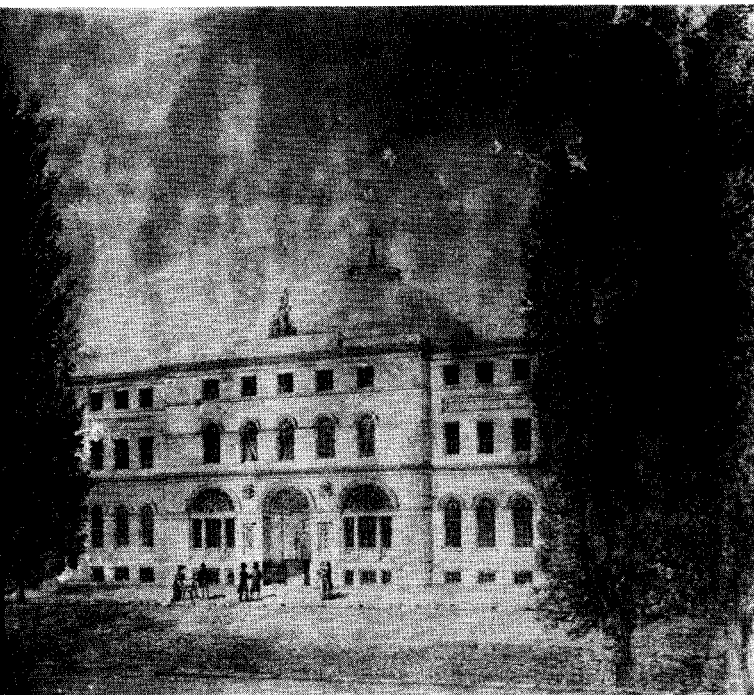


Having fought with verve on privateers and gallantly defended Baltimore in 1814, Marylanders looked forward to renewed prosperity. The end of war brought mixed blessings. In Baltimore civic leaders mounted two projects that reflected the city's sense of triumph. One of them, a monument to George Washington, originally had been planned for the site of the old city courthouse. In 1815 the organizing committee held a lottery to finance the endeavor and finally decided not to put up the monument in the city itself, where homeowners feared the structure might topple on them, but to accept John Eager Howard's donation of some rural land on the northern edge of Baltimore. Howard's forested hill was near his Belvidere mansion and a spot called Howard's Park, where the public for many years had been free to roam. Like the park, which one visitor described as exhibiting "one of the finest landscapes in nature," the site of the new monument commanded a breathtaking view of the city (about a mile south), its harbor, and Fells Point.<sup>2</sup> Robert Mills, a native South Carolinian who had studied architecture with Jefferson and then in Philadelphia with the foremost American architect of the day, British-born Benjamin Henry Latrobe, submitted the winning design. Mills began with a massive square base on which he placed a simple, 168-foot Doric column. Atop the shaft he portrayed Washington, 16 feet high, as the general resigned his commission in Annapolis. The cornerstone of the monument, inlaid with objects like coins, Baltimore newspapers, and a copy of Washington's farewell address, was put in place 4 July 1815. A few months later, on the first anniversary of the defense of Baltimore, another ceremony marked the beginnings of a smaller though more elaborate struc-

ture commemorating the dead at North Point and Fort McHenry. Because of financial and other complications, work on the monuments continued well into the 1820s.

Before the war Baltimore had been, and for several years afterward remained, an exciting city for architects. Sudden wealth and rapid growth had meant much building. Robert Cary Long, Sr., a Baltimore native who studied architecture informally and spent an apprenticeship in carpentry, designed several structures in the early nineteenth century, including the Union Bank building and the famous Holliday Street Theater. His best-known structure, completed in 1817, may have been new St. Paul's Episcopal Church, a Greco-Roman building with bright interior marblework. Latrobe himself, busy with responsibilities in the federal city until moving to Baltimore in 1817, also had a hand in the cityscape. Part of Bishop Carroll's plans for American Catholicism had been a cathedral that would stand as a sign of the church's independence and strength. Carroll accepted Latrobe's design in 1805, and though construction began almost immediately, not until 1818, three years after Carroll's death, did the landmark near completion. Mills, who had moved to Baltimore in 1815, that year designed a series of rowhouses on Calvert Street—too far northward to sell quickly—in which he justified Latrobe's comment that he was "an excellent man of detail, and a very snug contriver of domestic conveniences."<sup>3</sup> Overseeing labor on the Washington Monument, Mills also drew plans in 1817 for a new Baptist church that resembled a flattened Roman Pantheon.

The designer of the Battle Monument, Maximilien Godefroy, a Frenchman who had fled Napoleonic rule, had been in Baltimore since 1805 as professor of civil and military architecture at St. Mary's College. There he had planned a Gothic revival chapel that represented the earliest such attempt in the United States. Though soon widely imitated, Godefroy's ornate building did not please him as much as the neoclassical form—simple geometric solids of the sort Latrobe and Mills also preferred—that he used more famously in his Unitarian Church, begun in 1817 at the northwest corner of Charles and Franklin streets. A cube with a large dome, Godefroy's church featured Tuscan archways over the entrance and an interior made colorful with a maple pulpit set on a base of green and white marble. Collaborating with Latrobe, with whom he began on friendly terms, Godefroy at about the same time took classical patterns to the task of designing a bank and stock exchange. Their solution, the H-shaped Merchant's Exchange Building on South Gay, became the most important structure in Baltimore. Under its central dome merchants conducted their daily affairs. Three-story wings provided office space for lawyers, clerks, traders, and eventually the federal customs office, city government, and post office as well. A fireproof cellar insured the safe storage of records. In the five years after the peace with Britain, Baltimore supplied architects one of their most exciting work sites in the country, and Greek Revival structures proliferated. Later, when Ralph Waldo Emerson



"View of the center of the Baltimore Exchange on Gay Street." Original design drawing by the architects, Maximilien Godefroy and Benjamin H. Latrobe, 1816. The Exchange housed a reading room with up-to-date news of ships' arrivals and departures; on a catwalk within the dome, shipowners could see merchants' house flags flying at the Federal Hill Observatory. *MHS*

paid his first visit to Baltimore, he thought the interior of the Unitarian church "noble" and its exterior "quite unlike any in the city." All this building and planning made citizens' spirits soar. In June 1816 a new Baltimore magazine described the city as "the Athens of America." Emerson bestowed his highest compliment: "in general & in particular," he said, Baltimore "looks like Boston."<sup>4</sup>

Unitarians and New Englanders in fact helped to give the city its intellectual vibrancy in the postwar years. The visits of several Unitarian preachers earlier had galvanized Baltimoreans who found the church's doctrines attractive. Many Unitarians, according to the young Harvard graduate Edward Hinckley—who joined a small but significant number of New England businessmen in Baltimore—were men "of the highest standing in wealth, manners, and influence." One of their leaders, Nathaniel Williams, declared that he "would rather be opposed to the whole city of Baltimore than to a few individuals in Boston." Early in 1819 Unitarians invited Jared Sparks, Hinckley's classmate, to assume the pulpit of the new First Independent Church. In May an elder of the heterodox theology, William Ellery Channing,

came to Baltimore and gave an ordination sermon that defended Unitarians against "unwarranted use of reason in the interpretation of Scriptures," argued that the meaning of the Bible was "to be sought in the same manner, as that of other books," and protested "the irrational and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity."<sup>5</sup>

Channing's sermon rocked the city in controversy and opened what became for Sparks a raucous, if rewarding, several years in Baltimore. Joseph Bend's successor as rector at St. Paul's, William E. Wyatt, engaged Sparks in a running newspaper and pamphlet exchange. A Princeton divine come to Baltimore to install a Presbyterian pastor attacked Unitarians for being "no Christians" at best, "immoral" at worst. When yellow fever briefly struck Fells Point in September 1819, a clergyman declared the sickness to be a sign of God's displeasure that a "Synagogue of Satan" had been established in the city. Sparks in January 1821 began publication of his own monthly, the *Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor*, which soon reached a circulation of two thousand. At one time or another he welcomed as visiting preachers such noted Harvardians—and notorious independents—as Henry Ware, John Kirkland, John Gorham Palfrey, and Francis Parkman. "A strong spirit of inquiry is rapidly making its way among the people here," Sparks reported home soon after taking up his burden, "and prejudice is certainly sinking by degrees." Gradually, writing two sermons a week and fending off multiplying enemies, he lost spirit. "They assail me on all hands," he complained late in 1821; "as if my measure were not yet full, the Catholics are beginning to empty their quivers."<sup>6</sup>

Promoting the life of the mind in postwar Baltimore just as actively, though less seriously, were members of the Delphian Club. Organized in 1816 ("through a sort of Unitarian efflorescence") by Tobias Watkins and John Pierpont, the Delphians met Saturday evenings in members' homes—"there to eat bread and cheese, and settle the affairs of the universe." They were a varied lot. From 1816 to 1818 Watkins, an army surgeon, also edited the *Portico*, a literary magazine that gave writers in Baltimore and its surrounding area an outlet for their work. William Gwynn, an Irish immigrant and after 1813 editor of the *Federal Gazette*, served as president beginning in late 1824. His quaint Italianate home behind the newspaper office, designed by Robert Cary Long, Sr., and known as the Tusculum (the rabble called it "Gwynn's Folly"), provided a headquarters for the club. Other members included the master of the Bladensburg Races, William Winder, the proud Robert Goodloe Harper, and John D. Readell, a physician who for many years acted as club secretary. Rembrandt Peale, son of Charles Willson Peale, maintained informal ties to the group. In 1816-17 Henry Marie Brackenridge, son of the Pennsylvania jurist and writer, counted himself a member while practicing law in Baltimore. Francis Scott Key, whose poetic description of the battle for Fort McHenry recently had been set to music and performed at the Holliday Street Theater, attended Delphian meetings when in

town, along with William Wirt, a Bladensburg native and Virginia lawyer who maintained a practice in Baltimore after joining Monroe's cabinet as attorney general in 1817. That year Wirt also published a life of Patrick Henry. Besides Pierpont, a Yale-educated merchant who had gone bankrupt in Baltimore and who later became a Unitarian minister in Boston, two other New Englanders added to the middle- or meeting-ground character of the club. John Neal, a Quaker from Portland, Maine, wrote romances and poetry while studying law. Paul Allen of Rhode Island, partly responsible for a history of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1814, served as editor of the *Morning Chronicle* between 1818 and 1824. Meanwhile John Pendleton Kennedy, a handsome young fellow who considered law practice tedious and confining, published in the *Portico* and sought his own sanctuary in the literary life.<sup>7</sup>

The published work of the Delphians, thanks in part to their skilled Baltimore friends, appeared with the same brief intensity of the British rocket barrage over Fort McHenry. Printers like Thomas Murphy, William Wooddy, and J. Robinson (the last had offices in both Baltimore and Frederick) handled most of the books the group produced; publishers or booksellers/publishers—John Hopkins, Joseph Cushing, and Franklin Betts among them—aided in their appearance and promotion. With the help of the Cushing and Jewett firm on Howard Street, Brackenridge in 1817 completed a history of the late war with Britain. Allen projected, but relied on Neal and Watkins to write, a history of the American Revolution that a local shop printed. In 1821 the conservative Baltimore gentleman Thomas W. Griffith (French revolutionaries had imprisoned him for helping nobility escape the country) published two more early histories, *Annals of Baltimore* and *Sketches of the Early History of Maryland*. That year Baltimore printers also put out Allen's five-canto poem, *Noah*. Meanwhile Neal wrote with an enthusiasm that observers believed his greatest asset and liability alike; he worked, he said, with "marvellous rapidity." His *Keep Cool, a Novel Written in Hot Weather* appeared in 1817, underwritten by Joseph Cushing. Two books of his verse came out in the next two years. While outsiders published two other Neal creations, a Baltimore firm in 1823 produced *Randolph*. Masked as a novel, this book really cataloged his complaints against sundry people and almost occasioned a duel between Neal and a son of the late William Pinkney (whom even a friend had described as "vain of his vanity"). That year Robinson also published Neal's *Seventy-Six*, a popular romance of the American Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

Bright as did shine the Baltimore literary scene, it faded—partly because of deaths and departures and perhaps also because slave society demanded order that eventually stifled mavericks, whether religious, literary, or social. After leaving on a mission to the new South American republics, where Baltimore merchants discovered rich trading opportunities, Brackenridge rejoined the Delphians briefly before accepting in 1821 a federal appointment in Florida. Neal, after a sexual indiscretion, felt obliged to resign his Delphian membership in 1820. His next failure was an unsuccessful courtship

The Delphians at the Hall of the Flamen.

a drawing representing a meeting of the Club, at the Hall of  
 Casparus Oligostichus, Delphian Flamen Dr., together with some  
 explanatory verses, which his Lordship read.

The DELPHIAN CLUB met at Casparus Oligostichus's Hall.

Poetical Explanation.

By J. Kenuckefair, Duke of Pipes, Historical Painter &c.

"When Time with whirring wings has flown,  
 And Delphians' short their lives are gone."

"The Delphians at the Hall of the Flamen." Drawing by James H. McCulloh, Delphian Club Records, vol. 5, 10 February 1821. Beside the sketch McCulloh wrote a poem for future Delphians: "When Time with whirring wings has flown / and Delphians spent their lives are gone / How would they grieve to see no trace / Of person, lineament, or face / Of those who once in wit and fun / Composed the Club for '21!"  
 MHS

of Peale's cousin Sarah, a painter in her own right. Members of polite society made clear their objections to *Randolph*, and Neal left Baltimore for Britain in December 1823. The Reverend Sparks had resigned his pastorate in April of the same year in order to find peace and begin a life of George Washington. Allen died in 1826. The promising young poet Edward Coate Pinkney followed him two years later.

Rembrandt Peale, often busy with commissions, had hoped to settle in Baltimore. Some of his earliest work had been profile drawings of John Ross Key and Matthew Tilghman and portraits of Nicholson, Hanson, and Cohen family members. In the spring of 1797 Rembrandt and his brother Raphael had tried to establish their own gallery and natural history museum in Baltimore as the elder Peale had done in Philadelphia. By 1799 they had abandoned the project. After several trips to Europe, and a Baltimore unveiling in 1811 of a large painting of Napoleon mounted for war, Peale renewed his pledge to open an institution on the Chesapeake. He wrote Jefferson that it would differ from his father's in being "more properly a Museum of Arts and Sciences"; though the museum would not neglect natural history, Peale expected to direct his "chief attention to the formation of a picture Gallery and Depository of the course and products of manufactures."<sup>9</sup> Support appeared ample—Henry Robinson opened his purse generously—if for no other reason than Baltimoreans always stood ready to challenge Philadelphia. Peale asked Robert Cary Long, Sr., to design what would be the country's first planned museum. Built on Holliday Street, it turned out to have a three-story, residence-like front with extralarge windows, a columned porch and loggia, and a square, two-story gallery to the rear (overrunning Long's estimate of five thousand dollars, the museum finally cost Peale fourteen thousand). Huddled with his family during the British attack of September 1814, Peale had planned to beg the British if they broke through the defenses on Hampstead Hill to spare the place as a dwelling.

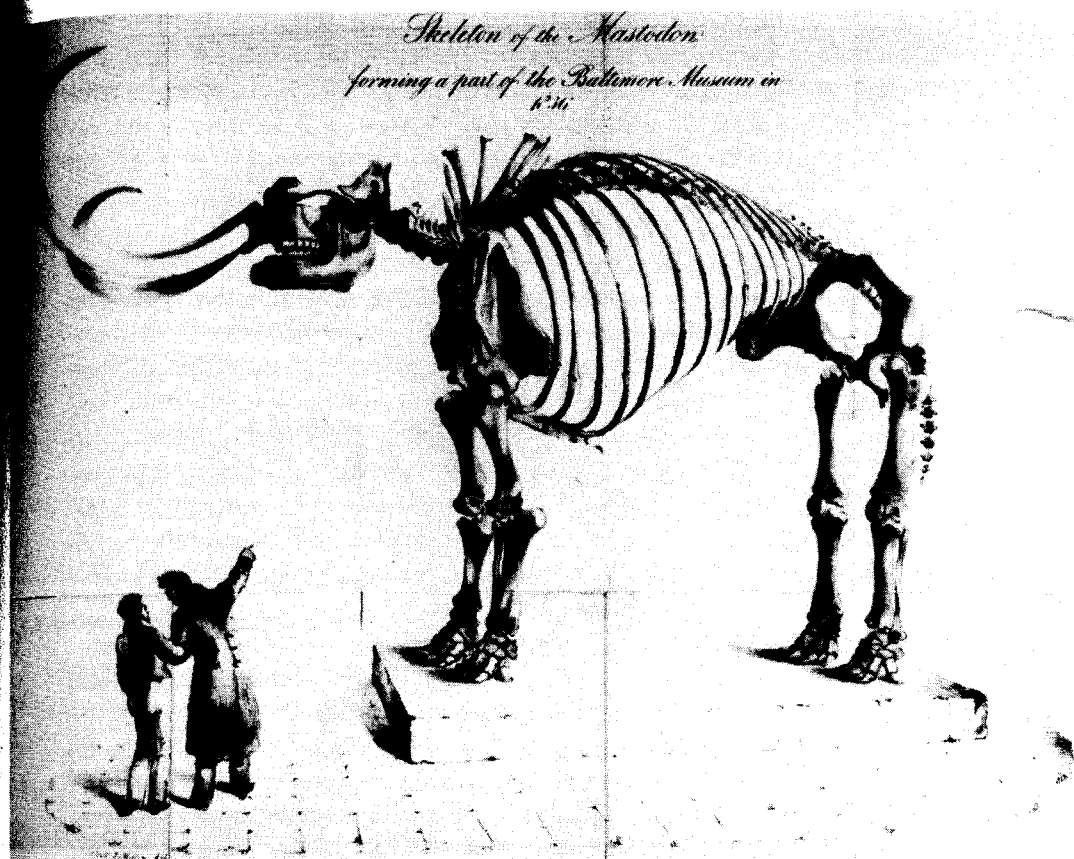
Later that year—with portraits of statesmen and military and naval heroes, a few copies of Charles Willson Peale's work, and some bones borrowed from the Philadelphia institution on display—Peale's Baltimore Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts opened as "an elegant Rendezvous for taste, curiosity, and leisure." As part of the effort to draw crowds to the museum, Rembrandt in June 1816 borrowed an idea from another brother, Rubens, who had managed the Philadelphia museum—he installed lamps that burned natural gas and pledged thereby to light the museum "every evening until the public curiosity be gratified." The innovation did impress Long and a few other Baltimore investors; they obtained a charter from the assembly, formed the Gas Light Company of Baltimore, and in 1817 put gas streetlights in Old Town. Financial troubles plagued Rembrandt as in the late 1790s, however, and Rubens joined him in an attempt to make the enterprise profitable. Egyptian mummies, chanting Indians, and an armless woman who did stunts with tools held in her teeth were added to the usual attractions. Re-



lieved of bookkeeping duties, Rembrandt produced a 24-by-13-foot, highly allegorical work depicting *The Court of Death*, which Baltimoreans viewed in 1820 before the painting left on tour. In May 1822 Rubens bought his brother's interest in the museum and Rembrandt himself left Baltimore for New York and Philadelphia. While Sarah Peale remained a portrait painter of considerable productivity in the city, the museum went into eclipse.<sup>10</sup>

Academics suffered a similar fate in Baltimore. In 1812 the General Assembly, hopeful of resurrecting plans for higher education in the state, had granted a university charter to Baltimore physicians who, for profit, operated a college of anatomy and medicine. The college owed its beginnings to Charles F. Wiesenthal, Prussian immigrant and state surgeon-general during the Revolution, who in the 1780s had made formal the informal apprenticeship method of training young doctors: he accepted students at his home on Gay Street and behind it built a small laboratory for their use. Since 1799 the Medical and Chirurgical Society that emerged from this experiment had authority to grant licenses to trained practitioners and prosecute the unfit. Popular outrage at grave robbing and dissection had hampered Wiesenthal, and in 1807 a mob tore down the college laboratory. The assembly acted that year to protect the institution by incorporating it. John Beale Davidge, an Annapolis native with Scottish medical schooling, and others began building a faculty, gathering students, and searching for new quarters. The doctors turned over fund raising to the worldly wise; John Eager Howard donated a plot of land at Greene and Lombard streets. A month before war broke out with Britain, Baltimoreans broke ground for a new anatomical classroom building that Long, Sr., designed as a small Roman Pantheon.

With its new University of Maryland charter, the faculty projected an enterprise (tuition going directly to professors) offering degrees in law, divinity, and even arts and sciences besides medicine. Prominent clergymen agreed to join the faculty on a part-time basis. In advertised weekly lectures the Reverend Wyatt, later known as "Dr. High-Church," aimed "to promote correct principles and pious habits among the young Gentlemen of the Institution." Other enlisted lecturers, apparently expecting rich rewards in high enrollments, included a state judge, Charles W. Hanson, in philosophy; John E. Hall (editor of a unique professional magazine, the *American Law Journal*), in what may have been the first separate history position in the country; and an Episcopal rector, George Ralph, in English and rhetoric. Principals of local academies offered more classes in mathematics, classical languages, and basic science. David Hoffman, a survivor of the 1812 Baltimore riot, planned the most ambitious curriculum of all. At the time young men prepared for the legal profession by reading lawbooks in an attorney's office; a few of them first attended college and later aspired to be statesmen. Hoffman contributed a syllabus of readings that marked a large step forward in legal schooling. *A Course of Legal Study, Respectfully Dedicated to the Students of Law in the United States*, appearing in 1817, soon won high praise from leading lights in Ameri-



"Skeleton of the Mastodon forming a part of the Baltimore Museum in 1836." Drawn by Alfred Jacob Miller, 1836. One of three mastodon skeletons Charles Willson Peale excavated in rural New York, the fossil became a major attraction at Rembrandt Peale's Baltimore Museum. *MHS*

can law. In 1823 Hoffman began lecturing according to this plan, teaching three four-month terms that included Saturday moot courts.<sup>11</sup>

Trouble developed because the "university" lacked focus and direction; it suffered from an excess of individualism so typical of the age. Robert Smith, who briefly served as Madison's secretary of state, accepted the unsalaried provost's post in 1813 only to resign it in 1815. His successor, James Kemp, Episcopal bishop of Maryland, seemed content performing ceremonial duties until he retired in 1826. Arts and sciences lecturers tried gimmicks like free introductory lectures and chemistry sessions with "magical demonstrations." They taught irregularly and saw no need to coordinate their classes. In 1824 John Allen on the mathematics side led an attempt to begin anew and offer a full curriculum. Newspaper notices, damning with faint praise, declared that the university supplied an education "as good as any in Balti-

more." Few students responded, and faculty members returned to their true careers. Hoffman's law institute faced equally low enrollments. In 1829, trying to stir more interest in the course, he published his lectures. But the two-volume set cost far less than tuition (\$120 a term) and Baltimore living expenses, and students grew even scarcer. Hoffman later resigned and left for Europe to write fiction.<sup>12</sup>



Intellectual and artistic life in Baltimore competed unfavorably with pressing material problems. The state stood divided as it had been in the late eighteenth century—roughly along a northeast to southwest line through Baltimore. The northern and western counties and upper Eastern Shore looked to the future with confidence; with good markets, reasonable tariffs, and reliable currency (money consisted of minted coins, bank-circulated paper, and commercial promissory notes), those areas figured to prosper in commercial farming, trading, or manufacturing. In the oldest counties of the Western Shore, to a lesser extent in the middle Eastern Shore, slaveowners relied on tobacco growing and generally resisted change.

Marylanders had profited from European war; the return of peace brought painful readjustment. British products flooded the American market, depressing Maryland factories that had sprung up to meet demand during the embargo and war. In 1814 Washington County investors had built a small woolens mill on Antietam Creek at Funkstown. Its manager had complained that Hagerstown merchants would "purchase few homemade goods as soon as foreign can be obtained."<sup>13</sup> Exporters of Maryland grain and flour (wheat in the region suddenly suffered attacks from the dreaded Hessian fly) now met competition from European growers; Marylanders largely filled gaps created when foreign crops fell short. British Corn Laws of 1815 restricted American imports to periods when local wheat surpassed a set high price. Maryland tobacco exports remained far below the level of 1790. Eastern Shore lumbermen lost out to Baltic woods the Europeans could buy after the war. The stagnant West Indian economy did nothing to increase demand for either Chesapeake forest or farm products, and in any event British and French vessels had resumed their role in the Caribbean trade.

After the peace treaty with Britain, questions about the proper role of the federal government in economic development produced rancorous debates with far-reaching implications. Acting too late to save the Antietam Mills, which changed hands in 1816, Congress that year laid frankly protectionist duties on selected foreign products, established a second Bank of the United States, and spent more money on internal improvements. Maryland mirrored the country at large in dividing over these measures. Manufacturers and their employees voiced support for tariffs. The state benefited from the National Road (opened between Cumberland and Wheeling in 1818) and a strong navy. For these reasons the Federalist party, discredited at large



William Gist  
PRATT ST. WHARE,  
Manufacturer of

White Lead, Red Lead, Litharge, Orange  
Mineral, Spanish Whiting, Spirits of Turpentine,  
Soap & Ship Rosin, Pitch, Copal & Japan Varnish,  
Bright & Black D<sup>o</sup> all of which will be Sold low.

Verdigris & all other colours ground in oil. &c. &c.

A paint manufacturer's advertisement showing strong support for protective tariffs. From R. J. Matchett's *Baltimore Directory for 1824*. MHS

for opposing the war and talking about separating New England from the Union, claimed strength in Maryland long after it ceased to be a force elsewhere.

Living in a diverse economy and society, Marylanders in general treated constitutional theory more pragmatically, with less piety, than did Virginians and other Southerners. Yet tariff walls kept the cost of clothes and hardware artificially high; slowing imports and raising duties abroad, they hurt Baltimore shipping. Maryland planters knew well that if federal power reached far enough outside constitutional bounds it might fall on slavery. Controlled by rural delegates and senators, the General Assembly in 1818 sought to restrict one federal intrusion by requiring banks opened "without authority

of the state" to pay a tax on issued notes or an annual fee of \$15,000. In the ensuing Supreme Court case, *McCulloch v. Maryland* (old and alcoholic Luther Martin argued for the state against Daniel Webster and two other Marylanders, Pinkney and Wirt), Chief Justice John Marshall struck down the Maryland law as "a tax on the operation of an instrument employed by the government of the Union to carry its powers into execution." Citizens still divided on exactly where those powers lay and the extent to which states exercised countervailing rights under the Constitution.<sup>14</sup>

Baltimore began losing ground to other American seaboard cities for geographic and maritime reasons that earlier had spelled success. Shippers discovered that the Baltimore Clipper carried disadvantages in peacetime, when vessels did not have to be fast and maneuverable so much as heavy and dependable—yet Chesapeake shipwrights had never specialized in making ponderous ships. Dredging of the Baltimore inner harbor had been tried with limited means and limited success. Sailing in and out of the bay for Liverpool, the leading British port, cost valuable time. While Marylanders took justifiable pride in their road improvements, it took sixteen to eighteen days for a loaded Conestoga wagon with its six-horse team, sometimes traveling day and night, to make the journey from the Ohio Valley to Baltimore. New York City by comparison enjoyed a large, deep-water harbor, easy access to the sea, and a shorter distance to Britain—making the city a logical entrepôt for goods going to and coming from that country. Clever Americans realized that, with European peace, large fortunes lay westward—in the marketing opportunities that would arise as settlers moved into the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys. In 1817 New Yorkers financed and began building a canal that they planned, incredibly, to cross the length of the state and connect the Atlantic port with Lake Erie and the west.

Another credit collapse in 1819 heightened the aura of crisis. Overproduction of cotton in the southern states, overly liberal credit to purchasers of public land there, and mismanagement of the national bank accounted for the fall, which struck hard at Baltimore firms. Many of them went under, closing shops and shipyards and throwing seamen, clerks, and laborers out of work. "The trade of this city was never more depressed," reported the British consul in Baltimore—"pecuniary embarrassments beyond anything ever before known, many failures, more expected and no one knows who to trust." Samuel Smith, since early 1816 serving a second series of congressional terms, recorded one of the saddest stories of financial failure. Smith had left his business in the hands of a partner, James Buchanan, who also acted as president of the Baltimore branch of the national bank. Buchanan joined other officials in irregular ventures that included lending themselves bank funds to make marginal stock purchases in the hope of selling at high profits. Without informing Smith, Buchanan had bought about \$300,000 worth of stock in the name of their partnership. Congressional inquiries uncovered Buchanan's scheme. John Quincy Adams, like his father a moral

critic of Baltimore, thought no city in the Union its rival for the "complication of profligacy." Smith and Buchanan, wrote Adams approvingly, fell "with a crash which staggered the whole city of Baltimore and will extend who knows how far." Smith had to sell Montebello; he contemplated suicide. About a hundred prominent merchants went bankrupt.<sup>15</sup>

The panic marked a watershed in the social history and economic growth of Baltimore. General Smith slowly recovered. He and his wife cut expenses and lived on his modest pension and meager congressional salary; their son, John Spear Smith, bought back Montebello and made it a working, paying farm. Even so, Smith's ill fortune—his literal discredit—helped to mark the decline of one commercial aristocracy, the elite that had arisen during the wars and trading opportunities of the preceding half-century. In the 1820s some of those wealthy Baltimoreans settled into the comforts of urban land-ownership, deriving income largely from rents drawn from city properties. They intermarried with the rural gentry of Frederick and Baltimore counties and made up a social register of old and still-proud Baltimore families. Another group consisting in part of Buchanans, Calhouns, Hollinses, and Lev-erings left trade for textile and other manufacturing. Still more leading or aspiring Baltimoreans adapted to the monetary and credit changes dictated by the shakedown of 1819. Now under capable and honest directors, among them the South Carolinian Langdon Cheves, the second Bank of the United States forced one change. Its notes circulated throughout the country, enabling buyers to make purchases in undiscounted paper; small merchants and wholesalers no longer depended on the advances, the credit patronage, of a single Baltimore merchant, and marketing practices shifted accordingly. Another change substituted institutional for personal borrowing. Before 1819 a merchant obtained credit on his word or a friend's endorsement; afterward he needed collateral and signed legal papers.

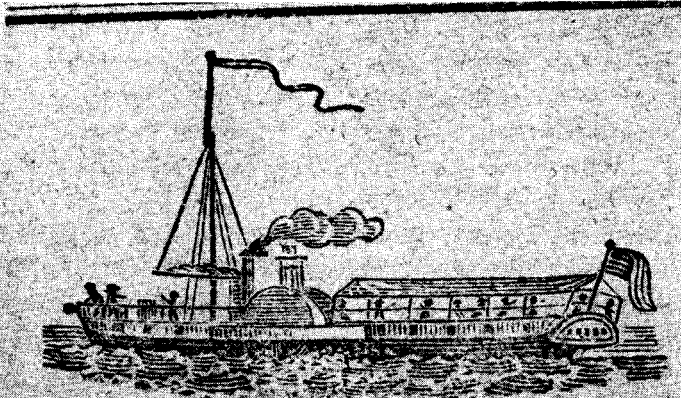
Alexander Brown typified new approaches to financiership and merchandising. Born in Northern Ireland, he first had entered the Irish linens trade in Baltimore and then widened his net. After the War of 1812 he sent his several sons to Liverpool, Philadelphia, and New York to establish branch offices and also acquired agents in southern cotton ports. So conservative was the elder Brown that he amounted to a pioneer. Rather than extend long credit to old friends, he insisted on short-term deals and payment in cash. By tradition Brown would have placed surplus capital in local real estate. Instead he reinvested in the firm. Unlike the few, high-risk efforts of Baltimore merchants bred to neutral trading during European war, his ventures tended to make small returns while representing little if any risk. After the 1819 panic, Brown bought ships and purchased bank stock at fallen prices. His strong position gained him a reputation for reliability and the respect of Cheves, who helped Brown's agents assume responsible posts at branch banks in southern cities.

Brown & Sons gained most from the lucrative export trade of the period—

the sale of southern cotton to England. Brown's Liverpool branch provided shippers with credit, insurance, and other services. The Baltimore office accepted bills of exchange for the shipped cotton, paid planters cash for two-thirds or three-fourths the cotton's total value, and then—an innovation—issued its own bills (sold for less than their value-when-due, usually due in ninety days) at a slight profit. The reliability of the company helped to make its bills especially desirable and more in demand. Brown set another precedent and added to his profits by smartly playing the market for bills—selling his own during the export season, when the exchange rate was high, buying those of other companies when demand and prices were low. By the late 1820s Brown & Sons had established itself as a powerful force in international trade and banking.<sup>16</sup>

Equally innovative were the Cohen brothers of Baltimore in the lottery business. In 1812 Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., had acted as one of several vendors—agents who sold a block of tickets at a small profit—in the successful lottery for the College of Medicine. Soon thereafter he and his brothers Mendes, David, and Philip established Cohen's Lottery and Exchange, a firm devoted solely to vending tickets and handling the various local bank notes people used to buy them. After the panic lotteries became big business—both because in hard times the small investor supplied the readiest source of capital and because Cohen developed into a prodigy of salesmanship. He published a weekly newspaper advertising current lotteries and offering miscellaneous commercial news, like commodity and stock prices and the discount rates (current value in Baltimore) of outside currencies. His brothers eventually opened branch offices in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Norfolk, and Charleston. By 1826 Cohen competed with a dozen other Baltimore lottery firms with names like Allen's Truly Lucky and Waite's Truly Fortunate. Colorful posters appeared on walls and posts everywhere. Drawings drew large, cheering crowds. Cohen advertised that he paid off numbers within ten minutes of their winning—no small feat with grand prizes sometimes as high as \$100,000, others \$50,000. He devised a system that paid small sums to last-digit ticket holders, whom he then enticed to buy more tickets. Cohen's paper reported stories of heaven-blessed small or share-of-ticket purchasers whose winnings fed their families or paid the mortgage. Many of them lived as far away as Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Crawford County, Georgia. In the late 1820s, with the return of moderate prosperity, the Cohen brothers left lotteries and entered banking, using their experience at changing different currencies to build one of the most successful firms in Baltimore.<sup>17</sup>

Lotteries enhanced a gambling spirit that made Marylanders watch transportation developments with a sharp eye. Steamboats, using energy of fearsome power, had begun to appear on the Chesapeake before the war with Britain. In design they followed the *Clermont*, built by Robert Fulton, whose New York monopoly forced them onto other waters. In 1813 two forward-



**The Steam Boat Chesapeake**  
 EDWARD TRIPPE, Master, will in future  
 leave the lower end of Bowley's Wharf,  
 5 o'clock precisely on  
 MONDAYS  
 WEDNESDAY, } EVENINGS,  
 FRIDAY,  
 And SUNDAY MORNINGS, at 9 o'clock  
 precisely. W. M. McDONALD & SON  
 The National Intelligencer at Washington,  
 will copy the above, and send their accounts  
 to the subscribers. W. M. & S.  
 apr 8 P6 d8ta08t

Advertisement for the Union Line. From the *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, 24 April 1816. MHS

looking marine financiers in Baltimore, Andrew F. Henderson and William McDonald, joined Edward Trippe in launching the steamboat *Chesapeake*. Two years later the Philadelphia-built *Eagle* sailed through the Virginia Capes and up the bay under command of a Connecticut native, Captain Moses Rogers. At first steamboats merely served as connectors for stage lines—carrying passengers between Frenchtown or Elkton and Baltimore (winds were notoriously undependable on the upper bay), or, in the case of the *Washington*, running between the federal city and stage terminals at Potomac and Aquia creeks in Virginia. Gradually they made longer voyages. In late 1815 Captain Rogers took the *Eagle*, a boat so simple it lacked a pilot-house, on a week-long trip from Baltimore to Richmond and back, proving the feasibility of service to points up and down the Chesapeake. Rogers piloted the vessel while standing on top of one of the paddle-wheel covers; he stomped on the main deck to signal the boilermen below. By 1819 a



Frenchman, fascinated by "*les bateaux à vapeur*," counted about a dozen Chesapeake Bay steamboats, whose novelty made excursion trips from Baltimore to Yorktown and other points of interest highly fashionable. In 1828 the formation of the Maryland and Virginia Steam Boat Company marked the first attempt to coordinate land and water service between Philadelphia and Norfolk. Weekly packets made the Baltimore to Norfolk run in about twenty-four hours.

Early bay packets left some problems unsolved. Passengers put up with smoke and soot aft of the stack. They noted poor ventilation in the cabin below. A local newspaper described the Baltimore-built *Virginia*, launched at Flannigan's Wharf in 1817, as a "very large and staunch boat, elegantly fitted." Longer than the *Eagle* by twenty-six feet and four feet broader of beam, the *Virginia* carried a boiler built of copper instead of cast-iron. Her engine, producing forty-four horsepower, turned the paddles eighteen times a minute for a cruising speed of six knots. Still, the boiler used crudely evaporated sea water, slowly salting the machinery, and burned so much wood (up to 100 pine logs every hour, more in fog and storms) that the boat had only limited space for freight and passengers. The *Virginia* carried auxiliary sail and often had to use it.<sup>18</sup>

Meantime commercial rivalries with New York and Philadelphia encouraged Marylanders in the mid-1820s to invest in a variety of internal improvement schemes. Old ones had proved of doubtful worth. The Susquehanna Canal, its locks narrow and upkeep costs high, had fallen into disuse by 1815. The Potomac Company eased downriver traffic with chutes around the falls, but rocks still made the trip advisable only when the river was high. Maryland owned much stock in both firms, whose financial condition counseled prudence (in 1822 the Potomac Company owed more than \$175,000). Nonetheless, pressure on legislators mounted from several directions, especially as the Erie Canal neared completion. For generations people had talked about a canal between the upper Chesapeake Bay and Delaware River. New Yorkers had shown that talk could lead to action. Mathew Carey, the Philadelphia publisher and promoter, fanned interest in the project, and in April 1824 work began on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. The Maryland legislature committed itself to \$50,000 worth of company stock—twice Delaware's contribution, half of Pennsylvania's interest. In 1825 Congress appropriated another \$300,000 to the C&D because of its military value.

That canal ran about thirteen miles over fairly level ground. Supporters of another ditch revived Washington's dream of a canal between the lower Potomac and upper Ohio, an estimated distance of 342 miles with a rise of about three thousand feet. At a conference held in the federal city late in 1823 a number of distinguished gentlemen subscribed to the plan. Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania, treasury secretary under presidents Jefferson and Madison, believed it possible, as did the honorable Charles Fenton Mercer of Loudon County, Virginia, and two important District of Columbia residents,

Francis Scott Key and the Georgetown merchant John Mason. Marylanders at the meeting included Joseph Kent (then governor), Frisby Tilghman and Thomas Kennedy of Washington County, and George C. Washington. Taking a national view and hoping for federal support, the meeting urged the Potomac canal as another form of National Road, a tie between the federal capital and the growing west. President Monroe mentioned the project in his next state of the union address. In January 1824 Virginia chartered the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company.

Financial issues and the queries of experts postponed the project. The army corps of engineers placed the cost of a canal to Pittsburgh at more than \$22 million—far more than the convention had estimated (the Erie had cost \$7 million)—and argued for larger dimensions. Engineers, whose expertise grew more specialized and invaluable as improvement schemes multiplied in the country, recommended 398 locks and noted the need for a four-mile tunnel at the summit of the Allegheny Mountains. Not until the spring of 1828 did Congress subscribe \$1 million to the canal, thus meeting conditions the Maryland assembly had laid down three years before. The state obligated itself to \$500,000 worth of C&O stock. Word of congressional approval set off celebrations in Washington City, Georgetown, Leesburg, Martinsburg, Oldtown, and Cumberland. Western Maryland fell victim to canal fever.

Philip E. Thomas of Baltimore served as Maryland commissioner to the interstate board of directors but resigned within a year; despite talk of a canal connecting Baltimore with the C&O at Point of Rocks or Georgetown, the project clearly would benefit the Potomac region alone. Indeed, canal mania had reopened the Pandora's box of internal Maryland rivalries. Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Montgomery county supporters of the Chesapeake and Ohio won some votes from Eastern Shoremen with promises of state appropriations for dredging rivers and draining marshes on their side of the bay. Hard-bargaining delegates from the upper Eastern Shore probably traded support for the Potomac canal for Western Shore votes in favor of the Chesapeake and Delaware enterprise. Legislators from Baltimore and the upper Western Shore largely had opposed both ventures. Earlier they had received no state help for a proposed new canal up the Susquehanna. To make the plight of Baltimore more desperate, Pennsylvanians were placing dams on the river upstream from the states' border line (surveyed by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in the 1760s). Built to siphon off water to the new canals feeding Philadelphia, these dams injured as well as insulted because they also kept farmers from floating their arks downriver to Port Deposit or Havre de Grace.

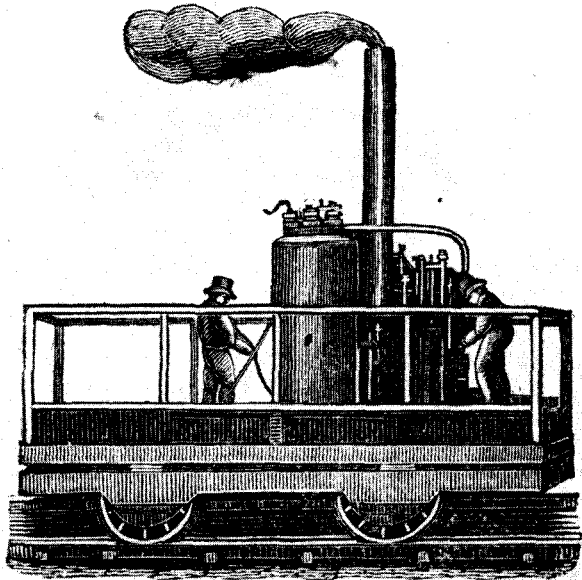
Just as the prospect of hanging concentrates a man's mind wonderfully, the specter of losing in the war for western trade forced Baltimore commercial leaders to consider innovation over imitation. They apparently first talked about taking a bold step at a dinner held at John Eager Howard's home in the fall of 1826. Philip Thomas's brother Evan, returned from Britain, had

reported with enthusiasm on a new British road of double rails. The one he had seen was used to haul cars filled with coal from mine shaft to waterside. It featured a chugging steam engine that made much noise and that he thought probably not as reliable as horsepower. At first amusing, the image of rails and loaded cars quickly suggested a possible answer to a serious economic problem. Twenty-five Baltimore businessmen considered the idea worth exploring and met the following February at the house of George Brown, a son of the banker. Some of them noted that a barrel of wheat costing one dollar at Wheeling accumulated four dollars in transportation expenses before reaching Baltimore. They studied the performance of British railways—which, so limited, decided nothing. The committee argued for going ahead. In Britain “many judicious and practical men,” read the published report, believed that railroads eventually would “supersede canals as effectually as canals have superseded turnpikes.”<sup>19</sup>

Members of the assembly could find no reason to oppose the plan, and in February 1827 Maryland chartered the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The charter held the company to certain restrictions. The road had to be started in two years and laid to the western border of Maryland by 1837; the state reserved to itself one-third of the thirty thousand shares, which sold at \$100 each, and allowed the city of Baltimore to purchase another five thousand. The charter exempted the railroad forever from all state taxes—a provision that one founder, Robert Oliver, had considered as likely to pass the legislature as the Lord’s Prayer. Terms may have been generous, but the venture had no precedent; the risks seemed huge, and railroad leaders had stated their intention of going ahead with or without state aid (Philadelphians, cautiously choosing canals, had waited for legislative financing). Public support boded well for the corporation. Within eleven days citizens in Baltimore, Frederick, and Hagerstown had bought all the stock available for public purchase.

Compared to railroad mania, canal fever was perfect health. The B&O prospectus looked for settlers to reach the Rocky Mountains within thirty years, “or even to the Pacific Ocean”; it asked readers to imagine how wide and rich a western market the railroad ultimately might tap. The strait-laced *Niles’ Weekly Register*, published in Baltimore since 1811, suddenly waxed eloquent over organization of the B&O. “Thus will scientific power conquer space,” it read, “and even the Alleghenies sink, as it were, beneath the pressure of unconquered steam, nay, the laws of gravity give way before the march of mind!” Actually the value of steampower on a railroad had no more been demonstrated than the advantage of a railroad over a canal. The terms of the B&O charter deliberately gave the company rights to run on its rails “all machines, wagons, vehicles, or carriages of any description whatsoever.” Trying an idea that one would expect to germinate in Baltimore, Evan Thomas conducted trials with a railroad car under sail, which worked well as long as the wind kept abaft. Another contraption—with a horse walking

**Steam Engine & Machine Manufactory,**



AT No. 14, FAYETTE ST., FORMERLY EAST,  
**MAYGER & WASHINGTON,**

Respectfully inform the public that they are ready to receive orders for Steam Engines, locomotive or stationary. PUMPS of all kinds, PRESSES of all kinds, Rolling Mill and other SCREWS. Iron and Brass TURNING of every description. LATHES and circular SAWS fitted up according to the most approved patterns. MILLWRIGHT & PATTERN MAKING in all their varieties. Rail Road CARS, and repairing of machines in general. They have also a separate shop for WOOD and IVORY TURNING.

The first locomotive steam engine used by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, later nicknamed the "Tom Thumb." From *Matchett's Baltimore Director* (Baltimore, 1831). MHS

a treadmill that turned drive wheels—met an end when it struck a cow and overturned. By the summer of 1830 Peter Cooper, a New York merchant with Baltimore investments, had built a crude "steam carriage" (in later legend known as *Tom Thumb*) that could attain a speed of twenty miles per hour on a straightaway; it could chug and hiss up to Ellicott's Mills and back to Baltimore with a car of B&O directors, all together weighing several tons. Riders at first expected it to burst or fly apart. The engine ran so fast, said one trial passenger in August, "as to terrify the whole party."<sup>20</sup>

Experiments with steam coincided with many a somber speech and sermon, for in these years of comparative security and wild expansion the last of the Founding Fathers passed to their reward. Sons and daughters spoke brashly of progress; at times they were moved to reflection. On 4 July 1826, as if by summons, both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams had died—fifty

years to the day after signing the Declaration of Independence. In 1832, four years after emerging from the past to bless nineteenth-century progress at the B&O groundbreaking, Carroll died. As he departed he invited comparison with Jefferson—if only because Maryland's sister state now had taken to complaining of her diminished role in public affairs and declining economic fortunes. Both Carroll and Jefferson had spent their lives as large slaveholders who quietly opposed the institution, entertained amicably the many pilgrims who came to visit them in late life, and taken great pride in their children and grandchildren. Jefferson, however, had mistrusted government, harbored mixed feelings about cities, banks, and industrial development, and placed confidence in the good judgment of an informed people. Fond of designs, he spent many years building and rebuilding Monticello. Carroll by contrast divided his time between a town house in Baltimore, where he enjoyed city life, and Doughoregan Manor, which struck a visitor as so haphazardly functional as to have "but little pretension either to beauty, variety or excellence." A planter whose wealth included stocks and foundries as well as land, he had never doubted the Hamiltonian connection between government and private enterprise. Believing himself a hard realist rather than designer, Carroll had fretted about widened suffrage and the popular election of officials. In the Jeffersonian years he went so far as to command employees to vote Federalist. Jefferson dreamed of transcontinental liberty; Carroll lived to launch a railroad that had ambitions of reaching the Ohio River.<sup>21</sup>



In broaching the connected problems of agricultural reform, slavery, and freed blacks, Marylanders illustrated both the hopeful spirit of the age and the obstacles any reformer faced in a slave society. Exhausted soil, gullied fields, abandoned lands—all had been the subject of commentary for many years. Along with visitors, natives like John Beale Bordley—an enlightened Eastern Shore planter of the eighteenth century—had called for a scientific approach to agriculture. After 1815 several societies formed to promote the cause. One emerged in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County late in 1817, held a contest or two, then disappeared. Another organized the following spring at a meeting at Gadsby's Tavern in Baltimore. Robert Smith and Edward Lloyd emerged as leaders of the group, which called itself the Maryland Agricultural Society. It adopted a constitution that divided officers evenly between Eastern and Western shores and provided for six "curators" from both areas whose duties included finding and distributing (at whose cost was not clear) all seeds, roots, and fertilizers that might be of value to neighboring farmers. At the November meeting of the society Lloyd, vice-president, issued a public appeal that began with an often repeated observation. "Lands generally in Maryland are nearly exhausted," he wrote; "our agriculture is sinking to its lowest stage of degradation."<sup>22</sup>

To publish such dire warnings and spread word of new agricultural methods, the society soon depended on John Stuart Skinner of Baltimore. A lawyer by training, Skinner had grown up on a Calvert County farm and never tired of talking about land, livestock, and horses. In 1816 James Madison appointed him Baltimore postmaster, and with the aid of a regular income Skinner, who shared the president's interest in agricultural reform, began writing about his favorite topics in a paper he entitled the *Maryland Censor*. An early article excoriated tobacco as a "loathesome weed" and challenged planters to substitute "reason and reflection in place of old fashions." Then in 1819 Skinner began publishing the *American Farmer*, a monthly magazine intended for the broadest possible audience. As the corresponding secretary of the Maryland Agricultural Society after 1820, Skinner used the *American Farmer* and later the *American Turf Register* to sound the call for new crops, improved field management, and knowledgeable animal breeding—especially of race horses.<sup>23</sup>

For a few years reform seemed to gain momentum. Several farms became showplaces—Skinner's at Maryland Tavern outside Baltimore (he had the aid of Robert Oliver and Isaac McKim), Lloyd's Wye River plantation, Robert Smith's dairy farm near Baltimore (he sold skimmed milk in the city for 2¢ a quart), Charles Ridgely's Hampton, and the estate of Charles Carroll's son-in-law Richard Caton. Prominent landholders like Colonel Nicholas Bosley of Hayfields, William E. Williams in Frederick County (he was son of the revolutionary war officer), Roger Brooke in Montgomery County, Tench Tilghman, Robert H. Goldsborough of Talbot, and Joseph Muse of Dorchester assumed local reform leadership. By 1825 each shore held a separate annual exhibition, usually at a gentleman's home. There, donated silver plate went to owners of the finest imported cattle and sheep, "the best cultivated farm," producers of exceptional butter, cider, and household manufactures, and the most ingenious farm implements. Plowing and reaping contests drew interested spectators. Officers of the society made speeches congratulating progressive planters. Western Shore members agreeably postponed a fall cattle show to the spring of 1825 so that Lafayette could make a brief appearance (the Eastern Shore chapter tried in vain to secure a similar visit), and at the affair dignitaries from Virginia and New Jersey joined Maryland politicians in toasting advances in husbandry. That meeting, according to the *American Farmer*, "consisted more exclusively than it had ever before done, of highly respectable landholders and gentlemen known for their practical skill & intelligence."<sup>24</sup>

Under the auspices of such men a number of useful experiments were made in these years. Skinner and the others demonstrated clearly the value of crop rotation, deep plowing, and the application of burnt lime and marl to worn-out fields. Devon, Alderney, Teeswater, and short-horned Durham cattle made their appearance in Maryland, along with crops like cotton, sorghum, and—in Dorchester County—rice. Attempts were made to control

the Hessian fly and wheat rust by washing seed in various mixtures of lime or saltwater—although John Piper of Allegany County, a leading experimenter, still took care to plant according to moon phases. Among others, the Stablers of Sandy Spring, Montgomery County, tried silkworm culture. Increased attention to fruit growing led in 1832 to the formation of a state horticultural society. In the early 1830s the patronage of Tench Tilghman enabled Obediah Hussey to build a prototype reaper that could harvest seventy-five acres of wheat in only five days and that for a time rivaled Cyrus McCormick's machine.

Yet reformers tripped over old stumbling blocks, one of them the pride of small farmers who found the Maryland Agricultural Society little more than another gentlemen's club. Working farmers cared nothing for essays on applying manure or speeches about bone meal. Machinery contests at fairs, instead of drawing farmers, developed into promotional affairs between competing manufacturers. Apparently trying to attract common planters to the 1821 meeting of the society, Skinner advertised a fight between two buffalo. The Baltimore *American* noted that an ordinary farmer's bull, taken to that exhibit, could not compare with imported strains and predicted that next year many plain men would be afraid to enter "for fear of being excelled." At the 1826 show scarcely anything, Skinner himself admitted, had been entered by one who earned his living at farming. Skinner favored regular sales rather than exhibits. Cattle shows, he wrote in 1839, remained "in too great degree contests of pride and wealth." People who called themselves "practical farmers" continued in the 1830s to get together of a winter's evening and in some counties to stage yearly public events. "King Alcohol" might assert himself at the larger gatherings, as he did at one Charles County fair—disturbing Port Tobacco "to a considerable degree"—but most county fairs, at once peaceful and exciting, followed the example of Frederick and Queen Anne's, where dinners and songs replaced silver plate, imported bulls, and theories of improvement.<sup>25</sup>

Agricultural reform in Maryland carried heavy irony; the more a planter needed to invest in agricultural improvement, the less likely he had the means to do so. Farmers in western Maryland, practicing the diversified husbandry that Lloyd recommended to everyone in the state, had little worry about soil exhaustion or a reliable cash crop. Large landowners, as in the case of Nicholas Bosley, might own the lime beds needed for soil enrichment or, like the Carrolls, have enough income from other sources, including the sale of slaves, to finance experiments. In the 1830s and 1840s population figures for southern Anne Arundel, lower Prince George's, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties gave continued evidence of outmigration, poverty—and room for change. "Let us then reform our system," read the Upper Marlboro *Gazette* in 1839, "reduce our Tobacco crop—thereby enhancing the value of the article—and assume more of the character of Farmers."<sup>26</sup> And yet, for the small, slaveholding tobacco grower who dominated the region,

*THE PATENT*

**HUSSEY'S**

**REAPING MACHINE**

*Machinery patented by the Patentee in Baltimore. Adapted to cut  
fifteen acres of heavy wheat in a day; the grain is blown as clean  
and left in as good order for binding as when cut by the sickle.*



"Hussey's Reaping Machine." Lithograph by Edward Weber & Co., Baltimore, 1838.  
MHS

the well of agricultural progress came up dry. Improving one's farm required capital that he could not spare or did not have. Blooded stock, any cattle, commanded high prices and took land out of cash-producing tobacco to grow hay or make pasture. Commercial fertilizer (South American guano began arriving in Baltimore in 1843) cost dearly if one were trying hard to make ends meet.

Though the hardscrabble slaveowner might consider the comparative worth of free and slave labor, he found himself in a closed circle of dilemmas—despite his vaunted liberty. Long habit and soil composition argued in favor of staying with a familiar crop; unsteady tobacco prices and the indifference of slaves made experiments risky. New implements were of no interest—the only way to pick hornworms off tobacco plants and harvest the leaves was by hand. Slaves may have been notoriously inefficient when set against free workers, but southern Maryland as other rural areas suffered a chronic labor shortage. Seasonal work did not always keep whites and free



blacks in the countryside; with good acreage scarce, people tended to move on. Slaves, if one managed to feed and clothe them, at least provided a steady labor force. Holding blacks had another benefit—it gave even the poorest planter some measure of status in his own eyes and those of other whites. He might be poor and miserable, but a small Maryland slaveholder still could ride a horse out to the fields to watch a gang of blacks working beneath him. Though wedded to comparative unproductivity, he still might put on airs for outsiders or boast at the country store.

Elsewhere, in the forward-looking western and northern counties and Baltimore City, a few men and women heaped criticism on slavery. Using issues at the federal level as an excuse to speak out, Marylanders for a time conducted debates that one seldom heard farther north or south. In 1819–20 the Missouri controversy—whether Congress should admit the new state with a proslavery constitution—produced antislavery meetings in Baltimore and, in Hagerstown, an antislavery petition to the General Assembly. The Frederick *Bartgis's Republican Gazette* expressed sorrow that Missouri so early had declared its “avaricious determination” to rely on slave labor. A Baltimore paper announced someone’s plans for a pamphlet proving that slavery was constitutional and Christian; a wit calling himself “Another Slaveholder” quickly replied that his own booklet—besides making “a reasonable windfall of cash”—would prove that owning slaves was so far from wrong “that no man can be a Christian who does not hold them” and that enslaving Africans was so just that Americans should carry off “the children of any other nation, when the same can be done with impunity.”<sup>27</sup> The Baltimore *Federal Gazette* announced that it no longer would carry the advertisements of slave dealers.

During the 1820s, when slavery in most states dropped from public view, Marylanders continued to discuss it. The Maryland legislature heard several memorials on the subject. In 1826 citizens of Baltimore County petitioned for a law that would “eventually but gradually and totally extinguish slavery in Maryland.” Similar pleas in the next few years came from Baltimore City, Harford and Frederick counties. Self-interest, James Fenimore Cooper predicted in *Notions of the Americans*, surely would provide the “entering wedge” of gradual abolition in Maryland, where citizens would begin to see “that they would be richer and more powerful without their slaves than with them.” In 1828, when Cooper wrote, he based this view on promising trends. Judging by numbers alone, Maryland slavery had begun a gradual decline. The state’s slave population dropped between 1810 and 1820, from about 111,500 to 107,400; by 1830 it had fallen by another 5,000. “The history of emancipation in Maryland has proved that manumission begets manumission,” wrote an antislavery Baltimorean in 1825—“that they increase even in a geometrical proportion.”<sup>28</sup>

Some of the slave decrease, as earlier, resulted from masters taking their property to the south and west. Other masters freed their bondsmen by will or deed (often with conditions and restrictions), and the number of freed



"An Overseer doing his duty." Watercolor by Benjamin H. Latrobe, 1798. After spending time in Maryland, Latrobe produced one of the rare images of American slaveholding. *MHS*

blacks swelled in the state from some 30,000 in 1810 to nearly 50,000 in 1830. Many freed Negroes went to Baltimore, where they hoped to find jobs as servants, teamsters, laundresses, and shipyard workers. There they formed a class with some friends and many enemies. Increasingly they lived apart from their white employers or patrons; the number of free black households in the city climbed sharply from 103 in 1820 to 687 ten years later. Free blacks competed for jobs. They posed a threat to slavery; if they did not purchase slaves with the idea of freeing them or teach slaves to read or how to escape, they simply showed bondsmen that not all blacks were slaves. To many sympathetic whites, moreover, the free blacks' condition did not speak well of black freedom. City death records, kept after 1824, proved that the mortality rate was highest among free blacks. A Northern visitor found "no strong attachment to slavery" in Baltimore, but a nearly universal attitude among slaveholders that freeing blacks by itself did them no favor. "That the moral and physical condition of the free negroes in Baltimore is worse than that of the slave, is a fact to which all intelligent men with whom I have conversed most fully bear testimony."<sup>29</sup>

Marylanders struggled with the question of free blacks, whose ambiguous status—neither slave nor completely free—well portrayed the social and moral suspension of Maryland. Since the late eighteenth century state law forced free blacks to obtain work; if they did not, and refused to leave Maryland, or left and returned, they faced sale into bonded labor for varying periods. Free Negroes—many with white blood and some free because they inherited the status of their white mothers—had access to the court system, but could not testify against whites. In 1818 the assembly decided no longer to imprison free blacks convicted of serious noncapital crimes, but instead to flog them, banish them, or sell them into servitude for the length of time whites would spend in prison for the same offense. Opposition to the last feature of the law formed because some blacks sold into servitude disappeared into slavery farther south. In 1826 legislators restored prison terms, followed by banishment, for a variety of offenses.

In 1817 Francis Scott Key, Robert Goodloe Harper, and Robert H. Goldsborough had been among the founders of the American Colonization Society. Aiming to solve the problem of freed blacks by returning them to Africa, the society brought together Northern and Southern members with potentially different objectives. The society might indirectly encourage the manumission of slaves; it might strengthen the slave order by removing an irritant. The Maryland auxiliary, its members mainly citing the advantages of free over slave labor, became one of the most active in the Union. Local chapters formed in Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Washington, Queen Anne's, Dorchester, and Talbot counties. In 1827 the General Assembly appropriated \$1,000 to further the society's work. Four years later differences between Marylanders and the parent group, which spent money raised in Maryland on emigrants from other states, came to a head. A colonization meeting held at the Baltimore Athenaeum—its leaders John H. B. Latrobe, son of the architect, and Judge Nicholas Brice of the Baltimore City court—declared the Maryland society virtually autonomous. Then, in December 1831, the bloody Nat Turner slave uprising in Virginia gave white Marylanders, especially in heavily black counties, grounds for fright. Whites urged the assembly to take courses that ranged from abolishing slavery to reenslaving newly freed blacks.

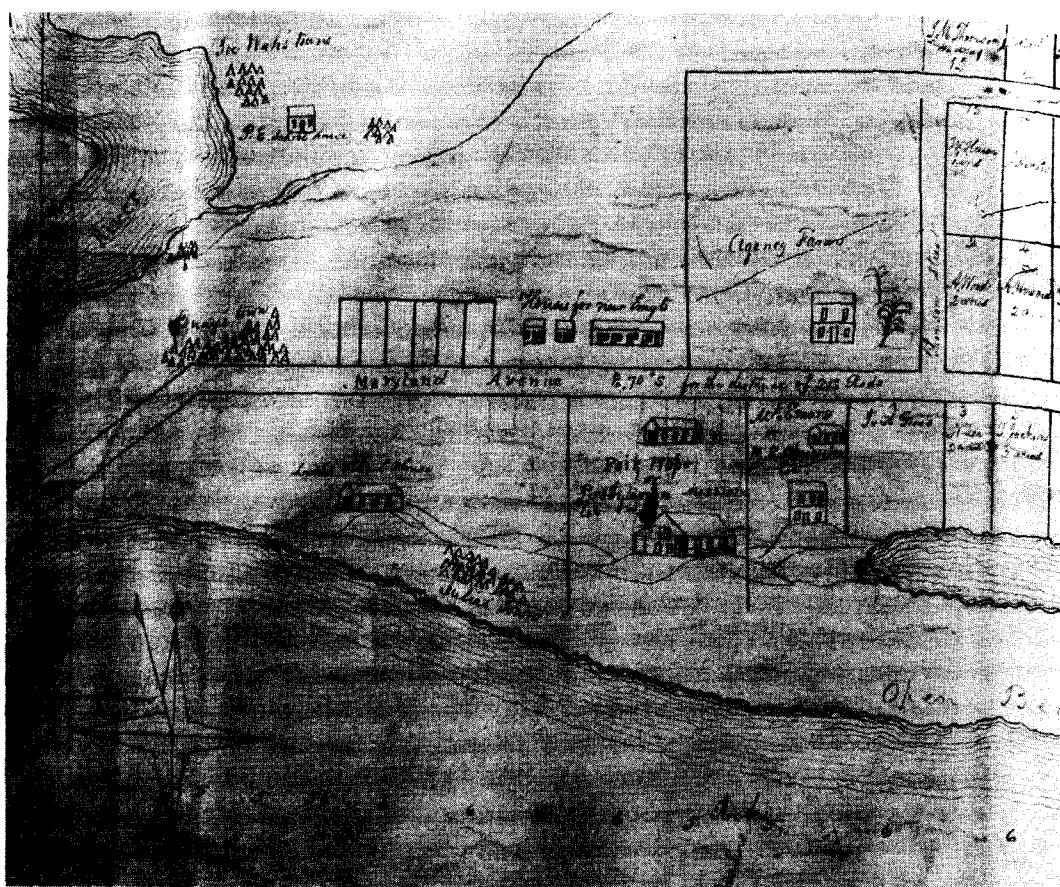
Legislators chose no radical course. In the spring of 1832, following recommendations of a House of Delegates committee under Henry Brawner, they passed a bill further restricting the liberties of Maryland free blacks. The 1832 statute required free blacks outside Annapolis and Baltimore to find a white minister for church services. Black vendors needed a new certificate to sell farm products (whites suspected widespread thievery) and liquor. A provision discouraging the return of free blacks who left the state contained exceptions to cover sailors, teamsters, and the like. The assembly also chartered the Maryland State Colonization Society, established a state board to oversee "the Removal of Coloured People," and set aside \$20,000 for 1832

and up to \$200,000 over the next twenty years to repatriate all free Negroes who were willing to return to Africa.<sup>30</sup>

Maryland's colonizing blacks in Liberia carried interesting parallels to Lord Baltimore's settling his province exactly two centuries before. Purposes of the expedition, so redolent of white self-interest, nonetheless sounded a moral tone. Each black couple had to carry a marriage certificate. Every adult swore to abstain from liquor. Members of the American Board of Foreign Missions, among the first parties to depart, planned to conduct religious instruction of both emigrants and natives. The Maryland settlement would be separate from the original American Colonization Society site at Monrovia so as to lie on better land and to avoid the "vicious habits" and "intervals of idleness" there. Gaining lessons from the Monrovia settlers' experience, Maryland emigrants carried instructions to practice farming rather than indulge in the rum trade. They also took with them a constitution and bill of rights. Everyone agreed to abide by laws that the society would frame until the colony grew strong.<sup>31</sup>

In September 1833 the Maryland Society appointed James Hall, a New England physician who had practiced in Liberia, as a kind of Leonard Calvert to oversee establishment of the new colony. Two months later, with nineteen blacks from Washington and Frederick counties and Baltimore City (only seven of whom were adult males), Hall and an assistant, the Reverend John Hersey, sailed from Baltimore on the brig *Ann* for Africa. Once at Cape Palmas, about two hundred fifty miles down the coast from Monrovia, Hall refused to ply native leaders with the liquor that whites often employed in land negotiations. He traded arms and manufactured housewares for several hundred acres he believed sufficient to sustain the newcomers. Like the first Englishmen in the Chesapeake, the settlers at first suffered a seasoning period and therefore learned much from the Maryland blacks who earlier had arrived in Liberia and now joined the latest settlement. By the late summer of 1834, Maryland in Liberia, as the settlers called Cape Palmas, had grown into a village of twelve private houses, a fort, jail, community kitchen, church, school, and several buildings for the shelter of new arrivals. In 1837 the settlement had more than two hundred people and a black governor, John Brown Russwurm. Maryland's success subtracted from the cause of Monrovia, so that the older colony's attitude to the new one remained jealous if not hostile for many years. Nonetheless, other states followed the Maryland example of independent action in Liberia. New York with Pennsylvania, and Louisiana cooperating with Mississippi, eventually founded similar colonies.

While members of the Maryland Society prayed for the survival of their colony, various critics at home scoffed at it, and blacks jeered. "We consider the land in which we were born our only 'true and appropriate home,'" declared a meeting of Baltimore free blacks in 1831, "and when we desire to remove we will apprise the public of the same, in due season." Free blacks



Detail, "The Town of Harper and its Vicinity at Cape Palmas, Maryland in Liberia." Lithograph by T. Campbell, Baltimore, 1834. Mission churches and schoolhouses dominated the scene in Maryland's free black settlement. MHS

went down to the docks to try to change the minds of rural slaves who had taken freedom at Cape Palmas over Maryland slavery. "The prejudices of the coloured people in Baltimore and other large Towns, against African Colonization, are so strong," reported a white agent, "that distributing literature among them would be to throw it away." Meantime Daniel Raymond, a Baltimore lawyer and student of political economy, observed that the Maryland black population grew by as much as forty-five thousand each year; blacks had increased by some 30 percent between 1790 and 1810 (for whites the figure had been only 13 percent). He raised serious doubts that a colonization program could settle blacks at a speed anywhere near their growth rate—and in fact no more than a few hundred Maryland blacks finally agreed to emigrate. Believing correctly that free blacks did not increase as rapidly as slaves, Raymond argued that emancipation offered whites more

advantages than tightening the slave system, which he blamed for Maryland's diminished population, the "comparative unproductiveness of the earth, in consequence of imperfect cultivation," and "the idle, dissipated habits, and consequent moral degradation, which always characterizes a portion of the inhabitants of a slave state." But he went beyond condemning slavery for being uneconomical. To anyone who believed in the moral government of the Lord, this pattern readily demonstrated God's "hot displeasure against slavery." The footsteps of an angry deity, Raymond declared, "are plainly visible throughout a state where slavery abounds."<sup>32</sup>

A few voices in Maryland joined Raymond in speaking to the wrong of slavery itself. Elisha Tyson, a Philadelphian who came to Baltimore as a merchant, left business to become an active worker in the antislavery movement; he helped many blacks prove their freedom in lawsuits. Benjamin Lundy, a New Jersey-born Quaker whose newspaper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, vigorously opposed slavery and the slave trade, moved to Baltimore from Tennessee in 1824. Lundy published a plan for the gradual abolition of slavery the next year, and while on a speechmaking tour of the North in 1828 made a larger contribution to the antislavery cause. He persuaded an outspoken young New Englander, William Lloyd Garrison, to return with him to Baltimore and serve as co-editor of the *Genius*. Though Lundy supported black emigration to Haiti, his paper—expanded and made a weekly—soon also reflected Garrison's uncompromising hostility to slavery as a sin and to colonization as "visionary." Garrison's editorials demanded "immediate and complete emancipation, the religious and secular instruction of freed blacks, and an end to the insulting policy of deportation." "Slavery is a monster," Garrison told Baltimore readers, "and he must be treated as such—hunted down bravely, despatched at a blow."<sup>33</sup>

Marylanders could neither suppress the slavery issue nor agree on it. In 1827 a Baltimore slave dealer brutally assaulted Lundy, who always chose his words carefully. Garrison did not, and in 1829, when he described fellow Yankees engaged in trading Maryland slaves to New Orleans as "highway robbers and murderers," a Baltimore jury took only fifteen minutes to find him guilty of libel. His counsel, Charles Mitchell, served for free, and Judge Brice, who pronounced the jail term that lifted Garrison from obscurity, may have opposed slavery (he did at least support colonization). Garrison, Lundy, and Raymond all left Maryland not long after. Lundy declared that "the spirit of tyranny" in Baltimore had become "too strong and malignant." Leaders of the Maryland State Colonization Society, trying in 1833 to clarify their position and obtain aid from friends north of the Mason-Dixon Line, avowed as their wish to hasten as best they could "the arrival of the period when slavery shall cease to exist in Maryland."<sup>34</sup>



Maryland newspapers carried reports of such astounding advances that one could not help but feel confident. Released energy seemed to justify every bright view of the future. Improvements in transportation became a marvel. The B&O—like the Erie Canal, proof of Yankee ingenuity—scored impressive successes. Even its bridges were remarkable, for they beautifully combined artistry and engineering. The four-span Patterson Viaduct over the upper Patapsco, completed in December 1829, soon became a landmark. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Jr., later designed a 700-foot-long stone bridge, the Thomas Viaduct, with eight arches that supported trains more than 60 feet above the river. After giving up stone sleepers for wooden ties, the company laid track only slightly behind schedule.

Progress also appeared in the form of improved steam locomotives, which soon replaced the horse on the railroad. Cooper's device had proved the skills of native labor and the workability of steam engines, but he could not fulfill a contract the B&O signed with him, and in January 1831 the company conducted a competition for an American-built steam locomotive. Phineas Davis, a York, Pennsylvania, watchmaker, won with an upright boiler or "grasshopper" engine that could pull loads weighing as much as twenty tons up the grades west of Baltimore. His *York* locomotive hauled the first train to Frederick in December 1831 (taking along horses for the governor's barouche) and created a popular sensation. The Baltimore to Washington branch went as far as Bladensburg in the summer of 1835, when a thousand or so spectators rode down in four festive trains. Bladensburg natives lined the tracks to greet them, and livestock gave way to machinery. Cows, horses, pigs, and turkeys scurried in all directions; a bull considered, then decided against, advancing on the "terrific object."<sup>35</sup>

The steamboat, suddenly rivaling the clipper as the rightful queen of the bay, cast a similar spell. Travelers now wrote eagerly of the size and speed of the boats, their bright signal flags and powerful engines. When in 1834 two vessels stopped briefly at the head of the bay and came abreast to "tranship" some passengers, an Irish actor, Tyrone Power, reported that the escaping steam made "a noise that might have drowned the voice of Niagara." Once passengers had been exchanged, he continued, "the paddles began to move, the lashings were cast off, and away the boats darted from each other with startling rapidity." Many of the boats offered considerable comfort. Sleeping and washing accommodations seemed luxurious compared to those in jolting stagecoaches and the lottery of rural hotels. Steam from the boilers cooked vegetables; roasting meat turned on a spit run by gears off the engine. In early winter, when New England peddlers journeyed southward for the plantation trade, the decks of these vessels might be covered with horses and loaded carts. At most times they invited promenading (the upper deck bore that name) and the well-bred—along with everyone who wanted to be taken as well-bred—went up to be seen. The many boats, the stillness of the Chesapeake, the setting sun, an ample deck "covered with many well-


dressed and *some beautiful passengers,*" wrote an English naval officer, "combined to produce a most enchanting effect."<sup>36</sup>

Between 1831 and 1843 ten steamship firms operated out of Baltimore, and with the growth of railroads competition among carriers mounted. In 1832 the Maryland and Virginia Steam Boat Company looted its treasury to buy a rival's flagship and later boasted that its *Kentucky* could make the Baltimore to Norfolk voyage in about thirteen hours. At first great distances gave the advantage to steamboats, with railroads in a minor role. After 1831 the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, opened in 1829, faced competition from a short railroad connecting the Delaware River at New Castle and the bay at Frenchtown. By the late 1830s an inland or "upper" rail route between Philadelphia and the South—making use of the B&O, a new Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac railroad, and a line to the Carolinas—challenged the speed and convenience of the bay steamboats. The Maryland and Virginia Company countered by hiring a railroad to whisk passengers toward North Carolina as soon as they landed in Norfolk. Eventually land and water firms had agents pass out handbills to travelers as they arrived in Baltimore. The sheets made blustery claims either for railroads or for boats and warned of horrible fates on alternative lines. Steamboat companies downplayed the danger of a boiler explosion—a notorious hazard on the Mississippi. In 1824 a mishap on the *Eagle* had left one person dead; an explosion aboard the Baltimore to Charleston packet *Pulaski* cost a hundred lives off Cape Hatteras in 1838. But by and large Baltimore steamboats shunned racing and escaped serious accidents. In 1840 the Maryland and Virginia firm declared that it had gone twenty-five years in perfect safety—so that the "croakings about 'Fogs,' 'Rough Weather,' 'Storms,' 'Risks,' 'boats urged to the top of the speed' &c." were "altogether the humbugs of a fruitful imagination, gotten up to impose upon the credulous."<sup>37</sup>


Steam power did excite the imagination; one way or another, it affected the lives of ordinary men and women on both sides of the bay. Industrialists found applications for the steam engine in Baltimore sugar refining, flour milling, glass cutting, plaster making, and spice grinding. Steam power appeared in Baltimore sawmills; it freed textile mills from their dependence on water. In the 1830s the Patuxent Manufacturing Company turned the village of Laurel into the largest cotton-milling center below the Mason-Dixon Line. Mainly supplying foreign markets, the company used crude steam machinery and took advantage of low land and labor prices there; it employed more than five hundred persons and relied heavily on the Washington Branch of the B&O. Steam power sped up the wagon-based economy, made possible entirely new exchanges, and created voracious demand. The railroad carried dry goods, groceries, plaster, boards, and bricks out of Baltimore. Trains returned with farm products that brought the B&O quick profits. Within three months of opening to Frederick, the B&O hauled 32,670 barrels of flour from that city. Baltimore fuel prices dropped mercifully during the cold win-



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The Steam Boats and Cars of this Line being now in complete order, have commenced their regular trips between Baltimore and Philadelphia.

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**DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAY.**

The subscribers take great pleasure in assuring the public, that the ease, swiftness, and neatness so much admired here-  
 by the passengers in this Line, will be strictly adhered to.

**FARE THROUGH \$4. ALL BAGGAGE AT ITS OWNERS RISK. MEALS AS USUAL.**  
**Travellers by this Line will meet with despatch, care, and atten-  
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Broadside, "Evening Line of Steam Boats for Philadelphia," Baltimore, 1839. MHS

ter of 1831–32 because large bundles of firewood arrived by rail. Managing unusually heavy loads, the railroad also expanded markets for western Maryland lime and granite. Investors realized that eventually the railroad would tap another Allegany County resource. Steam boilers at first relied on wood, but coal had distinct advantages. Reports furnished by the state geological survey (established in 1833) confirmed the economic value of Cumberland bituminous coal. The legislature rapidly began chartering coal companies.

Early-nineteenth-century progress struck the oyster tonger like a cold front. For generations digging oysters had been an individual effort or local business. The always-abundant shellfish lived on the muddy bottoms of creeks, rivers, and the bay, down to thirty feet below the surface. During the winter harvesting season they provided a principal means of livelihood to many Maryland families along the water. Watermen went after "ayrsters," as they called them, using long-handled, scissors-action tongs that left a tonger exhausted after a few hours' work and thereby placed natural limits on the size of a catch. The railroad lengthened the distance iced oysters could travel before they spoiled; making them more profitable, it helped in the 1820s to attract New York and New England oyster boats to the Chesapeake. Employing cable-drawn, chain-bag devices—dredges—as they raked over the oyster beds, "drudgers" vastly increased the size of a day's take (indeed, they had badly depleted their Northern sources) and threatened the tonger with extinction. Watermen did not react kindly. Answering their pleas, the assembly in 1830 made it illegal for nonresidents to harvest oysters in Maryland waters and two years later outlawed dredging entirely. Northern packers sidestepped the first measure by setting up plants in Baltimore. Demand for oysters continued to grow apace with railroad expansion, while Eastern Shore leaders mounted a campaign for a railroad line of their own.

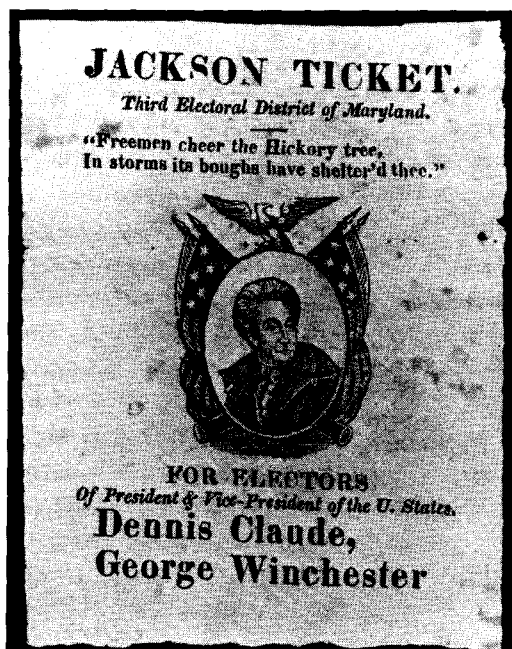
Meantime Maryland voters came to associate problems of economic development and federal authority with enormously colorful figures who quarreled over the presidency. Many of them migrants from their place of birth, they gave politics renewed intensity. Under Presidents Jefferson and Madison, secretaries of state had acted as understudies to the chief executive and later assumed his office with the approval of a caucus of congressmen. As the Federalist party waned, the caucus made its choice without fear of challenge. Then, in Monroe's second term, several men besides Secretary of State John Quincy Adams made themselves available for the highest office. The Virginia-born Georgian William H. Crawford, treasury secretary and strict constructionist, won endorsement from the caucus, which critics said was undemocratic. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, at the time a firm nationalist, claimed strength north and south. Henry Clay, a Kentuckian (also born in Virginia) who at Ghent had scandalized Adams by staying up all night playing cards and spitting tobacco juice, stood behind his "American System" of high tariffs and internal improvements. He enjoyed wide popularity among manufacturers and westerners. Andrew Jack-

son, a Tennessean with South Carolina roots and hero of the New Orleans victory that followed the battle of Baltimore, had fought several duels and been accused of murder and bigamy. He commanded grass-roots support among people who did not always know or care where he stood on issues. When the electoral college vote of 1824 ended in a tie, the House of Representatives—Clay having thrown his support to Adams—awarded the presidency to Adams. The New Englander named Clay his secretary of state, and friends of Jackson, who had received the highest electoral vote, then charged corruption—a term humming with Revolution-era fears. Jackson's loss gave him the vengeful loyalty of a growing following of Americans who made him a symbol of the common man's struggle against favoritism and privilege.

The 1828 campaign in Maryland provided a harbinger of things to come: a local office seeker frantically tried to prove that he had not missed the battle of Baltimore, as his opponent charged; Adams men made the tactical error of calling themselves the "thinking party." Opposing the "thinkers" was an odd assortment of Maryland Jacksonians whom the promise of power and patronage rewards held together. In Anne Arundel County and Annapolis local leaders with Jeffersonian sympathies, Horatio Ridout and Gabriel Duvall's son, Grafton Duvall, had formed the earliest Jackson committee in the state. Samuel Smith had taken William Pinkney's seat in the U.S. Senate upon Pinkney's death in 1821; he and Edward Lloyd, at first Crawford men, jumped on the Jackson bandwagon just in time. Early supporters of Calhoun like Virgil Maxcy, a Massachusetts-born lawyer who owned an Anne Arundel County farm, and John Pendleton Kennedy of Baltimore joined the Jackson camp when the Carolinian agreed to run as Jackson's vice-president. Former Federalists like William Beall in Frederick and in Baltimore George H. Stuart and Benjamin Chew Howard, son of the revolutionary officer, further leavened the Jackson ranks with people who believed Old Hickory committed to internal improvements.<sup>38</sup>

Roger Brooke Taney, whose father had introduced the 1802 suffrage reform legislation in the General Assembly, stood with Jackson from the beginning. Born in Calvert County, educated at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and trained in the law, Taney had married Anna Key, sister of Francis Scott Key. In 1800 he, too, had moved west—as far as Frederick, where opportunity beckoned. Later a Federalist leader, he found himself after 1821 without a party to lead. In 1824 he moved his practice again, this time to Baltimore, where with other lawyers of high reputation—Reverdy Johnson, John H. B. Latrobe, and John Van Lear McMahon, a Princeton graduate from Cumberland—he served as counsel for the B&O. In 1827 Governor Joseph Kent, another Calvert County native and former Federalist, named Taney state attorney general.

Though Jackson did not win the state in 1828 (Adams polled 25,527 to his 24,565), his Maryland friends looked forward to patronage appointments. Soon the Jacksonian glue dissolved. The old warrior Samuel Smith, assum-



Jackson ballot, probably for Montgomery County electors, 1824. Kensington Historical Society/MHS

ing that he alone would direct the distribution of federal jobs, passed out more plums to erstwhile Republicans than to ex-Federalists. He tended to favor men with family connections rather than party service—to follow the old recipe. Resentment of Smith began to build. Worse, Jackson in office chose courses that severely tested the loyalty of Maryland party leaders. He proved himself merely a lukewarm ally of internal improvements at congressional expense; the Constitution, he decided, only permitted federal projects that had possible military value and crossed state lines. In the spring of 1830 the president vetoed a bill to finance a road southward from Maysville, Kentucky, greatly embarrassing his friends in Maryland. Next rejecting federal aid for a turnpike from Washington to Frederick, Jackson left considerable doubt that he would approve expenditures for the C&O Canal or the B&O Railroad. Officers of the B&O, under Taney's influence, refused to scuttle hope—as a plan of interstate scope, the railroad might still win federal aid.

Jackson's enmity for the Bank of the United States (he held it responsible for the panic of 1819) provided his opposition another catalyst. Late in 1831, when bank directors applied for an early charter renewal, Taney, whom the president that year had named federal attorney general, strongly advised against approving it. Taney doubtless regarded the bank suspiciously because of its Philadelphia location; it made Baltimore's trade rival a financial

center and placed much authority in the hands of old-line Philadelphians like the sitting director, Nicholas Biddle—whose stuffiness matched his probity. Taney's more serious objections drew upon his experience as a director of a Frederick bank and the Union Bank of Baltimore. He was convinced that the federally chartered institution—directors appointed by the president of the United States—hampered economic growth and concentrated economic power. Its status as a creditor to private banks and its favored position as depository of federal funds combined for an unhealthy effect. Better, thought Taney, that the federal government leave banking private and competitive. "It is a fixed principle of our political institutions to guard against the unnecessary accumulation of power over persons and property in any hands," he wrote in an antibank report. "And no hands are less worthy to be trusted with it than those of a moneyed corporation."<sup>39</sup>

Once reelected in 1832, with diminished support in Maryland, the president declared war on the "monster" bank as a citadel of privilege. To carry out his plan of removing federal deposits from the bank and its branches and placing the money in various private or "pet" banks (one of them the Union Bank), Jackson in the fall of 1833 made Taney acting secretary of the treasury. Taney and the president broke open a hornet's nest of controversy. National bank shareholders joined the hue and cry against "King Andrew." John Pendleton Kennedy, though a Union director, openly condemned the bank war as foolish and destructive; given Taney's association with Union, he suspected shady dealings. The Union president, Thomas Ellicott, a sober, black-dressed Quaker who was among the first B&O directors, caught Kennedy one morning and reprimanded him for biting the hand that fed the bank. In reply Kennedy attacked Taney, denounced Ellicott for his complicity in the "flimsy affair," and wished Jackson impeached for assuming the authority of removal. Along with many other ex-Federalists, Kennedy left the Jackson fold bitterly. Most stockholders in Maryland banks applauded the president's campaign—even when Biddle, trying to build support for a new charter with a show of force, tightened credit and redeemed massive numbers of private bank notes. The resulting economic slowdown only strengthened Jacksonian resolve. Taney rallied young and rising entrepreneurs everywhere in Maryland. Rely upon it, he told a home audience, if the president restored federal funds to the national bank, it would win rechartering. "And if, after its enormities, it obtains its charter for a single year, the contest is over, and we may quietly resign ourselves to the chains with which it is prepared to bind us."<sup>40</sup>

In a collision between the C&O Canal and the B&O Railroad companies, Maryland offered another example of how differing approaches to economic development crossed in the age of Jackson. Both the canal and railroad planned to build west along the banks of the Potomac, where the river had cut narrow paths through the mountains. Directors of the C&O believed that their charter conveyed special status to the company, granting it a preemptive right of way along the river bank, and that the courts should protect

their particular right despite any arguments that the railroad might ultimately carry wider benefits to the state than the canal. In 1828 the canal company sought an injunction in Washington County Court prohibiting the railroad from laying track along the bank of the river between Point of Rocks and Harpers Ferry. Railroad engineers and canal surveyors literally butted into one another at Point of Rocks, and the future of both projects lay in doubt as the higher courts tried to untangle the mess. An 1829 Maryland chancery ruling went in favor of the railroad—since the canal had not actually reached Point of Rocks, it could not prevent the B&O from continuing its course. In January 1832 the Court of Appeals reversed that decision and agreed with counsel for the canal company—even unused privileges belonged by contract or “prior right” to the C&O. According to John Buchanan, the chief judge who spoke for the majority of three, economic progress might be slower if government honored such unused charter rights, but the courts had to enforce contracts.<sup>41</sup>

The majority and minority opinions represented legal ideas that compared like the horse and steam engine on the railroad. Differing with Buchanan, Judges Stevenson Archer and Walter Dorsey argued that the law, instead of protecting status conferred by contract, should uphold action directed to the purposes of a charter, and that since the B&O had shown more energy in meeting the obligations of its charter, the railroad ought to have first building rights on the Potomac bank. Their view clearly favored the display of energy in economic development and more openness of competition. Eventually it prevailed. In the short run canal and railroad companies agreed to a compromise that William Cost Johnson of Frederick and others worked out in the House of Delegates, and the B&O reached Harpers Ferry in late 1834. Three years later the B&O and C&O controversy provided legal background to Taney’s decision in the *Charles River v. Warren Bridge* case. By then Jackson’s choice as chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, Taney in that famous opinion reflected both Jacksonian ideas of free competition and the B&O argument for economic energy. He upheld a state’s right to grant charters that created competition; to vacate a Boston bridge monopoly did not impair the right of contract.



American ferment in these years drew a tribe of Europeans who found the country a political and social workshop—fascinating for what it might tell of the future. During Jackson’s first term two French noblemen, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, arrived in America to conduct a survey that led finally to Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. They visited Baltimore because concerned with United States prison reforms, and in the mid-1830s Maryland offered an interesting specimen. The state had built its first prison northeast of the city in 1811 and enlarged the structure in 1829, after a commission of merchants and lawyers found it wanting. Later, begrudg-

ingly, the assembly had appropriated funds for a new building. Maryland authorities then faced problems of design reflecting rival theories of penology. Near Philadelphia, Pennsylvanians had constructed a prison based on the principle of absolute confinement (removed from evil influences, one came to a realization of moral rightness and social duty); in New York, at Auburn, prisoners worked at hard labor (moral reform of grown criminals weighed less than stiff punishment).

Maryland took a middle course. The Pennsylvania prison had a central tower for guards with radial appendages for individual cells. In designing the new Maryland penitentiary, Robert Cary Long, Jr., applied the Philadelphia layout to a shop that fit the work purposes of the Auburn plan. Maryland officials left moral improvement up to the prisoner. Each male inmate supposedly had a solitary cell for sleeping and a copy of the Bible; the prison allowed weekly services but hired no permanent chaplain as Auburn had. Most interesting about the Maryland plan was its self-supporting, profit-making character. Male inmates—who usually numbered between 350 and 400 and consisted largely of thieves—worked for contractors in textiles, shoemaking, stonecutting, and nail manufactory; female prisoners, crowded into the old building after 1837, made combs, brushes, bags, brooms, and hats. Prison labor earned enough between 1822 and 1839 to render state appropriations unnecessary. After 1828 wardens and guards even drew their salaries from prison profits. By 1842 prisoner income paid \$69,000 toward prison construction costs. Tocqueville noted that prisoners pocketed sums for “overwork” and thereby created a prison underworld of bribery and corruption—an evil the state eventually corrected. Critics of the Maryland plan wondered whether “pecuniary interests” might drive officials to abuse inmates and criticized the neglect of moral improvement. But in 1841 directors of the prison stated that in many individual cases work and economy had produced an “evident deep contrition.” Whatever its drawbacks, the Maryland prison exemplified the Jacksonian ideal of cheap government.<sup>42</sup>

Self-government and the fetish for equality, wrote Tocqueville, led Americans to answer a multitude of civic and social needs by forming associations. Dealing with drunkenness had become one glaring social need—as travelers’ journals and institutional reports of the time demonstrated. Maryland almshouses sheltered a great many men whom drink had left unemployed; apparently pauper children often were victims of drunken parents. During the early years of the century pleas for temperance had come from pulpits and lecture halls—from religious leaders and the well-to-do membership of the Maryland State Temperance Society. In the spring of 1840 a tailor named William K. Mitchell and a few other Baltimore workers, after drinks at Chase’s Tavern on Liberty Street (and partly as a joke), attended a visiting clergyman’s temperance lecture. Afterward they agreed that temperance might be a good thing but also that antidrink ministers were “a parcel of hypocrites.” “I’ll tell you what,” said a blacksmith, George Steers, “let’s form

a society and make Bill Mitchell president." The men agreed to give temperance of their own making a serious try: We hereby form a society "for our mutual benefit," read a statement that each member signed, guarding against "a pernicious practice which is injurious to our health, standing, and families," and pledging "ourselves as gentlemen that we will not drink any spiritous or malt liquors, wine or cider." The Washington Temperance Society—named for the Founding Father—met regularly at Chase's Tavern until the society began to grow and the tavern owner forced it out. The group moved to a carpenter's shop and then rented a hall and began holding public meetings. At them no speaker pronounced the path to righteousness. Instead, reformed drinkers told their own stories—a completely novel and wholly Jacksonian idea.<sup>43</sup>

The Washingtonians grew rapidly, a reform movement led by the reformed. "Let every man be present," went the motto, "and every man bring with him a man." At weekly meetings, someone reported, the "whole society is considered a 'grand committee of the whole.'" In a few months the movement attracted John H. W. Hawkins, a Baltimore-born hatmaker who turned his back on twenty years of excessive drinking and found his true calling as a self-help temperance spokesman. In February 1841 he and a few other Washingtonians attended the state temperance society meeting in Annapolis and even addressed the General Assembly on the evils of drink. "He is a man of plain, good common sense," a listener later wrote about Hawkins, "with a sincerity about him, and easy way of expressing himself, that every word took like a point-blank shot." Mitchell, Hawkins, and other "Reformed Drunkards" made highly publicized trips to New York and Boston in early 1841. There newspapers told of intemperate persons tearfully coming forward to sign the pledge against drink that the Baltimoreans called "the second declaration of independence." In April, after only a year, the Washingtonians claimed one thousand members in Baltimore alone—many of them "drunkards of many years standing"—and conducted a triumphant parade through the streets of the city. By May 1842 delegations from Baltimore had established societies in towns from Brattleboro, Vermont, to Richmond; deputies held meetings in Pittsburgh, Wheeling, and then went on to Cincinnati and St. Louis. Women of the movement formed Martha Washington societies. In 1843 the American Temperance Union estimated that the Washingtonians had obtained abstinence pledges from "a half million hard drinkers often drunken, and a hundred thousand sots."<sup>44</sup>

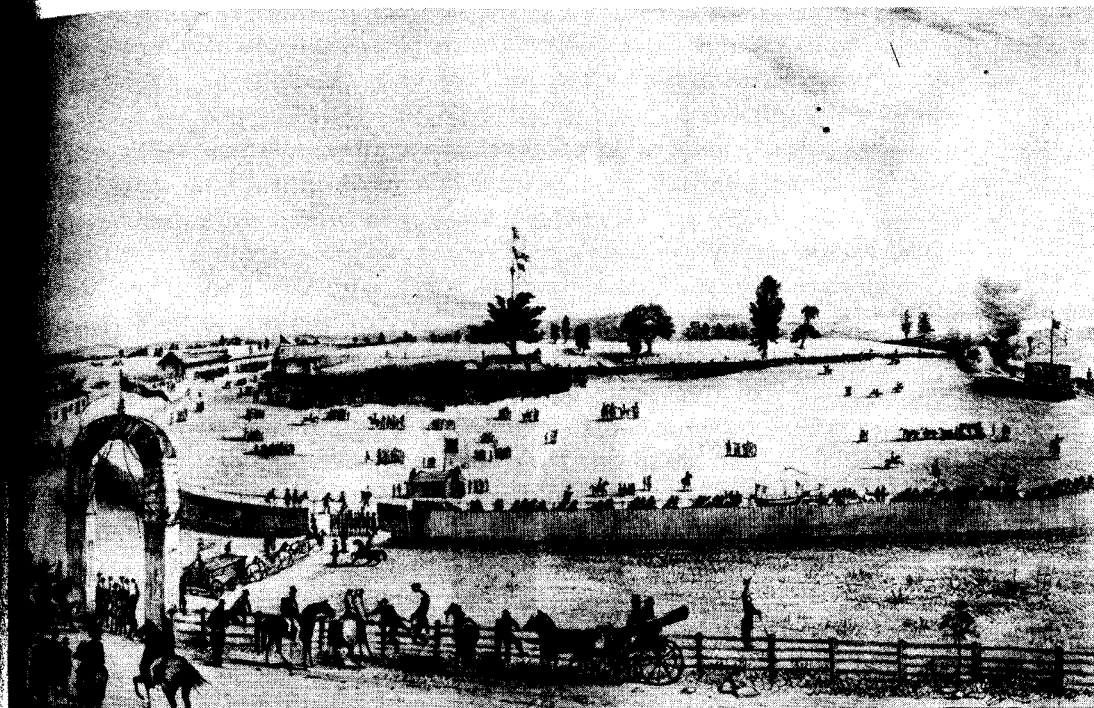
Tocqueville carried home especially vivid impressions of democratic politics—wherein Americans either joined the crusade against privilege and too much government or stood up for property rights and "moderation." Toward the end of Jackson's first term, nominating conventions began choosing party presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and because of Baltimore's transportation ties and Maryland's location between the poles of New England and the cotton South, the city became a favored meeting place. In



the fall and early winter of 1831 two anti-Jackson groups met in Baltimore. The smaller party, the Anti-Masons (opposed to secrecy, playing on Jackson's Freemasonry), nominated William Wirt to be chief executive—the first Marylander so honored. The following spring the Jackson party, by then known as Democrats, went to Baltimore for more political hoopla. To the joy of hotel owners and tavernkeepers, the Democrats again repaired to Baltimore in 1835. By then the president's critics called themselves Whigs, after the revolutionary heroes against tyranny. In 1840 the Whigs met in Baltimore to choose a candidate to oppose Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren. In Maryland as elsewhere, Democrats and Whigs formed state and local central committees that held their own conventions. Their ongoing rivalry (voters decided some election almost every year) encouraged mass participation and electoral frenzy.

Even more so than earlier in the century, party competition and party balance in Maryland recommended against one's being tarred with the brush of aristocracy. Candidates made it their business to get out among the people to deliver speeches, attend oyster roasts, and march in parades. At a typical rural rally south of Hagerstown, drums beat, a military band played from a wagon, and Whigs laid out enough bread, mutton, beef, pork, and miscellaneous "eats" for one or two thousand persons. Opposing candidates, speaking at these events together, never failed to arouse listeners. "We throw the gauntlet and challenge our adversaries to the Battle ground of Debate," explained the Jackson man Henry R. Warfield in 1837, using a variety of metaphors; and "altho they know we use neither the tomahawk nor the scalping knife—yet we play upon them so steadily and well directed a fire from our seventy four pounders, that most of them are blown ski high before the battle is half ended."<sup>45</sup> Buttons, badges, and ribbons bedecked the party faithful, who found such speechmaking and the excitement of electioneering a welcomed break from daily routine. During the 1840 campaign, when Van Buren faced "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," Whigs in Cumberland and Hagerstown adhered to party practice by rolling a heavy balloon, eight feet in diameter, through the streets at night while a partisan crowd carried torchlights and chanted slogans about keeping the ball rolling.

Party newspapers in Baltimore and many of the counties generated heat, if not light, before each canvass. When Democrats held a rally, the Whig press ignored it; if the turnout was disappointing (a visitor called one instance a "manifest failure"), the Democratic paper inflated attendance figures. A Whig in Cecil County complained of being at a distinct disadvantage—the party there had no voice "to respond to and refute the many calumnies" of the Jacksonian *Cecil Gazette*.<sup>46</sup> Partisan papers also served the cause by publishing and circulating the speeches of political champions, campaign biographies, and party sheet music. A Baltimore paper advertised the sale of one hundred copies of a Henry Clay address for only a dollar. "The World Is Too Much Governed," read the masthead caption of Francis



"National Convention of Whig Young Men." Lithograph published by George Willig, Jr., Baltimore, 1840. The rally for Harrison at the Canton race track—featuring the candidate's trademark log cabin, hard cider, and a speech by Henry Clay—drew 25,000 party faithful. *Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums*

Preston Blair's pro-Jackson *Washington Globe*. The *Sun* of Baltimore, first published by the New Englander Arunah S. Abell in May of 1837, cost the common man only a penny; though expressly independent, it could not hide its Jacksonian spirit and after 1840 proclaimed "Light for All" with each issue. *Niles' Weekly Register* assumed Whig leadership in the state before moving from Baltimore to Washington City in 1836. First the *American Whig* succeeded it and then the *Log Cabin Advocate*—titled to identify Whigs, too, with frontier democracy. On most election days 70 or 80 percent of eligible Maryland voters turned out, casting color-coded party "tickets" that thwarted the privacy of the ballot but permitted every voter to take a clear stand.

Winning elections meant dividing the spoils. Earlier, Jefferson had spoken of filling offices half with Federalists and half with Republicans. William Frick's appointment as Baltimore customs collector in January 1837 signaled the triumph of party professionals—men who relied on patronage for a living—over the Samuel Smiths who looked upon public office as a civic responsibility. Organizational loyalty became an end in itself—and a means to patronage. Party men made no apologies. Before a state election of the fall

of his first year as collector, Frick ordered a building contractor to hire more Democrats and fire Whigs. Since campaigns cost money, finance committees dunned well-heeled party ornaments and collected "taxes" from partisans on government payrolls.

High stakes made jobbery and pointed charity commonplace; in Baltimore City outright fraud followed close behind. "Whiskey flows like water, & money abounds very much," Hezekiah Niles wrote Henry Clay on the eve of an 1830 Maryland election. Niles claimed that in the closely contested counties Jacksonians had showered needy voters with coats, hats, and boots. The needy in Baltimore multiplied. Immigrants arriving there, mostly young men (as in the seventeenth century), numbered eight thousand in 1832—four times as many as four years before—and many of them failed in the struggle for work. Paupers seeking shelter at the city almshouse rose to five hundred in these years. About one in three had been in Baltimore less than half a year; about a third were foreign born, most of them Irish. White adult males could vote after one year's residence—but election day made a native out of many a newcomer. "In this state," explained an unapproving observer of Maryland politics, there always has been a "floating vote" of "loafers, rounders, and rowdies" who "lean against lamp posts during the day and knock store-boxes around at night, and who care a fig for neither party, having no knowledge or interest in the principles which divide the more reflecting portion of the people of the country." Ebenezer L. Finley of Baltimore admitted to Tocqueville that he had "seen elections carried through the almshouse poor."<sup>47</sup>

Had Tocqueville spent more time in Maryland, he would have witnessed a sorry democratic spectacle—a state badly divided by local interests, loyalties, and suspicions trying to reform its constitution. The document offered a plump target in the 1830s, and clamor for readjustment mounted with publication of the 1830 census figures. They showed that about one-fourth of the population elected a majority of legislators. Two senators and two members of the House of Delegates spoke for the 80,000 residents of Baltimore, whose level of representation had not changed since the city population had stood at 26,000. Annapolis, normally a quiet town of several thousand, sent the same number to the State House. Spokesmen for the older counties tightly guarded the apportionment of delegates (four per county, regardless of population) and senators (six for the Eastern Shore, nine for the Western); they defended the practice of electing one federal senator from each shore and governors from either the Eastern Shore or the lower Western Shore. John McMahon in his *Historical View of the Government of Maryland*, published in 1831, noted that "shore jealousies" and twin government offices had given Maryland "the character of a confederacy of two shores" rather than the integrity of an ordinary state.<sup>48</sup>

Party feeling stoked the fires of reform. Jacksonians, powerful in Baltimore, declared the 1776 frame of government rife with elitism and inequity.

Maryland Whig strength largely coincided with former Federalist areas—the Eastern Shore and southern and western counties; except for disgruntled westerners, Whigs enjoyed disproportionate power in Annapolis and of course defended restraints like the electoral college that chose state senators. That body, argued John McMahon, placed the legislature “beyond the momentary prejudices and passions, and hasty and short-sighted views, which at times pervade every community.”<sup>49</sup> In 1831 Whig electors chose an entirely Whig senate. The 1836 vote gave the Whigs twenty-one out of forty seats in the college, despite a Democratic edge of three thousand popular ballots. Francis Thomas, a Frederick County Democrat, hit upon a clever plan that would force either reform or constitutional crisis. Democrats kept their nineteen electors at home. Without a quorum the college could not elect a senate; without a senate there could be no assembly; without a legislature no governor could be chosen.

Thus Democrats employed minority tactics in the name of majority rule, and, oddly, they succeeded despite defeat. Illustrating the irony of their position, outnumbered reformers at a Cumberland meeting in the fall of 1836 angrily doused the lights and stamped out of the hall. Victories in both presidential and House of Delegates elections that season emboldened Whigs, who charged Jackson men with opening the door to revolution and chaos. A defiant gathering in Hagerstown, meeting to praise the boycotting “Glorious Nineteen,” appeared willing to cross that threshold; it declared that it was time to “recur to first principles.” “If the revolutionary spirit, now stalking amongst us is not promptly subdued,” retorted *Niles’ Weekly Register*, upon Maryland radicals would “rest the fearful responsibility of being the first in the country of Washington, to give liberty a mortal wound.” Anticipating the blow, the Planters Guards of Prince George’s County offered their services to the Whig governor, Thomas W. Veazey of Cecil. Finally enough Democratic electors caved in to give the college a quorum, it chose a Whig senate, and then, surprisingly, the new assembly—though securely in the hands of conservative forces—went on in March 1837 to pass an omnibus reform measure. With the necessary consent of the following assembly, Whigs agreed to grant Baltimore City as many delegates as the largest county, to provide for the popular election of state senators and of governors (governors’ homes had to lie successively in eastern, western, and southern districts of the state), and to abolish the old governor’s council.<sup>50</sup>



This Whig turnabout may have aimed to solidify the party’s position—the party afterward could claim to represent both reform and order while the Democrats stood mostly for anarchy. The need for order, a word Whigs often used, had grown abundantly evident to them. Labor violence had become the rule rather than exception. In August 1831 Irish workers battled blacks in Frederick County; after police arrested the ringleaders, a Gaelic mob rescued

them. Armed with stone hammers and carrying an improvised flag, laborers on the B&O at Sykes Mills quit work that year and threatened to tear up the rails they had laid unless they received the \$9,000 owed them in wages. Work did not resume until a militia force from Baltimore surprised and arrested strike leaders. In early 1834 gangs of Irish on the C&O project fell upon each other, leaving five men dead before soldiers arrived from Fort McHenry to quell the disturbance. In the fall workers on the Washington Branch of the B&O turned on a supervisor and brutally killed him. Militiamen took three hundred prisoners. Elsewhere Germans fought French. Though women escaped violence, they formed several new skilled trades associations, including a Female Union Society and United Seamstresses Society, and did voice anger. Complaining that widows and women with "sickly or worthless husbands" earned only a dollar or less a week, they challenged wage reductions, called strikes, and demanded (instead of a sunrise-to-sunset work schedule) a ten-hour day during the months of longest daylight.<sup>51</sup>

A wave of arson shocked Baltimoreans in early 1835, and that summer, following the financial collapse of several Baltimore banks, violence again rocked the city detractors called "Mobtown." Private bank expansion—reckless issuing of paper currencies—brought on the catastrophe, which Whigs attributed to Jackson's and Taney's policies. The Bank of Maryland became a celebrated case, especially among debt-plagued working families. During 1831 about a thousand persons had been locked away in the city jail for owing a creditor \$10 or less; although that year a law abolishing imprisonment for debts under \$30 had gone into effect, the legislature had repealed it in 1833.<sup>52</sup> Now bank officers declared themselves insolvent and escaped freely while small depositors lost \$2 million in savings. Common people built up steam as published audits uncovered Bank of Maryland mismanagement bordering on fraud—the bank had issued circulating notes in excess of its specie reserves by a ratio of 50 to 1. Chief culprits appeared to be Evan Poultney, former president, and Reverdy Johnson, John Glenn, and Evan T. Ellicott, directors.

On 6 August a group of men gathered in front of Johnson's home and broke his windows with stones. Suddenly the city exploded. Mayor Jesse Hunt tried to defuse anger by holding a town meeting that only assembled people for another assault on Johnson's home and those of other directors, on whose possessions the mob took glad revenge. Hunt's constables were helpless to quell the disturbance. Pillaging, shooting, and bonfires continued through the night of the eighth. In the end Samuel Smith, then eighty-three years old, called on orderly citizens to arm themselves under his command, as in 1814. Even after quiet returned, gangs of boys roamed the streets looking for trouble. Antagonism between rich and poor simmered because Johnson and other victims of the bank riot managed to win indemnities from the Whig-controlled assembly.

The failure of the Bank of Maryland supplied a forecast of bleak times, as



"Bank of Maryland Affair." Lithograph by "Jack Downing" (pseudonym of Seba Smith), 1834, lambasting the bank's directors, whose stock manipulations had brought disaster to depositors. MHS

the state government learned to its acute embarrassment. Maryland spending and bond issues for canals and railroads continued cheerfully in the 1830s—without the direction of a board of public works, unaccountably abolished in 1828. In 1834 the new legislature allocated half a million dollars to the B&O to finance its Washington Branch (later a moneymaker) and issued state bonds to support building of a rail line, begun in 1829, from Baltimore to the Susquehanna River at York, Pennsylvania. Labor and financial troubles had cost the C&O its federal and Virginia support in 1833, when Maryland had extended another \$2 million credit; in 1836 the assembly lent \$3 million more. That year the B&O received another \$3 million and legislators, rolling logs with energy, supplied inducements to various local (all unsuccessful) projects like an Eastern Shore railroad and canals linking both Baltimore and Annapolis to the Potomac. By 1840 the state had invested nearly \$7.2 million in the C&O, which had yet to return a dollar. Yearly interest payments on the total state internal improvements debt of about \$15 million, much of it owed to foreign investors, amounted to \$585,000.

Like many other states, Maryland stood vulnerable to any economic slow-down. Another one began quietly in 1836, when the Jackson administration declared gold and silver coin alone payable for public debts. The next year a drop in European cotton prices placed a strain on American banks, most of which had committed the sin of the Bank of Maryland. Foreign creditors recalled what money they could. The economy fell to an all-time low, and the state of Maryland faced the prospect of bankruptcy.

Elected public servants found life hard in the decade that followed. Legislators considered repudiating the state debt, seizing C&O assets, and various other plans of escape. Perhaps serving a single three-year term helped to guide the first popularly elected governor, William Grason, a Queen Anne's County Democrat, on an honorable course; he opposed repudiation and urged higher taxes. Twice in 1841 the Whig-controlled legislature responded, raising the real- and personal-property tax rate—first to twenty cents and then twenty-five cents on each hundred dollars of assessed value (a seven-fold increase); it also passed a constitutional amendment forbidding state assistance in public works projects. Grason's successor, former Jacksonian congressman Francis Thomas, spent much of his term embroiled in a personal dispute with the governor of Virginia, whose fifteen-year-old daughter Thomas married soon after winning the governorship and then spurned, publicly questioning her chastity. Adding to Thomas's troubles, many Maryland citizens refused to pay the late high taxes. Popular anger gave the 1844 gubernatorial election to a Prince George's Whig and former Democrat, Thomas G. Pratt. Pratt succeeded in obtaining a series of new measures distributing the tax burden among marriage licenses, acts of incorporation, inheritances, clerks' and registrars' fees—even, over Democratic objections, raising the price of public stamps. The assembly cut state salaries and abolished some jobs. Though the state never adopted repudiation, Maryland between October 1841 and January 1848 made no payments on its debts.<sup>53</sup>

The panic of 1837, its effects lingering into the early 1840s, spurred the violent and made many a weak man strong. Getting and keeping jobs became especially vicious business. In August 1839 Irish workers on the C&O not far from Cresap's Oldtown, fearful of losing their work, located a threat in nearby German employees of the same company. After enjoying plenty of cheap whiskey, the Irish armed themselves and fell on their rivals like "incarnate devils"—as a German priest put it—beating men and destroying property. One German died of injuries. In Baltimore political conflict continued, despite the hopes of Whigs who had backed the reform measures of 1837. Party stalwarts wanted jobs; the unemployed needed an outlet for their frustration. During the gubernatorial election of 1838 the Whig press reported that Democratic rowdies "stationed themselves at the corners of streets to waylay and attack with clubs, pistols, and stones, every prominent Whig that passed along." Democratic assaults on a Whig parade in 1840 left one man dead and another nearly so.<sup>54</sup>

Especially because earlier there had seemed so much reason for optimism, the disturbances and downturns of the late 1830s left many Marylanders troubled, angry, or simply stunned by the pace of change. Steam, it turned out, rewarded some people and displaced others. In the early 1830s Peter Cooper and other investors bought the O'Donnell country estate (named Canton to mark O'Donnell's successful foray in the China trade) southeast of Baltimore. There Cooper built factories that supplied the railroad with machinery; Canton's rail lines and docks made the site an important intersection between Maryland products and their markets. In other parts of the city workers made rail cars and built copper boilers. Good rail connections cheered those farmers in Prince George's, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore counties who grew food for urban tables. The Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad opened service in 1837. Within three years Maryland strawberries, finding a market in New York City, served as a lure for agricultural change, especially on the Eastern Shore. As the B&O pushed westward, farmers in Frederick and Washington counties found it profitable to ship grain directly to Baltimore. Many rural millers and distillers went out of business. Applications of steam power threatened even the traditional farmer's wife, according to Skinner's magazine. "As every good is said to bring its attendant evil," joked the *American Farmer* in 1839, the arrival of labor-saving machinery "has had the bad effect of nearly depriving the housewife of all economical employment; leaving her no resource to keep off ennui, except to read novels, whip the children, scold her husband, and kill flies!"<sup>55</sup>

Marylanders who favored stability found themselves uneasy. Obviously material improvement and political openness carried conflict and uncertainty. Bowing to democratic pressures in the 1837 omnibus reform bill, disturbed by the discontent that followed the panic of that year, watching investment in steam boilerworks, chemical manufacturing, and coal, men and women of old families sought distance. One response was to become a curmudgeon. A retired Eastern Shore congressman, John Leeds Kerr, mused that "politics is now become a complete trade and what is worse every fellow follows it fool or knave & aspires to the best jobs. This subject[,] once the study of patriots & statesmen, is now conveyed to such hands as to make it disgusting." "It is humiliating to confess it," wrote the Whig writer Brantz Mayer in these years, "but money making and president making are the two great occupations of all our people—public and private. . . . Possession, not enjoyment, is the great aim; so that Possession at length becomes enjoyment itself." He knew of "good men" in America, "but unfortunately they are neither rich nor in power." John Pendleton Kennedy for his part tried to revive the literary scene he had known in his youth. Earlier he had served as a patron to Edgar Allan Poe, the troubled young writer who in 1833 won a small prize for his story entitled "Ms. Found in a Bottle" (during a later stay in the city, Poe evidently fell victim to party thugs who seized the poet and used him as a multiple voter; plied with drink, he died after being pulled



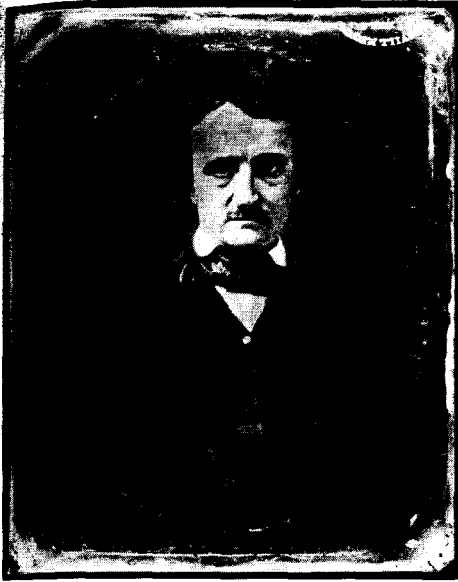
from a gutter). Kennedy now suggested his own misgivings about the present by writing romantic histories of the Revolution and of seventeenth-century Maryland. More directly in *Quodlibet*, which appeared in the fall of 1840, he published a farcical account of Jacksonian Baltimore. A one-term Whig congressman, Kennedy poked fun at renegade bankers and Democratic politicians—one of whom (Kennedy perhaps alluded to Taney) changed the name of his ancestral home, "Quality Hall on Poplar Flats," to "Equality Hall on Popular Flats."<sup>56</sup>

In January 1844, a group of twenty Baltimoreans who included Kennedy, John Spear Smith, John Van Lear McMahon, Robert Gilmore, Jr., Brantz Mayer, John H. B. Latrobe, Joshua Cohen, Charles J. W. Gwinn, and Severn Teackle Wallis founded the Maryland Historical Society. Through it, cynics would have said, they expected to tout their own families' considerable part in that history. However true, they also set about saving the artifacts, art, and records of the past that belonged to all. Kennedy already had recovered colonial records that had been collecting mold in the State House. Gilmore had asked members of old families for significant letters, which he placed in huge scrapbooks. In 1845 the society commissioned a young artist to render portraits of unsung or unpainted revolutionary heroes. The founders of the society hoped to cultivate a sense of continuity and preserve a heritage that appeared all the more fragile and valuable in the flux of the 1840s. The first exhibit, in 1848, avowedly public and thus perhaps an attempt to reach out even to the men who had rioted against Reverdy Johnson and the rest or who threw sticks and stones at well-known Whigs, tried to make respect for art and historical lore a means of restoring some of the equilibrium they believed lost in their age.

Establishing an institution that preserved for preservation's sake alone, early patrons of the Historical Society aimed for reverence in an age of irreverence. They swam against the currents of derring-do individualism, volatile politics, and forward-looking industry. Emerson, who had paid Baltimore another visit in 1843, might have saluted their effort while giving it scant hope of success. "Charles Carroll the Signer is dead, and Archbishop Carroll is dead," he lamented, "and there is no vision in the land."<sup>57</sup>



From the outside, life in slavery did not appear harsh. In 1832 Kennedy, who as a boy had made memorable visits to relatives in Virginia, published a romance of plantation life, *Swallow Barn*. In it he wrote affectionately of country gentlemen, lawyers, and parsons, of planters' mistresses, and of slave children who darted about the bushes "like untamed monkeys" or sat around blankly like turtles on a millpond log. Kennedy's book reflected the attitudes that most white Marylanders took to blacks—to racial differences, if not to slavery itself. He described "stout negro-women," the "prolific mothers of this redundant brood." Elderly black men, including the ludi-



Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49), as seen in a daguerreotype taken in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1848—the last known image of the poet.



John Pendleton Kennedy (1795–1870) by William J. Hubard, 1831. In 1836 Kennedy called for Poe's help in wresting this finished portrait from the artist, who then lived in Richmond. MHS

crous old bachelor named "Jupiter," wore "faces shortened as if with drawing strings" and had noses that ran "all to nostril." "I should not hesitate," said Kennedy's narrator, to pronounce slaves "a comparatively comfortable and contented race of people, with much less of the care and vexation of life I have often observed in other classes of society."<sup>58</sup>

As a lawyer, Kennedy might have based this portrait of slavery partly on statute and case law. If the law provided a guide, Maryland slavery in the nineteenth century had grown markedly more humane than in the colonial period, when slaves had been subject to punishments as draconian as hanging for stealing and loss of a hand before hanging for arson. Striking a white man in the eighteenth century left a slave liable to ear-cropping. Such "severe and very uncouth laws," as *Niles' Weekly Register* described them in 1826, later fell from use and then from the books. Punishments for serious crimes like murder varied in this period between sentences that were no

different from those given whites, and the sale of slave criminals out of state. Throughout the early nineteenth century whippings—no more than thirty-nine lashes—supplied punishment for slaves convicted of petty offenses in county or magistrates' courts. Maryland law limited the master to ten lashes, prohibited him from abusing slaves, and required him to supply blacks (just as indentured servants in the earlier period) with adequate food, clothing, shelter, and rest. There were incidents of masters being hauled into court to answer charges of slave abuse and of constables standing between owner and slave. White Marylanders spoke of the "ameliorated condition" of nineteenth-century society and of the salutary "changes that have taken place in public opinion" on proper slave treatment.<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, the law could by no means warrant the good behavior of masters, overseers, or persons hiring slave labor; William Green, who fled bondage on the Eastern Shore, remarked that a master had "all the power over the poor panting slave, and let him treat him as he will, the slave has no power to lay his grievance before any human being." Blacks themselves made valuable witnesses on this count, and runaways told many stories of severity and even cruelty. Stephen Pembroke, a Washington County slave who admitted that he also knew slavery's "moderate degree," reported that one of his three masters was "a rigid and wicked man," that he had seen blacks "tied up, whipped, shot, and starved." "I know one man who gave his slave one hundred and fifty lashes in two days," Pembroke said before a New York City audience, "and on the third day he died. He crept into the field, and his master supposing he was sleeping, went up and cowhided him, but he was cowhiding a corpse, thinking he was asleep!" Frederick Douglass wrote of whites who shot slaves at point-blank range and of a black man who was killed with a hatchet. One cold winter day a slaveowner in William Green's experience had forced an old woman who was supposed to look after the sheep but could not locate them to stay outdoors until she did. Later she was found frozen to death under a fence. John Thompson told of a southern Maryland master who would walk behind slaves as they picked tobacco worms and make them eat any they had missed. After an absence from the plantation the same man would occasionally gather slaves together and reassert his authority by whipping them "all around." It seemed to amuse him and his children, Thompson wrote afterward, to force slave husbands to whip their wives, mothers their daughters, and fathers their sons.<sup>60</sup>

Accounts of ill treatment had origins in all parts of Maryland, but several fugitives noted the bleakness of life in Prince George's County, where whites, outnumbered by blacks, felt a special need to make slaves stand in fear. George Ross, held in Hagerstown, had heard that Prince George's slaveholders were "a little harder than they are in the upper part of the State." Thompson called the county as different from the neighborhood in which he had grown up—apparently Calvert—"as Alabama is from Kentucky." His new masters in Prince George's considered "whipping as essential to the good of



"Perry Hall Slave Quarters, with Field Hands at Work" by Francis Guy, c. 1805. Guy portrayed Maryland slaves in Baltimore County working peacefully at a time when John Pendleton Kennedy and people like him gained fond memories of plantation life. The painting descended in the family of a freed Perry Hall slave. *MHS*

the soul as the body." In all the heavily black counties, especially following an actual or rumored slave uprising, whites patrolled the roads at night. According to a Prince George's County black, Dennis Simms, the slave caught more than a short distance from his master's home without a written pass was "unmercifully whipped," and he claimed that he knew of two absentee slaves who also suffered branding with an *R* on their cheek. Overseers in Simms's experience lost no opportunity to inflict the hated "nine and ninety-nine" (mocking the legal limit of ten strokes)—a flogging that went on until the slave lost consciousness or begged for mercy.<sup>61</sup>

Slave women could suffer particularly galling abuse. Life on an isolated farm and the many responsibilities of a planter's wife did not always produce women of great patience; many a black cook or house servant felt the wrath of a white woman frustrated, jealous, or simply lonely. One plantation mistress, "very rich and equally cruel," in the words of a fugitive slave, would sometimes attack her gray-headed kitchen servant "with shovel, tongs, or whatever other weapon lay within her reach," and then, exhausted, complain until her husband administered a whipping. In Baltimore County a young white girl described her neighbor as a "fiend in woman's shape" for having a black servant stripped and whipped by several men. Willingly or unwillingly, slave women on occasion became embroiled in illicit affairs with their masters, and upon discovering these encounters, mistresses could

more easily direct their rage against slave than husband. Thompson perhaps exaggerated when he said that one master he served under was "the father of about one-fourth of the slaves on his plantation, by his slave women." A black man from Charles County said only that slave women there "paid the price" for being attractive. Illustrating well the hidden sexual element in the slaveholder's power over his bondswomen was the sale of a Maryland slave girl in 1830. Born of a black mother, she was the seventeen-year-old daughter of a deceased slaveowner whose estate had gone to auction. When she mounted the block her appearance created a stir among buyers. She broke into tears at the lurid questions they put to her, and her refusal to answer them, read an account in a London newspaper, "met with blood-chilling oaths." She sold for the extravagant price of \$1,700.<sup>62</sup>

Making the most of these exhibitions, white and black abolitionists also leveled the charge of slave breeding against Southerners. Frederick Douglass reported an egregious example. The Talbot County farmer who tried to "break" him purchased a twenty-year-old black woman "for a breeder," hired a black man from a nearby planter, and then "fastened" them together at night. After a year the woman gave birth to twins, whom the farmer "regarded as being quite an addition to his wealth." With every incentive to encourage slave fecundity, Maryland slaveholders often did refer to a young black woman's health and stature. Whether as a rule they tried or succeeded in hastening slave reproduction, however, no one seems to have known. A Frederick County slaveowner described a black woman as being twenty-six and "in the prime of life"; she had been a house servant in childhood and when of age was "turned out for breeding," which may merely have meant allowed to find a mate. Ross knew of no instance where slaves were raised for the purpose of selling, but on his farm of thirty or forty slaves the older ones were sold as the younger blacks came of age. If slaveowners could get good bargains, he recalled, "they would sell the young just the same. I have often heard of slaves being kept for the purpose of breeding," Ross said, "but I have never seen it."<sup>63</sup>

Scarcely any generalization held up for Maryland slavery except perhaps that in this northernmost slave state (in Delaware slavery almost had disappeared by the 1830s), the peculiar institution had grown peculiar indeed. Most slaves still worked in the fields, gangs of men and women, as an outsider phrased it, "toiling under the harsh commands of the overseer." Some masters tried to vary the rural work pattern to their advantage; an Eastern Shore agricultural reformer, calling himself "the Great Labor Saving Man," embarked on what a slave later wrote was a plan "to make one man do the work of two" by getting his blacks up two hours before sunrise and keeping them at work after dark husking corn. One result was that he marketed 1,500 to 2,000 barrels of corn a season. Another was that his young slaves of eighteen or twenty years "looked to be thirty and thirty-five years old." Generally Maryland planters and farmers, as elsewhere in the South, followed a



"Mistress Overseeing the Plantation." Etching by Adalbert Volck, c. 1860. Volck, a German-born silversmith, dentist, and proslavery satirist who lived in Maryland in the 1850s, gave slaveholding the benefit of every doubt in this alluring view of self-possessed mistress, busy and deferential bondsmen, healthy crops, and pasture overrun with fat livestock. *MHS*

sunrise-to-sunset regimen, with work hardest during harvest season and Sundays left free. On the large plantations of the lower Western and middle Eastern Shore, labor for a few slaves grew highly specialized. Lloyd's Wye House blacks worked as coopers, cartwrights, millers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and weavers.<sup>64</sup>

Since most Maryland slaveholders owned but a few blacks, odds increased that slaves worked as domestic servants, did odd jobs, or spent time hired out in the state's varied economy. Charles Ball, who grew up near Leonardtown, was told that if he behaved himself he might become a waiter or overseer—stations that appeared to him "to be the highest points of honor and greatness in the whole world." Green served as a servant, then as a jockey, until he objected to the gambling that surrounded horse racing; his master, "being quite a conscientious man in some things," next made him a waiter. Later Green accompanied a physician on house calls. Slaves served as hands on the vessels that sailed between Eastern and Western shores and as cooks and stokers on the steamers that plied the bay. A traveler on a ferry crossing the Susquehanna in the dead of winter pitied the seven blacks who took turns standing at the bow breaking river ice with long wooden clubs. Each stint left them exhausted and covered with frozen splashes. In sharp con-

trast, slaves labored in iron foundries between Frederick and Baltimore and in Cecil County; believing blacks to be especially tolerant of heat, whites thought them "particularly suited to such an occupation."<sup>65</sup>

Leased to small manufacturers, wagon masters, shipbuilders, and the like, slaves in Baltimore—about four thousand in 1830, three thousand in 1840—lived a peculiar life that brought both pleasure and pain. They found that contractors often cared less than their masters did about their well-being. "I was never abused much by my own people," testified a former Maryland slave; "I was abused by those to whom I was hired out." On the other hand, slavery in the city permitted blacks to live a life partially beyond the gaze of whites. Some masters went so far as to allow slaves to act as their own agents in finding work, so that a slave like Douglass, a caulker at Fells Point, might see his master only once a week, when he paid over a portion of his wages. City slaves, besides sometimes living in their own rented quarters and having friends among free blacks, exercised some control over their own time, attended black churches, and found release in the black grog shops that emerged in Baltimore backstreets and alleys. "A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on a plantation," Douglass later wrote. Enjoying "privileges altogether unknown" to their brothers and sisters in the country, helpful to runaways from the tobacco fields, urban slaves represented, many whites realized, a threat to the slave order itself.<sup>66</sup>

As much as the Maryland economy, the natural environment affected slavery in the state—and again with double-edged results. Winters could be bitter cold. Few slaves who left a record of their experience in Maryland slavery failed to comment on their frequent discomfort in that season—despite the care many masters took to provide them with extra winter clothing. Apparently a typical planter issued slave men shirts and trousers made of coarse sacking, "such as grocers keep salt in," for summer, and women a jacket and skirt of the same material; winter wear consisted of rough black-and-white woolen suits that slaves called "nits and lice." Children wore nothing more than oversized cotton or woolen smocks. Blacks normally got a pair of shoes each year, roughly measured and crudely made of ox-hide. Some blacks called them "program" shoes because they often were so large that the toes had to be stuffed with discarded playbills. Except during the winter months, slave housing generally seemed to suffice. Most rural blacks (domestic servants and slaves belonging to a small farmer might have slept in the master's house) lived in one-story log or boarded structures, which may have had windows, but never glass, and only the simplest wooden door. Floors were of dirt or planks. Slaves usually slept on straw bedding or wooden benches; William Green complained of lying down on a "bunch of straw on the cold damp earth." Fireplaces in such huts provided only a little heat and much draft during the cold months, so that survival called for ingenuity and cooperation. Slave children took empty sacks from storehouses to use as extra bedding. Mothers made quilts from scrap cloth and slept next to their



*Frederick Douglass*

Frederick Douglass (1817–95). From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Worthy, near Leeds, 1846). McGregor Library, University of Virginia

younger children. Men covered windows as best they could and, according to Green, organized watches to keep the fire burning hot through the nights.<sup>67</sup>

At the same time the location of most Maryland slaves near the bay or its tributaries helped measurably to supply a nutritious diet. Food seems rarely to have been a source of complaint among Maryland slaves. According to Douglass (who hastened to add that there were exceptions), Eastern Shore slaveholders followed the rule, “No matter how coarse the food, only let there be enough of it.” John Thompson, describing a harsh regimen, said that slaves got a peck of corn, two dozen herrings, and about four pounds of meat per week—probably a more appetizing ration than slaves typically received on cotton or sugar plantations in the Gulf South. Another slave received a peck of corn each week throughout the year and a “tolerable supply” of pork in December, when the hogs were butchered. Apparently it was not unusual for Maryland slaves to have their own vegetable gardens—



though they could tend them only after working hours, which sometimes meant by moonlight. Slaves in Frederick and Prince George's counties, and probably elsewhere, supplemented their food supply by hunting the rabbit, possum, and raccoon that could make "a real treat" of a pot pie. Above all, slaves benefited from Maryland waters, and in many instances they did their own fishing. Charles Ball described himself as fortunate in living between the Patuxent and the bay; he enjoyed an "abundance of fish in the spring and as long as fishing season continued," and afterward a salt herring every day supplemented his allowance of corn. "Our food was very plain," recalled an old Maryland ex-slave, whose diet had included "fat hog meat, fish and vegetables raised on the farm and corn bread made up with salt and water." He stressed that his favorite meals consisted of the "fish and crabs cooked in all styles by mother."<sup>68</sup>



Maryland slaves did not hunt, fish, and garden like freemen, but even if rural blacks only occasionally secured their own food they demonstrated a level of self-help that slaves in the Old Southwest commonly did not enjoy. It would be difficult to imagine a slave in the Cotton South owning a hunting dog named "Ruler," as did a Charles County black who had trained the animal to jump and take off a man's hat on command. In the quarters, with many restrictions to be sure, slaves elaborated on this theme. Playing, praying, and trying to build stable domestic arrangements, they at least to a limited degree fashioned their own lives. "After work was done," a black remembered afterward, "the slaves would smoke, sing, tell ghost stories and tales," and dance to music played on home-made fiddles. The longevity of African folk customs among them made itself plain in the blacks' ability, in the frequent absence of white medical help, to "doctor themselves" with their own herbs, teas, and salves. Slave children amused themselves with mumbletypeg, rings, and marbles—although Frederick Douglass portrayed his own childhood as austere and joyless. When on holidays, especially Christmas, whites paid heed to their slaves, blacks did what they could to make a tradition of it—holding masters to their own graciousness. One black described the scene: "Christmas morning we went to the big house and got presents, and had a big time all day." Labor itself provided slaves with the means of community. Corn shuckings each fall brought blacks from several plantations together in a barn, where music, food, and drink accompanied work. After the last barrel of corn was hauled to the crib, dancing followed until late in the night. Slaves along the lower Potomac, testifying further to their success in piercing the blinds of bondage, blew a conch shell to signal nighttime social gatherings, and at times sang across the river to Virginia blacks, who would "sing back" to them.<sup>69</sup>

The whippings, sales, and living conditions of slavery did nothing to promote stability or authority in the black family, but evidence suggests that

Maryland slaves struggled against every obstacle. Allowed a few weeks "leisure" for childbirth, slave mothers afterward did what they could to care for their infant children. John Thompson wrote that if mothers had humane masters or overseers they might obtain permission to nurse the newborn between breaks in the work schedule; he might have noted the ways in which a skillful slave mother played on a slaveholder's view of himself as humane. According to Charles Ball slave mothers often went to bed with empty stomachs rather than refuse their hungry children. The powerlessness of slave fathers, who in addition might well live on a farm apart from their wife and children, made their place in the slave family especially ambiguous. Whites assumed that slave fathers counted little in the quarters and seldom felt enduring love for mate or children. Black testimony weighed against that jaundiced view. Ball developed a close relationship with father and grandfather alike. His father visited the family Saturday nights and always brought "apples, melons, sweet potatoes, or, if he could procure nothing else, a little parched corn, which tasted better in our cabin," Ball wrote, "because he had brought it." Later, when Ball's mother was sold away, his father became so despondent that his master decided to sell him as well, and ultimately the boy's grandfather assumed as best he could the role of parent. William Green told of slave fathers, living in barracks-like huts, who built board or blanket partitions for their families and thus became "a great man amongst them."<sup>70</sup>

Blacks struggled to shape their own lives within slavery; masters tried to control blacks but could not deny their humanity. This push-pull relationship became especially interesting in the shaping of black religion. Whites tried to make the gospel a means of discipline. "The ministers used to preach—'Obey your masters and mistresses and be good servants,'" complained a former Eastern Shore slave; "I never heard anything else." Slaves recognized the ploy and resisted it—either outwardly or quietly. Ball's grandfather—who had been born in Africa, claimed noble blood, and clung to African religious beliefs—warned younger blacks that these Christian teachings were the "inventions of designing men." By singing Protestant hymns in the tobacco fields, John Thompson could throw his Catholic master, who believed orthodox instruction of his blacks to be a solemn duty, into "spasms of anger." Forced to attend an Episcopal church in southern Maryland, usually seated in the rear balcony, slaves felt indifferent because the service bore so little relationship to their own experience—it aimed, as they said, "above our comprehension." Several fugitive slaves, besides telling abolitionists what they wanted to hear about Southern religion, voiced the resistance slaves mounted to "white" faith by declaring that they would rather belong to unchurched masters who drank and played cards than to pronounced Christians.<sup>71</sup>

Slaves found the singing, heart-centered, hope-for-deliverance strains of evangelical Christianity far more compelling than high-church white liturgy or the message of St. Paul's Epistle, and to celebrate their own kind of Chris-

tian expectation they obviously preferred their own churches. Thompson recalled a wave of conversions to Methodism among the slaves of southern Maryland, significant in part because it proved that slaves on neighboring farms could communicate with one another. The awakening "produced great consternation among the slaveholders," who apparently disagreed on how best to respond to it. In this instance they established patrols to break up black religious assemblies. Thompson's master, employing another tactic, purchased a slave fiddle player and for a time distracted his slaves with what Thompson called "worldly pleasures." Where blacks were not numerous, as in Carroll County, slaves attended an "old side" Methodist church in which a black minister preached. In southern Maryland Episcopalian and Methodist slaveholders joined in building a chapel for slaves, then cautiously installed a white minister. Even there, Thompson testified, whites occasionally allowed a "qualified and licensed" black to preach, and in Prince George's County during these years a free black known as "Parson" Rezin Williams conducted black prayer meetings with the sufferance of slaveholders. They conceded what was unavoidable, for slaves risked almost any punishment to assemble clandestinely, sing spirituals, and offer one another the support faith supplied.<sup>72</sup>

Thus in many subtle ways slaves succeeded in insisting on their humanity and forced, in a sense of the word, slaveholders to live up to their own professed ideals. Escaped slaves—the exceptional blacks who by acting became abolitionists—blamed the slave order for its evil effects on whites while acknowledging many examples of kindly treatment in Maryland. George Ross described the master from whom he escaped as "a very nice man, and very much a gentleman. He never laid the weight of his hand upon me to whip me." William Green pronounced Edward Hamilton "a humane man to be a slave-holder." While strict, he was "generally kind to his servants; yes, I must say very kind to them in the way of feeding and clothing them." Hamilton's children were of a piece—Green "never knew one of them to strike a servant in anger." A former slave from Frederick County said that owners there "as a whole were kind" to blacks and gave them money to spend when the crops were good. An aged ex-slave, Charles Coles, came close to portraying Kennedy's romanticized slaveholder in his recollection of Silas Dorsey. Coles's memory may have turned selective with age; nevertheless, he said that Dorsey was "loved by all who knew him, black and white, especially his slaves."<sup>73</sup>

Maryland slaves had been in the state for generations, frequently held by the same white families or living in the same localities. This pattern helped explain why many whites referred to their bondsmen as "their people" and were reluctant to divide or sell them south, and why blacks greatly feared that fate. It was not unusual for wills to stipulate that slaves had to remain within Maryland. Newspaper advertisements of slave sales often carried conditions to the same effect. Slaves in their later writings vividly remem-

bered both the threats severe slaveowners made of sale southward and the assurances of a kindly master or mistress that they would never be sold out of the neighborhood. Since the promises of a well-intentioned slaveholder could not always be kept, estate sales often produced deeply affecting scenes for blacks and whites alike. Charles Ball recalled one from his childhood. His new master had clothed the black boy in one of his own children's frock shirts and was leaving the site of the sale when Ball's mother, whom the master could not afford to purchase, went to a trader from the lower South. The Marylander, Ball later wrote, "seemed to pity her, and endeavored to soothe her distress by telling her that he would be a good master to me, and that I should not want anything."<sup>74</sup>

Without doubt the nearness of free territory also had an effect on Maryland slaveholders and worked to keep the worst features of slavery in check. Cruelty invited action on an impulse that few whites denied to exist among slaves and that fugitives said was universal among them—the urge to freedom. In the upper counties of both shores a slave could cross the Mason-Dixon Line after a night or two spent in hard running or a few days under sail. Frederick Douglass correctly noted the average slave's ignorance of geography, yet slaves ran off with increasing frequency in the 1830s and 1840s and friends of fugitive slaves grew in numbers and efficiency. Opponents of slavery developed a secret, word-of-mouth network—the "underground railroad"—leading from Maryland into Pennsylvania and New York, each household offering refuge and occasionally transportation to those blacks who could muster the strength to leave loved ones and risk heavy punishment by running off. On the Eastern Shore, Harriet Tubman, herself an escaped Maryland slave, repeatedly returned on missions to conduct blacks across the inlets and through the forests she knew so well. Tough and resourceful, Tubman became legendary for her "military genius." Once, after a daylong wait in a swamp without food, one of her party spoke of turning about and taking his chances back on the plantation. Tubman pointed a pistol to his head and told him to "Move or die."<sup>75</sup>

With escape inviting (though never simple) for slaves, Maryland slaveowners faced the need actually to talk about subjects that may never have surfaced elsewhere in the slave South. Marylanders labored to convince their slaves that Canada had been oversold—that nothing grew there, that it was too cold for horses, hogs, and cows (much less for non-natives), and that half of everyone's income went to the Queen of England. Blacks, who often knew better, heard that Pennsylvania and New York were filled with ogres who recaptured fugitives and sold them south. "I don't think a great many believed those stories," Ross commented, "for we knew they were told to keep us there." Pretending to believe forbidding accounts of Canada or feigning disinterest, a slave nonetheless could know that white anxiety about runaways gave him some advantage. An Eastern Shore slave, after unloading a cargo of Canadian wheat, casually asked his master how it could have



Harriet Tubman (1820–1913). MHS

grown in ice. "I never saw anybody tied up and cut and slashed as they say it was in Virginia and New Orleans," said Joseph Smith after making his way to Canada; Maryland slaveholders were afraid to whip their blacks "because they knew, if they did, they would run away from them." One noticed something of the game whites and blacks played under these conditions in a master's telling his slaves that they had been treated well "and it would not be fair for them to go away," or in the almost pathetic plea William Green heard from one of his masters: "I do everything I can to make you comfortable and happy, and this is the way you go on."<sup>76</sup>

Finally, wanting to believe that they were indeed good masters and given their declining proportion in the state, Maryland slaveholders had to be especially concerned with their image in the public eye. In most slave states planters dominated the legislature. After the 1837 constitutional reforms, planters in counties like Talbot, Anne Arundel, and Prince George's could not ignore the truth that sheer numbers probably lay with citizens who had no vested concern with slave property; as a protection, that omnibus bill included the proviso that slavery could be abolished in Maryland only with a unanimous vote of the legislature. By the 1830s, bearing in mind the fury of distant abolitionists, planters everywhere in the South pledged themselves to view slaveholding as a form of Christian stewardship. Maryland masters lived in the midst of outspoken antislavery sentiment. In Baltimore, Douglass wrote, few people were "willing to incur the odium attaching to

the reputation of being a cruel master." Charles Ball believed that his "sullen and crabbed" master was "ashamed to abuse me, lest he should suffer in the good opinion of the public."<sup>77</sup>

Determined at the very least to protect their property rights and themselves from uprisings like that of Nat Turner, Maryland slaveowners wavered between anxious proslavery and calculating self-doubt. In August 1835 in Annapolis a public meeting of planters appealed to the General Assembly to pass a law that would stamp out the writings of "certain deluded fanatics" who would promote "a general servile insurrection." Seven years later a similar gathering, which was planned to be much larger than it turned out, called for statutes discouraging manumission, restricting free blacks, and by various devices making escapes from slavery more difficult. For all this bluster, owners could refer to slaveholding as a "source of vexation," as did Charles Goldsborough, a former congressman and governor, in writing a Mississippi friend in 1834. In his seventieth year, Goldsborough pondered what to do with his black laborers. If he kept them at all, he had to keep them well, he explained, yet they consumed all they made and notwithstanding his kind treatment of them were prone to run off. He could simply sell them to a slave trader, but prices stood below their real worth and, besides, the transaction was "inevitably to a certain degree inhuman and offensive to one's own feelings." Searching for a middle course, Goldsborough hoped to send them en masse to work on a Mississippi cotton plantation, where they would suffer "no possible severance of connections" and would be "sure of being as well treated as they ever were." He died before acting on his plan.<sup>78</sup>

## *A House Divided*



Maryland by the mid-nineteenth century had become a sectional netherland, a mix of free and slave economy, Northern and Southern culture. The state partook of both Yankee "go-aheadism" and Cavalier leisure, gave itself completely to neither. Cambridge, Easton, Chestertown, Annapolis, and Southern Maryland nestled themselves in the ways of the past and on the surface might have been tidewater towns or tobacco lands anywhere in the South; Westminster, Frederick, Hagerstown, and Cumberland continued to grow, prosper, and boast of their advancing fortunes. Baltimore resembled Philadelphia or New York in its commercial banks and varied manufactures. At the same time the city impressed visitors as being gay and charming in a way entirely its own. The songs of black hucksters selling fruits and vegetables, dairy products and poultry, filled the morning air. For the outdoor life, the state had no peer, wrote a correspondent to the *Spirit of the Times*; "old Maryland" stood "preeminent, for hospitality, shooting, fishing, and sporting, in each and every particular." Oysters, crabs, terrapin, and canvasback truly had made Baltimore hotels like Barnum's famous as far away as London.

One also noticed the pleasantness of Maryland in polite relations between men and women. Maryland women from families of accomplishment seemed to bring out the courtly best in the gentlemen who paid them attention, and traditionally they had many admirers. Passing through Baltimore in the 1850s, an Englishwoman—though noting that they had a habit of eating everything, including oysters, with their knives, leaned both elbows on the dining table, and gloried a bit in the "braverie" of their colorful clothes—wrote that Maryland ladies were celebrated all over the Union. The most a Kentuckian could boast, she reported with slight dismay, was a sure rifle, a fine horse, and "a Maryland gal for his wife." A London lawyer discovered the proverbial phrase "Baltimore beauty" to be perfectly apt. Henri Herz, an Austrian-born pianist and composer who lived in Baltimore at mid-century, found women there positively distracting. "At my concerts," he confessed, "I was carried away to see so many beautiful faces all at once." He made it a

practice to wave to the Maryland belles with his right hand while continuing to play with his left—a feat they applauded with delight.

Not to be outdone, young Maryland gentlemen of the day tried to win that applause by taking up chivalry. The sport of "jousting"—galloping on horseback in medieval costume and spearing rings—gained popularity in this romantic period and often included a ceremony crowning a queen at the post-tournament ball. "The Knights looked well and fought gallantly," wrote a Maryland woman of an especially chaste event near Leonardtown. After ceremonies acclaiming the winner, "the Knights rode in order to the Town and the maids to their homes."<sup>1</sup> To sober Northerners jousting was a sure sign of Southern influence.



A better index might have been the state of education. Maryland offered an example of a slave state in which legislators, having spent large sums on internal improvements, were eager neither to support elitist colleges nor to provide for a general system of public schooling. Education thus hung somewhere between Northern interest in public schooling and Southern regard for the academies that prepared gentlemen for public leadership or ladies for social confidence. Catholics had a women's school, St. Joseph's, at Emmitsburg; well-to-do Methodists sent their daughters to academies in Annapolis and Baltimore—the Baltimore school receiving \$1,500 annually from the General Assembly. Another college for women opened at Mount Washington in Baltimore County in 1856. Until retiring that year, Almira Lincoln Phelps, a New England native transplanted to Howard County, served as headmistress at the Episcopalian Patapsco Female Institute. She recognized that daughters of slaveholders posed special problems to an educator; a North Carolina congressman with daughters enrolled at the institute complained that Phelps did not pay enough attention to the development of feminine charm. Ahead of her time, she replied that she aimed to give women all the advantages young men received in college.

Men's institutions got along as best they could. Washington College in Chestertown—closed after a fire in 1827—triumphantly reopened in 1844, won limited state funding four years later, and enjoyed a period of modest prosperity. St. John's College in Annapolis, struggling financially, its trustees convinced that the 1806 withdrawal of state aid violated its charter and therefore amounted to breach of contract, finished students irregularly in the 1840s. At the 1849 commencement, William H. Tuck, an 1827 graduate who soon served as a Court of Appeals judge, seized the opportunity to speak on "the educational problems and requirements of the times." Newton University, founded in Baltimore in 1845, promised to impose "no rules, laws, or regulations of a sectarian or party character." While the college recommended its regular curriculum of languages, history, belles-lettres, and math, it also offered a three-year course in commercial, mechanical, and sci-





"A Maryland Tourney: Riding at the Quintain." Silhouette signed "T. F. H., 1841."  
MHS

entific subjects that produced "practical men and good citizens." Also in Baltimore, the University of Maryland slowly recovered from its unhappy experience in the years 1826–39, when the assembly had tried to make it a combined undergraduate college and professional school. Once more a private institution with strong medical, dental, and pharmaceutical faculties (though missing its earlier law school), it reflected growing specialization in mid-nineteenth-century professional life but also the somewhat haphazard manner that Yankees put down as Southern. Its faculty declined a donation of \$10,000 virtually because spending the sum would be too much trouble. John Pendleton Kennedy, elected provost of the university in 1850, joked of his unfitness for the post and his unwillingness to let its duties draw him from more pleasurable occupations. "Think of a Provost with his coat off at billiards!" he wrote a friend.<sup>2</sup>

Unfamiliar with the township system of local government typified in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, many Marylanders, like Virginians, resisted a general system of free public schools. In the 1820s Littleton Dennis Teackle of Somerset County had drawn up a program that would have divided each county into districts and distributed the two-dollar annual cost of educating

a child among taxable citizens—each of whom, Teackle, figured, would have paid about sixty-two cents a year. An act of 1825 substantially adopted this plan while leaving the counties free to accept or reject it. Voters in six counties, among them Teackle's own, turned it down, postponing any statewide system of public education. As in other slave states, private academies in Maryland varied greatly in quality. Few measured up to Charlotte Hall, which for a time received monies from St. Mary's, Charles, and Prince George's counties, employed three teachers in the classics, and accepted twenty "free students." Another academically respectable academy, St. James, east of Hagerstown, had been chartered as a "college" in 1843; the Episcopal bishop of Maryland, William R. Whittingham, perhaps planned to build it into an institution to rival Mount St. Mary's, which thrived under the Reverend John McCaffey as a leading middle-states Catholic college. In Baltimore City and Frederick, Washington, and Allegany counties small free schools, some with one teacher, had become numerous by 1850, when the census placed Maryland's white illiteracy rate at about 5 percent. In this respect the state ranked between New England and New York (about 2 percent) and Virginia (8.6 percent).

The fortunate geography of Maryland continued to stimulate investments that few other Southerners found enticing. As the nineteenth century wore on, mineral wealth and ship, canal, and rail enterprises tied the state less to staple crop agriculture and ever more to manufacturing, Ohio Valley farming, and foreign exchange. In October 1850 the C&O Canal finally reached Cumberland. Long hampered by financial shortages and labor troubles, the canal company completed work on the fifty-mile stretch between Dam Number 6 at Great Cacapon and the Queen City using private money (in 1844 the legislature, itself in fiscal trouble, had released the company from earlier ties to the state). Though originally supposed to extend much farther than Cumberland, the canal became profitable enough as a conveyor of Western Maryland flour, wheat, and corn. Freight tonnage on the canal, a mere 60,000 in 1841, reached 86,000 in 1848 and two years later almost 102,000. Recognizing the close tie between farm productivity and the canal's success, company officials in 1848-49 offered special low toll rates on fertilizer headed upriver. Meantime the canal suffered from seemingly endless problems of maintenance and order. Each year banks caved in, muskrats burrowed under the towpath, floodwaters damaged both channels and locks, and boatmen broke rules against iron-tipped poles and untowed boats. Users of the "Big Ditch," as Potomac Marylanders called it, complained of delays, sunken wrecks, and drifting rafts. As always in need of funds, company directors watched developments in iron mining west of Cumberland and welcomed the bituminous coal traffic that the George's Creek Valley began to produce in quantity.

The canal literally faced an uphill contest in competing with the B&O, which eventually solved problems that would have broken the canal company. Having arrived at Cumberland (running on the Virginia side from

Harpers Ferry) eight years before the C&O opened to that city, the railroad faced both political and practical difficulties in reaching the Ohio River. Alive to the economic benefits of a cross-state railroad, Pennsylvania in the mid-1840s withdrew cooperation, forcing B&O planners to stay outside the state's boundary. In the summer of 1848 chief engineer Benjamin H. Latrobe, Jr., his predecessor, the feisty Jonathan Knight, and a New Englander, John Child, completed a survey that mapped the best route to the Ohio and estimated the cost of building west from Cumberland at more than six million dollars. The next year leadership of the company passed to a young and energetic board member, Thomas Swann. Swann cleverly used the plight of the B&O to activate the competitive juices and tap the pocketbooks of Baltimoreans, among them some younger men whose wealth had charted recent economic gains in the city—George Peabody, a New Englander with London banking ties, and Johns Hopkins, a Quaker merchant with heavy interests in development of the B&O.

Realizing the dangers of further delays (the Maryland and Virginia legislatures already had extended the deadline for completion to the Ohio), Swann focused all the resources of the road on the drive to Wheeling. Five thousand men and 1,250 horses went to work. Eleven tunnels had to be bored, two of them extraordinarily long: Broad Tree (163 miles from the Ohio) extended 2,350 feet; Kingwood (83 miles) ran to 4,100 feet, an unprecedented length. Delivering supplies to workers on the far side of each mountain required a switchback system that Mendes Cohen, a nephew of the B&O director of the same name, devised while serving under Latrobe. A company builder at the Mount Clare shops, Ross Winans, designed the slow but powerful engines that pulled twelve-ton loads up the steep switchbacks. B&O engineers constructed a 650-foot iron bridge—stone viaducts took too long to build and had grown too costly—over the Monongahela, the longest such structure in the country. Work proceeded with an enviable safety record. On Christmas Eve 1852, at a lonely spot 18 miles east of Wheeling, the tracks joined. In January, Maryland and Virginia dignitaries met at Wheeling for a rightly exuberant ceremony. After a quarter-century of trial, rails linked the Chesapeake Bay and Ohio River.

Practical developments ensured the primacy of rail over canal. Though Winans played a large part in locomotive technology during the 1830s and 1840s, the B&O had decided against relying on its own builders and gone to the open market for its engines. Philadelphia manufacturers supplied the next generation of steam locomotives, which, both powerful and fast, left no doubt that trains could run over the rugged terrain between Cumberland and Wheeling. Their boilers and driving rods, instead of vertical as in the early grasshoppers, lay parallel to the tracks. With forward "trucks" or sets of small wheels in front of the four drivers—along with "cowcatchers," gaping smokestacks, and racy cabs—the locomotive assumed its classical form. Between 1848 and 1854 revenues permitted the B&O to increase its number of

engines from 57 to 207. With more of them available, none had to be in constant service, making it possible to maintain them properly and thus minimize repair costs over long service. After completion of the line to Wheeling, Cohen experimented successfully with coal-burning boilers, and before long coal replaced wood on B&O tenders. He also designed a new pressure gauge that allowed firemen to know exactly how much fuel to burn to sustain a level of steam. This simple device saved the company an estimated ninety-five thousand dollars each year.

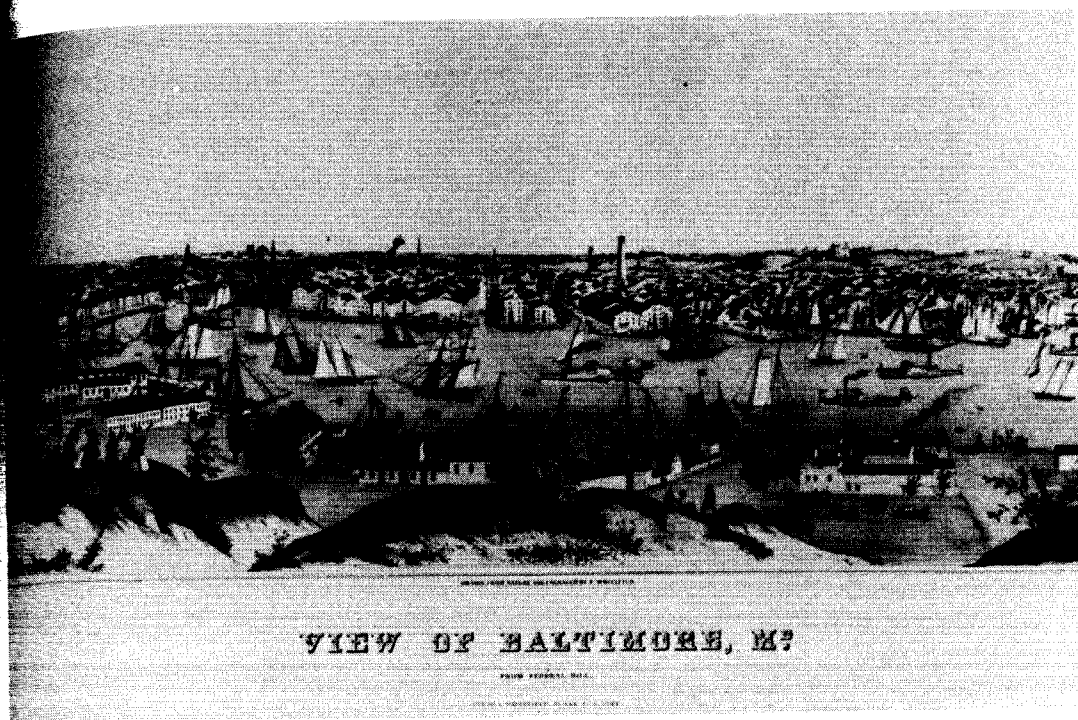
Criss-crossing much of the state, taking many engineering and operational lessons from the B&O, other railroads made their own marks. Annapolis had a line to the B&O tracks at Elkridge, Hagerstown its own rail connection to Harrisburg. Eastern Shore lines remained incomplete for want of capital. At mid-century the Baltimore and Susquehanna line connected Jones Falls factories and the Harrisburg intersection with the new Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1850 the company also completed work on a new, gas-lighted Calvert Street Station, then the largest in the country and a model of simplicity and function. It went up on the site of an old waterworks and stood only five blocks from Barnum's Hotel. Another company, the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore, connected those cities and in February 1850 opened its President Street Station just east of the harbor. Two years later the B&O left a haphazard Pratt Street depot and moved to the site on which the company in 1856 built Camden Station. Baltimoreans long had argued about land use, the proper pathways of railroads, and the noise of steam locomotives within the city. These new stations, along with track and wharfage construction at Canton and after 1848 at Locust Point, represented the state of the struggle between the railroads—which in 1845 won the nighttime right to use steam engines to carry heavy freight like coal and iron ore over city tracks—and the draymen, who needed hauling work but after 1847 faced higher taxes on their draft animals. Even after completion of the new, closer-in stations, passengers from Philadelphia to Washington detrained at President Street for a horsecar trip to the B&O terminus at Camden Street.

On the water, Maryland by mid-century had recovered from the financial reverses of 1837 and registered progress. In October 1852 Maryland ship pilots, angered by a recent act that permitted skippers to do their own bay and large-river piloting, formed a professional association with stiff membership requirements. During the next legislative session the association lobbied successfully for a bill making pilotage compulsory (unless shipowners paid an annual fee that a commission then divided among pilots) and establishing regular, if modest, rates. While ship captains disagreed that pilots alone knew Maryland waters well enough to navigate without mishap, the new law, partly satisfying a special interest, included general considerations of safety and insurance costs. In 1855 the state began planting offshore lighthouses (the first beacon had gone up at Bodkin Point in about 1820) according to a new, screw-pile design. Auger-like pilings, turned into the

soft bay bottom, solved the problem of anchorage that until then had frustrated construction of effective warnings on the bay's sandy shoals. The first one went off the mouth of the Patapsco at Seven Foot Knoll.

With travel safer than ever and the economy healthy, steamboats thrived. The Maryland and Virginia Steam Boat firm, a victim of the depression, gave way in 1840 to the Baltimore Steam Packet Company. Later known as the Old Bay Line, it resumed the daily service between Baltimore and Norfolk and demonstrated its prosperity in the early 1850s by ordering two new vessels, the *North Carolina* and *Louisiana*. Magnificent, white-painted side-wheelers with copper-covered wooden hulls, the steamships measured well over two hundred feet in length and incorporated the latest mechanical advances and creature comforts. Passengers who had nowhere to sit except on the main deck later remarked on the pervasive smell of liquor (shipboard bars did such business that captains and crews demanded a share of the profits) and the puddles of tobacco juice. More commonly travelers praised the boats as "elegantly carpeted and furnished . . . with the most profuse gilding, mirrors, ottomans, etc."<sup>3</sup> By 1858, agreements with rail lines to the north and south of the Chesapeake made the Old Bay Line a chain linking sections together. The company sold through tickets from New York City to Wilmington, North Carolina.

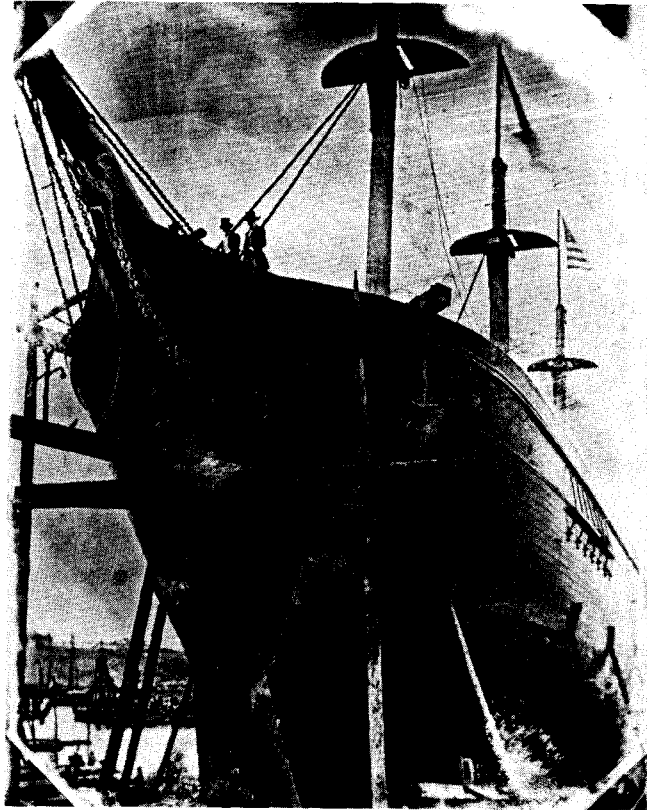
Maryland shipbuilding, most extensive in the slave states, enjoyed a rebirth of its own in the 1850s as shipping patterns once again called for fine-lined sailing vessels. Trade between Baltimore and New Orleans—with its Mississippi shoals—required vessels of shallow draft; trips to China, which fully opened its doors to Western commerce in 1842, and after 1849 runs to the California gold fields placed a premium on speed. Expanded as far as its design would permit, the Baltimore Clipper played a last part in the glory days of sailing. The *Ann McKim*, launched in 1833, 493 tons, joined the square stern, low freeboard, and heavy after-drag of the Baltimore Clipper hull (usually of about 250 tons) with the three-masted ship rig. Striving for the capacity of the packet ships then common to oceangoing commerce, the *Ann McKim* anticipated the large, full-sail clippers later famous in the California and China trades. Baltimore shipyards produced their share—*Rattler* (1842, 539 tons), *Architect* (1847, 520 tons), *Grey Eagle*, and *Grey Hound*. In the spring of 1850 the Bell brothers of Baltimore, Edward Johnzey and Richard Henry, accepted a commission to build a speedy ship of 550 tons burden for the busy traffic around Cape Horn. Their three-masted *Seaman*—136 feet long, 28 feet of beam, and drawing only 15 feet of water—slid into the basin at the end of September. Two months later, under Captain Joseph Myrick, the *Seaman* made its first New York to San Francisco passage in 107 days, registering the second-best time any vessel had made on that journey; her return sailing time, 94 days from San Francisco to Capes Henry and Charles, set a record for sailing ships that no one ever surpassed. With such success to prompt them, the Bells in July 1851 launched a sister ship, the *Seaman's*



Detail, "View of Baltimore, Maryland, from Federal Hill." Lithograph by Edwin Whitefield, 1841. From atop Federal Hill a group of gentlemen and ladies marvel at the active port and city beneath them—the countryside on the north almost having receded to the horizon. MHS

*Bride.* While Baltimore did not produce as many ships as Maine, New York, or Philadelphia in these years, it hummed with activity that made shipbuilding one of the four leading sources of city employment. Yards in Talbot and Dorchester counties turned out their own working vessels for bay waters.

All these economic advances worked to change the character of the people who called Maryland home. Elsewhere in the slave South social homogeneity helped enormously to preserve a white order based on black bondage. Maryland by 1850 had attracted a high proportion of free-state immigrants. Of about 55,500 non-Maryland-born persons in the state that year (perhaps 9,000 of them having arrived since 1840), only about 12,500 outsiders had arrived from the slave region to the south and west. More important, no eastern slave state approached Maryland in number or proportion of foreign-born. Of about 418,000 Maryland whites in 1850, almost 54,000, or nearly 13 percent, had been born abroad—half of them in Germany, about 20,000 in Ireland, 4,500 in England, Scotland, and Wales, and the rest in twenty-five different countries. Baltimore, that census year a city of nearly 170,000 people and twenty wards, had doubled in size since 1820 and accounted for almost 36,000 of the foreign-born. Germans in the city were numerous



The *Seaman's Bride* under construction, 1851. An early daguerreotype depicted the Bell brothers on the deck of their nearly completed clipper ship. MHS

enough to support publication of three newspapers in their language, clubs, musical and athletic groups, and schools. While the ratio of foreign to native-born in Maryland resembled the average for the entire United States at this time, a significant comparison lay with sister states below the Potomac: more foreign-born persons lived in Maryland in 1850 than in the other old slave states—Virginia to Georgia—combined. True, newcomers might adopt the ways of their new home, but the German papers in Baltimore were openly and actively abolitionist.



During the 1850s the peculiar qualities of Maryland both heated up politics within the state and, in sectional debate, gave its spokesmen an in-between perspective that counseled coolness and compromise. Sectional conflict followed upon United States military successes. Maryland volunteers, serving in a regiment that included District of Columbia troops, had fought in the

Mexican War and been involved in some of the heaviest fighting around Monterrey; the rich bounty of western territory that fell to the country at war's end in 1848 proved even deadlier than enemy musketry. David Wilmot's proposal that the federal government prohibit slavery in the lands won from Mexico set off hateful exchanges between slave and free states and quickly raised other acrimonious issues: how much trouble Northerners should take in returning fugitive slaves to the South (as the Constitution required of them) and whether Congress should permit slave trading in the federal capital (where by law it governed). Doubting that slaveholders' rights would survive intact in this crisis, Southern radicals called a convention to meet in June 1850 at Nashville, where they hoped to prod their states to consider secession.

Invited to participate, Maryland leaders all declined. Throughout the year public feeling in the state overwhelmingly favored peaceful settlement and a return to business. Governor Philip F. Thomas in his yearly address to the assembly—he was a Democrat, to the dismay of his traditionally Whig Eastern Shore family, and the legislature was overwhelmingly Whig—spoke of the need for moderation. The governor made his only political mistake in suggesting Maryland make common cause with the South should the sectional quarrel come to blows. On 4 March, in bad weather, five thousand Baltimoreans staged a bipartisan rally at Monument Square under a banner that read (paraphrasing a line Andrew Jackson had addressed to John Calhoun in 1831) "The Union Must and Shall be Preserved." Another such meeting, this one called by Baltimore businessmen, was held in June. All the while Maryland congressmen and Whig senators James A. Pearce of Chertertown and Thomas G. Pratt of Annapolis lent their support to Henry Clay's omnibus compromise bill, which in late summer suffered defeat. The Baltimore *Sun* wrote that the bill's "murder" was the fault of "Northern and Southern abstractionists." Newspapers in Rockville and the Eastern Shore echoed these sentiments. Finally it was Senator Pearce, introducing Clay's measures one by one, who broke the deadlock and secured passage of the hopeful 1850 compromise. Henry Winter Davis, a Baltimore lawyer and son of a former president of St. John's College, expressed the prevailing Maryland view when he wrote that the "North is filled with the fanatics of liberty, as the South is with the Quixotes of slavery." "In the name of God," wrote another Marylander in a letter he wished every American could read, "take the Compromise of 1850 and don't let us hear any more about this matter."<sup>4</sup>

Politics in Maryland itself did much to direct the state's course over the next few years, at the same time that, in Washington, sectional issues became more and more difficult to manage within party bounds. Congressional debates had made it obvious that most spokesmen for Southern rights were Democrats while the old opposition party—which for many years had won regular, if narrow, victories in Maryland federal elections—had divided so bitterly between "Conscience Whigs" and "Cotton Whigs" that it lay nearly



broken as a countrywide force. Most Maryland Democrats eschewed the extreme rhetoric of the Calhouns and Yanceys. Whig leaders in Maryland faced the unhappy prospect of belonging to a party with declining hopes of retaining the presidency. Then, in 1850, the matter of constitutional change in the state, subdued but not quieted after the 1837 reforms, returned to the fore. Malapportionment had remained a complaint in Baltimore and the western counties. Eastern Shoremen, though still unwilling to concede power to their traditional rivals, found the state's fiscal problems so severe (taxes recently had gone up to cover the heavy state debt) that a convention, as a means of tightening controls on spending, carried some appeal among them as well. Yet opposition in the Whiggish, slaveowning counties of Southern Maryland divided the party, and generally Whigs found themselves standing behind the Democrats in pro-reform publicity. In the western counties this image proved a severe disadvantage. During the 1850 gubernatorial canvass, coinciding with the election of delegates to the constitutional convention, the victorious Democrat Enoch Louis Lowe of Frederick, whose campaign newspaper was entitled the *Maryland Reformer*, had little trouble promoting himself as the better friend of progress.

The constitutional convention of 1851 was not a resounding success, but the encounter with reform worsened the plight of Maryland Whigs. From the start convention members placed themselves in bad odor by spending a week bickering over a choice for chairman. They went on to write a mixed bag of changes. New curbs appeared on legislative spending. The convention created new offices (state comptroller, commissioners of public works and lotteries, and county commissioners) while making formerly appointive local positions (judge of the orphans' court, county clerk, justice of the peace, and constable) elective. Henceforward state senators ran for reelection every four instead of six years. While the growing counties of the Western Shore did gain by the apportionment formula the convention finally agreed to, and Baltimore City enhanced its part of the General Assembly from one-sixteenth to one-eighth, opponents of drastic reform had enough votes to prevent election of the House of Delegates strictly on the basis of county population. Even as voters ratified the constitution, comment was critical almost everywhere: if a county did not lose representation, it did not gain enough. A Cumberland wag totaled the cost of the meeting and the length of the new constitution and argued that, at a cost of a dollar and a half per word, it was "about the hardest bargain of modern times."<sup>5</sup> The biggest losers, the Whigs, realized that they had won seats in the western counties only by running with Democrats as "fusion" candidates—suppressing their party identity—and that the state government, already susceptible to Democratic pleas, now consisted of even more offices that Democrats likely would win. In the 1852 contest between Winfield Scott and Franklin Pierce, the Democrats carried Maryland for the first time in a presidential election.

In these circumstances—sectional tensions still high, Whig party in decline—the cauldron of Maryland bubbled near boiling. Always combining dislocation and benefit, change in the state now brought a new round of fears. Since the 1830s private groups had been meeting to discuss the threat to old ways that accompanied the influx of immigrants, to ask what had happened to the former influence of the native-born. Secretive about their doings, members of these lodges had parried all questions by answering “I know nothing.” Detractors called them “Know-Nothings,” suggesting that they represented ignorance. In truth they spoke for bewilderment. Their malaise perhaps had something to do with the very speed of communication, the quickened pace of life. By 1848 the telegraph, first tested between Baltimore and Washington in 1844, made possible nearly instant news reporting from such faraway places as New Orleans. The Baltimore *Sun* soon made extensive use of the telegraph and wrote that it resulted in the “complete annihilation of space.”<sup>6</sup>

The Know-Nothings may also have reflected a Christian native's uneasiness about the growing Jewish presence in Baltimore. Since 1826 Jews had been able to hold public office in Maryland, but change had come only after struggle and several defeats. In 1818, after receiving petitions from Jewish Baltimoreans, delegates Thomas Kennedy of Washington County had proposed and William Pinkney of Baltimore had written a constitutional amendment removing the religious test for state officeholding. The federal Constitution prohibited such restrictions, and the measure had the support of lawyers like Henry M. Brackenridge and John Van Lear McMahon as well as spokesmen for religious equality, among them John S. Tyson, William G. D. Worthington, and Ebenezer S. Thomas of Allegany. Kennedy, a Scots-born admirer of Jefferson, said he knew no Jews personally but declared that one's religion “is a question which rests, or ought to rest[,] between man and his Creator alone.” “The right to put up one religion, is the right to put down another,” said Tyson, who won praise from the Catholic bishop John England of South Carolina. Despite its merits, the “Jew Bill” or “Kennedy's Jew Baby” became a test of party loyalty and went down to defeat in that session and again in 1822–23; Kennedy himself lost his seat for a term when an opponent charged that Jewish equality would bring Christianity “into popular contempt.” Once reelected, Kennedy introduced another measure that produced more acrimony and further pleas for religious rights. In February 1825 the bill at last passed—by one vote, with eighty legislators abstaining. Confirmed narrowly in the next assembly, the amendment opened places of public trust to anyone who believed in an afterlife—to Jews but not atheists.<sup>7</sup>

Of German origins, and for many years small in number, Baltimore Jewish families had formed the Hebrew Congregation (or Stadt Schule) in 1829. This Orthodox group moved from friendly rooms to available houses until Robert Cary Long, Jr., designed the first synagogue in the city. Long's Greek Revival structure retained the traditional gallery for women but introduced Ameri-

can (or Gentile) pews in the place of benches; it opened in 1845 in the heart of the old German-Jewish community centered around Lombard Street in Old Town. Another synagogue organized on Eden Street in Fells Point. A third—Reformed—split from the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1854 and built a temple on High Street, and then a fourth—Oheb Shalom (Lover of Peace)—tried to steer a middle course between Orthodoxy and Reformism. Despite theological differences, all these congregations clung to German-language services.

German Jews by the mid-nineteenth century had achieved considerable social distinction in the state. Reuben Etting earlier had served under Jefferson as federal marshal for Maryland. Both Solomon Etting, Reuben's father, and Jacob Cohen had lobbied for Jewish rights in the 1820s. After passage of the Kennedy amendment Etting and Cohen, well known as directors of the B&O, won seats on the city council. In 1846 Joshua Cohen, Jacob's younger brother and a prominent University of Maryland physician, played a part in removing a reference to Christians in an old law that limited black court testimony against whites; at the 1851 constitutional convention Dr. Cohen with partial success advocated the end of all religious references in state charter and laws. The number of Jews in Baltimore neared seven thousand in the late 1850s, when Jewish leaders included the banking Cohens and merchants and clothiers like the Ettings, Friedenwalds, Hutzlers, Hamburgers, Levys, and Sonneborns. Leopold Blumenberg, an officer in the Fifth Maryland, demonstrated that Jews could serve in the city's proudest militia unit.

Most of all, however, Know-Nothings were disturbed by electoral, labor, and miscellaneous violence and angered by "foreign ungrateful refugees." In Baltimore gangs calling themselves Plug-Uglies, Red Necks, Blood Tubs (who soaked the heads of erring voters in a vat of pig's blood), and Butt Enders combined drinking with intimidating rivals at polling places. Baltimore fire companies, many of them Irish or German clubs, had become "jealous as Kilkenny cats of one another"; rumored to set fires in order to engage in contests, wrote an astonished visitor, "they scarcely ever lose an opportunity of getting up a bloody fight." Labor groups, recovering from the long depression after 1837, brought together at least two currents of anxiety. Better-off Marylanders worried because laborers seemed to begin with a premise of natural conflict between propertied and poor; native-born union members harbored animus toward the immigrants who served as strikebreakers. In 1853 labor unrest reached a new peak. That spring and summer Allegany County coal miners (in some districts nine out of ten miners were foreigners) struck for more pay, threatening livelihoods all along the C&O Canal. Limestone workers in Baltimore County also went on strike. Laborers in the western Maryland iron fields and Harford County textile workers struck for a ten-hour workday.<sup>8</sup>

Objecting to use of the Protestant Bible in Baltimore public classrooms,



"A Sketch, from The New Tragic Farce, of 'Americans Shall Rule America' as enacted by Mayor Swann of Baltimore, and his wonderful 'Star' Company." Pen and ink drawing by unknown artist, 1858. The caption accused Swann of being behind Know-Nothing violence and rendered pithy dialogue: "Hello!! Red-neck—Seen any thing worth Shooting, up this way to day?" "No—nothing of any Count worth speaking of—Some of the Fellers racked out a 'Lager Beer' just now, and winged a few Dutch,—But I'm tired o' shooting Dutch and Irish, I am! If I don't kill something else soon, I'll spile!" MHS

Catholics in 1852–53 sought state funds for parochial education. Thomas Kerney, a Baltimore delegate and chairman of the education committee, introduced a bill that would have allowed commissioners to allocate to parochial schools "so much of the common School Fund as in their judgment may be just and reasonable." Quickly recognizing a no-win situation, members of the assembly tabled the measure in several consecutive sessions. Running quarrels over the Kerney bill poisoned relations between Protestants and Catholics, particularly since the numbers and political weight of Catholics were increasing with immigration. Few people recalled that in 1840 the Catholic clergy, seeking a fair solution, had seriously doubted whether introducing the Bible "as an ordinary class book into schools" would prove "beneficial to religion." One's position on the Kerney bill drew on deep be-

liefs and cultural identity. The bill gave free rein to the imagination. Opponents saw it as a "conspiracy against the diffusion of knowledge" and the dark design of a "foreign priesthood."<sup>9</sup> In the fall of 1854 the *Hagerstown Herald and Torch Light* fanned anti-Catholic sentiment by publishing a story about a nun who had "escaped" from the late Mother Seton's convent in Emmitsburg and whose accounts of abuse titillated readers. A crowd in Baltimore burned a papal emissary to American bishops in effigy. Friends of a mentally unstable priest took him by rail from Annapolis to a Baltimore hospital. Onlookers said that he had been kidnapped and held prisoner.

In the spring of 1853 nativists threw off their cloak of secrecy and got involved in politics, first as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner or Know-Nothings, then as affiliates of the countrywide American party. Members came out against the Kerney bill and in favor of the Maine Law—a temperance measure proposed in the assembly. The Know-Nothings drew on rural discontent over the pace and "morbid love" of change and the ballooning power of Baltimore; the *Worcester County Shield*, a Know-Nothing voice on the Eastern Shore, called the mid-1850s "this age of wild and reckless fanaticism" and referred sarcastically to "Beautiful Baltimore"—so "petted and pampered and indulged" that its citizens had begun to think of the city "as all Maryland." The new party organized under the banner Americans Shall Rule America. Charles Benedict Calvert, a Prince George's County Know-Nothing with distinguished bloodlines, wrote the *Port Tobacco Times* urging a movement to "bring back the government to its original purity."<sup>10</sup> Nativists did not have to be Anglo-Protestants with forebears like Josias Fendall or John Coode to participate in the soul-searching—or belong to the Protestant branch of the Carroll family, as did an active Know-Nothing publicist, Anna Ella Carroll. Friedrich Anspach, a Lutheran minister in western Maryland, published a number of nativist pamphlets in these years, the best known of which, *Sons of the Sires*, made an impassioned plea to the native-born to restore the republic of the Founding Fathers. Troubled Marylanders, many of them former Whigs but ex-Democrats in Baltimore as well, heeded the call. In the fall of 1855 Know-Nothings took control of the Baltimore city government, filled all the state judgeships up for bid, elected several state commissioners, gained the balance of power in the legislature, and won four of the six Maryland congressional seats.

On the subject of slavery, the state Know-Nothings tried to maintain the moderation that appealed to most Marylanders. Henry Winter Davis, now a congressman and Know-Nothing leader, told colleagues in Washington that "the way to settle the slavery question is to be silent on it." But events made silence impossible. Opening the Kansas territory to antislavery and proslavery elements in 1854—leaving slavery in the future state constitution to settlers to decide—Congress both had repealed the Missouri Compromise (prohibiting slavery north of Missouri and above its southern border to the west)

and produced an orgy of frontier violence. With Kansas bleeding, politicians in Congress found it difficult to discuss much of anything peaceably. In May 1856 Preston Brooks assaulted and nearly killed Charles Sumner on the Senate floor. The Baltimore *Sun* decried both the abolitionist's "venomous invective" and the South Carolinian's brutal reprisal.<sup>11</sup>

The presidential election that year forecast the fate of moderation as crisis worsened. Maryland Know-Nothings supported the American party candidate, Millard Fillmore, an ex-president and former Whig, and his running mate, the Tennessean Andrew Jackson Donelson. Like the Whigs earlier, the American party split between supporters of the ticket and "North Americans" who thought both men soft on slavery. The only state Fillmore carried was Maryland. Once again without patronage hopes at the federal level, Maryland Know-Nothings faced a bleak future. Democrats won many votes in the state by running a Pennsylvanian who refused to condemn slavery, James Buchanan. His refusal cost him much Northern support and thus bolstered the new Republican party that was fundamentally hostile to Southern interests. Standing against slavery in the territories, favoring a high protective tariff, free land for homesteaders, and federal support of internal improvements like western railroads, Republicans protested that they would not touch slavery in the states below the Mason-Dixon Line and Ohio River. Yet not even Marylanders doubted that, in Republican hands, congressional power and presidential appointments could greatly undermine slave-ownership and its way of life. In slaveholding Southern Maryland, Catholic enough to back away from the Know-Nothings anyhow, voters drifted toward the Democratic camp because it offered a more likely check on "Black Republicanism."

With the old parties in disarray, extremists and novices on both sides found opportunities for advancement, and when tempers were feverishly hot, inexperience could take a heavy toll. Maryland Know-Nothings proved a partial exception to the general rule. Most of them had never before run for public office, and once in the General Assembly might have abruptly passed laws, as one nativist proposed, outlawing Catholic convents as "priests' prisons for women."<sup>12</sup> Instead, Know-Nothings exercised restraint, as if the anti-Catholic rhetoric that had helped them win office embarrassed them once in power. At national conventions of the American party, in fact, Maryland Know-Nothings worked to define the enemy as immigrants rather than Catholics.

On the other hand, rowdyism at Baltimore polling places—instead of abating as the scions of the sires took control—grew worse. Whether the "enemy" was an Irish newcomer or an Irish Catholic, Know-Nothing appeals at election time encouraged intense public interest, attacks and counterattacks, and immense fraud. In October 1856 the Baltimore city elections produced pitched battles between Know-Nothings and Irish Democrats near

Monument and Calvert streets and at the Lexington Market. Besides throwing brickbats and swinging clubs, opposing sides pulled pistols and drove some voters to seek cover behind the white marble town-house steps that visitors found so beautiful. Four people died in the fray and at least fifty, in the words of a laconic physician, were injured "more or less dangerously."<sup>13</sup> To keep some kind of order during the later Fillmore-Buchanan contest, the Democratic governor, Thomas Watkins Ligon, placed militia units on alert and offered them to Thomas Swann, now the Know-Nothing mayor. Swann calculated the effects of an increased Democratic turnout and refused help. When the riot fully unfolded somebody started firing a cannon. Ten persons were killed and more than two hundred and fifty wounded. Mayor Swann took his own measures to keep peace during the two elections in the fall of 1857, which made up in stuffed ballot-boxes what they lacked in street violence.



Concern for order, locally and generally, mounted. Prominent Baltimore business and professional men, along with some clerks and skilled workers, formed a City Reform Association in 1858. Led by the established lawyer and slavery opponent George William Brown, reformers promoted change in the city police and fire departments. People in other parts of the state still looked with horror upon the metropolis; an Annapolis newspaper expressed "shame and disgust" at irregularities that cast a pall on every Baltimore election return.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile Americans debated Chief Justice Taney's most famous and infamous decision, handed down the year before, declaring that a slave like Dred Scott did not escape his condition by being moved into free territory. The federal Constitution, Taney declared, never had contemplated black citizenship. Excoriated by abolitionists, Taney's majority decision did not comfort moderate Marylanders either, because it dismissed the old Missouri Compromise as unconstitutional in the first place—Congress had no power to prevent slaveholders from taking their human property anywhere they chose. How could one compromise without establishing a north-south line? Must every western territory undergo the bloodbath and then election-eering fraud that had made such a mess of Kansas?

Sectional suspicions grew darker and darker, and while arguments about escaping slaves and freeing blacks tended toward theory in Massachusetts or Alabama, in Maryland they could not have been more concrete. Having played a leading part in the effort to colonize freed blacks in the 1830s, Marylanders faced anew the question of the free black's place in society. One reason for the failure of colonization lay with the blacks themselves—they steadfastly refused to leave home. By 1850, more free blacks lived in Maryland than in any other state of the Union. In ten years the gap widened; the 1860 census counted almost 84,000 "free people of color" in Maryland (Vir-

ginia that year had 58,000, Pennsylvania 56,000). They lived all over, but were concentrated on the Eastern Shore and in Baltimore City. To encourage their departure, state and city legislation kept them out of jobs like policeman and steamboat captain and from fields like the militia, politics, and law.

Whites expected them to work at menial tasks, especially in the country. Caroline County offered an example of population shifts and rural labor demand that caused friction between free blacks and whites. From the first of the nineteenth century its black population had grown more than four times as fast as that of whites, while the percentage of blacks who were slaves had dropped from about 80 to 20. Meantime Eastern Shore farmers found it hard to interest free blacks in labor contracts that rewarded them with little more than "victuals and clothes" and assigned them the common agricultural and domestic work they had done as slaves. Blacks who did labor usually worked "Christmas to Christmas," living as a tenant on a landowner's farm, or performed seasonal work like harvesting crops; if women did not join the men in the fields they washed clothes or served as house maids.

At the same time a few free blacks in the country managed to prosper as skilled workers—some of them in shops, others as itinerants. A Talbot County free black earned a wide reputation as a shoemaker who also could build boats, wagons, and wheels. On the lower Eastern Shore free blacks worked as sawyers. In Chestertown and Cambridge the most successful butchers were free blacks. Until someone discovered a copy of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in his back room, a Salisbury free black managed to do very well as a shopkeeper. Captain Robert Henry of Pocomoke City became a successful shipowner and trader, carrying on business between Maryland and Virginia ports. To judge from white patronage, the most successful restaurants in Chestertown, Easton, and Princess Anne were those of free blacks, and when in 1845 the federal government opened a naval school at Fort Severn, Annapolis, the first chief steward there was a local black freeman. Elsewhere on the Western Shore free blacks had a hand in the hard work of ironmaking, blacksmithing, and farming. At Ellicott's Mills they made barrels and harness of noted quality.

Most conspicuous in Baltimore, free blacks and mulattoes found their position increasingly vulnerable in the 1850s. Twenty-five thousand of them lived there, more than in any other American city, and they had done much to build a society of their own. A few had attained some status as tobacconists, confectioners, grocers, or clothiers; one, Lewis Wells, was a physician. After 1847 Baltimore free blacks supported two Masonic lodges. Besides their African Methodist Episcopal churches—now numbering about fifteen—they had established two banks (with almost twenty-one thousand dollars on deposit) and more than thirty mutual aid or insurance societies. They also banded together in their residential patterns. Free blacks (and some slaves) formed backstreet neighborhoods in Fells Point and Old Town



and to the west and southwest of the harbor; they bore ironic or tell-tale names like Happy Alley, Welcome Alley, Strawberry Alley, and Whiskey Alley.

Baltimore blacks provided evidence of community strength in this period by trying to place their children's schooling on a firm foundation. For many years outsiders had commented on the church sabbath schools and their seriousness of purpose; after a visit in 1847 a black Baptist minister from Virginia said he found the colored people of Baltimore "advanced in education, quite beyond what I had conceived of." Still, the sabbath schools left many gaps to be filled. In early 1850 the Reverend Moses Clayton, Nathaniel Peck, and Captain Daniel Myers and other black leaders dared to petition the mayor and council for part of the city's school allocations. Maryland law neither prohibited black education nor encouraged it; though Clayton and the others had the support of 126 whites who questioned why blacks should be taxed to support schools for whites only, the mayor and council abided by tradition and declined the request. Over the next decade black churches, the black Catholic Oblate Sisters of Providence, and some white friends—Methodists, Quakers, Presbyterians—managed to open fifteen schools for black children in Baltimore. That of William Watkins, who was self-taught except for some training with Daniel Coker, had the highest reputation: "He was strict," a former student remembered, "from the first letter in the alphabet to the last paragraph of the highest reader."<sup>15</sup>

All the while free blacks discovered their jobs shrinking as white immigrants forced their way into the Baltimore labor market. This process, begun in the 1830s, accelerated as the number of unskilled whites in the city increased and as skilled whites controlled certain occupations with guilds open to themselves alone. By the 1850s free blacks for so long had dominated barbering, blacksmithing, and carriage driving that whites avoided that work as "black." Free Negroes made slight advances during the decade in oystering, though perhaps not owning their own boats, and in bricklaying as Baltimoreans put up structures less likely to burn. Other work, earlier shared between white and black, gradually went to whites. City directories for 1860 listed far fewer free blacks than earlier as laborers, sawyers, washers, draymen, and the like. This process did not always occur peacefully, particularly after the economic downturn of 1857. In May of the next year whites attacked black workers in a Fells Point brickyard, shooting one. That summer fights between black caulkers and whites trying to "bust" the longtime Negro hold on those jobs grew vicious enough to force the closing of Skinner's shipyard. In June 1859 whites belligerently offered themselves as replacements for blacks on the city horse-drawn railway system—but only at a raise from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per day. Soon after, a mob attacked blacks at another shipyard. Thugs whom police took into custody later went free for lack of white witnesses. The *Sun* referred to a "reign of terror" on the Baltimore docks.<sup>16</sup>

These tensions did not improve with news of John Brown's raid on the Harpers Ferry federal arsenal that October. Brown's unlikely, even maniacal, plan was to arm Virginia slaves and begin a war to free all Southern bondsmen. His vision carried racial conflict to its hideous conclusion, and his force included several free blacks. Maryland militia units, some from Baltimore, gladly joined in capturing Brown. In the superheated atmosphere following the raid—with military companies forming in the state to repel madmen, keep order, and protect white families from racial holocaust—free blacks stood near the top of the suspected enemies list. Baltimore constables in December 1859 answered a call that a fight had broken out at the black caulkers' annual ball. What the police found after breaking in provided plenty of ammunition for the various white Marylanders who resented free blacks in a slave state. The caulkers had drawn a likeness of Brown on the ballroom floor and labeled it "The martyr—God bless him." Also on the floor were outlines of Virginia governor Henry A. Wise (who had seen to Brown's execution), "a huge Ethiopian" who apparently struck a menacing pose, and an inscription that the *Sun* described as "unfit for publication." Forty-nine blacks were arrested. Laws pertaining to the free Negro now received the full attention of authorities. The next year three blacks in Harford County were prosecuted for "being members of a secret association," violating a law of 1842. Police in Somerset County and Annapolis conducted searches for weapons among free blacks. Rural Marylanders believed free blacks and slaves had set house fires and tried to poison whites.<sup>17</sup>

Evidence that Maryland free blacks incited slaves to rebel or helped them to escape did not have to be enormous; protests to the contrary aside, slaveholders so near free territory were in good position to worry. Indeed, with Northern states, Pennsylvania among them, passing "personal liberty" laws in these years—statutes making recovery of fugitives legally difficult and expensive—Maryland slaveowners suffered directly from one of the celebrated complaints Southerners made while weighing the Union. The number of blacks who escaped slavery never was entirely clear. According to census figures 279 Maryland slaves fled the state between June 1849 and June 1850—though at least another 47 were captured and imprisoned in Baltimore. In the year before the 1860 census, Maryland fugitives numbered 115 (about as many as from Virginia and Kentucky), with another 70 caught and jailed in Baltimore alone.

Only a few incidents were needed to fuel fears that free blacks aided and abetted slave resistance. In July 1845 a gang of 30 or 40 Charles County slaves had gathered together and covered considerable distance (presumably with the help of District of Columbia free blacks) before armed whites overwhelmed them near Rockville. Whites held a meeting at Port Tobacco and gave free blacks there until 1 December to leave the county. In 1847 a gang of free blacks in Hagerstown tried to free fugitive slaves detained in the jail

there. Six blacks near Cambridge were arrested in 1849 on charges of aiding escaped slaves. In 1857 a Baltimore court sentenced a free black to banishment from the state for the same offense.<sup>18</sup>

White Marylanders could not agree on what to do about the "free Negro problem" or slavery either. Though immigrants had little love for their free black competitors, many of them, in particular the Germans who fled political oppression after collapse of the 1848 revolution, abhorred slavery. Eastern Shore farmers continually complained during harvest season that free blacks could not be "induced to work," though many of these same people, former slaveholders, had helped bring on their predicament by acting on antislavery principles. Baltimore slaveowners knew that the abundance of free blacks dropped wages and thus made hiring out slaves less profitable. Partly for that reason Baltimore slaves had declined in number between 1850 and 1860, from almost 3,000 to 2,218. In fact, slavery in the state as a whole had continued its decline during that period, from 90,368 to 87,189. Alone of the slave states, Maryland had almost as many free as enslaved blacks. The tendency of the first group to grow larger and the second smaller caused white Marylanders anxiety, yet the economic feasibility of slavery remained a doubtful question. The price of tobacco reached a low point of 5¢ a pound in 1850 (it had been 20¢ in 1810), and Marylanders continued to discuss farm reform and new crops that meant using free labor. Some slaveholders sold their bondsmen to traders who sent them southward. Stories circulated of other planters who simply turned their backs while their slaves ran off. A Bel Air man claimed that poor farm prices left him glad that his slaves had escaped. John Giddings of Prince George's County gave his blacks food and directions to the Mason-Dixon Line.<sup>19</sup>

When the General Assembly convened in early 1860 it briefly considered restoring a simpler order with all blacks in some kind of bondage. Militant slaveholders and planters in need of dependable labor (petitions arrived from Cecil, Somerset, Anne Arundel, and St. Mary's counties) lobbied in favor of proposals that would have ended manumission, forbidden blacks from peddling, traveling, holding their own church services, or having their own schools, and punished some offenses—among them carrying books or papers of an "inflammatory character" and any crime for which a white went to prison—with slavery. Unless free blacks found regular jobs, local commissioners would assign them masters under terms that involved renewable contracts and amounted to peonage. Since by Taney's dictum free blacks could not be citizens, the state, some legislators argued, had an obligation to "restrain their freedom and make them useful and subordinate laborers." "Free-negroism throughout this State must be abolished," declared Curtis W. Jacobs in defense of the bill that finally emerged from his House of Delegates committee on "the Free Colored Population." He aimed to force his colleagues to decide whether Maryland would be a Southern state "or whether she shall go into the arms of the abolitionists." Significantly, the Jacobs bill

passed the assembly as a referendum, to be decided in the counties of Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore alone. Also significantly, voters there turned it down. The plan would have put the "evil example" of freed blacks in the slave quarters. It would have saddled slaveholders with slavery.<sup>20</sup>



This curious referendum helped prepare Marylanders for the decision the country faced in the November presidential election. Democrats split. At the regular Charleston convention they nominated John Breckinridge, the choice of proslavery, positive-protection-of-slavery Southern Democrats; another faction, meeting in Baltimore at the Front Street Theater (where the main floor caved in), offered voters Stephen A. Douglas. On the Kansas-Nebraska formula, Douglas wished to leave slavery to future territorial voters. The Republican party—its slogan "Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free Land"—mustered small numbers in Frederick and Carroll counties and claimed support among pro-tariff Allegany County workers, except the Irish. Baltimore German immigrants applauded the Republican plank against slavery in the territories. Yet Lincoln had little hope of success in Maryland. The Free Soilers, Republican forebears, had won only 21 Baltimore votes in the 1852 presidential election; in 1856 the Republican candidate John Frémont had captured a mere 214. To help organize the House of Representatives in early 1860, Henry Winter Davis, who first and last despised Democrats, had cast a deciding vote for a Republican, William Pennington of New Jersey. At home that decision won him burning in effigy and obtained assembly resolutions condemning him. Miners in Pompey Smash raised what they believed was the first Lincoln campaign pole below the Mason-Dixon Line; someone cut it down, and after the Lincoln Club president put it back up, he had to stand guard over it with a shotgun. In places support of the Republicans made one an abolitionist. A Charles County Republican, believing he could deliver 15 or 20 Lincoln votes there, vowed to stand firm "although," he said, "it may cost me my life."<sup>21</sup>

Workingmen in Baltimore, so many of them loyal Democrats, made life miserable for Republicans. In May of the election year, Montgomery Blair, a Missouri-born, moderate Republican leader, left his Silver Spring estate to make a speech in Baltimore. He had to contend with a howling mob. When the Germans staged rallies, opponents pounded them with stones, garbage, and eggs. Thick-skinned Republicans formed a chapter of the party's Wide Awakes, whose active members marched to rallies wearing green capes and slate-colored caps with red trim. One night during the campaign the Wide Awakes staged a torchlight procession that wound up at the Holliday Street Theater. Democrats and various rowdies, having waited in the galleries, drowned every Republican speaker in a chorus of groans, bahs, coughs, wheezes, and sneezes. A Wide Awake leader who visited the gallery to call for quiet was thrown down the stairs. By the time police arrived, the meeting

had become a brawl and someone had mounted the stage armed with a pistol. Another open Republican in Baltimore, the hapless abolitionist William Gunnison, suffered like an early Christian martyr; "the presence of ladies alone," wrote an unfriendly paper of an assault made upon him, "spared him the application of boots and shoes to that point of the human anatomy where kicks 'Hurt honor more than twice two thousand kicks before.'" <sup>22</sup>

Marylanders by and large wanted both to uphold Southern rights and to hold the Union together. Their choice narrowed to the Democrat Breckinridge and yet another ticket that formed in the state itself—at a "Constitutional Union" convention held at the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore during May 1860. The new party, combining old Whigs and Know-Nothings in an uncertain alliance, nominated John Bell, a pro-Union Tennessean, for president and a Massachusetts conservative, Edward Everett, for vice-president. Bell and Everett sought to unite moderates throughout the country. Western Marylanders and leading Baltimoreans welcomed their appeal. The *Cumberland Civilian & Telegraph* endorsed the Constitutional Union party. Brantz Mayer, lawyer and man of letters, voiced the now-familiar cry that differences over slavery were false alarms, "political bugaboos, that are as harmless and hollow as ghosts manufactured out of sheets and pumpkins." John Pendleton Kennedy, who earlier in the decade had served well as Fillmore's secretary of the navy and then had withdrawn from politics, wrote an English friend that slavery agitation represented a political "trick," a sentiment others in the makeshift party echoed. Kennedy came out of retirement at Mount Vernon Place to speak for Bell. Constitutional Union men avoided discussing sectional issues, pointing out instead the value of steadiness, the rule of law, the protections contained for both sides in the Constitution. They warned of the radical drift of Breckinridge's platform. Frederick newspapers referred to Breckinridge men as "seceders"; the Baltimore *American* noted "the rampant and controlling spirit of disunion" as being "a distinguishing feature of his supporters." <sup>23</sup>

Though in the state Breckinridge's Democracy carried the taint of secessionist threats, his candidacy also defended rights that many Southern and Eastern Shore Marylanders—as possible slaveholders in the west—might wish to exercise, or that they held inviolable given their view of the compact Americans had entered into in 1789. A Montgomery County paper expressed "abhorrence" at the unwillingness of Bell to speak "upon this most vital and all-important question of slavery in the territories." For many months before the election the *Sun* refuted the charge that Southern rights stood for aggressiveness or radicalism. Lovers of the Union, wrote *Sun* editors, should ask themselves not whether the South would secede, but when the arrogant North would recede—give up its hostile designs on Southern property. "Maryland Must and Will Be True to the South," read a hopeful banner painted for a Breckinridge meeting in Monument Square. <sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately the November elections settled nothing. Lincoln won more

The Constitution, the Union, and the  
Equality of the States.



For President,  
**JNO. C. BRECKINRIDGE,**  
OF KENTUCKY.

For Vice-President,  
**JOSEPH LANE,**  
OF OHIO.

For Electors of President and Vice-President of the  
United States.

E. LOUIS LOWE,  
JAMES LLOYD MARTIN,  
ELIAS GRISWOLD,  
JOHN BROOKE BOYLE,  
JOSHUA VANSANT,  
T. PARKIN SCOTT,  
JOHN RITCHIE,  
JAMES S. FRANKLIN,

**Maryland State Ticket.**  
Election, Tuesday, November 6th, 1860.



"The Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of  
the Laws."

For President of the United States,  
**JOHN BELL,**  
Of Tennessee.  
For Vice President of the United States,  
**EDWARD EVERETT,**  
Of Massachusetts.

For Electors of President and Vice President of the  
United States

**CHARLES F. GOLDSBOROUGH,**  
**J. DIXON ROMAN.**  
1st District—**JAMES U. DENNIS.**  
2d " **JOHN B. SMITH.**  
3d " **SAMUEL M. RANKIN.**  
4th " **WILLIAM PRICE.**  
5th " **JAMES S. CARPER.**  
6th " **ALEXANDER B. HAGNER.**

**NATIONAL  
Democratic Nominations**



FOR PRESIDENT,  
**STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS,**  
OF ILLINOIS.

FOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
**HERSCHEL V. JOHNSON,**  
OF GEORGIA.

**ELECTORS.**

COL. WILLIAM F. MAUGSBY,  
JOHN B. BOWAN,  
G. W. F. SMITH,  
COL. WILLIAM B. STEVENSON,  
DR. MILTON N. TAYLOR,  
HON. HENRY MAY,  
WILLIAM WALSH,  
HENRY E. WOOTEN.

**Republican Ticket.**



FOR PRESIDENT,

**Abraham Lincoln,**

OF MASS.

FOR VICE-PRESIDENT,

**Hannibal Hamlin,**

OF MAINE.

FOR ELECTORS.

For the State at Large,

**WILLIAM L. MARSHALL,**  
**GEORGE BAKER.**

1st District—**DANIEL V. COBB,**  
2d " **WM. FERGUSON SMITH,**  
3d " **THOMAS E. CONKERN,**  
4th " **GEO. EDWARD WHEE,**  
5th " **ISAAC COBB,**  
6th " **MONTGOMERY BLAIR.**

Election tickets, 1860. Maryland supporters of all four candidates used similar slogans and symbols in avowing loyalty to Constitution, Union, and liberty. MHS

than five hundred votes in Allegany County, over a hundred in Cecil and Frederick, and about a thousand in Baltimore City. Douglas strength followed the same pattern, with Washington, Carroll, and Baltimore counties added. Bell and Everett carried 47 percent of the vote outside Baltimore City and all the counties except Talbot and Worcester east of the bay and St. Mary's, Charles, and Prince George's on the Western Shore. Breckinridge nonetheless ran a close second in all the counties except those with Lincoln-Douglas leanings. Democrats in Baltimore City, having successfully identified themselves with electoral and police reform, carried the day by over two thousand votes. The total Maryland popular vote thus went to Breckinridge by six-tenths of a percentage point. Badly divided in selecting a new president, Marylanders had objected overwhelmingly to "black Republicanism." Nearly half of them had supported as their first choice a kindly old statesman who seemed to hope that the political weather might someday clear. Soon that hope seemed terribly forlorn. Between December and early 1861 the states from South Carolina to Texas seceded, calling on Marylanders to make another choice, this one between staying in or leaving the Union that now had a Republican in its highest office.

The quarrel over Maryland secession began as soon as Lincoln's election became clear, and it engaged a full range of reason, emotion, and prayer. "May God in his mercy avert the dangers" that impend "so threateningly," prayed the *Frederick Herald* in mid-November. Shortly afterward Presbyterians in Baltimore held a large "Union prayer meeting." Newspapers like the *Centreville Advocate* and *Patapsco Enterprise* argued in favor of secession. In December, after the secession of South Carolina, some Baltimoreans hung the Palmetto flag out their windows. "Southern Volunteers" formed in Baltimore, while a Reisterstown company adopted the blue cockade that signified Southern rights. A Harford County militia unit wrote the governor, Thomas Holliday Hicks, begging to be mobilized against the "Black Republican hordes of the North." Newspapers overflowed with opinion: some Marylanders favored armed neutrality, others economic reprisals against the North, others a strengthened fugitive slave law as the price of keeping the state in the Union. Pro-Union feeling grew more vocal with news that more states had followed South Carolina's lead. In January Union men staged rallies in Frederick, Baltimore, and Cumberland. George William Brown, now Baltimore mayor, left no doubt that in his opinion state policy ought to be adherence to the Union. Henry Winter Davis, remaining unpopular at home as one who was willing to deal with the incoming Republicans, played a large role in congressional efforts to find a sectional compromise, at one point suggesting admission of New Mexico as a slave and Kansas as a free state.<sup>25</sup>

The Union or secession issue involved procedure that bogged down revolution and focused attention sharply on one man. If Maryland were to withdraw from the Union, the decision would require a convention elected for

the purpose. Only the General Assembly could call such an election, and the legislature, convening every other year under the 1851 constitution, was not due to meet until 1862. Everyone watched to see whether the governor would call a special session. Nothing could properly have prepared Hicks for this crisis, but to many observers he cast an unusually small shadow. Son of a Dorchester County planter, he had risen slowly as county sheriff and member of the House of Delegates. He had gained a reputation in the state for talking seriously now and again of Eastern Shore secession. In 1857, when it was the turn of the Eastern Shore to supply the executive, he had won the governorship as a Know-Nothing. Now Hicks claimed to know of a plot to take the state out of the Union if the assembly met. Plot or not, the Democratic legislature in 1860 had resolved, "if the hour ever arrive when the Union must be dissolved," to cast Maryland's "lot with her sister states of the South and abide their fortune to the fullest extent." It was no secret that counties where Breckinridge had polled well still enjoyed heavy representation in the assembly. The Speaker of the House of Delegates, Elbridge G. Kilbourn of Anne Arundel, had openly sided with the seceded states. Kilbourn commented that the situation was too serious to allow the governor to go it alone.<sup>26</sup>

Hicks faced his duty ruefully and cautiously. Though sympathizing with the South as a critic of personal liberty laws, he counted himself a strong Union man and furthermore doubted the wisdom or workability of secession. In late November 1860 he had announced a wait-and-see policy; nothing, he wrote the month following, should be done before the people had time to reflect. As pressure mounted, Hicks's resolve seemed to strengthen. True to his Eastern Shore and small-state heritage, he hated above all things to be bullied. South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi sent letters or emissaries urging the governor and Maryland to act. Hicks reportedly said that disunion remedied no wrongs done the South "and Maryland should not seem to give countenance to it by convening her legislature at the bidding of South Carolina." When in January 1861 Mississippi departed the Union, he noted on the back of the envelope that had brought him the telegraphed news, "Mississippi has seceded and gone to the devil."<sup>27</sup>

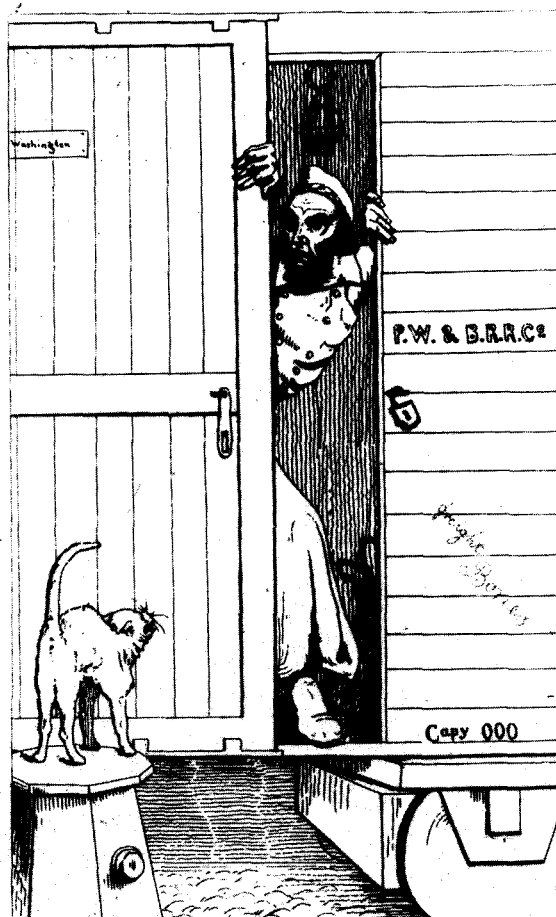
The governor continued his balancing act throughout the early months of 1861 while excitement, war fever, and rumors filled the air. A gathering of citizens disgusted with the governor's inaction met in Baltimore in February and again in March, threatening to call an extralegal convention to debate secession. Meantime Hicks, on his own power, appointed a committee of Marylanders—Reverdy Johnson, Augustus W. Bradford, Benjamin Chew Howard, John T. Dent, John W. Crisfield, William T. Goldsborough, and J. Dixon Roman—to attend a conference that opened 4 February at the Willard Hotel in Washington. There border-state and Northern moderates made a desperate attempt to formulate a sectional compromise. The nationalism that gloried in the defense of Fort McHenry provided Hicks with emotional



leverage in these highly charged circumstances. He told a delegation from Talbot County that secessionists in the District of Columbia had poised themselves to take over Washington City should Maryland move. Wavering Marylanders must have agreed with the governor that the prospect of an isolated and pillaged federal capital was shocking and unacceptable. Lincoln's necessary rail passage through Baltimore in late February gave rise to plenty of whispered rumors of a kidnapping or assassination, though no one ever produced the names of the supposed conspirators. A Maryland woman wrote the governor of a plan she had been told about involving three thousand men who were determined to prevent Lincoln from taking office. The Baltimore City Guards planned to take part in the military parade at Lincoln's inauguration. A reporter for the *New York Tribune*, hoping that General in Chief Winfield Scott would "assign them a proper place" if they did, described the guards' sympathies as "fully understood."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the conciliatory tone of the president's address on 4 March, the practical problem of handling federal garrisons within the seceded South offered scant room for compromise or delay, and in mid-April, when South Carolinians fired on Fort Sumter and Lincoln called on the states to gather seventy-five thousand troops to put down the rebellion, Marylanders faced the most difficult question yet placed before them: whether to arm themselves and force fellow Americans to remain in the Union, whether to cooperate at all in the war against Southern independence. Having expressed scruples against Union-by-coercion, Hicks found himself tottering. Military units sporting the blue cockade, fired by action in Charleston, waited menacingly for the state to secede. Enough Baltimoreans demonstrated against answering the president's call that Hicks felt compelled to visit the city and see for himself. On 17 April he traveled to Washington to confer with Lincoln and his highest aides, advising them against pressing the troop request and warning them of the tinderbox that was Baltimore—through which Lincoln's army presumably would pass. Later that day the secretary of war sent Hicks written assurances that the administration would employ Maryland soldiers only to defend federal property within state boundaries and to protect Washington. On 18 April the governor issued a plea for calm, assured citizens that any federal force passing through the state would be directed only to the defense of the capital, and promised in the pending congressional elections to listen to the voice of Maryland on the issue of Union or secession. The next day, staying with Mayor Brown in Baltimore, Hicks had begun drafting the Maryland muster order when the public voice reached him from the streets.

The riot of 19 April eventually became legendary. At about 11 A.M. the 6th regiment of Massachusetts volunteers arrived from Philadelphia at the President Street Station. The troops then proceeded by single horse-drawn cars along Pratt Street to the B&O station for the trip to Washington. Most of the



"Passage through Baltimore." Etching by Adalbert Volck, 1861. Allan Pinkerton's agents recommended that President-elect Lincoln slip through divided Baltimore in the dead of night, thus prompting Volck to pick up his poison pen.  
MHS

seven hundred men had made it, hazarding shouts and stones, when some bystanders dumped a cartload of sand and threw some anchors on the tracks ahead of the last few cars, halting them and turning them back. Soon afterward Mayor Brown, demonstrating the new official attitude toward disorder in Baltimore, arrived on the scene and ordered the debris cleared. Brown next met the last companies of troops running up Pratt Street, pursued by a mob throwing cobblestones at the "invaders," screaming insults, and firing an occasional pistol shot. For a time the mayor rode at the head of the men in an effort to safeguard their passage. "The soldiers bore the pelting of the



"The Sixth Massachusetts Regiment Repelling the Attack of the Mob in Pratt Street, Baltimore, April 19, 1861." Wood engraving from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 1861. Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums

pitiless mob for a long time under a full trot," an eyewitness wrote, "& more than three of them were knocked & shot down, before they returned the assaults."<sup>29</sup>

When the troops returned fire all hell broke loose, as many bystanders as rioters falling in the melée. Marshal George Kane—head of the Baltimore constabulary that the assembly in 1860 had placed under control of a state commission—finally managed to form a police line at the rear of the troops and hold the mob at bay. The soldiers left for Washington, shooting out the windows of their cars. Four soldiers and twelve Baltimoreans lay dead, and scores were injured, the first real bloodshed of the Civil War. At an afternoon rally in Monument Square both Brown and Hicks (the governor fearing for his life) appealed for peace. Aiming to prevent troop movements and further bloodshed, the mayor and police board—either with Hicks's permission or with his acquiescence—directed Kane and militia units to burn railroad bridges north of the city. One junior officer at Fort McHenry, expecting attack, threatened to train his guns on the Washington Monument. If you do, a representative from the city replied, "there will be nothing left of you but your brass buttons to tell who you were."<sup>30</sup>

Lincoln agreed to defuse the situation and wait for tempers to cool; he and

Maryland leaders, among them the president of the B&O, John W. Garrett, struck a deal whereby federal troops bound for Washington would bypass volatile Baltimore, steaming from Havre de Grace to the naval school and then proceeding by branch lines to the capital. A Pennsylvania regiment turned about at Cockeysville and left for the border. But in these critical days the administration could ill afford to temporize for long. As soon as sufficient troops arrived in Washington to defend the city, General Scott promised, he would assign ten thousand men to hold Baltimore and secure the rails and bridges above the city. On 22 April General Benjamin F. Butler landed a force at Annapolis and began repairing the Annapolis and Elkridge Railroad, which its directors had begun to tear up to prevent its military use. Butler cleverly offered to help put down the local slave uprising that rumors described as imminent. While helpless to slow the growing federal presence, Hicks rejected the offer as unnecessary. Later, when Butler occupied the Relay House B&O station, just seven miles from Baltimore, he issued an ultimatum based on the belief that a Maryland farmer had poisoned one of his men. The general declared he could put an armed soldier in every household he chose.

Squeamish about forcing the South to return to the Union, perhaps realizing that events were beyond one person's power to control, Hicks on Monday, 22 April, called a special session of the General Assembly for Friday of that week. Northern commentary, until then complimentary toward the Maryland governor, wrote him off as a secessionist pawn. The Lincoln administration quietly planned every necessary measure, including "the bombardment of their cities," should legislators vote to arm against the Union.<sup>31</sup> In these perilous circumstances one might have expected a referendum or test of the public will. Actually voters filled only a few places according to prevailing sentiment—one seat in Washington County and nine places in Baltimore (the assembly earlier had vacated them by reason of fraud). A "States Rights and Southern Rights" gathering in Baltimore nominated candidates, including Severn Teackle Wallis and Ross Winans, who ran unopposed; the western seat went without opposition to Lewis P. Fiery, a strong Union man. With Butler in Anne Arundel County, Hicks decided to convene the assembly in the Frederick Courthouse, where—students of his motives reflected—lawmakers would not be surrounded by Union troops but would sit in the midst of Union sympathizers.

Most Marylanders probably wanted to be left alone. State government, roughly reflecting that wish, appeared paralyzed. Neither the governor nor the assembly found any decisive course appealing. A hand-carried invitation from Virginia to join the Confederacy got a cold reception. The senate published resolutions denying its authority to decide the secession question. Hicks in his address wanted neither league with the seceded South nor any active Maryland role in invading another state—and no passage through

Maryland of forces with that hostile intent. A memorial to the House of Delegates from Prince George's County called for immediate secession, but the delegates demurred, again for lack of authority. A few outright secessionists, Coleman Yellott of Baltimore among them, spoke of calling a convention to consider leaving the Union. Yellott, who had commissioned a steamboat to bring Eastern Shore legislators across the bay, introduced a bill for the "public safety" that would have created a commission to stand above the governor, prepared the militia for defense of the state, and presumably taken Maryland into the Confederacy. His bill went down to defeat—not even Wallis supported it—on grounds that it threatened "a Military Despotism." At the same time delegates turned down a request to reopen rail links to the North; repaired, legislators agreed, they would invite the invasion of "fanatical and excited multitudes, whose animosity to Baltimore and Maryland is measured by no standard known to Christian civilization." Resolutions authorized a commission to Lincoln protesting Maryland's treatment as "a conquered province."<sup>32</sup>

The assembly adjourned, and finally geography, economy, old patriotism, and the harsh reality of military law combined to keep Maryland officially in the Union camp. The events of 19 April both demonstrated and spent anger; the hostility of the mob may have had as much to do with transgressed neutrality—being bullied—as with support for Jeff Davis's government. Gradually, as usual, a reaction to the violence set in. On the twenty-eighth, the commander at Fort McHenry reported that a sailing ship had passed down the Patapsco freighted with men cheering his garrison and flying the Union colors stem to stern. Pro-Union Marylanders staged a convention in Baltimore on 2 May, planning to organize a party around loyalism. The destroyed railroad bridges did such harm to the local economy that there was talk of food shortages in Baltimore. They underwent repairs.

John Pendleton Kennedy, who earlier had tried to chart a course for all the border states in the crisis, next published a masterful pamphlet arguing strongly against Maryland secession on the basis of self-interest. The free-trade policy planned for the Confederacy would ruin Maryland manufactures, he wrote. Direct Confederate taxes on populous Maryland would multiply its existing tax burden as much as twelve times. Out of the Confederacy Maryland might lie vulnerable to a Southern blockade of Capes Henry and Charles, he said, but the United States could do the same to a Confederate Maryland and shut off commerce with Ohio and Pennsylvania as well. Though historically tied to Virginia, Maryland still had to decide its own course and should realize that its future truly lay not with stagnant eastern Virginia but with growing western Virginia. Kennedy also noted, as had Hicks and other Marylanders, that the state had no defensible northern frontier. Confederate Maryland would be the first region to be swept by recurrent war—and would lie on a boundary as unfriendly to slavery as Canada's. Widely circulated, this *Appeal to Maryland* doubtless had an impact on the

popular will. "Maryland has no cause to desert our honored Stars and Stripes," wrote Kennedy. "Out of this Union there is nothing but ruin for her."<sup>33</sup>



Clinching the question, Lincoln used military power to quell disorder, restore links between Washington and the North, and keep Maryland beyond the reach of would-be secessionists. On 27 April he directed Scott and his subordinates to suspend the writ of habeas corpus anywhere along a line between Washington and Philadelphia where federal officers met resistance. Without precedent, this measure enabled the military to seize and hold indefinitely anyone suspected of disloyalty. On the rainy night of 13 May General Butler quietly entered Baltimore and occupied Federal Hill, and thereafter he and his successors employed their authority to considerable effect. Much of it bore directly on the war and the eagerness of many Marylanders—whom Butler described as "malignant and traitorous"—to contribute to the Confederate cause. Butler seized twenty-seven hundred muskets, ammunition, and other stores he had reason to believe were headed southward. He closed shops he suspected of manufacturing Confederate military supplies, outlawed unsanctioned assemblies, and forbade display of the Bonnie Blue Flag. Federal officers arrested known Confederate recruiters. Shortly after Butler's arrival old Ross Winans, who in 1859 had made four thousand pikes to be used against abolitionists, landed in jail partly for building a steam-powered, four-wheeled cannon that he tried to get through Union lines to Harpers Ferry (federal troops found it unreliable). Though Winans on 16 May took the prescribed oath "not openly or covertly [to] commit any act of hostility against the Government of the United States," his reputation remained with him. Union authorities later considered hunting in a Baltimore convent for the "Winans cache" that according to rumor lay hidden there, ready for an uprising of Confederate sympathizers.<sup>34</sup>

Over the summer of 1861 the hand of the federal government fell firmly on the shoulders of Marylanders. Troops encamped in Patterson Park and on the railroad avenues into the city. Soldiers on Federal Hill, overlooking what a Union officer called a neighborhood "rank with disunion," dug fortifications and planted cannon that could reach three-fourths of the city. Federals began improvements on Fort McHenry, which had few defenses on its land side. Military engineers surmised that the McKim mansion and Potter's Race Course, both in east Baltimore, needed entrenchments and troops. Both places commanded the 8th ward, "one of the most disloyal in the city." Murray Hill to the north and on West Baltimore Street the home of George Hume Steuart also assumed strategic value (Steuart, a pro-Confederate with long service in the Maryland militia, had fled to Charlottesville, Virginia; in April his son had resigned from the army and embraced the Confederacy). By August more than forty-six hundred Union soldiers had taken up posi-

tions in Baltimore. Others in the military Department of Maryland occupied Annapolis, defended Relay House and the railroad to Washington, and were headquartered at Cockeysville and Havre de Grace to safeguard the railroads to York and Philadelphia. Federal troops encamped in Cumberland, Williamsport, and other points along the C&O Canal. Union commanders continually requested more men, estimating the number needed in and around Baltimore at seven thousand and describing the city as an excellent place to break in raw recruits.<sup>35</sup>

Union men and women were happy to have order at last, but there was no mistaking the weight or character of federal power. Mid-June congressional elections in Baltimore corresponded with the arrival of General Nathaniel P. Banks—a Massachusetts Republican, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and state governor—who had steeled himself for any challenge. He assured Mayor Brown that no Union soldiers would be permitted to leave their posts or otherwise interfere with the election, that he had confidence in the Baltimore police “to suppress ordinary election tumults.” He also had his men armed with forty rounds each and prepared to march instantly; he ordered liquor stores closed and warned Brown that if the people took advantage of the situation “to organize anarchy and overthrow all forms of government,” responsibility for whatever resulted would be theirs alone. Before departing in July he brought some of his troops in from the countryside so as to exercise a “moral effect upon the disaffected inhabitants of the city.” Marylanders who voted returned a pro-Union delegation to Congress.<sup>36</sup>

Banks's replacement, John A. Dix, approached his duties with puritan pleasure. A New Hampshire native who in the 1820s had studied law with William Wirt, Dix had no doubt that since 1812 Baltimore domestic violence had been the worst in the Union. “A city so prone to burst out into flame, and thus become dangerous to its neighbors,” he later wrote, “should be controlled by the strong arm of the government wherever these paroxysms of excitement occur.” Dix extended the crusade against secessionist flags and paraphernalia to the latest Confederate colors, red and white—their appearance together, he said, was provocative. Amused Baltimoreans issued a mock bulletin in the name of “His Majesty (Abraham 1st),” requiring all persons having red hair and moustaches to have one side or the other dyed blue. One stanza of a song celebrating “Dix's Manifesto” went: “On Barber's pole, and mint stick / He did his veto place / He swore that in his city / He'd red and white erase.”<sup>37</sup>

“In times of civil strife,” read an earnest War Department order of the day, “errors, if any, should be on the side of the safety of the country.” The Lincoln administration left considerable room for discretionary power among its friends and little for dissent, doubt, or even indifference among others. Baltimore police, by reports reaching General Scott, had discouraged citizens from greeting Union troops with food and water. Banks ordered Marshal Kane arrested on 27 June; several days later, at four in the morning, Union

troops seized all four members of the city police board and put them in cells at Fort McHenry without specifying charges against them. Afterward the city lay under the authority of provost marshals. Military forces seized former governor Thomas G. Pratt early in the summer, Judge Richard Henry Alvey of Hagerstown (he opposed coercion of the South), and Baltimore Congressman Henry May, who favored peace negotiations with the Confederacy. In the fall, as the assembly prepared to reconvene, the army arrested twenty-six suspicious or pro-secession legislators—Winans (again), Wallis, and Kilbourn among them. The clerks of the house and senate went to Fort McHenry. Pinkerton secret service agents jailed the editors of two newspapers devoted to Maryland secession: Frank Key Howard (grandson of Francis Scott Key) and William Wilkins Glenn of the *Baltimore Daily Exchange* and Thomas W. Hall of the *South*. After also arresting Mayor Brown in a dispute over payment of Baltimore police during federal occupation, Dix complained in September that Fort McHenry had grown so crowded with prisoners that one cell had twenty people in it. So many disloyalists had been placed in tents on the drill field that there was "hardly room left for the guard to parade."<sup>38</sup>

Whatever the value of Lincoln's object, saving the Union, these means led to serious questions and earlier had produced a dramatic confrontation between the president and the Maryland native, then eighty-four, who sat as federal chief justice. The protagonist was John Merryman, a Baltimore County Democrat who in 1861 was president of the Maryland Agricultural Society and an officer in a local militia unit that under orders had helped break Baltimore's rail links after the 19 April riot. For that act federal troops arrested him in May. Merryman's friends quickly obtained a hearing with Chief Justice Taney in his capacity as judge on the federal circuit court for Maryland. Taney had issued a writ of habeas corpus, calling on the commander holding Merryman at Fort McHenry to bring him to court on 27 May and explain the reasons, if any, for his imprisonment. Though Taney feared his own arrest, he believed it important to defend the rule of law against arbitrary authority, even in perilous times. "I am an old man, a very old man," Taney had said to his friend the mayor, "but perhaps I was preserved for this occasion."<sup>39</sup>

At the appointed hour a blue-coated officer with red sash appeared in Baltimore federal court and handed the chief justice a paper. It announced that authorities suspected Merryman of treason and repeated that they, under presidential power, had set aside the habeas corpus protection. Taney ordered the Union general, George Cadwalader, to appear in court the next day, but there was scant hope he would obey and none of compelling him. The chief justice then wrote Lincoln an opinion that amounted to a lecture: the president assumed a power that the Constitution granted not to him but to the Congress; military officers had no right to arrest anyone not subject to army discipline except by judicial order. If the executive and the military





Baltimore from Fort Federal Hill. Photograph probably taken in September 1862, when Union troops had fortified the position Butler secured in the spring of 1861. *Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums*



Roger Brooke Taney (1777-1864), the chief justice who, in his last, sad years, defied President Lincoln in the belief that no circumstances set aside constitutional safeguards. *MHS*

usurped such power, Taney declared with stirring choice of words, "the people of the United States are no longer living under a government of laws, but every citizen holds life, liberty, and property at the will and pleasure of the army officer in whose military district he may happen to be found."<sup>40</sup>

Dix's rule, like Lincoln's presidency, exhibited some latitude and humanity under the circumstances. Dix demanded proof of a person's alleged disloyalty and discharged some prisoners on insufficient evidence. He advised Union troops not to assume that Marylanders carrying shotguns on a "sporting excursion" were rebel soldiers. He did not use troops to search private homes and declined a request from Harford County that the army administer loyalty oaths at polling places. A few Confederate sympathizers Dix kept in perspective. One exotic war prisoner was Richard Thomas, who called himself "Zarvona" and who became known as "the French Lady" for his part (bustled and petticoated) in capturing a steamboat and sailing it into Confederate waters. After capturing "Zarvona" on another escapade, Dix eventually paroled him as a small man, "crack-brained," whose danger related directly to his stature.<sup>41</sup>

Still, no one could mistake the folly of open opposition to the federal government. Lincoln had made no reply to Taney's defense of civil liberties in *Ex parte Merryman*. The arrests continued. Perhaps the most abusive of them involved Richard Bennett Carmichael, a state circuit court judge for Talbot, Queen Anne's, and Kent counties. Objecting bitterly to arbitrary arrests on the Eastern Shore, Carmichael instructed grand juries to indict anyone making or abetting them. Late in 1861 Secretary of State William Seward ordered Dix to arrest Carmichael. Dix described Carmichael's courtroom statements as "inflammatory" and "insulting" to the federal government but postponed action on the advice of Eastern Shore Unionists who feared that more harm than good would come from forcibly quieting the judge. When a bill came down against Dix's deputy provost marshal for the Eastern Shore, Dix wrote Augustus Bradford, newly elected governor (and father of a Confederate officer), that Carmichael was a dishonor to the state. Finally, in late May 1862, federal troops entered Carmichael's court at Easton and literally pulled him off the bench. When Carmichael kicked back, he was pistol-whipped into submission. First taken to Fort McHenry, the judge spent six months in prison with no charges ever filed against him. Except for the staunchest supporters of the Union cause, Marylanders found Carmichael's arrest, as much the manner as the deed itself, appalling.<sup>42</sup>

A Maryland native in Louisiana, James Ryder Randall, wrote a poetic protest to all these attempts at military control, "My Maryland," and Baltimoreans set it to music. The song became popular among all Southern soldiers. James J. Archer, a Marylander who as a Confederate general later fell at Gettysburg, conveyed home the same sentiments. "Our Maryland is throttled," he wrote sadly. "Every day I see her across the Potomac—the armed heel of the disgusting despot trampling upon her bosom."<sup>43</sup>



Militarily nothing had been settled in May 1862. Since early spring elusive Confederate foot soldiers under Stonewall Jackson and Richard S. Ewell had struggled with Union forces for control of the Shenandoah Valley, one avenue into the Confederacy. The federals held onto outposts at Strasburg and Front Royal. John R. Kenly, a Baltimore native who briefly had been provost marshal in that city, commanded the Union detachment near Front Royal. His regiment, the 1st Maryland, provided the main line of defense. Beginning a thrust designed to tie down as many Union troops as possible, Jackson late in May left his encampments at New Market and Luray and headed north. His movements typically escaped the notice of federal officers, whose cavalry remained wanting, and on 23 May the head of his column of about ten thousand men approached the unwary defenders of Front Royal. To deliver his surprise (and without knowing who his adversaries were), Jackson chose another 1st Maryland, led by Bradley T. Johnson of Frederick. Rarely, even in a conflict that pitted many a brother against brother, did men from the same state face each other in combat.

The skirmish that day did not decide much, but it was sharp, and celebrated at the time. Kenly's men delayed the Confederate advance as long as possible, spreading themselves thin to cover the two roads and pair of bridges to their rear. Jackson, who did not bestow lavish praise, reported that against this "spirited resistance" the Confederate Marylanders "pushed forward in gallant style." After several hours the larger Confederate force prevailed. Union troops withdrew across the bridges in good order until Southern cavalry broke through and spread havoc among them. Severely wounded, Kenly was captured along with more than five hundred of the federal 1st Maryland and most of their stores.<sup>44</sup>

Fugitives who made it to Williamsport said that the Confederates had flown a black flag, shot into an ambulance, and given no quarter. Outraged at that news, Union men in Baltimore stalked the city and beat up Southern sympathizers. Not until early June, after Kenly was exchanged, did it become clear that the Confederates had treated him and his men well. Indeed, among the Marylanders who that evening found old friends and relatives in another uniform, the brief fight had purged hostility in a way that civilians could scarcely understand. "Colonel Kenly says many officers of the First Maryland Confederate Regiment visited him," read the *Sun* on 6 June, and they had been "particularly kind."<sup>45</sup> The fact remained that many citizens of the old state, having grown up on the middle ground between the Potomac and Mason-Dixon Line, were trying to shoot one another.

The Marylanders in gray had gone south by various routes. Many of them had joined military companies that formed in response to sectional tensions of the 1850s and that consisted of Southern rights men; they, like others, left the state and offered their services to the Confederate government when the

opportunity for Maryland secession passed. After quitting federal service, young George H. Steuart—known in the army as “Maryland Stuart” to distinguish him from J.E.B. Stuart—had recruited Baltimoreans for the Confederacy. In the spring of 1861 Isaac R. Trimble, a West Point graduate who worked as an engineer for the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad, assumed command of a pro-secession “Volunteer Un-Uniformed Corps,” many of whose members showed up in Confederate service. For good reason Governor Hicks so doubted the loyalty of the Maryland militia at the outset of war that he thought better of calling it into service. Maryland militiamen like those under William H. Dorsey and George R. Gaither (Butler called them “violent rebels”) headed south, some as soon as Virginia seceded, others when the Union army entered Maryland. Most Maryland Confederates—who came from all over the state but heavily from Baltimore and the slaveholding counties—made their way individually or in small groups. Butler had noticed squads of men hastening toward Harpers Ferry and at first did not know whether he could stop them or what to do with them if he did. Soon the noose tightened, and joining the Confederate army during the war became an adventure in itself. Soldiers spoke of traveling an “underground railroad” of their own in Southern Maryland, of night crossings to Mathias Point, below Port Tobacco, or to Chantilly Bluffs, opposite St. Mary’s County.<sup>46</sup>

The Maryland presence in Confederate service, if not large, was noticeable. Probably not more than five thousand men at any one time served under the state colors, which included a battle flag “Presented by the Ladies of Baltimore” and a headquarters pennant bearing the Crossland cross bottony. Not counting emigrés, thousands more (as many as twenty thousand Maryland men later called themselves Confederate veterans) found their way into Virginia regiments and various other units. Gaither led horsemen who made up K Company of J.E.B. Stuart’s 1st cavalry; the Maryland Guards, a Baltimore militia unit, served with the 21st Virginia Infantry. Volunteering strenuously, obviously devoted to the cause, these Marylanders performed service that did them disproportionate credit. The 1st infantry, organized of companies mustered at Harpers Ferry, Point of Rocks, and Richmond, distinguished itself at First Manassas, leading the flanking charge that began the Union collapse. After Front Royal the regiment took severe losses in a fight with a noted regiment of Pennsylvania “Bucktails” at Harrisonburg, Virginia, there winning the right to attach a buck’s tail to its standard. Later in 1862, at the battle of Gaines Mill below Richmond, the 1st Maryland halted a Confederate retreat by standing dressed on the colors, shot and shell raining down, while other units rallied around them. From time to time the Confederate war department tried to combine the proud Maryland infantry regiment with other units from the state—the small horse corps formed around Ridgely Brown of Montgomery County in the spring of 1862 and one of several artillery batteries the state supplied the Army of Northern Virginia. Briefly in 1862 the 1st regiments of infantry and cavalry did serve alongside

Marylanders who formed the Baltimore Light Artillery. Yet for the time being the "Maryland Line" existed mostly on paper and in the minds of Maryland Confederates.

Like the Kentuckians who called themselves an "orphan brigade," these troops spent most of the war cut off from their state—lacking military supplies, official recognition, even mail service. They worried with reason that Union authorities would harass their families and confiscate their property; they borrowed, begged, or captured what they needed. Early in the war Colonel Johnson's wife, a North Carolina native, traveled to Raleigh to plead the regiment's cause. She returned with gray uniforms and rifles that were far superior to standard Confederate arms. The Baltimore Light Artillery, like so many other Confederate batteries, fought with antiquated cannon until it won rifled guns as battle trophies. When Henry Clay Mettam succeeded in making his way from Pikesville to Richmond and located the 1st Maryland Cavalry, he had to wait while an agent for the company commander looked for horses in North Carolina (each trooper paid for his own mount). During lulls in the fighting recruiters stole home to seek replacements or money for military supplies. Often these men were captured or failed to return.

Even in the summer of 1862, when Lee's force seemed indomitable, it did not lure as many fence sitters as Maryland Confederates hoped. Lieutenant George Booth, proud of his "somewhat unruly" company of Irish-Americans, needed replacements when in early September the army crossed into his home state—a brass band leading the way and playing "Maryland, My Maryland." Booth reckoned that his bare-footed troops may have evoked the sympathy of a fellow Marylander but likely "did not inspire his confidence." He gauged correctly. The strain of the march and dusty conditions, besides the usual shortage of supplies, left Lee's men looking tired and bedraggled—not the sort a young fellow would jump to join. Dr. Lewis H. Steiner, a prominent Frederick Unionist, complained that the Confederates smelled like ammonia and referred to pro-Southern cheers for Jackson's vanguard as "feeble." A Clear Spring farmer, Otho Nesbitt, described the Confederates who camped near Hagerstown as "a hard, drab-colored set—long, lanky, and tawny"; "the dirtiest men I ever saw," wrote another onlooker, "a most ragged, lean, and hungry set of wolves." Lee had hoped to swell his ranks in Maryland. During that campaign the Army of Northern Virginia attracted perhaps two hundred Maryland recruits.<sup>47</sup>

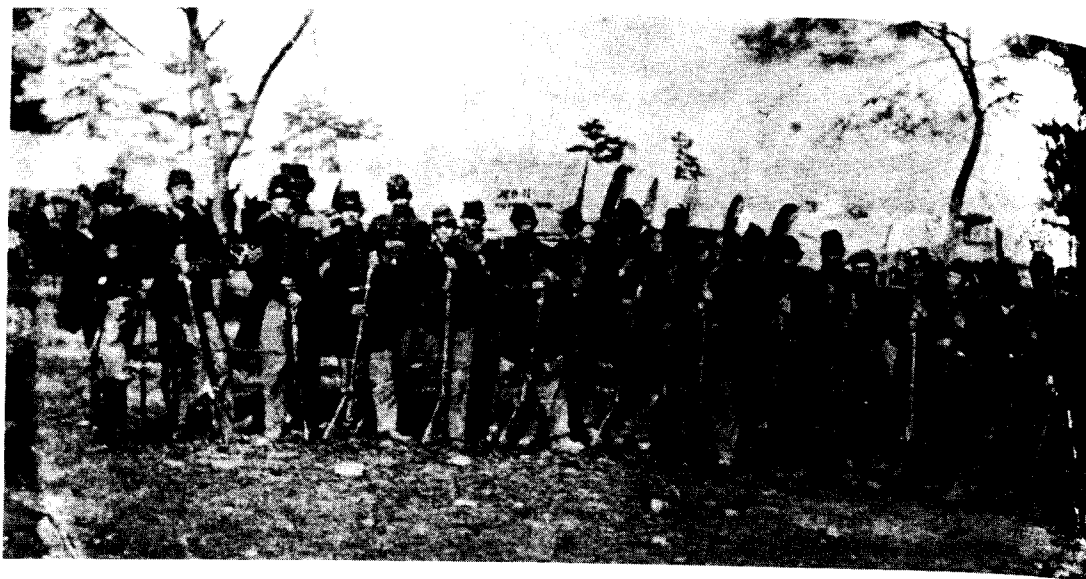
Union officials, who finally recruited about 25,000 white volunteers (and about 5,000 sailors and marines), faced their own peculiar obstacles. In May 1861, once Hicks felt comfortable issuing a call for the Maryland troop quota, loyal Baltimoreans, along with contingents from Baltimore, Howard, and Frederick counties, quickly formed the 1st Maryland under Kenly. Western Marylanders that summer and fall organized companies to thwart Confederate sallies across the Potomac. As a polite gesture to loyal members of the old Fifth Maryland, the federal government swore them and their recruits



"The Charge of the First Maryland Regiment at the Death of Ashby." Lithograph by A. Hoen & Co. after a drawing by W. L. Sheppard and C. A. Muller, 1867. The war in its romantic phase, as recalled in the bittersweet times afterward. *MHS*

into service under that number. The 2d infantry regiment was also raised in Baltimore in September. A few weeks later the War Department accepted a "legion" made up of foot, horse, and artillery troops organized by William J. Purnell, a Worcester County native who was the Baltimore postmaster. During the next year Union enlistments slowed. The promise Hicks had received that Maryland troops would serve only in defense of the state and Washington did not hold for long, but many Union soldiers belonged to three regiments in the "Potomac Home Brigade"—supposedly defensive forces. Others served only on garrison duty at the military prison at Point Lookout, as pickets in Southern Maryland and on the Eastern Shore, or as occupying forces in the Shore counties of Virginia. Federal officers tried to fill quotas east of the bay by naming two infantry regiments "Eastern Shore" rather than simply Maryland units. One Shore company was disbanded when it refused to serve anywhere except at home.

A great many Marylanders, especially in the western counties, wished to see the Union preserved; there nonetheless remained much reluctance to force people to stay in it. The occupation of Baltimore did not help efforts to recruit a light-infantry regiment that General Dix himself sponsored and that never filled. Maryland failed to meet troop quotas in 1862, and in August Governor Bradford began organizing a draft under John A. J. Creswell of Cecil County. Immediately military authorities noticed a migration of young men toward Philadelphia. At about the same time the state and localities,



Company I, 5th Maryland Volunteer Infantry, c. 1862. An amply supplied Cecil County unit, recruited to fill the regiment traditionally from Baltimore, rests arms to pose for a passing photographer. *Historical Society of Cecil County*

including Baltimore City, offered bounties to volunteers, as did the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad. Union recruiters in some areas faced personal danger trying to compile the draft lists required to raise troops. When some of them called for protection, General John E. Wool, department commander, commented acidly, "If the state of Maryland cannot enforce enrollment let it be put under martial law." In the fall of 1862 federal troops, including the cavalry of the Purnell Legion and the 4th Maryland Infantry, aided draft enforcement in Southern Maryland.<sup>48</sup>

Although skirmishes along the river boundary with the Confederacy were frequent, Union soldiers of Maryland did not truly feel their mettle tested until the Army of Northern Virginia entered the state in force. Much of Lee's army occupied Frederick for a week, beginning Saturday, 6 September. Lee used the time to issue a formal appeal to Maryland. Colonel Charles Marshall, a Marylander on his staff, drafted a message assuring the state of Southern friendship and offering to assist, as he put it, "in regaining the rights of which you have been despoiled." Bradley Johnson, acting as provost marshal in his home city, called on Marylanders to think of Fort McHenry's victims, "the insults to your wives and daughters, the arrests, the midnight searches of your houses. Rise at once in arms," he concluded, "and strike for liberty and right!"<sup>49</sup> Calculated at once to court an unseceded slave state, prey on Northern weariness, and obtain European aid for the Confederacy, Lee's daring campaign might have won the war. Instead, with Jack-

son's men detached to capture Harpers Ferry, the main body of Southern troops found itself driven through two gaps in South Mountain west of Middletown and almost into the Potomac at Sharpsburg, a village of about thirteen hundred people.

Maryland soldiers suffered as severely as any in the Army of the Potomac during the terrible engagement that followed on 17 September, a day that began with low clouds and a Union assault that sent the sound of cannon rumbling all the way to Hagerstown, seventeen miles north. Hurrying down the Hagerstown–Sharpsburg turnpike, a reporter for a Northern newspaper described the horrifying sound that met him as “at first like pattering drops upon a roof; then a roll, crash, roar, and rush, like a mighty ocean billow upon the shore, chafing the pebbles, wave on wave, with deep and heavy explosions of the batteries, like the crashing of thunderbolts.”<sup>50</sup>

Probably at about the time he arrived, soldiers of George S. Greene's division of the Twelfth Corps—including the 3d Maryland (in service only since February) and infantry of the Purnell Legion—were climbing over stout farm fences and throwing themselves into the center of the smoky and confused battle. They attacked through the destroyed Mumma farm and East Woods toward the Dunker church, which charge and countercharge since dawn had left pockmarked and filled with wounded. Not long afterward the 5th Maryland, led by Leopold Blumenberg, and part of a Second Corps division commanded by a West Pointer and Baltimore native, William H. French, moved through the Roulette farm and assaulted southward. They ran into opposition at a sunken lane filled with Southern troops who (taking ghastly casualties themselves) for nearly four hours crouched and poured such fire into their attackers that the dead soon lay heaped in rows and “the broad, green leaves” of corn “were sprinkled and stained with blood.” A little before noon the 2d Maryland, part of Ambrose Burnside's force on the Union far left, took heavy losses trying to cross over the narrow Antietam bridge that Georgians covered with four hundred muskets and artillery fire. “The 2d Maryland had some good soldiers in it,” wrote a regimental surgeon of Northern birth. “These boys just stood up to be shot down.” Later in that day that seemed to have no end (“The sun seemed almost to go backwards, and it appeared as if night would never come,” one soldier remembered), Battery A, Maryland artillery, posted itself in what was left of David R. Miller's cornfield. Crumpled men lay there by the hundreds; “we could not get into position,” James H. Rigby of Baltimore wrote, “without striking them with our wheels.” On this dismal spot and in a second position Battery A won acclaim for withstanding heavy fire and helping to repulse Confederate counterattacks.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of that inconclusive day more Americans had died in battle (4,800) than on any other single day in history, and another 20,000 lay injured. “The crying of the wounded for water, the shrieks of the dying, min-



gled with the screeching of the shells, made up a scene so truly appalling and horrible," Rigby reported home, "that I hoped to God, that I might never witness such another."<sup>52</sup>



Living where Marylanders did, the war was no stranger, but the battle of Antietam brought home its carnage in focused horror. On the nineteenth of September, when Nesbitt rode to the battlefield, he could tell where the Confederates had formed by a mile-long line of bodies—"the dead lying along it as they fell," he wrote in disbelief. "Nearly all lying on their backs as if they hadn't even made a struggle." Burial parties worked for days. Some families in and around Sharpsburg had left for safer quarters when the armies began choosing their ground; others had sought refuge in their cellars, as during a tornado. Though only one of them, a small girl, had been killed during the storm, it still had been a terrible ordeal, and everyone who left came home to frightful devastation. Horses of a Confederate artillery battery lay where they had been struck in the town square. Barns, homes, livestock, and crops had been destroyed. "Fences were everywhere broken down, trees shattered, the ground ploughed up in furrows" from artillery shot, wrote a New York soldier on the twentieth. Farmers discovered unexploded shells in fields and haystacks. Meanwhile physicians tried to care for the seriously wounded, whose injuries in that era carried a good chance of leading to death. Churches and public buildings in Williamsport, Keedysville, Boonsboro, Hagerstown, and Frederick served as makeshift hospitals—as did barns (preferred for their open space) for miles about. St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Sharpsburg, badly damaged by Union artillery fire, housed Confederates, the Lutheran Church Union men. No one overlooked the piles of arms and legs lying outside these places. "The minnie ball," wrote the 2d Maryland's surgeon, "does not permit much debate about amputation." On the northern edge of the battlefield Union surgeons built a tent city to shelter their patients, blue and gray. The tents remained there as late as December.<sup>53</sup>

The enormous scale and intensity of civil war placed new importance on organizations. Casualties on the magnitude of those at Sharpsburg called for coordinated relief, and women played a large part in a new set of benevolent organizations. Clara Barton, a New Englander who performed heroic service during and after Antietam, proved an exception in her vigorous independence. The United States Sanitary Commission, a private group that aimed broadly at the soldier's personal welfare, received heavy subscriptions in Baltimore, made purchases there, and had a large hand in supplying the army hospitals in Annapolis—one at St. John's College, the other in the vacated buildings of the naval school. Another group, the Christian Commission, applied evangelical energy to the spiritual and medical needs of Union troops. Immediately after Sharpsburg, its Baltimore committee journeyed to the battlefield and by later report was "very active in its exertions." The



Confederate dead at Antietam, 18 or 19 September 1862. Reality replaced the romantic in Alexander Gardner's classic photograph. *MHS*

Christian Commission did not, however, cater to Catholics; an Annapolis parish priest successfully petitioned the Sanitary Commission to deliver Catholic Bibles to Maryland regiments. The Union Relief Association of Baltimore—joining which gave proof of one's loyalty—held regular meetings to roll bandages, box personal articles for the comfort of Maryland troops in blue, and hear patriotic speeches. On leaving Baltimore in 1862, General Dix singled out the ladies of this association for special thanks; the records of philanthropic devotion, he wrote with a flourish, "do not contain a brighter example of self-sacrificing service than that which is to be found in their own quiet and unobtrusive labors." In the McKim military hospital, they worked hard and openly after the battle of Antietam.<sup>54</sup>

No organization played a more important role in the war effort than the B&O, whose rail network was as vital to the Union as its field armies and (Marylanders knew) as valuable to Baltimore as to the Union. B&O tracks connected Washington with North and West alike, and though military tonnage during the war years climbed beyond anyone's expectation in 1861, the value of the Maryland railroad also was psychological. Union forces expended vast resources to protect the B&O tracks in Virginia, where they ran



"The Baltimore Sanitary Fair at the Maryland Institute." Woodcut from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 14 May 1864. Pro-Union Baltimoreans flocked to an event that benefited army hospitals. *Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums*

through country friendly in places, hostile in others. Confederate raiding parties, some of them under the command of a colorful Maryland cavalrman, Harry Gilmor, constantly tore up track, derailed trains, tried to make off with locomotives, and burned bridges. The span over the Potomac at Harpers Ferry went down five times. John Garrett's solution became an organizational model. His steady men at the Mount Clare shops piled up all debris for reuse. "There are millions of pounds of damaged iron," the *American Railroad Journal* reported with amazement in 1863, "but it is not lost to the company, for no matter how small the piece, it is collected, placed into melting furnaces and again wrought into such parts of engines and cars as are required." Insofar as possible Garrett made short sections of the line independently functional—so parts of the system could be used even when a break occurred. Always on good terms with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, Cameron's replacement, and with Lincoln himself, Garrett never surrendered control of the company to the military. He cared less about his employees' politics than their loyalty to the B&O.<sup>55</sup>

Garrett's cooperation, despite early misgivings about the war, told the tale of the Maryland home front: division no one denied, but life somehow went on. Residents of Deal Island claimed loyalty to the Union but carried on a lucrative trade with the Confederacy, usually eluding Union gunboats. Mili-

tary authorities in Baltimore continued to suppress Southern supporters and, with members of the Union League, to press everyone for outward signs of Union feeling. In August 1862 the Baltimore council required a loyalty oath of all city officials, schoolteachers, and employees. Two people were arrested for waving a window curtain at passing Confederate prisoners. Provost marshals banned the sale of "evil, incendiary" secessionist sheet music in the spring of 1863, when a bank president went to prison for tipping his hat to captured rebels. General Robert C. Schenck, then military commander, went so far as to round up women who seemed to be spying on Union movements and send the ladies to Confederate lines. Frank Howard published his recollections of imprisonment for Southern sympathies, *Fourteen Months in American Bastiles*, in early 1863. When it went into a second edition, troops seized all unsold copies and threw one of the printers in jail (Howard was left unharmed). On 3 July 1863 Schenck issued an order "requesting and recommending" that every house display the American flag on the fourth. Police took down the numbers of flagless residences. After the battle of Gettysburg, during which Maryland soldiers fought each other near Culp's Hill, Baltimoreans were forbidden to receive or entertain wounded from Lee's army. Relatives of a Confederate artilleryman killed at Gettysburg met to bury him in Greenmount Cemetery. After the funeral Union troops arrested all the adult males who attended, only clergy excepted. Union officers forbade public prints to put "CSA" after the names of Marylanders killed in Southern service and shut down additional newspapers on loyalty charges.<sup>56</sup>

Churches, offering some sanctuary, and families, where divisions were private, vividly portrayed the conflicts that the war imposed on Marylanders. All denominations suffered some sort of wartime disruption. Earlier having tried to avoid the slavery question, Benjamin Kurtz of the *Lutheran Observer* decided when secession was the issue "to lie low and keep dark"; for the next two years he tried to hold his middle ground by arguing for gradual slave emancipation only. Methodists came under attack in Baltimore for being, too many of them, laggards in suppressing the rebellion. The mob angered by reported atrocities against Kenly's Maryland regiment in 1862 had broken up services at the Independent Methodist Church, and the following year that meeting and another received orders to display a large American flag or be judged. The minister of the Strawbridge Chapel went to jail in 1863 for pro-Southern sympathy. Priests at the Catholic cathedral in Baltimore refused to say the usual prayer at the end of mass for civil authorities because it contained a clause about saving the Union. Bishop Francis P. Kenrick then determined to say it himself, but every time he did some parishioners stood up and left and others made noises "by a great rustling of papers and silks." In Baltimore, rabbis serving the seven thousand or so Jews in the city voiced three positions toward the war. Benjamin Szold led a majority of the faith who clung to neutrality during the conflict. Bernard Illoway

condemned violence against a neighbor's institutions, asking "Where was ever a greater philanthropist than Abraham, and why did he not set free his slaves?" David Einhorn, strongly pro-Union, advised Jews to "remember Egypt." Episcopal Bishop Whittingham called for a Sunday of prayer and thanksgiving after Gettysburg. The rector at Mount Calvary Church, A. A. Curtis, wrote that to him Union victories were simply "steps and stages toward eventual ruin," "matters of humiliation and not of thanksgiving."<sup>57</sup>

Whittingham replied by withdrawing his name from the list of pew holders at Mount Calvary—he did not wish to be "associated with a body treasonably ungrateful for Divine mercy shown in the deliverance of the State from an invasion of armed rebels and thieves." A Baltimore father wrote his son in Harford County that if he did name his baby boy Jefferson Davis Colburn, as contemplated, he must not forget to add "Beelzebub." "Between the blue forces and the gray we were ground between two millstones of terror," recalled Lizette Woodworth Reese, later an accomplished poet and then a young girl living out York Road north of Baltimore. Her grandfather was a fervent states' rights secessionist. One of his sons, a Unionist, joined the federal army. Reese's mother married a Southern sympathizer and another daughter wedded an abolitionist. One night Union soldiers came to arrest the grandfather but by mistake stumbled on the abolitionist son-in-law. "Why, boys," he sang out from a second-story bedroom window, "the old gentleman has a son in the Union Army."<sup>58</sup> The troops left without a prisoner.

Passing through Maryland, Confederates found such divisions of mind baffling, maddening. In Frederick in September 1862 some Marylanders had hung out buckets of water for thirsty Southerners, prepared them decent food (one South Carolina surgeon never before had tasted apple butter), and in a few cases given them the very shoes off their feet. "The ragged were clad, the shoeless shod, and the inner man rejoiced by a number and variety of delicacies," testified one of Jackson's officers. Southern-sympathizing Marylanders by their own admission held Lee, Jackson, and Stuart in awe. Baltimoreans smuggled a dress uniform to Lee. Henry Kyd Douglas, a Jackson staff officer with ties to Washington County, wrote that as soon as the tents went up outside Frederick during the campaign into Maryland, townspeople, "especially ladies," had flocked to catch a glimpse of the famous generals in gray. William W. Blackford, Stuart's scout, later wrote of a fancy ball held for the general and his officers at the Frederick Female Academy during that campaign and of the unbounded delight Marylanders a month later took in the gray cavalry as it passed through Emmitsburg on a long raid. "Though only a mile or two from the Pennsylvania state line," Blackford wrote, "the people here seemed to be intensely Southern in their sympathies and omitted no opportunity of showing us attention during the short half hour we passed among them."<sup>59</sup>

Lovely farms and fat livestock in the state (especially impressive after war-torn Virginia) held out promise, if Maryland would only secede, of a well-

fed Confederate army able to fight indefinitely. A North Carolina soldier remarked on the "fine thickly settled country, splendid farms & houses with plenty" he saw in western Maryland—yet in Buckeystown "the houses were all shut up & nearly all the people looked as if they had lost a dear friend." "There was a surfeit of enthusiasm all about us," Douglas remarked more sharply, "—except for enlistments." Maryland's divided sympathies lived in Southern memory. On a Sunday before Antietam, when General Jackson attended a German Reformed church in Frederick, the undaunted minister prayed for Lincoln (not noticing that Jackson had fallen asleep). A Frederick farmer gave Jackson a mare to ride in battle. Stonewall mounted, but she wouldn't move; he gave her spurs and then—Douglas called the mare a "Trojan gift"—she rose up and threw the general on his back so severely that he lay there for half an hour. When the Confederate column left Frederick, natives flew Confederate and Union colors alike (Barbara Frietschie evidently waved the Stars and Stripes later, at men in blue) and drew various cries from the troops. A buxom woman wearing a small Union flag caused a riotous comment about storming breastworks; General Howell Cobb, a division commander who had served in Buchanan's cabinet, endured catcalls but found a few listeners while trying to make a secessionist speech. When the Confederates passed through Middletown, "two very pretty girls" ran down to Jackson's men wearing red, white, and blue ribbons in their hair and carrying Union flags. Laughing, they "waved their colors defiantly in the face of the General. He bowed and lifted his cap and with a quiet smile said to his staff, 'We evidently have no friends in this town.'"<sup>60</sup>

In June 1863 first Confederate cavalymen and then Union infantry passed through the hamlet of Union Mills, almost entirely made up of the Shriver clan. One family, nonslaveholders who supplied five sons to the Confederate side, welcomed Stuart's famished cavaliers with a heavy breakfast—the horsemen fingered the hotcakes off the griddle before they were ready—and sang the Confederate commander's favorite tune, "If You Want to Be a Bully Boy, Jine the Cavalry." Later that day another Shriver household, pro-Union slaveowners, greeted their champions in blue with a picnic lunch and music on the family piano.<sup>61</sup>

By 1864 the character of the war had changed, the Southern star had sunk on the horizon, and campaigns of Union and Confederate generals alike became exercises in vengeance. Earlier Southern attacks on the C&O Canal had attempted to halt traffic on what might eventually become an asset to the Confederacy; after 1863 the raids aimed at maximum destruction—breaching the canal's banks, exploding locks, burning boats, and stealing mules. In the summer of 1864 Confederates under Jubal Early crossed the Potomac to travel in Frederick County for a third time, hoping to pull some of Grant's forces away from Lee's front. Southern troops set out to even the score, to repay the Union for its burning and pillaging in the Shenandoah Valley. Confederate horsemen under John McCausland entered Hagerstown and deliv-

ered a ransom note demanding \$20,000 (they missed a digit, intending to call for \$200,000) and a large assortment of clothing and supplies. The banks and merchants produced the money and most of the other articles, but another Confederate force broke into stores and took what they wanted. Confederates seized the Reverend John B. Kerfoot, headmaster at St. James Academy, and one of his faculty members, hoping to trade them for a Virginia churchman whom Union troops had captured. Middletown had to pay \$5,000 and Frederick—once Union forces retreated—a full \$200,000. Many farmers lost horses to the Confederates, as they usually did, as well as "money, meat, chickens, cattle, sheep, & anything that came their way." Pro-Union newspaper offices in Boonsboro and Frederick were destroyed. Baltimoreans faced an invasion scare of the same kind they had experienced in the two preceding summers. Militia and volunteer units mustered. Authorities closed shops selling spirits, curtailed travel without passes, and kept a watchful eye on suspected Southern sympathizers. Residents worked on earthworks. Prices shot up as food grew scarce.<sup>62</sup>

Early's campaign, designed as an armed feint, accomplished little more than to remind Marylanders how tiresome the war had grown. Among Frederick County farmers, Early's offensive and the failure of federal troops to prevent wholesale seizures dropped "Union stock" to about 25 percent of par value, wrote Jacob Englebrecht, who was so disgusted that he himself rated the cause at only 5 percent. Another example of fatigue came from the other side. Confederate Marylanders, now united in the Maryland Line, included horsemen under Johnson and Gilmor, whom Early dispatched on a separate raid.

Aside from burning Governor Bradford's home north of Baltimore (retaliating for the destruction of the Virginia governor's house in Lexington), the two Maryland Confederates conducted a thrust that almost acquired a comic or festive air. Gilmor's troopers scattered the few Union soldiers in Westminster by charging with drawn sabers, then stopped to admire a young woman who waved a kerchief out her window. Early ordered a ransom of clothing from the town fathers; they proved hard to locate, and Gilmor persuaded Early to drop the demand. Outside Baltimore, Johnson and Gilmor captured a train only to have the engineer fix the locomotive so that it could not be moved. The raiders captured another one, and this time, after gallantly giving passengers their luggage, set the train afire and backed it onto the bridge over the Gunpowder River. Guards jumped into the water, but the bridge failed to catch fire and federals repaired it in three days. A captured Union general, elderly though he was, made good his escape. At Owings Mills Johnson's men came across a railroad car loaded with ice cream. Some of the western Virginians had never seen it before and thought it was frozen mush. Gilmor's men rode off with canteens, cups, and even hats filled, slurping it at a gallop. Several of the Marylanders then enjoyed sneaking to their homes for a quick visit, right under the noses of federal troops. Johnson and Gilmor



Lieutenant Colonel Harry C. Gilmor (1838–83), looking proud and fit at the height of the conflict. *MHS*

had planned to sweep down to Point Lookout prison the night of 12 July, free the Confederates held there, and then re-arm them from captured Washington arsenals. Wisely, they abandoned the scheme. Later, after a far more destructive McCausland raid on Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on 30 July, Johnson and Gilmor protested that the ransom demanded of Hancock—\$30,000 in cash and 5,000 cooked rations—was excessive for so small a village. Hancock was spared.



"In Carroll County there were so many people who were Union men that it was dangerous for whites in some places to say they were Rebels," an ex-slave remembered long after the war. "This made the colored and white people very friendly."<sup>63</sup> While no doubt true to one slave's experience, this impression did not hold widely; for most blacks the war imposed pressures and carried hopes that hardly made relations between themselves and whites more comfortable. Slaveholders resisted change to their labor system. Most white Marylanders remained unsettled about the numbers of free blacks. Near war's end, after outside prodding and by a circuitous route, Unionists made Maryland the first slave state to abolish slavery.

At first the Union army steered clear of any role in domestic arrangements.



Unruly slaves in Anne Arundel would have looked in vain to General Butler in April 1861. One of Dix's first duties involved the return of runaways who believed that Union troops were abolitionist friends. He ordered slaves captured by a cutter on the Severn turned over to civil magistrates at Annapolis and later directed the return of Dorchester County fugitives to their owners. "We wage war with no individuals," Dix wrote a Wisconsin officer. "Do not interfere in any manner with persons held in servitude." To avoid "misrepresentation or cavil," Dix wanted no blacks within military camps. When citizens in Washington County complained that an army officer encouraged insubordination among slaves, the local Union commander issued a reprimand and promised in the future to turn disobedient soldiers over to state authorities for trial.<sup>64</sup>

Holding the military on a tight leash, the Lincoln administration tried to strike a balance between its radical antislavery wing, with leaders like Horace Greeley of New York and Charles Sumner, and party moderates like Edward Bates of Missouri and Montgomery Blair, who knew well the political needs of border-state Unionists. Slowly the party center moved toward emancipation; surely Lincoln's military aims carried him along as well. Late in 1861 Republicans in Congress introduced a measure to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, compensate slaveowners, and provide a fund for voluntary resettlement of the freedmen. On 6 March of the next year, believing that an end to slavery in the border states would deny them to the Confederacy and hasten the war's end, Lincoln sent Congress a proposed resolution urging those states to adopt gradual emancipation. He offered federal financial aid "to compensate for the inconveniences public and private, produced by such a change of system."<sup>65</sup>

Maryland Unionists hesitated. Soon after suggesting these resolves, Lincoln met privately with border state congressmen and senators, including John W. Crisfield, an Eastern Shore representative and Lincoln's former colleague in the House, and Cornelius L. L. Leary, an "independent Unionist" from Baltimore. Unionists had united on a conservative platform: suppressing the rebellion, preserving the Union, leaving slavery alone. Both the District bill and the compensated emancipation plan threatened unanimity among these erstwhile Know-Nothings, Democrats, Whigs, and Republicans. Crisfield and other Maryland leaders hedged, asking for more time and firm assurances of federal aid. While Congress passed the compensated-emancipation resolution easily, the entire Maryland delegation voted against it or abstained. Lincoln's proposal reached the House of Representatives just as legislators in Annapolis were about to adjourn. They took no stand on it and sidestepped another serious issue. According to the 1851 constitution, the assembly after each census had to conduct a referendum to learn whether voters favored another convention. Rural members, apprehensive that a new constitution might dismantle slavery, used parliamentary delays to defer the poll.

Congress passed the District measure that spring, and the family networks and travel patterns of free blacks quickly spread word of it. Slaves in Montgomery and Prince George's counties began departing for Washington and freedom. In April 1862 the Baltimore *Sun* reported that between one hundred and two hundred slaves were leaving for Washington weekly from the Maryland countryside. Whites watched in frustration. Reverdy Johnson, senator-elect, began preparing lawsuits to test the constitutionality of the law, which seemed to violate the terms of Maryland's land cession for the federal district. Learning that federal marshals in the District refused to honor the 1850 fugitive slave law, Governor Bradford registered futile protests with Lincoln and Attorney General Bates. Bradford's position was as helpless as Hicks's had been in the secession crisis. Losing slaves himself, he told delegations of slaveowners that calling out the militia to protect slavery would only result in disastrous clashes with federal troops; the slaveholder had to accept his losses as a cost of war, "one of the direct and anticipated fruits of this atrocious rebellion, got up under a pretense of establishing a better security for this very species of property."<sup>66</sup>

Editors of the *Montgomery County Sentinel* believed that the District emancipation act, besides providing a haven for runaways, promoted the likelihood of racial war—it created a hatchery for slave insurrection. Freeing the slaves might do away with that fear, but for whites in early 1862, just as in the 1820s, talk of emancipation raised the specter of living in a heavily black society. If Maryland suddenly freed its slaves, Brantz Mayer observed in an article for the Baltimore *American*, the combined black population would exceed 170,000 persons, many of them competing for jobs, others becoming a public burden. Attempting such a social revolution in the midst of political rebellion would be foolhardy, and freeing blacks who then would lose in the struggle for survival was no kindness to them. It was, he concluded, not so much emancipation as the emancipated that Marylanders need fear; the time was rapidly arriving "when the *Negro question*, rather than the *Slavery question* . . . would become of paramount importance in its bearing on labor and taxation in Maryland." A Dorchester County meeting put it more bluntly: Maryland was in danger of becoming "the free Negro state of the Union." "If in the providence of God," the resolves declared ungenerously, "this country was intended as a home for the exclusive occupation of the white man, there should be no dark spots upon it—it should be white all over."<sup>67</sup>

As 1862 wore on, a welter of events strengthened antislavery sentiment all the same. The Baltimore *American* cited figures showing land in nonslaveholding counties to be worth twice as much as in slaveholding areas; it declared that if all Maryland slaves ran off, the result would be a "prodigious gain." Unionists in Baltimore, angry that the assembly had failed to call a convention referendum, described slaveholders as longtime oligarchs. Meanwhile Lincoln—who protested that events controlled him, not the opposite—made shrewd patronage choices and kept to a gradualist policy. In April the

*American* printed a letter Postmaster General Blair wrote a Maryland friend favoring "separation of the races" after the slow dismantling of black bondage. Under consideration for a federal post, former governor Hicks, still a slaveholder, called Lincoln's compensated emancipation plan as much a stroke "against ultraists of the North as at Southern fanatics." Frederick Schley of the *Frederick Examiner*, switching his editorial stance, also endorsed Lincoln's scheme—and soon afterward became a collector of federal revenue. In a militia act of July 1862 Congress freed "rebel"-owned slaves and their families when a slave enlisted in the Union army. A sterner confiscation act (unenforceable except when slaves escaped to Union lines) freed all slaves belonging to masters supporting rebellion. Lee's retreat after Antietam permitted Lincoln to confirm that policy. White Marylanders largely greeted the Emancipation Proclamation with coolness, while Baltimore free blacks saluted the president by presenting him with an inscribed, pulpit-sized Bible. The *American* spoke for many citizens when it called slave-ownership "a fleeting interest, one that all must recognize as doomed."<sup>68</sup>

Wartime expedients took their toll on Maryland Unionism. In May 1863, dissatisfied with "the old Bell and Everett" moderates, the leadership of the Maryland Union League met in Baltimore and formed what it called the Unconditional Union party. At the local level the league took its strength from the people who rolled bandages and sent sundries to Union troops. At the convention its spokesmen—among them Baltimore criminal court judge Hugh Lennox Bond, Henry Winter Davis, Henry Hollyday Goldsborough, and Henry Hoffman, sergeant-at-arms of the House of Representatives and a Davis man—demanded action on slavery and state constitutional reform. In part the Unionist split followed old lines. Among the Unconditionals were many former Baltimore Know-Nothings like Davis. Marylanders loyal to the established Unionist central committee, calling themselves Conservative Unionists, included Republican regulars and many former Democrats, who in places—especially the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland—retained power at the county level. Led by Bradford Johnson, Hicks (a U.S. senator after Pearce's death in 1862), and former Baltimore mayor Thomas Swann, conservatives aligned with Montgomery Blair, whose personal differences with Davis and policy quarrels with Republican radicals were growing more serious. Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg that July helped the Unconditional Unionists gain momentum as the fall elections approached. Closely following the radical Republicans in Washington, they recommended emancipation without compensation in the border states. Conservative Unionists accused them of "toadying to the administration"; they were "prisoners on duty for the cause of abolitionism." Unconditional Unionists labeled the conservatives Copperheads, rebel sympathizers, and Democrats.<sup>69</sup>

Agreeing that slavery was doomed, Conservative and Unconditional Unionists located a divisive issue in the administration's recruitment of black

soldiers. Baltimore free blacks had offered to help defend the city after the April 1861 riot—when Mayor Brown said he would call on them if needed. Later the army had employed them in building fortifications around Baltimore, and General Schenck had urged the administration to form them into line units. The War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops the same month as the Union League's Baltimore convention, and in mid-July 1863 William Birney, son of the Kentucky abolitionist, set up office in Baltimore. Recruiting proceeded briskly that summer, black sergeants making the pitch for army life at nineteen recruiting stations throughout the state and a band of black musicians from Hagerstown marching in parades and performing at rallies. While free blacks joined in large numbers, they knew that Negro troops received less pay than did whites in uniform, and as the pool of willing free blacks dried, Birney's enthusiasm led to excesses. Filling the ranks of the 4th U.S. Colored Infantry in about seven weeks, Birney emptied the Baltimore City jail and ostentatiously freed slaves being held in Baltimore slave pens by District of Columbia owners trying to evade the emancipation law of 1862. His civilian agents, many of them black, had no authority to accept bondsmen. Some Maryland slaves, lacking their master's permission to volunteer, nonetheless ran away that summer and left the paperwork to the authorities—as did a Howard County man named Joe Nick. His escape to Ellicott City occasioned an embarrassingly winless contest among local bloodhound owners.<sup>70</sup>

In the early stages Lincoln's use of black troops pleased only Unconditional Unionists—most of whom were never so radical as to suggest that black and white soldiers stood equal to each another. Small farmers, suffering the usual labor shortage, favored slave recruitment; they grumbled that by taking free blacks into the army the federal government threw the little man on the mercy of slaveholders and their bondsmen-for-hire. Slaveowners supported recruitment of free blacks as one means to get rid of them and where possible used the state statute book to limit their property losses (in August 1863 a Union recruiter in Frederick went to jail for violating a law that punished anyone aiding slaves to escape). Black recruitment especially angered whites in heavily black areas. Talbot County citizens protested against black companies strutting about in their midst. A St. Mary's County slaveholder badgered his congressman to do something about the fugitive slaves who found sanctuary in the Leonardtown military hospital. Masters missing slaves alleged that their men had been impressed. Reports of irregularities in Maryland grew so numerous that Lincoln in September suspended black recruitment there and negotiated with Bradford and other state leaders. In early October, by General Order 329, the administration established a plan that became the model in other border states. Lincoln agreed not to enlist Maryland slaves unless free blacks failed to fill assigned draft quotas. After a thirty-day grace period, however, recruiting officers would

take slaves regardless of whether they had their master's permission, the federal government paying loyal slaveholders three hundred dollars a head for their lost property. To collect, they had to produce papers freeing the recruits.

That fall, in an election many Marylanders charged was influenced by the military, Unconditional Unionists won a clear majority in the General Assembly, and friction between military and slaveholders peaked—a mark of the masters' frustration as the clock of bondage wound down. Upper Marlboro slaveowners complained bitterly that black recruiters on a steamboat were "harassing us, plundering us, and abducting our negroes." Near Camp Stanton in St. Mary's County, two whites killed a black lieutenant for enticing slaves to join the army. By early 1864—with talk of manumission on the increase, the thin fabric of Maryland slavery tearing at every corner—tension between military and civilian changed dramatically. Slaveholders seized on the army as a means of avoiding financial loss. Military officers defended themselves against another excess: they often refused, they said, to accept slaves whose owners had given up trying to force them to work and wanted them put into service. In the year following General Order 329 the federal government paid more than \$14,000 for enlisted Maryland slaves. During that period nonslaveholders seemed content that ex-slaves counted toward the Maryland draft quotas. Former slaveowners complained of delays in obtaining compensation.<sup>71</sup>

Joined on the surface and in large issues, bickering behind the scenes, Conservatives and Unconditionals (forty-seven of whom had run as "Emancipationists") steered the ship of state to the end of the war. When the legislature met in January 1864, it quickly set about calling a constitutional convention. Members heard an unusual series of addresses—apparently by invitation—that were designed "to instruct them in the path of duty." Blair, Hicks, and Swann spoke on the need for a convention, Swann in particular demanding that the "steed of Emancipation" be whipped and spurred until "the whole state of Maryland, from its center to its circumference, shall be awakened to an edict of universal Emancipation." The assembly called for an election of convention delegates. Restricted to men loyal to the Union (perhaps as many as two-thirds of all Maryland electors did not vote or were prevented from casting a ballot), the vote affirmed the need for a convention and overwhelmingly selected emancipationists to attend it. The convention met in Annapolis in late April and sat until September—with interruptions for the national Republican convention in Baltimore, held in early June, and Early's raid in July. A minority of some thirty-five members, mostly Democrats from the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, lost every substantive issue and made sarcastic motions about suspending debate entirely.<sup>72</sup>

Though enacting reforms, the new constitution contained several notoriously pungent features. The Unionist majority pushed through an article awarding House of Delegates representation on the basis, not of total popu-

# **OATH**

## **TO BE ADMINISTERED TO EVERY VOTER.**

"I do swear (or affirm) that I am a citizen of the United States, that I have never given any aid, countenance or support to those in armed hostility to the United States, that I have never expressed a desire for the triumph of said Enemies over the Arms of the United States, and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States, and support the Constitution and Laws thereof, as the Supreme Law of the land, any Law or Ordinance of any State to the contrary notwithstanding; that I will in all respects demean myself as a Loyal citizen of the United States, and I make this oath (or affirmation) without any reservation or evasion, and believe it to binding on me."

## **QUESTIONS**

### **For the use of Judges of Election**

#### **1. Service in the Rebel Army.**

Have you ever served in the rebel army?

#### **2. Aid to those in Armed Rebellion.**

Have you ever given aid to those in rebellion?

Have you never given money to those intending to join the rebellion?

Have you never given money to their agents?

Have you never given money, clothing or provisions for the purpose of aiding the emigration of persons from this State to the South?

Have you never sent money, clothing or provisions to persons in the South since the rebellion?

#### **3. Comfort and Encouragement to Rebellion.**

*Note.*—Comfort or encouragement means advocacy, advice in favor of. We aid the rebellion by giving money, clothing and provisions; we give it comfort and encouragement by our words. A man who has advocated the cause of rebellion, who talked in favor of Maryland going with the South, who rejoiced over the victories of the rebel armies, has given comfort and encouragement to the rebellion.

Have you ever given comfort or encouragement to the rebellion?

Have you never in conversation, attempted to justify the course of the States in rebellion?

Have you never expressed a wish for the success of the rebellion or its army?

Have you never in conversation, discouraged the cause of the Federal Government?

Did you rejoice over the downfall of Fort Sumpter?

#### **4. Disloyalty.**

*Note.*—If the Judges are satisfied that a man is disloyal to the United States; it is their duty to refuse his vote, for such a person is not a "legal voter" of the State of Maryland.

Are you a loyal citizen of the United States?

Have you been loyal ever since the beginning of the war?

Have you ever rejoiced over the defeat of the Union army?

Have you ever rejoiced over the success of the rebel army?

When the Union army and the rebel army meet in battle, which do you wish to gain the victory.

*Note.*—After interrogating the person offering to vote, the Judges may hear other evidence to prove or disprove his statements, and must be governed by the weight of testimony.

lation (dear to heavily black counties), but of white population. The majority adopted a stringent loyalty oath and granted wide discretionary powers to election officials—they could judge for themselves whether one took the oath in good faith. An oath required of officeholders declared the U.S. Constitution and federal laws supreme in the land, “any law or ordinance of this or any other state, to the contrary, notwithstanding”—a clause striking at the states’ rights interpretation of the federal compact. Another article disqualified from voting or holding office everyone who had served in “the so-called Confederate States of America,” who had given aid or comfort to enemies of the United States, sent them “money or goods or letters or information,” even those men who “by open word or deed declared adherence” to the South. Arguably necessary as war measures, these oaths and proscriptions applied even after war’s end—forever, unless one obtained an act of assembly restoring citizenship or served in the federal military. Finally, to seal acceptance of the new charter, the majority voted to impose these stringent election restrictions on the ratification vote itself—an irregularity that brought forth jeers of protest from the outvoted rural members. The convention succeeded in its single most important object by the end of June. It adopted a Declaration of Rights that included an article abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude: “all persons held to service or labor as slaves, are hereby declared free.”<sup>73</sup>

Though the issue may have been settled at home, Marylanders like everyone else fought on until the following spring. Maryland sailors on the Union side served under Louis M. Goldsborough in the Atlantic blockading squadron; they fought on western rivers and in battles for strategic Southern coastal points. Although by the late months of the war the South virtually had no navy, Maryland natives had played conspicuous parts in the glory days of the Confederate sea service. Its ranking officer, Raphael Semmes of Charles County, skippered the celebrated sea raider *Alabama* until its sinking in June 1864, and Franklin Buchanan of Baltimore had commanded the *Virginia* (earlier *Merrimack*) when in May 1862 the ironclad challenged the *Monitor* at Hampton Roads. A brigade of Union Marylanders took part in the brutal fighting in the Spotsylvania County wilderness in late 1864. The Confederate 2d Maryland, successor to the 1st, made a name for itself in critical battles like Gettysburg but also, as the war became a matter of attrition, struggled in ugly engagements at places important only to the soldiers who lost friends there: the Weldon Railroad, Peebles Farm, Squirrel Level Road, and Hatcher’s Run. Eventually forming six regiments (8,718 men), black Marylanders made bloody assaults on Fort Fisher, North Carolina, and then, during Lee’s last defensive stand, charged into the fatal Petersburg Crater—a huge hole blasted by tons of gunpowder beneath the Confederate lines. Many of them, unable to climb out of the loose earth, were trapped and killed.

No less than other Marylanders who fought in that meaningful American

war, they knew why they were there. In October 1863 the *Baltimore Daily Gazette* published in dialect words that someone had overheard a newly enlisted black soldier saying in prayer. "King ob Kings and God ob battles," he had asked, "Help us to be able to fight wid de union sojers de battles for de Union. Help us to fight for de country—fight for our own homes and our own free children and our children's children."<sup>74</sup>