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The Capital



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A FEMALE CONDUCTOR OF THE UNDER-GROUND RAILROAD —At the late Woman's Rights Convention, at Melodeon Hall, Boston, the most interesting incident was the appearance on the platform of the colored woman, Mrs. Harriet Tupman, who has been eight times South, and brought into freedom no less than forty persons, including her aged father and mother, over seventy years old. She had a prolonged and enthusiastic reception.

Documenting history

State archivists uncover stories of slavery



Chris Haley, director of the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland at the Maryland State Archives, and research archivist Maya Davis look over 150-year-old copies of the *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, where the news item about Harriet Tubman was discovered.

By Paul W. Gillespie — The Capital

By THERESA WINSLOW
Staff Writer

Like someone mining for gold in a stream, Maya Davis slowly sifted through the yellowed pages of a 150-year-old newspaper at the Maryland State Archives.

She peered at the type crammed into the 2½-foot-wide *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, scanning line after line. "It was headache-inducing," said Davis, a research archivist.

But it's part of her job, and her persistence paid off.

Just above an announcement of a divorce settlement, there was a short paragraph describing "Mrs. Harriet Tubman's" appearance at a women's right convention in Boston. It identified "Tupman" as a "female conductor of the under-ground rail-road." Davis found the item in 2005, but because the newspaper was too big to be scanned at the time, it was filed away until recently.

When the announcement appeared June 5, 1860, Harriet Tubman could still have been arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act, and the item's writer could have also come under fire, said Chris Haley, director of the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland.

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ONLINE EXTRA

• See a slideshow of the slavery documents at HometownAnnapolis.com

HISTORY

(Continued from Page A1)

Over the past decade, Haley and his staff have uncovered scores of other historical nuggets in newspapers and other documents, allowing them to piece together some of the life stories of slaves.

"They've done extraordinary work, extraordinary work," said Ira Berlin, a history professor at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Berlin, who works with the program, said what they've illustrated is the pervasive nature of slavery in the state — how it shaped economics, politics and even culture from Maryland's founding until 1864.

"What they've done at the archives has been a kind of prototype of what's happening elsewhere," the professor said. "The information is a great godsend."

The state of slavery

Haley and his staff have studied slavery in Anne Arundel, Prince George's Baltimore, Frederick, Washington and Somerset counties from 1830 to 1860. They've compiled records for the cities of Annapolis and Bowie, and researched slaves who ran away and joined the British during the War of 1812.

"It's like reclaiming lost history," said Rachel Frazier, another research archivist. "It's a story no one else knows."

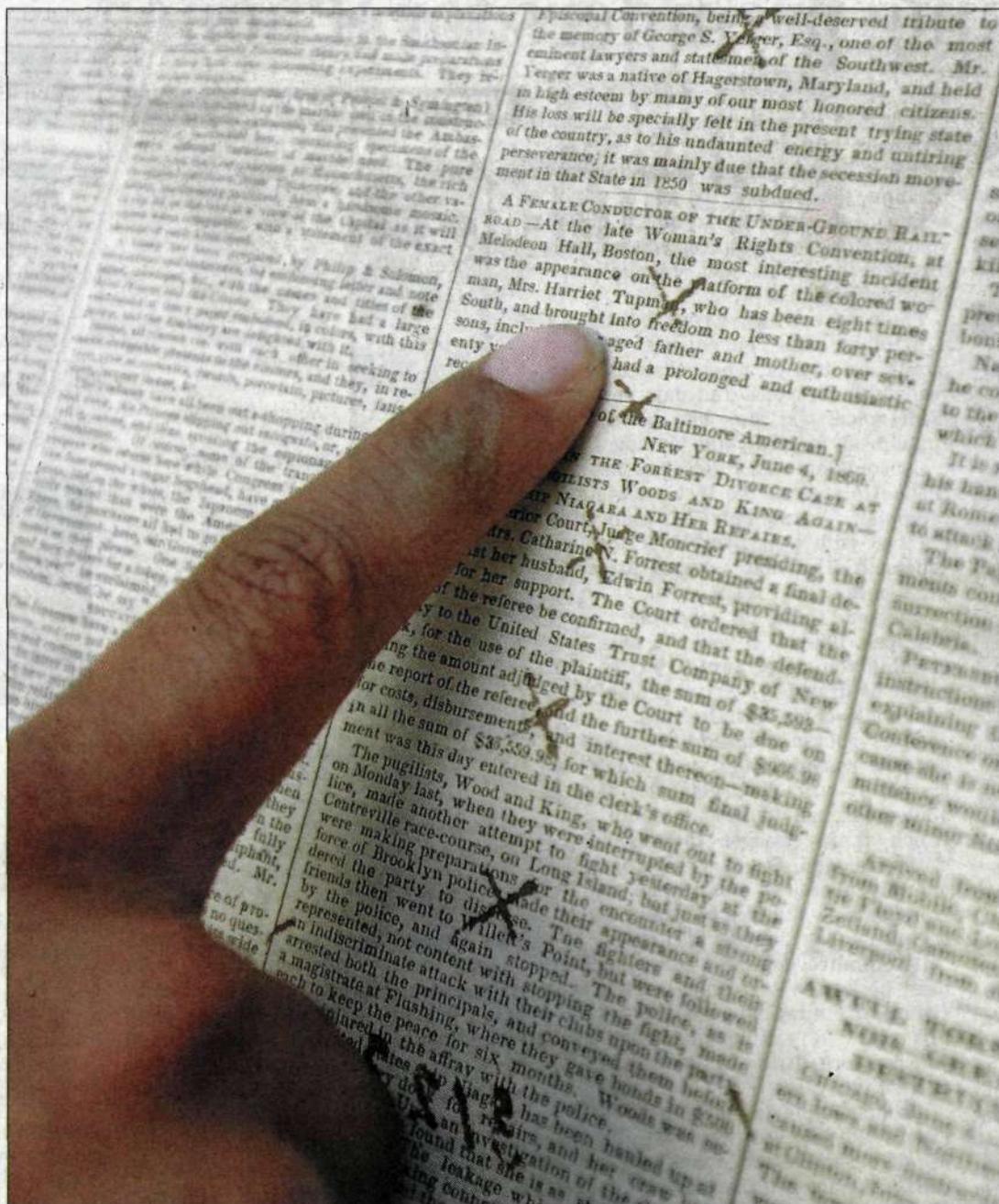
Thanks to a \$739,000 federal grant, they're beginning a three-year project to unearth more history: the legacy of the Underground Railroad in the Eastern Shore counties of Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Talbot. The project will cover a 50-year period, from 1830 to 1880.

"It's very self-affirming that what we are doing is worthwhile," said Haley, the nephew of "Roots" author Alex Haley.

Consider the case of Abraham Brogden, a free black laborer, whose tale was one of those pieced together through the program. Brogden helped his 24-year-old wife escape from her Anne Arundel County owner on Dec. 21, 1848, and ended up sentenced to four years in prison.

His wife Cinderella, meanwhile, was caught a day later, sold out of state, and died while Brogden was still imprisoned. She was apprehended so quickly that the ad for offering a reward for her capture still hadn't run in the newspaper.

All this happened despite great sympathy for Brogden's plight. There were numerous petitions to the governor for Brogden's release, and he was eventually pardoned and freed from the Maryland penitentiary in May 1851.



Research archivist Maya Davis points to the paragraph about Harriet Tubman, called "Tupman" in the brief.

What happened next is unclear, Haley said, but Brogden's story illustrates the attitudes of the period as well as the relationship between blacks and whites. At the same time people were arresting fugitive slaves, others were working to help them.

"If this (kind of) history isn't worth it, than

no history is worth it," he said.

For more information on the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland, visit the websites www.mdslavery.net/ugrr.html or www.mdslavery.net.

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By Paul W. Gillespie — The Capital