

“Objects of Distress”: Inequality and Poverty in Early Nineteenth-Century Prince George’s County

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In the winter of 1800–1801, the Reverend Clement Brooke of Prince George’s County, Maryland, died. A prosperous planter, owner of 1,045 acres of land and fifty-eight slaves, he was the nineteenth wealthiest head of household in the county tax lists taken the previous October.¹ He had lived in a fifty-by-thirty foot framed house with a piazza “on each side” and with a twenty-four-by-sixteen foot kitchen adjacent. Within two acres of the big house were a meat house, milk house, lumber house, carriage house, and two slave cabins. Farther away were nine tobacco houses, two cow houses “with eight foot sheds,” five more “small” slave cabins, and two tenant houses. The value of the land and buildings was \$10,435.25, according to the Federal Direct Tax of 1798, although its market value would have been a little higher.²

An inventory taken in January 1801, following the preacher’s death, estimated the worth of his personal estate at \$14,405.54, probably very close to its market price. Most valuable were fifty-eight slaves, worth \$9,346. Other saleable or working capital, worth \$4,346.97, comprised forty thousand pounds of crop tobacco, 260 barrels of maize, twenty thousand pounds of timothy hay, “A Quantity of Corn fodder,” “5 pounds Cotton in Seed,” ten horses, forty-seven sheep, seventy-two swine, six bee hives, “3 old Cyder Mills press and trough,” “3 handMills,” a millstone, “Shoe Makers tools,” “Carpenters & Cooper tools,” various casks, and sundry items such as wagons, saddles, branding irons, guns, hunting nets, hoes, and so on, all testifying to a variety of supplements to tobacco staple agriculture. The remaining \$712.57 in personalty consisted of household items, many of them luxurious. Clothes and a library were respectively worth \$100 and \$200, fifty-six items of gold and silver (including dinnerware, jewelry, and sartorial adjuncts such as cuff-links) were worth \$109.75, and the rest comprised scores of other items of comfort such as mahogany, cherry, and walnut furniture, “6 feather Beds,” and “13 Rose Blankets.”³

Charles Jones died a year after Clement Brooke, but his sparse estate provides a stark contrast with that of the planter-preacher. He owned no land or slaves, just “one Old horse,” “one Cow and Calf,” “one Sow,” two feather beds and bedsteads, two tables, “4 Old Chears,” and “1 Old Chest,” altogether worth \$60.50.⁴ Priscilla

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Brooke family coat-of-arms. Reverend Clement Brooke (1730–1800) descended from one of Maryland's wealthy founding families. On his death, the appraisers valued his estate at \$14,405.54. (George Norbury MacKenzie, Colonial Families of the United States [New York: The Grafton Press, 1907].)



Howington, who died and whose property was inventoried two months after Jones's, was even poorer. She owned "one Old horse. . . . One Cow and Calf. . . . three piges," twenty-one ounces of "Old Pewter. . . . one Old Table. . . . One Old Cupbord. . . . two Old Beds and Bedsteades. . . . two old pots and [an] oven. . . . Old Lumber," and "Nine pounds of old iron and Skillet," worth \$42.54.⁵

The kinds of inequalities represented in the respective properties of Clement Brooke, Charles Jones, and Priscilla Howington are perhaps not surprising, given what colonial Chesapeake historians have found about rising socioeconomic differentiation and the growth of a propertyless sector of the free population in the eighteenth century.⁶ And yet they are surprising in light of what early national historians generally say about rural society in the early republic. While colonial historians have relied on sources such as wills, inventories, and tax records for their socioeconomic analyses, usually of particular localities in depth, the currently dominant "republican synthesis" school of early national historical thought is influenced by the philosophical-epistemological premise that social realities are intellectually or linguistically constructed. The methodological corollary is that these historians rely heavily on literary sources, especially the writings of contemporary agrarians, for their socioeconomic analyses, usually abstract ones of society in general. Consequently, like those agrarians, they tend to see society in the early republic as roughly egalitarian, at least in as much as the large majority owned land and thus possessed economic independence and self-sufficiency.⁷

This article challenges the "republican synthesis" conception of early national rural society, at least for the Chesapeake tobacco-slave-plantation region, em-

ploying the same sorts of methods and sources used by colonialists. It explores inequality, focusing on the existence of poverty in the free population, using Prince George's County on Maryland's lower western shore as a test case. Studying a single county risks producing unrepresentative results, although the findings here make sense in the light of colonial Chesapeake historical development and are similar to the few early national studies of tobacco society which have used the same kinds of sources but which have not received the attention they deserve.⁸ The benefits of the local approach lie in the opportunity for closer analysis of the socioeconomic conditions of individuals and groups than is afforded by the more impressionistic generalizations of contemporary writers. Indeed, a local analysis based on county property records shows that agrarian writers were selective to the point of distortion, for it reveals the existence of a large and growing section of the population which was materially poor and was excluded from agrarian discourses. These poorer people were able to make a living as tenants and wage laborers as long as times were generally good.⁹ But their economic position was precarious, and when faced with economic crisis, as they were in the late 1810s, many found themselves dependent upon county alms, being, in the levy court's words, "such objects of distress as to require immediate relief."¹⁰

Table 1 allows us to place Clement Brooke, Charles Jones, and Priscilla Howington in the context of the whole Prince George's population. Clement Brooke was toward the top of the richest decile—nineteenth from the top in 1800—with total taxable wealth of \$8,695.50, according to annual county assessments which rated property at much less than market value. Members of this group, which owned over two-thirds of taxable property, were almost four times richer on average than those in the second decile and almost sixty times richer than the poorest taxpayers. Charles Jones and Priscilla Howington, however, were among 782 Prince

Table 1: *Distribution of Total Wealth among Percentile Groups of Resident Household Heads, 1800*

%/no. of householders		Value	% of value	Cum. %	Mean value
10	171	819,236.82	67.5	67.5	4,790.86
10	171	209,247.45	17.2	84.7	1,223.67
10	172	101,605.03	8.4	93.1	590.73
10	171	52,219.43	4.3	97.4	305.38
10	171	26,221.91	2.2	99.5	153.34
4.3	74	5,939.84	0.5	100	80.27
45.7	782	0	0	100	0
Total	1,712	1,214,460.48	100	100	709.38

Table 2: *Distribution of Total Wealth, 1810*

%/no. of householders		Value	% of value	Cum. %	Mean value
10	162	1,151,024.19	70.3	70.3	7,105.09
10	162	269,933.02	16.5	86.7	1,666.25
10	162	124,741.07	7.6	94.3	770.01
10	162	57,969.06	3.5	97.9	357.83
10	162	25,296.01	1.5	99.4	156.15
9.3	150	9,923.35	0.6	100	66.16
40.7	660	0	0	100	0
Total	1,620	1,638,886.69	100	100	1,011.66

Georgians, nearly 46 percent of county household heads, who owned less than £40, or \$106.80, in total and were thus exempt from local taxes. Poverty such as theirs, then, was widespread.¹¹

The inequalities apparent in Table 1, furthermore, were growing over time. Table 2 shows that the gap between the wealthiest and the rest had grown by 1810, with the richest decile owning over 70 percent of taxable wealth. The number of nontaxables, however, and their proportion in the population, had declined, although, as we shall see, this had much to do with disproportionate outmigration by the poor. By 1820, moreover, after outmigration had declined and once the population of household heads had risen again, both inequality and the extent of poverty had increased. Table 3 shows that in 1820 the richest decile owned over three-quarters of taxable wealth, while nontaxables had grown in number to over a thousand and had become a majority of household heads.

For various reasons, however, these figures understate the extent of inequality. Some of those reasons have to do with tax assessment practices, such as rating property at considerably less than market value. In 1800, for instance, assessors valued prime-aged male and female slaves at \$120.15 and \$80.10, respectively, yet they sold for two to three times those sums: Reverend Brooke's slaves, children and the elderly included, were worth over \$160 each, according to his inventory. Rural land without taxable built improvements was assessed at an average of \$1.63 per acre, yet usually sold for between \$5 and \$25, or even more with particularly high quality soil and farm improvements. When county officials doublechecked assessed value of land in 1801, taxable values were still well below market values.

As well as under-assessment, under-reporting also minimized apparent differentials between rich and poor. Assessors only updated their records by visiting households once every several years, while in the meantime property owners were

Table 3: *Distribution of Total Wealth, 1820*

%/no. of householders		Value	% of value	Cum. %	Mean value
10	180	1,230,732.69	76.1	76.1	6,837.40
10	179	246,684.43	15.3	91.4	1,378.13
10	180	96,031.60	5.9	97.3	533.51
10	179	36,095.53	2.2	99.6	201.65
4	71	7,055.28	0.4	100	99.37
56	1,006	0	0	100	100
Total	1,795	1,616,599.53	100	100	900.61

supposed to inform the levy court when they acquired new property or when slaves crossed age barriers. This they manifestly failed to do, for recorded property holdings invariably remained static for unfeasible periods of time until suddenly increasing dramatically. Thus, assessments in 1800 recorded 10,830 slaves while the census-takers found 12,191, and there were over 400,000 acres of land in the county, rather than the 330,000 and declining number recorded for the levy.¹² Most of the missing thousand-plus slaves and 70,000 acres would more likely have belonged to wealthier rather than poorer people.

Another factor leading to under-representation of gaps between rich and poor, as derived from local tax lists, is that up to 30 percent of property (in addition to that accounted for in the Tables) was recorded as being owned by people who either lived in a household in which someone else was deemed by census-takers to be the head, or resided somewhere other than Prince George's County, or had died and whose property had not yet been divided among creditors and heirs. It seems likely that wealthy nonhousehold heads would have lived in households headed by someone wealthier rather than someone poorer, in which case some of the rich households were even more opulent than figures based on household heads alone will show. Absentee-owned property in Prince George's raises questions about Prince Georgians owning property elsewhere. It seems safe to suppose that those who held large properties outside the county were among the wealthier residents within the county, and that perhaps many of the county's richest people held some property elsewhere. The Calverts of Riversdale, for example, had taxable wealth of \$13,951.38 in 1800, including 3,325 acres of land and seventy-six slaves, and were Prince George's seventh wealthiest family (and would eventually be its wealthiest by far). In addition to their Prince Georgian holdings, though, the Calverts also owned, at various points in the early 1800s, 875 acres of land in neighboring Montgomery County, plots of land in Washington, D.C., and Alexandria, Virginia,

Table 4: *Frequency of Land- and Slaveownership, 1800, 1810, 1820*

Group	1800 No.	% of 1,712	1810 No.	% of 1,620	1820 No.	% of 1,795
Landed taxables	524	30.6	531	32.8	462	25.7
Nonlanded taxables	406	23.7	429	26.5	327	18.2
Nontaxables	782	45.7	660	40.7	1,006	56.0
Total landless	1,188	69.4	1,089	67.2	1,333	74.3
Slaveowning taxables	652	38.1	589	36.4	539	30.0
Nonslaveowning taxables	278	16.2	371	22.9	250	13.9
Nontaxables	782	45.7	660	40.7	1,006	56.0
Total nonslaveowners	1,060	61.9	1,031	63.6	1,256	70.0

stocks in various banks and in a Georgetown manufacturing company of which George Calvert was a director, and government bonds.¹³ One might assume that the eventual disposition of property from the estates of the deceased was ultimately a socioeconomic leveler, but inheritance was the principal means by which wealthier people acquired property in the early nineteenth century, and, besides, as we shall see, life-cycle mobility made little difference to general inequality.¹⁴

Prince Georgians were differentiated by what kind of property they owned as well as by how much. The 782 nontaxables obviously owned no land or slaves, nor did a good many of the taxables. Indeed, as in Table 4, 406 taxables were nonlandowners, leaving a total of 524 landowners and 1,188 nonlandowners out of 1,712 household heads: a nonlandownership rate of 69.4 percent. Furthermore, although landlessness fell to 67.2 percent by 1810, it rose to 74.3 percent by 1820. Surprisingly, perhaps, Table 4 also shows that slaveholding was more extensive than landownership, although nonslaveholding still encompassed a majority of 61.9 percent in 1800 rising to 63.7 percent in 1810 and 70 percent in 1820.¹⁵

The decline in landholding in the early nineteenth century represented the continuation of a process in which ownership rates in the tidewater Chesapeake had fallen from 70 percent in the late seventeenth century to 50 percent by the time of the American Revolution. The decline in slaveownership between 1800 and 1820, however, was a reversal of expansion throughout the eighteenth century. It is worth suggesting, then, that the late 1850s fall in slaveownership represented a return to downward trends, or was at least symptomatic of fluctuation, while stability in slaveownership rates at about 30 percent from the 1820s to the mid-1850s was aberrant.¹⁶

Not all the landless and slaveless were poor. Mary Wootton, for instance, had no land to her name but owned over £2,000 in personalty in 1800, including sixty-one



*At the Request of Samuel Snowden the following Release was Granted the 17th June 1781
I Samuel Snowden of Prince Georges County in Maryland Do hereby set free from
Bondage my thirty five Negroes as hereafter named W^{ch} I think about thirty*

Above, Montpelier, home of the Snowden family (Maryland Historical Society). Below, Samuel Snowden (1732–1801) freed his slaves in 1781 and then relied on wage workers. (Maryland State Archives.)

slaves, and certainly had use of over 1,500 acres of land recorded in the name of “Turner Wootton heirs.”¹⁷ In all, 239 nonlandowners, over 20 percent of the landless, were slaveholders. Most—145—were small-scale owners of fewer than five slaves, but eight others besides Mary Wootton held twenty slaves or more. Samuel Snowden, on the other hand, third largest landowner in the county in 1800, freed his seventy-one slaves in 1781, relying on wage workers and tenants to tend his 5,703 acres thereafter. Of sixty-nine planters with over eight hundred acres in 1800 (landholdings which could sustain twenty laborers or more), Snowden was one of only three nonslaveholders.¹⁸ Like Clement Brooke, most large landowners were large slaveholders, and vice versa. Most people, however, owned neither slaves nor land, numbering 949 and forming 55.4 percent of householders in 1800. One hundred sixty-seven of them owned some taxable property, but the rest, Charles Jones and Priscilla Howington included, owned none. Those without the two principal forms of capital in this plantation-agricultural county in 1810 and 1820 respectively numbered 884 and 1,143, and formed 54.6 and 63.7 percent of householders.

Table 5: *Upward Mobility among Nontaxables, Nonslaveholders, and Nonlandowners, 1800–1810–1820*

Group	No. survivors to 1810	No./% upwardly mobile	No. survivors to 1820	No./% upwardly mobile
Nontaxables	217	121 55.8	78	38 48.7
Nonslaveholders	347	74 21.3	135	41 30.4
Nonlandowners	396	74 18.7	158	46 29.1

The existence of slavery reminds us that the figures given so far actually tell us less than half the story of inequality and poverty in this tobacco county. In 1800, 12,191 people, 57.6 percent of Prince Georgians, did not even own themselves. There were 8,984 free people in 1,712 households, a rate of 5.25 persons per household: if we assume the same average household size among slaves, then we can extrapolate another 2,322 household heads from the enslaved population. If we count slaves as potential property owners and subtract the value of slave property from the figures given, then \$771,020 divided among 4,034 households represents a per capita wealth of \$191.13, considerably less than the \$709.38 per capita in the free population, making Prince George's County seem somewhat less opulent than mean property ownership in Table 1 suggests. It is interesting to note, moreover, that an emancipation in 1800 would have left Prince George's County with 930 taxable and 3,104 nontaxable households, or 23 percent taxable and 77 percent nontaxable.¹⁹

The free population of 8,984 in 1800 also included a disproportionately poor group of 648 free African Americans in 123 households. Only eight black heads of household qualified for the local levy. The free black community, 7.2 percent of the free population, altogether held \$2,028.91, or 0.2 percent of taxable property. Mean taxable wealth among all free black households was \$16.50. Including the estimated 2,322 slave households, average wealth among 2,445 African-American heads of household was eighty-three cents. The white population, 8,336 people in 1,589 households, 39.4 percent of all households and 92.8 percent of free households, owned \$1,212,431.57, or 99.8 percent of the wealth and \$763.02 per household. But, while 115 of Prince George's 782 nontaxable householders were black, another 667 were white. With 42 percent of white householders nontaxable, poverty in the white population was pervasive.²⁰

Some of these poorer people were eventually able to obtain property. Table 5 reveals extensive mobility among those who remained in the county to 1810 and 1820. Over half of the nontaxables of 1800 became taxables by 1810, and just under half of those who survived and stayed in Prince George's did so by 1820. Also, just



Court clerks recorded alms dispensed to the local poor in this second Prince George's County courthouse (1801–1881). (Prince George's County Historical Society.)

over one in five erstwhile nonslaveholders became slaveholders over the course of one decade, almost one in three over two decades. The numbers of hitherto landless householders who became landowners was the same and slightly higher over one and two decades respectively, although they formed slightly smaller proportions of the erstwhile nonlandowning population.

These figures give a somewhat deceptive impression of high mobility, however. First, mobility took the form of small steps, not large leaps. Forty-eight, almost 40 percent, of the nontaxables who became taxables by 1810 remained outside the wealthiest half of the free population, and another thirty-five, close to 30 percent, only aspired to the fifth decile. Fourteen of those who subsequently survived to 1820 moved another rung or two up the ladder, but seventeen returned to the nontaxable category. Similarly, eight of the new slaveholders of 1810 fell back into nonslaveholding by 1820, as did five of the new landowners. Also, although

Table 6: *Disappearance Rates, 1800–1810–1820*

Group	No. in 1800	No. gone by 1810	%	No. gone by 1820	%
Taxables	930	460	49.5	740	79.6
Nontaxables	782	565	72.3	704	90.0
Slaveholders	652	312	47.9	517	79.3
Nonslaveholders	1,060	713	67.3	926	87.4
Landowners	524	233	44.5	415	79.2
Nonlandowners	1,188	792	66.7	1,029	86.6

the records do not permit systematic analysis of how all the upwardly mobile acquired their new property, evidence from wills suggests that inheritance was the main means of doing so, and there is little in the land records to indicate that poorer people were especially active in slave or real estate markets.

Furthermore, the survivor figures above account for a relatively small proportion of the population, and one which probably had a higher level of upward mobility than the rest. There is no way of counting exactly how many of those who disappeared from the census did so because they died, abdicated the headship of household, or migrated. Yet it appears from Table 6 that the poor must have migrated disproportionately, suggesting that many of those who stayed behind expected to gain by doing so, while the poor in many cases migrated because they had no such expectations but thought they might gain by moving. Almost three-quarters of the nontaxables of 1800 disappeared from the record by 1810, compared to half the taxables, and nine of ten nontaxables disappeared by 1820, compared to eight of ten taxables. The disappearance rate was lowest at the top end of the scale, with seventy-four, or 43.3 percent, from the wealthiest decile absent by 1810 (although 136, or 80 percent, disappeared by 1820—probably because they tended to be older and thus died more frequently). Fewer than half of slave- and landowners disappeared over one decade, compared to two-thirds of non-owners. Eighty percent of slave- and landowners disappeared over two compared to 90 percent non-owners. If wealthier people were older on average and thus disappeared more frequently from the record through death, as is likely, then these figures understate the differential between migration and persistence based on wealth.²¹

Bayly Ellen Marks made similar findings about migration from St. Mary's County, discovering that between the 1790s and 1830s 67 percent of outmigrants were nontaxables, 55 percent were slaveless, and 90 percent were landless. She also found that about 13 percent of migrants moved to other Maryland counties, 5 percent to Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, and the rest further

Ordered by the court that John Reed magister pay
 to John H. Hall the sum of Two Dollars for
 one week support of a Saary Swann a young
 child whose Mother has left it and for sending
 the child to the Poor House (S. P. Hall, ed)

The levy court paid John Hall (above) and Charity Lowe (below) for their care of abandoned children. (Maryland State Archives.)

afield, including 72 percent who moved to Kentucky. We can make some suppositions about the likely fate of these various migrants based on other people's scholarship. Marks herself shows that socioeconomic conditions in St. Mary's County—where, in 1800, 5 percent of taxables owned a third of taxable wealth, 40 percent of free householders were nontaxables, and 65 percent were landless, rising to 75 percent by 1840—were similar to those in Prince George's. According to Jackson Turner Main, landlessness rates were as high as 75 percent in some late-eighteenth-century Virginia tobacco counties. It seems unlikely, then, that local migration within the tidewater tobacco region benefited people much.²²

The same goes for most of those migrating farther afield. Lee Soltow, Fredrika Teute, and Elizabeth Perkins found extensive inequality of condition and opportunity in the tobacco west. In 1792, 65 percent of residents of the new state of Kentucky were landless, as were as many as 84 percent in certain districts. Land prices, beginning at \$1 per unimproved acre, rising to \$2 for improved acres and up to \$60 for prime riverbank land, were too high for many poorer migrants to buy farms. Although speculators inaugurated a deferred payment practice in 1797, and prices fell to \$20 per hundred acres, landlessness still stood at 52 percent in 1802. When the government discontinued a credit scheme in 1806, many lost their

1792
 Ordered that Thomas Tyler and William Wells
 Proprietors at Queen Anne Warehouse pay to
 Charity Lowe ^{a single boy} the sum of Twenty Dollars for
 the purpose of supporting and maintaining an
 Infant found by the said Charity for Twelve
 Months or more

newly acquired land, and in 1821 a third of Kentucky realty remained in the hands of out-of-state banks and speculators. It is more difficult to arrive at the likely fate of migrants to the wheat regions of Maryland, Virginia, and further north, or of those who moved to cities. It may be that poorer people who moved to more egalitarian non-plantation farming areas prospered more often than others. It is probable, however, that those who swelled the ranks of the rapidly growing urban industrial workforce of the early nineteenth century did not.²³

Some people may have escaped propertylessness, then, but many died as poor as Charles Jones and Priscilla Howington. Moreover, there is evidence that significant numbers lived close to destitution and sometimes suffered subsistence crises from which only public assistance could rescue them. Some people's need for poor relief arose from tragic personal circumstances. In July 1801, Prince George's Levy Court paid the splendidly named Charity Lowe "Twenty dollars for the purpose of supporting and maintaining an Infant found by the said Charity for Twelve Months." The following year the court gave John H. Hall "Two Dollars for one Weeks support of Sauncy Swann, a young Child whose Mother has left it — and for sending the Child to the Poor House." While Sauncy Swan went to the "Poor House," there is no record of what became of the child Charity Lowe found. Nor is it known what caused the parents of these children to abandon them, but we can fairly suppose that those parents also suffered terrible privation.²⁴

Although such starts in life were inauspicious, children sent to the almshouse were taught trades and thereby equipped to make a living. The Orphans' Court proceedings and land records contain numerous instances of young boys and girls apprenticed to learn various crafts. For some people, though, life ended in poverty-stricken circumstances. In 1803 the levy court paid Dr. Alexander Mitchell \$12.25 for "nursing and burying" Martin Murphy, "a poor travelling man." Rather than having been forced into vagrancy, it is possible that Murphy chose the freedom of peripatetic poverty over the confinements of other lifestyles. Whatever the case, he seems to have had no family or friends to rely on in his time of greatest need. He died, though, in the care of the community in the form of a local physician who was compensated by the public purse. In this last respect he was luckier than some. In 1805 Joseph Schofield received \$8 from the levy court "for digging [a] grave . . . and making a coffin" for James Fletcher, "a Mulatto Man . . . found dead on the public road." James Fletcher appears to have died homeless, possibly of exposure, perhaps unnoticed by anyone until someone had to bury him.²⁵

The county provided a rudimentary safety net for the extremely poor, notwithstanding that Martin Murphy, James Fletcher, and others occasionally fell through it. The levy court annually paid the county almshouse trustees sums which normally ranged from \$500 to \$1,500, although no other records survive to enlighten us about the people housed there. The court also provided money, usually \$10 to \$20, to patrons for the support of individual almshouse outpensioners.

Rosalie Stier Calvert (1778–1821), wife of George Calvert (1768–1838) of Riversdale, described the hardship she witnessed among the county's poor in letters to her family in Belgium. (Maryland Historical Society.)

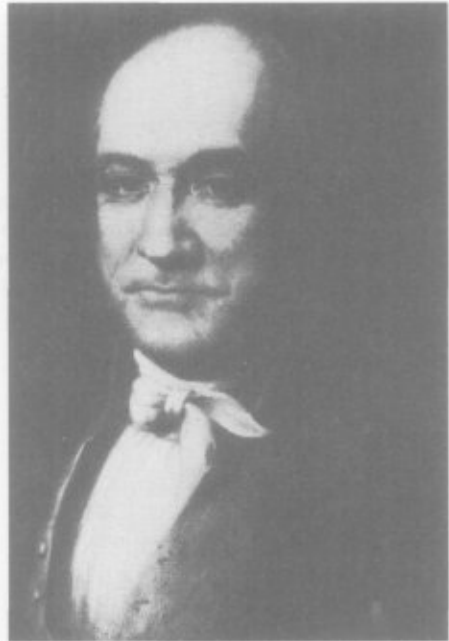


There were only two such Prince Georgian recipients of levy court poor relief in 1800, although more might have needed or wanted it. In 1805 there were four outpensioners, and in 1808 there were twenty-four. It appears, therefore, that a flood in 1804, a drought in 1806, and the trade embargo in 1807 rendered a small but growing number of people unable to make their own subsistence.²⁶

The long years of trade interruption from the embargo of 1807 through the War of 1812 were disastrous for large numbers of people, and a wheat crop failure in 1816 was for many the final straw. On January 30 next, responding to grain shortage, the Maryland Assembly passed an "An Act for the temporary relief of the poor in the several Counties in this State" requiring levy courts to provide an emergency dole. The justices of Prince George's Levy Court acted quickly, meeting on February 21 and appointing eighteen of the county's most prominent citizens "to enquire into the situation of the Poor in their respective Neighbourhoods and . . . to report to the Court on Saturday the first of March next the names of all those whom they may discover to be such objects of distress as to require immediate relief." On March 1 members of the court procured an immediate loan of \$1,500 and authorized themselves to obtain a further \$1,000 "as soon as circumstances will admit of it." The same day, the court gave several benefactors no less than \$2,175 to distribute among no fewer than 139 people. It also provided another \$675 for the aid of forty-four more people on March 17, \$255 for thirty others on May 19, and \$35 for another four on July 7. In addition to this total of \$3,140 for 217 people, the court allocated \$500 for the almshouse on August 6.²⁷

Although there were no doubt philanthropic motives for the 1817 dole, its administrators were not averse to making a little profit from it. The loan which

Doctor Joseph Kent (1779–1837). The court appointed Kent and twelve influential residents to investigate the worsening conditions of the county's poor in 1817. (Courtesy of the Maryland Commission on Artistic Property of the Maryland State Archives, MSA SC 1545-1009.)



the justices raised was obtained from John Read Magruder Jr., the levy court's clerk. This may have been expedient—an important consideration under such urgent circumstances—but it is notable that the justices and clerk arranged an 8 percent interest rate, 2 percent higher than planters normally expected from investment in land, stocks, and bonds.²⁸

More significantly, perhaps, the manner in which the money was supposed to be given reflected planters' sense of social superiority. In the first place, wealthy men were asked to "enquire into the situation of the Poor" and then report back to the court; it was not intended that the destitute should define their own needs or claim alms as of right. Also, as with outpensioners in other years, money was not provided directly to those in need but given to a patron "to be applied in such a manner as he may judge most effectual to relieve the said out Pensioners from Suffering." Beneficence, then, was tempered by the court seemingly depriving the needy of their freedoms as consumers and rendering them beholden to wealthy patrons. Despite these provisions, though, it is probable that in practice some sort of dialogue occurred between patrons and benefactors in which the latter's views on their own needs and how they should be accommodated may have been both aired and respected. Because the court directed its patrons to "enquire into the situation of the Poor in their respective Neighbourhoods," they would have been familiar with the individual needs and wishes of their particular charges, and taking those wishes and needs into account would probably have been the "most

effectual" way "to relieve the said out Pensioners from Suffering." If so, then alms recipients were not mere "objects," as the levy court described them, but to some extent agents in the provision of their own welfare, even if there is no doubt that they were in distress and required immediate relief.²⁹

However large or small a role recipients played in the distribution of the dole, most of them were already among the most economically vulnerable of Prince Georgians before the wheat crop failed. Of those identifiable in the censuses or tax records, forty were nontaxables in either 1800 or 1810 or both. Of those who were taxables, most owned only a small amount of "other" property. A few had once been quite well off but had fallen on hard times by 1817. Among them was Elizabeth Hill, who had owned \$1,963.73 in 1800 and \$2,887.95 in 1810, including 382 acres of land and fifteen and eighteen slaves in the respective years.³⁰ Another was Elizabeth Eastwood, who had owned one hundred acres in 1800 and 1810, respectively worth \$60.08 and \$153.53.³¹ Patrick Sim also received alms in 1817, although he had been in dire straits for some time. He was once fairly prosperous, probably an artisan, with \$1,108.85 to his name in 1800, including two acres of land in Beall Town, worth \$203.88, and eight slaves, worth \$488.61. He was a nontaxable by 1810, however, and in January 1812 John Hodges of Thomas received \$40 from the levy court for past and future "support of Patrick Sim who is in very indigent circumstances."³² Charles Proctor and his wife (she was unnamed in the list) were members of Prince George's materially poor free black community. So, probably, were Esther Churb and Kitty Gray, both surnames belonging exclusively to extended free black families in Prince George's in the early 1800s.³³

Of those who cannot be traced, many must have been widows left without means of support. This appears to have been the case with "Tobias Belts Widow," whose husband had once owned \$2,829.21, including 590 acres of land and fourteen slaves, but who had perhaps died indebted, and with "Benjamin Jones Wife & Children," whose husband and father had been a nontaxable.³⁴ Many other women were not noted as someone's wife or widow, such as "Elizabeth Stone her Daughter Eliza Thompson & child" but may also have been widowed, divorced, or separated. Some of the young people on the list of 1817 were apparently orphans, such as the "Children of Thomas Littleford," whose father had been a nontaxable in 1800 but had owned \$200.25 in "other" property in 1810.³⁵ All told, 65 men, 127 women, and 24 children received alms under the 1817 Act for the Temporary Relief of the Poor (one first name is indecipherable and the person's sex is thus not known). Clearly, a large number of Prince Georgians were, for various reasons, too poor to cope with economic emergency.

There was, then, great inequality of wealth distribution in early national Prince George's County. Most significantly, large numbers of free people depended on others for a living, and many of them were unable to support themselves in times of economic crisis. These people and their predicaments did not feature in agrar-

ian discourses about the predominance of the independent husbandman in the early republic. And they have rarely featured in historical renderings of early national rural society because “republican synthesis” historians have tended to rely on those discourses as the definitive intellectual or linguistic “constructions” of reality at the time. Many colonial and a few early national historians have done things differently, though, and reached different conclusions. Rather than relying on such texts, which perhaps say more about the often elite writers than about the subjects and society they purported to describe, they have used locally based, often quantifiable sources which allow a close-up and detailed view of people and their social and economic circumstances. This essay has tried to do the same, and perhaps the cumulation of knowledge from such sources will eventually help us more fully to appreciate the extent of poverty and the conditions of the poor in the early national tobacco plantation South.

Yet the line between quantifiable and literary sources is perhaps not as clear as we sometimes think. The measurable data contained in tax lists and inventories, for instance, was often accompanied by qualitative information, such as the description of many of Priscilla Howington’s possessions as “old.” Indeed, quantifiable evidence can itself sometimes be read as a kind of text. The appendix, a transcription of the lists of patrons and outpensioners, and the amount of money allocated for each outpensioner (or group thereof), made by the levy court between March and July 1817, is an example. In a most basic sense, it is a table of names and numbers which quantifies economic dependence and at least temporary destitution. But it is also a kind of text which, by revealing people and privations overlooked by agrarian writers, argues powerfully against yeoman-republican discourse and warns us not to be seduced by it.

Appendix

Recipients of Poor Relief and their Patrons March to July, 1817

The levy court gave money to patrons of the poor on four different days in 1817. The dates, names of patrons (*italics*) and recipients, and the allocation (in U.S. dollars) for each recipient (or group thereof) are listed below. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are as in the original document. Prince George’s County Levy Court, Proceedings, February 21, 1817, 603; March 1, 1817, 604–16; March 17, 1817, 621–24; May 19, 1817, 626–29; and July 7, 1817, 639–40.

March 1, 1817

Josias Jones: Elizabeth Stone her Daughter Eliza Thompson & child, 30, Edward Welsh & Wife, 20, Ruth Hinton & her children, 25, Elizabeth & Ann Cross, 20, James White & his four children, 20, Margaret Miller, 15, Mary Hyatt, 15; *Dr.*

Samuel Franklin: Sibby Felton & her two Daughters, 15, Sarah Mitchell & Elizabeth, 30, Charlotte Baldwin & her three children, 20, Jacob H. Waters & his Sister Rachel Donnison, 25, Uriah Mitchel & his Daughter & her child, 20, Isaac Clark, 15, Mary Brashears, 15, Nancy Hinton & her two Children, 25; *William Dudley Digges and Jasper M. Jackson*: Jane Thompson, 15, Mrs Haywood, 25, Thomas Baldwin, 10, Mrs Magee, 30, Henry Fowler & five children, 20; *William Hebb*: Mary Ridgeway, 20, Jemima Allen, 20, Jacob King, 30, Thomas Cook, 15, Lenna Hurley, 30, Mrs Locker, 15, Susanna Tenby, 15; *Thomas Mundell, Horatio McEldery, William Marshall*: John Thorn, 20, Ann Thomas, 10, Mrs Tracy, 15, Theodore Glasgow, 20, Thomas Barton, 15, Milly Thompson & Daughter, 15, Jeremiah Ivington, 20, Miss Knotts, 20, Miss Gregory, 10, John Martin, 20, William Rowe, 10, Osborn White, 15, Hannah Lucas & her Daughter, 10, Joseph Gales, 20, Lewis Dent, 15, Thomas Underwood, 15, Levin Webster, 30, Mrs Boswell, 15, Luke Day, 15, Mrs Richards, 20, Basil Talbot, 15, James Atchison, 15, Mary Short, 15, Luke Thompson, 15, Mrs Howard, 20; *Francis Magruder and Edward Henry Calvert*: Caroline Mullikin, 20, Henrietta Thompson, 15, Elizabeth Price, 20, Priscilla Vermillion, 20, Mary Fowler, 20, Ann Beckett, 15, Ruth Brown wife of M Brown, 20, Druscilla Mitchell, 15, Elizabeth Free, 15, Patrick Sim, 20, Lydia Clereland, 15; *Francis M Hall*: Mrs Ryon Widow of Thomas Ryon, 25, Samuel Mockbee, 25, William Russell, 10; *Richard W West*: Jonathon White, 30, Thomas Fry, 25, Archibald White, 20, Margaret Winkler, 30, George Winkler, 30; *Edward Henry Calvert and William Marbury*: James Carroll, 30, Sarah Sansberrie, 15, Aquilla Wilson, 20, Lydia Kidwell, 20, Zachariah Scott, 15, John King, 20, Francis Walker, 20, Joseph Barrott, 15, Hilleary Piles, 15, Zadock Reston, 15; *Thomas Somerville*: Ann Richards, 20, Elizabeth Eastwood, 20, Elizabeth Richards, 20, Priscilla Collins, 20, Elizabeth Carrico, 20, Elizabeth Devan, 20, Sarah Cooksey, 20, Ann Williams, 20, Monica Carrico, 20, Rebecca Lynch, 20, Mary Bedds, 20; *Robert Bowie and Edward Henry Calvert*: Ann Tarvin, 15, Ann Gardiner, 25, Mary Venables, 25, Elizabeth Venables, 15, Mary Magruder, 25, Sarah Linthicum, 25, Elizabeth Nowell, 25, Elizabeth Worrell, 25, Mrs Crook, 15, Mrs Hazard, 25, Mrs Mobberly, 15, Joanna Retter, 15, Dennis Curton, 20; *David Craufurd*: Sarah Ryan, 15, Sarah Burgess, 30, Esther Churb, 20; *Samuel Clagett*: John Garner, 20, Rebecca Dorsett & her three Sisters, 60

March 17, 1817

Henry A Callis: Charles Tenbys Widow, 25, Mrs Ralph, 15, Thomas Biggs, 15, Mrs Summers, 15, Kitty Gray, 10; *William Hebb*: Richard Ridgway, 15, William Palmer, 20, Henry B Thorn, 20; *Francis Magruder*: John McDowell, 15, Ann Keadle, 15, Elizabeth Arnold, 15, Ann Hay, 10, Rachel Hunter, 10, Benjamin Cooke, 15, Esther Stone, 15, Ann Webster, 15, Eleanor Summers, 15; *Dr Joseph Kent and William A Fitzgerald*: Mrs Hinton, 30, Sarah Barron, 20, Rachel Deakins, 25, Catherine

Medcalf, 20, Mary Danford, 15, Ann Onions, 10, Julia Neal, 15, Benjamin Jones Wife & Children, 25, Jacob Brown, 20, Tobias Belts Widow, 30, Sarah Riddle, 15, Rebecca Brashears, 10, Eleanor Clarke, 10, John Brashears Wife and Children, 20, Oliver B Suit, 30; *Edward Henry Calvert*: Elizabeth Swann and Daughter, 15, Eleana Burgess and Daughter Priscilla Day, 15, Mary Barklay, 15, Thomas Mullikin, 30, John Sansberrie, 15; *Trueman Tyler*: Henrietta Young, 15

May 19, 1817

Thomas Mundell: Elisha Arvin, 10, Thomas Arvin, 10, Price Collins, 10, Elizabeth Hill, 8, Luke Windsor, 5, Edward Curtain, 5; *Francis Magruder*: Mary Roby, 15, Ann Weaver, 10, Elizabeth Weaver, 8, Sarah Allen, 5, Ann Vermillion, 8, Letty Day, 5, Mary Willing, 15; *Dr Joseph Kent*: Nathaniel Hall, 10, Hetty Brashears, 10, C[ary?] Vermillion, 8, Lucy Vermillion, 8, Fielder Hays, 8, Richard Martin, 8, Zachariah Halsall, 10, Lucy Hinton, 5; *Edward Henry Calvert*: Charles Proctor & wife, 16, Elizabeth Griffin, 8, Elizabeth Power, 10, James Mobberly & wife, 10; *David Craufurd*: the Children of Thomas Littleford, 20; *Dr Samuel Franklin*: Allen Harvey, 10

July 7, 1817

Thomas Mundell: Nehemiah Kidwell, 5, James Hill, 5, Mrs Wood, 5; *William Dudley Digges*: Thomas Baldwin wife, 10

NOTES

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1. Real Property, 1800, 41, Prince George's County Tax Assessments [PGCTA].
2. Federal Direct Tax, 1798, Prince George's County, Maryland [FDTPG], Collington and Western Branch Hundreds, Particular List of Slaves, 1; Particular List of Dwelling Houses, 2; Particular List of Land, Lots, Buildings, and Wharves, 3.
3. Inventories, January 15, 1801, ST 4, 88-100, Prince George's County Register of Wills [PGCRW].
4. *Ibid.*, January 22, 1802, ST 4, 244.
5. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1802, ST 4, 266.
6. Aubrey C. Land, "Economic Base and Social Structure: The Northern Chesapeake in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Economic History*, 25 (1965): 639-54; Russell R. Menard, "From Servant to Freeholder: Status, Mobility and Property Accumulation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., 30 (1973): 37-64; Menard, P. M. G. Harris, and Lois Green Carr, "Opportunity and Inequality: The Distribution of Wealth on

- the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, 1638–1705,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 69 (1974): 169–84; Carr and Menard, “Immigration and Opportunity: The Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland,” in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 206–42; Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption Patterns in St. Mary’s County, Maryland, 1658–1777,” *Historical Methods*, 13 (1980): 81–104; Walsh, “Servitude and Opportunity in Charles County, Maryland, 1658–1705,” in Land, Carr, and Edward C. Papenfuse Jr., eds., *Law, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 111–33; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 30–37, 85–92, 131–41, 428–32.
7. Robert E. Shalhope, *John Taylor of Caroline: Pastoral Republican* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1980); *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760–1800* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). For critical appraisals see Joyce Appleby, “Commercial Farming and the ‘Agrarian Myth’ in the Early Republic,” *Journal of American History*, 68 (1982): 833–49, and Daniel T. Rodgers, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,” *Journal of American History*, 79 (1992): 11–38.
8. Jackson Turner Main, “The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 61 (1954): 241–58; Sarah Shaver Hughes, “Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782–1810: The Economic and Social Structure of a Tidewater County in the Early National Years” (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1975); Bayly Ellen Marks, “Economics and Society in a Staple Plantation System: St. Mary’s County, Maryland, 1790–1840” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1979); Lee Soltow, “Land Inequality on the Frontier: The Distribution of Land in East Tennessee at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,” *Social Science History*, 5 (1981): 275–91; “Kentucky Wealth at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Economic History*, 43 (1983): 617–33; *Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States in 1798* (Pittsburgh, 1989); Fredrika J. Teute, “Land, Liberty and Labor in the Post-Revolutionary Era: Kentucky as the Promised Land” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1988).
9. Jean B. Russo, “Free Workers in a Plantation Economy: Talbot County, Maryland, 1690–1759” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1983); “Self-sufficiency and Local Exchange: Free Craftsmen in the Rural Chesapeake Economy,” in Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo, eds., *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 389–432; Christine Daniels, “Alternative Workers in a Slave Economy: Kent County, Maryland, 1675–1810” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1990); “‘Getting his [or her] Livelyhood’: Free Workers in Slave Anglo-America, 1675–1810,” *Agricultural History*, 71 (1997): 125–61; Willard F. Bliss, “The Rise of Tenancy in Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 58 (1950): 427–41; Lorena S. Walsh, “Land, Landlord, and Leaseholder: Estate Management and Tenant Fortunes in Southern Maryland, 1642–1820,” *Agricultural History*, 59 (1985): 373–96; Steven Sarson, “Landlessness and Tenancy in Early National Prince George’s County, Maryland,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 57 (2000): 569–98.
10. Prince George’s County Levy Court [PGCLC], Proceedings, February 21, 1817, 603.
11. Maryland county levy courts produced annual property assessments detailing ownership of land (including built improvements and town lots), slaves (divided by age and sex),

plate (gold and silver), and “other” property (livestock, stills, ready cash, riding carriages, vessels over twenty tons, and, after 1813, some furniture and farm equipment): William Kilty, *Laws of Maryland, 1776–1818, revised and collected under the authority of the legislature* (Annapolis, 1820), 1784, chapter 4; 1797, chapter 34; 1812, chapter 141. These tables are derived from matching assessments against censuses for 1800, 1810, and 1820. Assessments for Prince George’s County are extant from 1792, although the earliest are rendered partly illegible by mold. Unfortunately, the federal census population schedules for Prince George’s for 1830 are lost. My total figures, derived from the tax and census schedules, sometimes differ, in some cases markedly, from the summary totals given by assessors and census takers who occasionally made arithmetical errors. Also, until 1813 property was assessed in Maryland pounds, shillings, and pence, but for convenience and to enable easy cross-referencing with 1820 I have converted amounts into dollars at the levy court’s rate of £1 : \$2.67. For a more detailed discussion of total wealth distribution see Steven Sarson, “Wealth, Poverty, and Labor in the Tobacco-Plantation South: Prince George’s County, Maryland, in the Early National Era” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 35–75, 167–207, 437–40.

12. Population Schedules of the Second Census of the United States, 1800, Prince George’s County, Maryland, 491.

13. Real Property, 1800, 24, 25, 30; Personal Property, 1800, 28, PGCTA; Margaret Law Callcott, ed., *Mistress of Riversdale: The Plantation Letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, 1795–1821* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 384–86, 393 n. 64; Sarson, “Wealth, Poverty, and Labor,” 253–92; Wills, June 8, 1835, PC 1, 89–90, PGCRW.

14. Any attempt to correct under-representation of property ownership in tax assessment entails a high risk of inaccuracy because of the number of unknown or incompletely known factors involved. It is safest, therefore, to take the local assessment figures for resident household heads as a base-line measure of inequality which we can supplement with evidence from inventories as above. For further analysis of methods used and problems in wealth distribution analysis see Sarson, “Wealth, Poverty, and Labor,” 37–45.

15. For more detail see Sarson, “Wealth, Poverty, and Labor,” 76–119, 208–51.

16. Lois Green Carr, “County Government in Maryland, 1689–1709” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1968), 581–97; Edward C. Papenfuse Jr., “Planter Behavior and Economic Opportunity in a Staple Economy,” *Agricultural History*, 46 (1972): 301–2; Carville V. Earle, *Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System: All Hallow’s Parish, Maryland, 1650–1783* (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography, Research Paper no. 170, 1975), 206–12; Gregory A. Stiverson, *Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Tenancy in Eighteenth-Century Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), xii; Russell R. Menard, *Economy and Society in Early Colonial Maryland* (New York: Garland Press, 1985), 51–77, 155–201, 302–20; Walsh, “Land, Landlord, and Leaseholder,” 373–96; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 131–41, 152–61, 296–97.

17. Real Property, 1800, 28, 29, 43; Personal Property, 1800, 3, 31, 44, PGCTA; Wills, T 1, April 12, 1797, 397, PGCRW.

18. Samuel Snowden to his slaves, Manumission, FF 1, 135–37, June 12, 1781, 135–37, Prince George’s County Land Records [PGCLR]; FF 2, September 27, 1785, 431–32; FDTPG, Eastern Branch and Rock Creek Hundreds, Particular List of Dwelling Houses, 4; Particular List of Lands, Lots, Buildings, and Wharves, 7; PGCTA, Real Property, 1800, 32; Personal Property, 1800, 38.

19. Population Schedules of the Second Census of the United States, 1800, Prince George’s County, Maryland, 491.

20. See also Marks, “Economics and Society in a Staple Plantation System,” 227–28, 437–44,

Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), 217–49, and Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 29–30, 37–38, 69–71, 83.

21. For further detail see Sarson, “Wealth, Poverty, and Labor,” 120–66.

22. Marks, “Economics and Society in a Staple Plantation System,” 110–40, 221–40, 303–18; “The Rage for Kentucky: Emigration from St. Mary’s County, Maryland, 1790–1810,” in Robert D. Mitchell and Edward K. Muller, eds., *Geographical Perspectives on Maryland’s Past*, University of Maryland Occasional Papers in Geography, 4 (1979): 108–28; Main, “Distribution of Wealth in Post-Revolutionary Virginia,” 242–45. Prince Georgian inequality was greater than that in the nation as a whole, where the top tenth possessed 45 percent of taxable wealth. Inequality was greater in the South than in the North, and greatest in the lowlands as opposed to the uplands where slavery and plantation agriculture had not fully developed. See Soltow, *Distribution of Wealth and Income*, 171, 236.

23. Teute, “Land, Liberty, and Labor,” 184–311; Soltow, “Land Inequality on the Frontier,” 275–91; Soltow, “Kentucky Wealth at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” 620–22; Elizabeth Perkins, “The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky,” *Journal of American History*, 78 (1991): 486–510. I am grateful to Prof. Ronald Hoffman for his thoughts about rural-urban migrants made at the Early Americanists in Britain and Ireland conference, Brunel University, May 1999. A systematic study of the possibly varying fates of migrants from particular places to a variety of destinations would be a painstaking but perhaps a very revealing research project.

24. Proceedings, July 16, 1801, 133; June 9, 1802, 162, PGCLC.

25. Levy Lists, I800, I; I803, 4; I805, 5; Proceedings, May 21, 1800, 114; June 8, 1807, 289; July 14, 1807, 292–93, Levy Book, 1803, 613; 1805, 634, PGCLC.

26. Rosalie Calvert recorded the hardships caused, especially for the poor, by the flood, the drought, and the embargo in various letters at the time. See Callcott, ed., *Mistress of Riversdale*, 85–86, 88–89, 147, 181, 190, 195, 198, 201.

27. Kilty, *Laws of Maryland*, 1817, Chapter 192; Proceedings, February 21, 1817, 603; March 1, 1817, 604–616; March 17, 1817, 621–624; May 19, 1817, 626–629; July 7, 1817, 639–640; August 6, 1817, 648, PGCLC. In adding up the number of people on the levy court’s lists, I assumed that when the number of children were unspecified there were two children. I have also assumed that “Benjamin Jones Wife & Children,” for example, meant just the wife and (two) children, as opposed to “Charles Proctor & wife,” which clearly means two people. If I have erred, therefore, it is on the side of caution. The entire list of patrons and beneficiaries is transcribed in the appendix. Again, Rosalie Calvert made many references to economic difficulties and hardships caused by the War of 1812 (Callcott, ed., *Mistress of Riversdale*, 217–75).

28. Rosalie Calvert wrote on several occasions about normally expecting a 5 or 6 percent rate of return on various kinds of investment. See for example, letters to Henri Jean Stier, August 2, 1810, March 20, 1815, in Callcott, ed., *Mistress of Riversdale*, 223, 279–80.

29. Proceedings, February 21, 1817, 603, PGCLC.

30. Real Property, 1800, 12; 1810, 12; Personal Property, 1800, 12; 1810, 11, PGCTA.

31. Real Property, 1800, 5; 1810, 5; Personal Property, 1800, 5; 1810, 5, PGCTA.

32. Real Property, 1800, 32; Personal Property, 1800, 38; Proceedings, January 4, 1812, 404, 414–15, PGCTA.

33. Kitty Gray may have been Caty Gray who was identified as a free black person in the census of 1800. If not, there were numerous other Grays, all free African Americans, to whom Kitty Gray was probably related. Esther Churb was probably a relation of either or both of

George and Robert Churb, also identified as free blacks. See Population Schedules of the Second Census of the United States, 1800, Prince George's County, Maryland, 446 (Benjamin and Peter Gray), 456 (Richard, Thomas, and Millie Gray), 457 (George and Robert Churb), 477 (Mary Gray), 478 (Caty Gray).

34. Real Property, 1800, 25; 1810, 23; Personal Property, 1800, 28; 1810, 25, PGCTA.

35. Personal Property, 1810, 2, PGCTA.