

# Slaveholders

Slaveholders in Maryland used slaves to cultivate wheat and tobacco, or to perform domestic work and skilled labor. Slave owners saw their slaves as property, sources of revenue, status symbols and important investments. They also saw them as dangerous threats who needed to be controlled and kept at bay. Owners feared runaways would encourage other slaves to escape—or rebel. When slaves escaped, masters might punish those who remained.



## CASE STUDY

**Rev. John Ashton**, a Jesuit priest at the White Marsh Church in Prince George's County, lost many slaves who not only ran away, but who also challenged him in court. Two groups of slaves escaped from Ashton at the end of the eighteenth century. The Queen family, a group of twelve, fled in 1795. Three years later, brothers Charles and Patrick Mahoney also ran away. Both groups unsuccessfully sued Ashton for their freedom. Ashton manumitted the Mahoney brothers in 1804, but the Queen family remained in slavery.



**Sixteen Dollars Reward.**  
**R**AN away from the subscriber, living in Prince-George's county, two mulatto fellows called **CHARLES** and **PATRICK MAHONEY**; they pretend that have been away about three weeks; they pretend they are set free by the verdict of a jury in the last general court, but were ordered by the court to return home till a point of law should be settled relating to their case; this they refuse to do. As they are well known in and about Annapolis and the forest of Prince-George's, where I suspect they must be, I do hereby forewarn all persons from harbouring or employing them, and will give any person **FIFTY DOLLARS** reward for securing either of them in gaol.  
 JOHN ASHTON.  
 January 8. 1798.

**Twelve Pounds Reward.**  
**A**BSENTED themselves from my service since the late Prince-George's and Anne-Arundel county courts, the following twelve **NEGROES**, calling themselves **QUEENS**; *Simon, Billy, Jack, Lewis, Isaac, Paul, Matthew, and Tom*, very black negroes, and *Tom, Billy, Nick, and Fanny*, of a brown complexion; they are all young, hearty, and well made negroes, and quitted me for no other reason but because they were not set free at the last court. As I have recognized for the said negroes I conceive that I do not forfeit their services, nor lose any share of my authority over them, before trial; I do therefore promise the above reward to any person who will inform me where the aforesaid negroes may be found, and be witness against such persons as harbour or employ them, or **TWENTY SHILLINGS** for each one. I likewise forewarn all persons from harbouring or employing the said negroes at their peril, as I am determined to prosecute every such person agreeably to law.  
 JOHN ASHTON.



**\$5 Reward,**  
 Will be given for the apprehension and delivery in Easton Jail, of negro boy **ALFRED**, who escaped from my farm in Caroline county on Wednesday the 24th inst. The above reward will be given if he is taken in Talbot or Caroline counties, or \$10 if taken in Dorchester.  
 He formerly belonged to Dr. Absalom Thompson— is about 5 feet high, tolerably black—had on when he left a low-crow white hat, white kersey over jacket, pants blue & red, vest not recollected; shoes, cap & half-soled. The above boy is believed to be concealed in the neighborhood of Cambridge by his mother, belonging to Dr. Thompson.  
 April 27, 1844. RICKSOM WEBB.

Ashton and Webb challenge the traditional portrait of slave owners. As a clergyman and a free black, respectively, they illustrate that slavery was an institution which sometimes outweighed moral and racial conventions.

Discover more at [www.mdslavery.net](http://www.mdslavery.net)

74

Account Webb negro 450 acre of land C44 1800.00

3 beds & furniture 30.00

1 table board 5.00

1 chair 5.00

1 bed 20.00

115.00

160.00

30.00

105.00

1 bag & harness 50.00

Notes & judgement 2500.00

1 negro girl Harriet to serve 10y 120.00

Smith & Miller Note & judgement \$759.00

## CASE STUDY

**Ricksom Webb** was a free black man who owned slaves, an unusual but not unheard of situation. Like his white counterparts, he enforced the cruelties of the slave labor system in Maryland. Owning slaves possibly elevated Webb's status in society, even among whites. Webb owned at least six slaves, including Alfred, who tried to escape from his Caroline County farm in 1844.