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Special Issue

“Women, Slavery, and the Atlantic World”
Brenda E. Stevenson, Guest Editor

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CHARITY FOLKS, LOST ROYALTY, AND THE BISHOP FAMILY OF MARYLAND AND NEW YORK

Jessica Millward

They [African Americans] are the only folk so great in number who have added to their original racial possessions the language, the literature, the civilization, the culture, and the religion of an alien people. They seem a sort of crucible in which God is working out by experiment the problem of the adjustment of races.

—Reverend Shelton Hale Bishop, 1910¹

But African memory does not disappear quietly into that good night. It mounts resistance in both the African continent and the diaspora.

—Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2009²

Charity Folks, born in 1757 in Annapolis, Maryland, was an African American woman of distinction. Folks lived most of her life as someone else's property; however, following her manumission from slavery in 1797, she became one of the wealthiest free black property owners in Annapolis. Despite her accomplishments, the personal history of Charity Folks is not well known. When Charity Folks is discussed in Annapolis, she is often conflated with her daughter, Charity Folks is Bishop, a prominent property owner in the 19th century. Historians of the early republic era have also focused on the accomplishments of Charity Folks's husband, Thomas Folks. Until now, Charity Folks's experience of bondage and freedom in Annapolis has escaped scholarly attention.³

Charity Folks has been missing from the historical record for several reasons. The scholarship on African Americans in Maryland has focused almost exclusively on the free black population of Baltimore.⁴ The free black population of Annapolis continued to be small into the early 19th century. In contrast, the free black community of Baltimore County—in particular Baltimore City—increased threefold in the decades preceding the Civil War.⁵ When the city of Annapolis in this period is the subject, usually the focus is on white Annapolitans, some of whom owned Folks or members of her family.⁶

And despite the increasing number of monographs published on African American women's history, the works on the experiences of free black and enslaved

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women during colonial and revolutionary periods are few.⁷ Black women's history has expanded greatly through studies of their experiences in the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods, and in the late 19th and 20th centuries, including their transnational activities and connections.⁸ African American women's history in the colonial and early republic eras, however, has the potential to uncover the lives and experiences of countless African American women of importance who remain hidden, as was the case with Charity Folks.

Although absent from the historical record, Charity Folks has remained hidden in plain sight. Charity Folks is visible to those who choose to see her. Like other free black women, Folks advanced herself economically after manumission. As historian Loren Schweninger pointed out, African American women were manumitted in greater numbers than their male counterparts and thus represented a larger portion of the free black population; and before the great Emancipation, they controlled a significant portion of black communities' wealth.⁹ This does not mean that Folks's ascent into the free black class was without its hardships. As the studies by Cathy Adams, Erica Armstrong Dunbar, Wilma King, Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, Shirley E. Thompson, and Elizabeth Pleck have made clear, financial stability and success for free black women were often elusive.¹⁰

Charity Folks is distinctive in other ways. Not just a successful property owner, Folks was also a "Founding Mother." Charity Folks's descendants, the Bishops of Maryland and New York, are counted among the most accomplished African American families of the 19th and 20th centuries. Perhaps more importantly, the Bishops contributed to the African American freedom struggle over several generations. Like other prominent families such as the Wrights, Bonds, and Grimkes, Charity's family line produced generations of "race men" and "race women."¹¹ During the 19th century members of the Bishop family were prominent members of the free black communities in Annapolis and Baltimore; served as pillars in the Methodist and Episcopal churches; and fought in the Civil War. During the 20th century, members of the Bishop family were pioneers in the fields of medicine and religion, and they participated in the ongoing struggle for black freedom and equality in the United States. The royal status of the Bishops and others like them was achieved, not ascribed, for what they have contributed to African American advancement. Intergenerational achievement is the legacy of the "Founding Mothers" and for that reason they should be respected and revered.

This essay establishes Charity Folks as the founding mother of the Bishop family. I draw from over a decade of research that included oral interviews, review of recollections in published family histories, and travel to archives and museums on three continents. I use details of Charity's exceptional life to cast light on the experiences of other African American women in the period of the early republic. This essay examines the architecture of slavery and public memory in Maryland;

the life and family history of Charity Folks, and her manumission; and the idea and reality of freedom, as well as the ghosts of slavery. I argue that despite her unfortunate absence from the historical record, Charity Folks and other enslaved women like her not only shaped the history of early African America, but also left an imprint that is quite visible. As an example of the advantages of micro-history, this story of Charity Folks challenges scholars to reexamine their methodologies in conducting African American women's history in the Atlantic World. A methodology is needed that orphans neither the African background nor her enslavement. It renders all facets of African American women's lives meaningful. As a biographical subject, Charity Folks also reminds us that the African American freedom struggle includes many actors who need to be recognized.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF SLAVERY AND PUBLIC MEMORY IN MARYLAND

The public memory of enslavement in Maryland is almost exclusively associated with three figures: Kunta Kinte, the Gambian stolen from Africa in 1767 and immortalized in Alex Haley's bestseller, *Roots*; fugitive slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass; and abolitionist and Civil War scout Harriet Tubman.¹² The Alex Haley memorial commemorating *Roots* sits on the Annapolis dock. Plaques and memorials honor Harriet Tubman in Dorchester County, where she was born, and in Albany, New York, where she lived in her later years. Recently, a large statue was unveiled at Wye Plantation, where Frederick Douglass was born.¹³ For \$18,000, one can take a walking tour of the Fell's Point area of Baltimore where Douglass lived.¹⁴ If Baltimore is the Maryland city most associated with Frederick Douglass, then Annapolis is certainly the city of Charity Folks. Many of the physical structures Folks inhabited, visited, or worked in are now part of the Historical Annapolis Foundation, the Maryland Historical Trust, the National Historic Trust, or part of a city or state museum.

Charity Folks did not meet Kunta Kinte, Frederick Douglass, or Harriet Tubman, yet her life overlapped with theirs in key ways. Kunta Kinte and Charity Folks are connected through John Ridout, the owner of Charity and the *Lord Ligonier*, the ship that took Kunta Kinte out of Africa. Both Kinte and Folks were between the ages of ten and twelve years old when the ship docked in the Annapolis harbor in September 1767. Charity may have seen the ship from her window in the attic of the Ridout house, a block away.¹⁵ She also may have witnessed the captives ascend from the bowels of the vessels before being carted away to the auction block.

Charity Folks shared a connection with Frederick Douglass through bondswoman Sall Wilkes, who was enslaved in Annapolis and worked in a home

belonging to the Lloyd family, Douglass's owners. Indeed, Douglass suggested that Colonel Edward Lloyd fathered Sall Wilkes's son William, who grew up enslaved, but away from his mother on Lloyd's Wye Plantation in Talbot County. William Wilkes was manumitted when he was a young adult.¹⁶ Douglass noted that free black pastors and businessmen in Annapolis, who shared social ties with Charity Folks and her kin, had negotiated Wilkes's freedom.¹⁷

It is Harriet Tubman's life, however, that most resembles that of Charity Folks. Both women understood the sexually exploitative and vulnerable position of bondswomen.¹⁸ If they did not experience it personally, they knew other women who did. Tubman's family, like that of Folks, was an intricate web of enslaved and manumitted African Americans.¹⁹ Both women were enslaved while their husbands were free. Though Folks acquired her freedom through legal deed, and Tubman through flight, both women remained concerned about the fate of family members and friends left in bondage.

Charity Folks differs from Kinte, Douglass, and Tubman in several key ways, however. Folks did not flee bondage, as did Douglass and Tubman, nor did she die enslaved like Kinte, or in poverty like Tubman. She was also not a contemporary of Douglass or Tubman, both of whom are associated with antebellum abolitionist campaigns. Yet as a manumitted woman, Charity Folks is more representative of the enslaved experience in Maryland than Kinte, Douglass, or Tubman. Charity Folks and her family were like some 45,000 other bondpeople who were manumitted in the decades following the American Revolution.²⁰ She lived her entire life in the Chesapeake. This small geographic region boasted a remarkably fluid population of free, enslaved, and "quasi-free" African Americans. Charity Folks experienced all three statuses in the course of her life.

CHARITY FOLKS: A LIFE AND A FAMILY HISTORY

Charity Folks enters the historical record only as an adult and thus her early life had to be pieced together using family narratives and public records. It is believed that she was born at Belair Plantation, twenty miles west of Annapolis, in the present town of Bowie, Maryland. Samuel Ogle owned Folks's mother, Rachel Burke. Ogle was the two-time governor of Maryland, and he and his wife, Ann Tasker Ogle, were members of the most elite slaveholding families in the Chesapeake. Rachel Burke may have been born in Virginia and came to Maryland when Ann Tasker married Samuel Ogle.²¹ Like most slave-owning families, the Ogles and Taskers transferred their bondpeople between properties and to other family members. Thus, separation from her kin was a fact of life for Rachel Burke.

While precious few details exist about Charity's mother, the man presumed to be her father was a well-known figure in colonial America. It was rumored that

Charity's father was Ann Ogle's brother, Colonel Benjamin Tasker, Jr.²² A politician, businessman, slave trader, and bachelor, Col. Tasker assumed the management of Belair Plantation in 1752 upon the death of his brother-in-law Samuel Ogle.²³ It is not clear when or how Tasker decided to use Burke to gratify his sexual desires. He may have taken her as she measured grain in the cellar, forcing other bondpeople to watch. He may have caught her unaware as she walked the road lined with poplar trees leading from the mansion to the stables and back again. She may have anticipated his desires from the moment she began tidying the gold curtains, stays, and bed linens in his room.²⁴ Perhaps Rachel resigned herself to the reality that sexual violation was inevitable, and slept with Tasker in exchange for certain favors.

Charity likely learned at a young age that she was the product of her mother's rape. How much or how little Charity knew about her mother's experience is debatable.²⁵ Forced sexual experiences were common for enslaved women; sexualized violence masqueraded as physical punishment and psychological torture.²⁶ Charity and her mother lived in a world where violence against African American women was not only normative, but legally sanctioned. If Charity knew her father at all, it was through the memories passed down by others, or through the public memorials erected in his honor. Charity was little more than three years old when Col. Tasker died in 1760 after a lingering fever at the age of thirty-nine.²⁷

Charity Folks is described as being a "5 ft. 4 inches [tall], bright mulatto."²⁸ There are few clues as to how Charity felt about her mixed-race background or the role that it played in her identity formation. Yet it seems fair to say that Charity's African cultural heritage was the most influential in her life.²⁹ It is possible that Charity's African forebears were members of the Akan peoples of the Gold Coast.³⁰ Nearly three quarters of the African captives arriving in Maryland during the 17th and 18th centuries were from the Gold Coast, the present-day Ghana.³¹ The Akan are noted for the importance they place on land ownership, community, and property; and these traits are reflected in several actions during Charity Folks's life.

In the enslaved community where Charity was raised, she was exposed to the cultures and belief systems of bondpeople from the West Indies. Ships owned by the Ridouts and their associates often purchased Africans and "country-born" captives from the markets of St. Eustasias, before continuing onto Maryland.³² Thus, despite being at least two generations removed from Africa, Charity Folks had exposure to the continent regularly "in the appearance and intonations" of those around her.³³

For the first ten to twelve years of her life, Charity lived in the cellar at Belair Plantation with her brother James and their mother. The family entered their quarters through a stone archway that bore an eerie resemblance to "The Door of No

Return" that their ancestors had walked through as they left the slave dungeons and boarded ships destined for the Americas.³⁴ They shared their living space with some fifteen to twenty other bondpeople, six horses, and fifty hogs and sows.³⁵ They made their pallets on the floor and kept a lookout for the rats and mice feeding on the beans, oats, wheat, and rye stored nearby.³⁶

The Burke family's time together was short-lived. Sometime between 1765 and 1767, Charity became the property of John Ridout and moved to Annapolis, some twenty miles away. British by birth, John Ridout was the provincial secretary for Maryland. Ridout's descendants believe that Charity was part of the wedding dowry Mary Ogle, Samuel and Ann Ogle's daughter, brought to her marriage with Ridout.³⁷ It is equally possible that Charity became the property of John Ridout when he served as executor of the estates of Benjamin Tasker, Sr. and Benjamin Tasker, Jr.

As a young girl in her early teens, Charity found herself in a house with a mistress she knew and a master she did not know. The Ridout sons Samuel and Horatio were abroad for much of her adolescence.³⁸ That does not mean Charity was free from sexual harassment, as she was in close contact with John Ridout and those who visited him. Perhaps Rachel Burke anticipated Charity's situation and explained to her daughter that if she could not avoid sexual exploitation, she should use it to her advantage. Burke or other bondwomen may have taught the young bondwoman to fashion an identity within the limited choices available to her.³⁹

Charity gave birth to at least five children while she was enslaved: Harriet Jackson (b. 1780), James Jackson (b. 1786), Hannah Folks (b. 1787), Mary Folks (b. 1788), and Lil' Charity Folks (b. 1793).⁴⁰ She would have been twenty-two years old when Harriet was born—slightly beyond the age of first birth for most bondwomen.⁴¹ There is some indication as well that Charity may have had another son in addition to James since a family member once remarked that she preferred her son-in-law William Bishop to "any of the sons she ever had."⁴²

Charity's eldest children James and Harriet bear the last name of Jackson. Charity, however, does not appear ever to have used the name "Jackson." The surname Jackson does not exist on any slave inventories for the Ridouts, Taskers, or Ogles.⁴³ Nor was Jackson a prevalent surname of black or white families living at that time in Annapolis. If Charity and Mr. Jackson were "married," it was not formalized; nor could it be if either one of them was enslaved. Charity's descendants believe that "Jackson" was either a bondman who ran away, or a free black who passed away early in their relationship.⁴⁴ It is more likely that Mr. Jackson was enslaved and was sold or separated from his family when the children were young. Charity's relationship with Thomas Folks is much easier to reconstruct. Shopkeeper and tavern owner John Davidson was the owner of Thomas Folks.⁴⁵

Charity and Thomas maintained an “abroad” relationship, spending most of their time at the Davidson residence.⁴⁶ In 1787 John Davidson hired a midwife to deliver Hannah, presumably the daughter of Thomas and Charity.⁴⁷ Charity and Thomas had two other children, Mary and Lil’ Charity. Both were given the last name Folks. As Thomas and Charity’s family grew, so, too did the number of bondpeople in the Davidson home. If Thomas Folks was not the biological father of any of the children bearing his last name, this did not prevent him from acting as their father, or from taking an active part in the lives of his stepchildren, Harriet and James. Records indicate that Thomas and James Folks spoke often about various matters concerning the family.⁴⁸

The ability of Charity and Thomas Folks to begin and maintain a family testifies to the adaptability and complexity of kinship relations under slavery. For example, Charity and Thomas’s daughter Hannah was born within a year of a free black woman giving birth to Thomas’s son Henry.⁴⁹ Only Lil’ Charity resided with her mother at the Ridout’s home in Annapolis; Charity’s other four children either lived at Whitehall, the Ridout country home seven miles outside Annapolis, or at one of the other Ridout farms in various parts of the Maryland countryside.⁵⁰

Charity did get to spend time with her children, but it was limited. Her duties allowed her to travel between the Ridout properties. She used these occasions to see her children, but her main responsibility still was as a domestic in the Ridout’s Annapolis home and Ridout Rowe, the three row houses adjoining the main home. Taking care of the Ridout family and their visitors left Charity straining for time to take care of her own. One can imagine how little time she had when important visitors such as Benjamin Franklin and George Washington came to visit.⁵¹ Her duties included work at home as well as shopping for the household. Folks shopped for lace, ribbon, silk, and wine in John Davidson’s store where she and “Mayor’s Jenny,” “Carrolton Carroll’s Jack,” “Dulany’s Jack,” “Worthington’s Sam,” and other bondpeople established credit on behalf of their owners.⁵² Charity’s social world was also expanded when she accompanied Mary Ridout on holiday trips to places such as the Bath natural springs in what is now West Virginia.⁵³

Charity Folks was a hardworking domestic and her labors for the Ridout household benefited from her African cultural heritage. She drew upon a huckster tradition to haggle with local farmers over their crop, and discuss the price of fish and oysters with watermen on the docks. It is also apparent that Folks was skilled with roots and herbs. The Ridout garden consisted of peppermint and spearmint—key agents spiritualists used to cleanse spaces in order to connect with the spiritual world. The garden also contained other plants and roots grown and used for their healing powers.⁵⁴ There is evidence that Folks tended to mem-

bers of the Ridout family when they were ill by mixing roots and herbs.⁵⁵ She no doubt traded plants from the Ridout garden with those in need of a particular herb or root.⁵⁶

If Folks’s day-to-day activities were informed by aspects of her African past, so too were her spiritual experiences. Her owners were Anglicans and Methodists. Yet archeological findings at the Ridout house suggest that Charity’s spiritual practices were more complex than the traditional Christianity practiced in the Ridout home. Spiritual caches, for example, were found in strategic locations in Styron house, the middle home of the three row house dwellings adjacent to John Ridout’s home. The individual caches consisted of buttons, string, bone, and other symbolic materials. They were placed in strategic places in a room running from north to south and east to west. When viewed together, the caches transform into a composite cosmogram.⁵⁷ Some African communities believed that cosmograms offered believers protection over long periods of time.⁵⁸ Charity Folks spent a great deal of time in the Ridout row houses, tending to Mary Ridout’s mother, Anne Tasker Ogle.⁵⁹ She may have placed the items there over the course of the years.

There is also evidence that Charity’s spiritual world syncretized Yoruba-derived practices with Christianity. Archeologist Mark Leone has suggested that two bondwomen Charity associated with at the nearby home of Charles Carroll were responsible for taking a red shift and other items that went missing.⁶⁰ When combined with other materials, the missing items could have made an effective altar or shrine to the orisha, Shango.⁶¹ The composite spiritual profile of Charity Folks, therefore, strongly suggests that she welcomed contact with “the Most High,” lesser deities, and her ancestors. She would have relied on all of them to help her order her life and those of her family members in bondage.

Charity Folks’s position in the capital city of Annapolis generally, and the Ridout home more intimately, also meant that she lived through the Age of Revolution (1763–1823).⁶² She remained in Annapolis while John Ridout, a presumed British Loyalist, relocated his family to the Whitehall plantation outside of Annapolis or his property in western Maryland. She heard about the slave uprisings in the French colony on Saint Domingue from the bondpeople who arrived when their owners resettled in Maryland. She would have served these slaveholders when they called upon the Ridouts and voiced their opinions about how the themes of liberty, equality, and fraternity were fine for the French, but held dangerous consequences when espoused by oppressed Africans. Folks also lived through the denouement of the post-Revolutionary era and the War of 1812. Her vision of freedom, while informed by a multiplicity of sources, nonetheless remained centered on one goal: her and her family’s manumission from slavery.

MANUMISSION: MYTHS AND REALITIES

Charity Folks received what appeared to be a splendid Christmas gift in December 1797. Mary Ridout, acting as executor of her husband's estate, chose to "liberate, manumit, and set free" Folks for her "faithful services and dutiful behavior."⁶⁵ Ridout coupled her decision to free Folks with another benevolent act. She liberated three of Charity's five children—eight-year-old James, four-year-old Lil' Charity, and infant Hannah. The elder Charity and Hannah received their freedom the day the manumission deed was signed, but Ridout delayed manumission for James until 1808 and for Lil' Charity until 1812. This family, by then spread over three generations, experienced what is thought to be one of the most sought-after legacies of the American Revolution for enslaved people—access to freedom via legal deed.⁶⁴

At first glance, the 1797 deed for manumission does look like a splendid Christmas "gift."⁶⁵ Yet it was not a gift of immediate freedom. Manumission was often a lengthy and difficult process, and Charity's "gift" was only one marker in the family's long struggle for freedom. Rachel Burke, Charity's mother, had gained her freedom as an adult and had gone on to purchase the freedom of her son James.⁶⁶ In 1794 Thomas Folks bought his freedom from John Davidson.⁶⁷ John Ridout had manumitted Charity's eldest daughter Harriet Jackson in 1786 when she was about five years old.⁶⁸ Five years later, John Ridout freed Mary Folks, Charity's third eldest child.⁶⁹ Thus, at least five members of Charity's family preceded her in the transition from slavery to freedom.

Surely Charity Folks was elated that her children had escaped the cruelties of human bondage. Soon she learned, however, that maintaining their freedom was another thing entirely. When Harriet and Mary were freed and Charity was still enslaved, rather than stay at the Ridout house, Charity's daughters lived with either their grandmother Rachel Burke or their father, Thomas Folks, both free. The fateful decision to separate from her children undoubtedly weighed upon Charity, producing moments of relief that the children were free, as well as anxiety that their freedom may be short-lived. To Charity's heartbreak, the unease about her children's status proved well founded when local officials challenged the legality of their manumission papers.⁷⁰ As Charity and her family learned, freedom was difficult to achieve and challenging to maintain.

Charity Folks traveled back and forth between the Ridout house and those of her free family members. Though the distance between the two residences was not more than two blocks, Charity's status as a slave separated her from her kin. With the delayed manumission of James and Lil' Charity under the terms of the 1797 deed, Folks undoubtedly traveled regularly from her free family's home to visit her enslaved children. Moreover, the historical record reveals that there were at

least three instances when Charity was hired out for a time, and perhaps she used the wages paid to buy her own freedom.⁷¹ Whereas Charity was determined to pursue her own liberation, it is clear that John Ridout's decision to manumit her evolved over time. The first codicil to his will, dated 1797, bequeathed to his wife Mary Ridout "[his] Negroes called Ruth, Hannah, Jack and Milly, also her trusty Mulatto Charity."⁷² Ridout at that time outlined his intention to free two of Charity's children still in bondage.⁷³ Plans to free Charity crystallized after she nursed the family through a smallpox epidemic. Ridout drafted a second codicil to his will in 1797.⁷⁴ In it, he awarded Charity Folks her freedom, commencing in 1807.⁷⁵ Thus, Charity's efforts and Ridout's gratitude converged.

The exact nature of relationships within the Ridout household is open to speculation. There is a possibility that John Ridout fathered some of Charity's children. This would explain why he chose to free some of her children and not others. While an illicit relationship may have existed between the owner and bondswoman, the Ridouts often manumitted members of the same family.⁷⁶ In keeping with local law, Ridout attested that Folks was capable and able to provide a livelihood for herself in freedom.⁷⁷ But he also went a step further and directed his heirs to pay her the sum of twelve silver Spanish dollars and other "aspects of his estate."⁷⁸ It is not clear what these "other aspects" in Ridout's provision entailed, but they may have included Folks's use and eventual purchase of a house on Church Circle.⁷⁹ Ridout also insisted that his heirs care for Charity Folks. Ridout drafted a separate legal document binding his sons, Horatio and Samuel, to respect his wishes to distribute his property as outlined in his will and subsequent codicils.⁸⁰

Knowing that many heirs might choose to ignore such a bequest for financial or other reasons, Ridout made it a point to ask his wife to honor his wishes. In a September 1807 letter to her mother, Mary Ridout mentioned that "the [John Ridout] said Ruth and Charity had been two such faithful servants that he desired more might be done for them than the rest. That if I survived him he requested me if they were living to leave them a small annuity to maintain them comfortably."⁸¹ Within two months after her husband's death in 1797, Mary Ridout signed the deed granting Charity immediate manumission. Ridout also allowed Hannah and Lil' Charity to "stay with their mother," though time still remained on their terms of bondage.⁸² Mary Ridout made no provision for James other than her intention to grant him freedom in 1812. He continued to be enslaved at a Ridout property some distance from Annapolis, while his siblings lived as free or "quasi-free" blacks in close proximity to their mother.

Charity Folks was not satisfied with her children's delayed manumission. She knew enough about the law to make certain that the details of her freedom were not only spelled out, but executed as well. Charity understood in the summer of

1787, for example, that Mary Ridout was terminally ill and she may have prodded the ailing woman to honor John Ridout's intention to free Hannah, Lil' Charity, and James. Her efforts proved successful. Mary Ridout returned to court in August 1807. Leaving little to chance, Mary was accompanied by her eldest son, Samuel Ridout, the immediate past mayor of Annapolis, and her younger son, Horatio Ridout, a local barrister and powerful official in the Anne Arundel county court. Charity Folks paid Ridout \$1.00 to execute the manumission document. This gesture was more symbolic than anything, given that the Folks family already had been making payments to free the children. The document freed James and Lil' Charity and provided gradual manumission for Folks's grandchildren James, Ann, and William. Ridout's deed also affirmed the legality of the previous documents that freed Harriet, Mary, Hannah, and Charity.⁸³

Mary Ridout's relationship to Charity Folks, however, generates more questions than answers. Descendants of the Ridouts suggest that Mary Ridout and the bondswoman were close friends because they grew up together. Mary's will indicates this since she requested that upon her death, Charity should receive Ridout's "wearing apparel and feather bed."⁸⁴ Mary also bequeathed Folks an additional one hundred dollars. The funds were derived from Ridout's inheritance from the estate of her uncle, Benjamin Tasker, Jr.⁸⁵ To be sure, the irony of inheriting money from either Ridout or Tasker was probably not lost on the former bondswoman.

When Charity Folks was manumitted in 1797, she did not move far from the corner of Church Circle and Duke of Gloucester Street, two short blocks from the Ridout residence. Thus Folks began her freedom with money, and also with the most tangible expression of wealth in early America, property. She also received a tangible expression of wealth in African society, her family.⁸⁶ The 1810 census lists Charity Folks, Thomas Folks, and three of their children living in the same house.⁸⁷ However, Charity Folks soon learned that manumission, while a blessing in many ways, included some of the same pains she experienced in slavery.

FREEDOM AND THE GHOSTS OF SLAVERY

For African Americans in Maryland who had been manumitted like Charity Folks, freedom did not mean a distancing from slavery. Folks continued to work as a domestic for the Ridouts. Her daughter Lil' Charity, and granddaughter Elizabeth both earned wages by doing domestic work for whites in the area.⁸⁸ African American women who were not fortunate enough to be manumitted with a pension, or to have a mutually beneficial relationship with a patron, supported themselves in a variety of ways. They rented out rooms to boarders, worked as laundresses, and utilized their skills as hucksters to provide for their families.⁸⁹ A

few free black women worked as prostitutes in order to survive.⁹⁰ Yet, Charity Folks was manumitted with a pension. Her continued work for the Ridouts, therefore, underscores her vision for financial success, as well as the reality that free blacks were required by law to stay gainfully employed lest they be arrested and thrown into jail.⁹¹

For Charity Folks, aspects of the institution of slavery were visible everywhere. A narrow street separated her free black household from Reynolds Tavern, where bondpeople were bought and sold. She continued to frequent the market on the docks, just feet away from slaving vessels. And on any given day she could look out from her home on Church Circle to St. Anne's Church where notable men were buried including Johns Hopkins, Charles Carroll, and his son Charles Carroll of Carrollton. St. Anne's Church was also the final resting place for Charity's presumed father, Colonel Benjamin Tasker, Jr. and her grandfather, Benjamin Tasker, Sr. To be able to gaze upon the Taskers' final resting place underscored the drama of Folks's life, one that was exceptional and at the same time representative of the movement from enslavement to freedom among African Americans in the Chesapeake region. Even near the end of her life, she could witness aspects of her beginnings.

Slavery even existed within Folks's own household. The 1820 census lists her as the owner of one bondperson.⁹² Yet, her grandchildren were still enslaved and could have been living with Folks, or with their mother Harriet Jackson Calder. Ten years later, however, three bondpeople resided in the Folks household, well after her grandchildren would have been manumitted.⁹³ Perhaps it was not unusual for the Folks family to own bondpeople. The 1830 census reveals that a considerable number of free Africans and African Americans in Anne Arundel County held people in bondage.⁹⁴ In some instances free blacks purchased members of their family, or close friends, only to manumit them later. Sometimes enslaved children and grandchildren were allowed to live with free black kin. And some free blacks chose to purchase "chattel property" to suit their labor needs. By owning bondpeople who were not their kin, however, the Folks family was beginning to distance itself from other free African Americans.⁹⁵ That they owned slaves at all shows that the Folks family was just as complex as the families of the slaveholders who manumitted them.

Despite efforts to keep her maturing family close, decisions made in slavery haunted Charity Folks in freedom. Family members remarked that Charity Folks "appeared to have a greater fondness" for Lil' Charity.⁹⁶ As the daughter who remained enslaved while other children were manumitted, Lil' Charity was the child with whom Charity Folks spent the most time and who held the greatest influence over her mother in later life.⁹⁷ Thomas Folks remarked that his daughter's influence "would carry his wife to hell."⁹⁸ Charity's relationship with her older chil-

den Mary and James, on the other hand, was more strained very likely because both felt they were unfairly separated from their mother as young children.

Charity Folks's obvious preference for one child over another produced a long-standing rivalry between Mary and Lil' Charity. James Jackson believed that his mother's preference stemmed from "Mary being taken away from her mother when a small child."⁹⁹ Mary was manumitted while still a child, and while her mother and father were still enslaved. She left the Ridout home (if she was ever in bondage there at all) and lived with free black family members. Perhaps she lived with her grandmother Rachel Burke. She certainly lived with Thomas Folks after his manumission in 1794, and census records list Thomas as head of household.¹⁰⁰ Freedom should have yielded Mary a happier life, yet it is ironic that for Mary, it was manumission, not slavery, which created the wedge through her family and robbed her of her relationship with her mother.

The tension between Lil' Charity and Mary took its toll on the elder Folks. One family member remarked that the sibling rivalry "caused her [Charity] a good deal of trouble."¹⁰¹ Folks feared that even after her death their hostility for one another "would bring her grey hairs."¹⁰² The sisters competed for men as well as for their mother's loyalty.¹⁰³ Upon their mother's death in 1834, the two even fought over eighteen inches of property separating their homes.¹⁰⁴

Charity Folks's fondness for Lil' Charity clearly made her other children uncomfortable, especially as the elder Folks aged. The tension in the family was exacerbated when William and Charity Folks Bishop moved into the Folks home on Church Circle after their marriage in 1821. Lil' Charity reorganized the house and ordered her brother James to remove the hogs he kept in their mother's yard. James removed the pigs, but a volatile argument ensued. He confronted his mother for siding with his sister. The argument became so heated that James actually drew "a knife on her [the mother] and called her ill names."¹⁰⁵ Charity Folks never forgave her son and even refused to leave him an inheritance.¹⁰⁶

Charity Folks suffered a paralyzing stroke in early 1834, when she was nearly seventy-five years old.¹⁰⁷ She regained her ability to walk, and some ability to speak, but died within the year. She left real estate to each of her three surviving daughters and to one granddaughter.¹⁰⁸ It should be noted that Charity Folks left a will at a time when many white men failed to use this legal document. Her will and its related codicils underscore the importance that she attached to kin and property alike.¹⁰⁹

Charity Folks seemed to never forget a debt owed to her. For example, she bequeathed to her granddaughter Elizabeth "one hundred and eighty dollars due to me from Mr. Samuel Ridout and all the interest thereon at the time of my death."¹¹⁰ Her financial acumen may explain her success as a free black property owner. She

Charity Folks, Lost Royalty, and the Bishop Family of Maryland and New York

had a clear understanding of what it took to succeed in free society, and she worked hard to become a woman of property and social standing. Though she was not formally educated, Charity gleaned an understanding of legal protocol from experience and exposure to business transactions throughout her life.

In an eerie foreshadowing, Charity Folks anticipated being lost from history. In her final years, she often felt displaced and feared being "turned out of doors."¹¹¹ She obsessively searched for something lost, and "half of the time she did not know what she was after."¹¹² Family members and neighbors described her as "deranged."¹¹³ Given her age, her failing health, and the trauma of her past, it is probably not surprising that Folks suffered from symptoms of dementia.

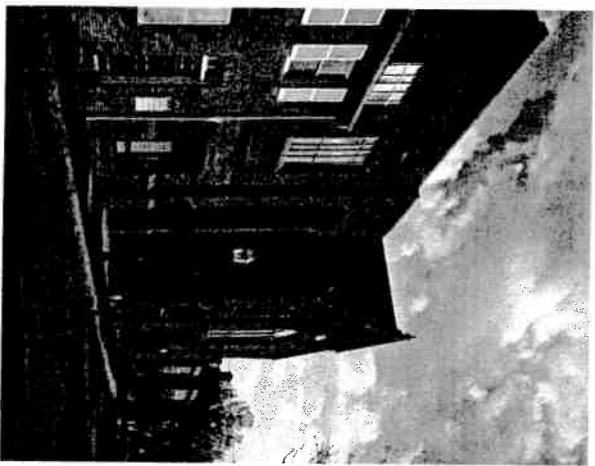
Part of Folks's rootlessness may have stemmed from a sense that her position as "mistress" of the house was being undermined in favor of her son-in-law, William Bishop.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, Bishop assumed the deed for the property and control over her residence, substantiating Folks's fear that she was losing power among her kin.¹¹⁵ A family friend even described a fight between William Bishop and Charity Folks during which Charity remarked "that there was no other place for her," and that she might as well "set off to the graveyard."¹¹⁶ This was the last surviving account documenting the life of Charity Folks.

Charity Folks's final resting place remains a mystery. Family members have two theories about her burial location. One account suggests that she may be buried with John and Mary Ridout at Whitehall. The Ridouts were buried without headstones, as John Ridout believed that their graves might be prone to robbery. Portions of Whitehall have since been sold and the exact location of the graves remains lost. One of Folks's descendants believed that a "Ridout" marker situated close to the Bishop family burial plots in Annapolis's St. Anne's Parish Cemetery had been reserved for Charity Folks.¹¹⁷ Situating Folks next to the Ridouts in death expands the biological or fictive ties Folks may have had to the family. However, this account is also disturbing because it paternalistically positions Folks as the faithful and loyal servant who would rather lie beside her owners than her kin.

The second and perhaps more believable clue to her burial place appears in a family genealogical chart. Charity, "the wife of Thomas Folks and servant to the wife of the governor," is noted to have been buried in the Bishop family plot at St. Anne's Cemetery where eleven members of her family were also buried.¹¹⁸ There is no headstone to commemorate her grave, and so Charity's life becomes something of a ghost story.¹¹⁹ She is like the "wandering spirits" who died onboard ships during the Middle Passage without a proper burial.¹²⁰ Lacking a memorial, she has been denied the possibility of being honored by the living.

Nevertheless, Charity Folks's life continues to claim our attention. Belair Plantation where she was born is now part of the city of Bowie museums. Tours of Belair recently incorporated references to the bondpeople who worked there.

The John Ridout house at 125 Duke of Gloucester Street is part of the National Historic Trust. Reynolds Tavern, once owned by the Davidson family, who enslaved Thomas Folks, is now a tourist site popular for its afternoon tea and dinner. There are also fainter outlines of Charity's presence. Her home on the corner of Duke of Gloucester Street and Church Circle has been replaced by a Bank of America building. This fact is a bit ironic, given her financial success. Properties once owned by Folks and her son-in-law William Bishop are sites for archeological digs and continue to yield crucial details about black Annapolis. During the late 19th century, Folks's property at 84 Franklin Street was sold to the Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church as the site for their new building.¹²¹ Frederick Douglass delivered the dedication address when the church opened its doors in September 1874. Now part of the National Historic Trust, Mount Moriah has been converted into the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Maryland's official repository for African American artifacts and documents.¹²²



Banneker-Douglass Museum at 84 Franklin Street.
Courtesy of the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis, MD.

THE LEGACY OF CHARITY FOLKS

Charity Folks probably thought little beyond securing her family's freedom and ensuring their financial security after manumission. Yet, her greatest legacy—greater than her material wealth or the places and spaces that have been commem-

orated as sites of historical significance—is present in the lives of her descendants. Folks's son-in-law William Bishop (1802–1870) was one of the twelve wealthiest men in Annapolis, black or white.¹²³ Charity Folks Bishop, her daughter and William's wife, owned sixteen properties at the time of her death in 1875.¹²⁴ The children of William and Charity Bishop expanded the family's economic base and furthered the family's call to service in various forms. Rebecca Bishop, Folks's granddaughter and the only daughter of William Bishop and Charity Bishop, married Peter Vogelsang of New York. The couple was among the notables of New York society. Charity's great-granddaughter and Rebecca's daughter, Theresa Vogelsang (1854–1888), married Josiah T. Settle (1850–1915), a prominent lawyer and businessman from Mississippi. The Settles relocated to Memphis, Tennessee, and owned a boarding house whose clientele included anti-lynching activist and newspaper editor Ida B. Wells.¹²⁵



Charity Folks Bishop
From the Doris Moses Collection, Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD.

The sons of William and Charity Folks Bishop also were prominent in their respective fields. James Calder Bishop (1824–1893) ran a tobacco shop and built upon William Bishop's considerable property holdings.¹²⁶ Moses Lake Bishop (1833–1869) was one of the first African American midshipmen at the U.S. Naval

Academy in Annapolis.¹²⁷ Charity's grandson William Henry Bishop III (1824–1906), and his wife Elizabeth Chew Bishop (n.d.–1886), helped to establish St. Mary's Parish Church in Baltimore, an important African American Episcopal congregation in the city.¹²⁸ Their son, and Charity's great-grandson, Dr. Hutchens Chew Bishop (1858–1937) served as the rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Harlem.¹²⁹ Consisting of a predominantly African American and West Indian membership, St. Philip's is considered to be the largest Episcopal congregations in the country and is often touted as one of the most important.¹³⁰

Hutchens Chew Bishop followed in his great-grandmother's footsteps by acquiring property through shrewd business transactions as well. Working with Harlem businessman John Nail, Bishop used his ability to "pass for white" to purchase valuable real estate on Harlem's 135th Street between Lenox Avenue and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.¹³¹ Bishop and Nail then rented the property, or deeded it, to African Americans who faced racial discrimination in trying to move uptown.¹³² Bishop also secured enough property to move St. Philip's Church from its original location on Mulberry Street in the Tenderloin district to 136th Street.¹³³ In July 1917 Rev. Bishop allowed St. Philip's to be used as the coordinating headquarters for the NAACP's "Silent Protest March," following the murder of large numbers of African Americans by white rioters in East St. Louis.¹³⁴

Hutchens Chew Bishop was succeeded as rector of St. Philip's by his son, Shelton Hale Bishop (1889–1957). The successive leadership of father and son spanned nearly seventy years, often referred to as the "Bishop era," and concretized the royal lineage.¹³⁵ Father Shelton Hale Bishop also exhibited his family's gift for religious vocation and once remarked, "I've never wanted to be anything but a priest."¹³⁶ During his tenure as rector, Father Shelton Hale Bishop strengthened his father's efforts to advance the Harlem community. Father Bishop oversaw St. Philip's efforts in developing the Lafargue Clinic dedicated to African American mental health.¹³⁷ He was a self-proclaimed pacifist and remained an active member of the NAACP throughout his life.¹³⁸

Descendants of Charity Folks also demonstrate her knowledge of root work and healing, though in more professional settings. Elizabeth Bishop Davis (Trussell), M.D. (1920–2010), the daughter of Shelton Hale Bishop and Eloise Carey, was professor emeritus of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University.¹³⁹ Dr. Trussell, or "Beth," as she was known to family, had a long and distinguished career. She founded the Department of Psychiatry at Harlem Hospital Center, one of the first community-centered mental health facilities in the country.¹⁴⁰ Dr. Davis also remained active in academia. In response to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's depiction of low-income black families as "dysfunctional," she authored several scholarly studies on "identity formation" among urban youths

and multigenerational trauma during pregnancy among African American women.¹⁴¹ Dr. Davis's awards and accolades included the 2001 Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York State Office of Mental Health and a 2003 Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.¹⁴² The late Dr. Davis, true to her royal heritage, emerges as just as distinct and memorable a woman as her great-great-great-grandmother.

History should be a restorative process. The rediscovery of Charity Folks provides contemporary scholars with both a cognitive and physical map to understanding the importance of enslaved women's contributions beyond their lived experiences. Charity Folks, in any or all of her forms (enslaved woman, manumitted woman, property owner, founding mother), testifies to the distinctly African-derived spirit of survival and adaptation during and after enslavement.

NOTES

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¹Shelton Hale Bishop, "The Romance of the Negro," *Spirit of Missions* 75 (March 1910): 204–205.

²Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (New York: 2009), 44.

³The exceptions were William Caldehead and Carter G. Woodson; see William L. Caldehead, "Slavery in Maryland in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1790," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 98 (Fall 2003): 303–324; and Carter G. Woodson, *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (Washington, DC, 1924), 16.

⁴Bettye Collier-Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community, 1865–1910," Ph.D. Dissertation, George Washington University, 1974; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT, 1985); Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790–1860* (Urbana, IL, 1997); Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore, MD, 2009); T. Stephen Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775–1865* (Baltimore, MD, 2007).

⁵During the period in question, Baltimore City was part of Baltimore County. In 1790, there were 7,132 slaves in Baltimore County. By 1830, 10,653 people were slaves. Much more dramatic than this increase, however, was the increase in the free black population. The 1790 census counted 927 free blacks living in the county; by 1830, 17,888 free blacks resided in the county. "Baltimore County Census, 1790," *U.S. Federal Census, 1790* (Washington, DC, 1790); and "Baltimore County Census, 1830," *U.S. Federal Census, 1830* (Washington, DC, 1830).

⁶Sean John Condon, "The Slave Owner's Family and Manumission in the Post-Revolutionary Chesapeake Tidewater: Evidence from Anne Arundel County Wills," in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, ed. Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, SC, 2009). See also Lorenna Walsh, "Receding the Eighteenth-Century Town Folk, or, Whence the Beet?," *Agricultural History* 73, no. 3 (1999): 267; Lorenna Walsh, "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial

Chesapeake, 1643–1777.” *Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 1 (1983): 109. Mark Letzter and Jean Russo, *The Diary of William Farris: The Daily Life of an Annapolis Silversmith* (Baltimore, MD, 2003), 380–390.

¹⁷The exception being, but not limited to the following: Catherine Adams and Elizabeth Pleck, *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England* (New York, 2010); Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*; Erica Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City* (New Haven, CT, 2008); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York, NY, 1996); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, 1st ed. (New York, 1985).

¹⁸Among the important works produced in the last decade are: Daina Berry, “Swing the Sickle for the Harvest Is Rape”: Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia (Urbana, IL, 2007); Stephanie Evans, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850–1954: An Intellectual History* (Gainesville, FL, 2007); Dayo G. Rosemary Brana-Shute, and Randy J. Sparks, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York, 2009); Kali Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880–1910* (Durham, NC, 2006); Tiffany Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women’s Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana, IL, 2010); Erik McDuffie, *Soujourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC, 2011); Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles against Urban Inequality* (New York, NY, 2004); Karen C. Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto, Canada, 2011).

¹⁹Loren Schweinger, “The Fragile Nature of Freedom: Free Women of Color in the U.S. South,” *Beyond Boundaries: Free Women of Color in the Americas* (Urbana, IL, 2004), 107.

²⁰See Adams and Pleck, *Love of Freedom*; Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom*; Noralee Frankel, *Freedom’s Women: Black Women and Frontiers in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington, IN, 1999); Lynn Hudson, *The Making of “Mammy Pleasant”: A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Urbana, IL, 2003); King, *The Essence of Liberty*; Suzanne Lebeau, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784–1860* (New York, 1984); Seth Rockman, *Scrapping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore, MD, 2009); Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*; Charlotte Forten Grinké, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grinké, ed. Brenda L. Stevenson* (New York, 1988); Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011); and Shirley E. Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

²¹For works on black families and uplift, see Grinké, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grinké*; Willard B. Gatewood, ed., *The Life of Scott Bond* (Fayetteville, AR, 2008); Adele Logan Alexander, *Homelands and Waterways: The American Journey of the Bond Family, 1846–1926* (New York, 1999); and *Parallel Worlds: The Remarkable Gibbs-Hunts and the Enduring Insignificance of Melanin* (Charlottesville, VA, 2010); Ruth Wright Hayre, *Tell Them We Are Rising: A Memoir of Faith in Education* (Philadelphia, PA, 1999). For other readings of African American families who considered themselves “elite,” see Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color* (Bloomington, IN, 1990); and Julie Winch, *The Clamorgans: One Family’s History of Race in America* (New York, 2011).

²²Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, NY, 1976); Kunta Kinte—Alex Haley Foundation, *Slavery in a Border State—What Was It Like in Anne Arundel County, Maryland?* (Annapolis, MD, 2003); Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York, 2004); Carole Marks, *Moses and the Monster and Miss Anne* (Urbana, IL, 2009); Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (Boston, MA, 2004); Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Urbana, IL, 1987); Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (Washington, DC, 1948); Nathan Huggins, *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston, MA, 1980).

²³Douglass State Welcomed Home,” *Star Democrat*, 19 June 2011, http://www.startem.com/news/local_news/article.190807ec-9a6b-11e0-9ec2-001cc4c00260.html, accessed 1 September 2011.

²⁴Frederick Douglass, Path to Freedom Walking Tour,” “Frederick Douglass: Baltimore.org,” <http://baltimore.org/visitors/tour-baltimore/guided-tours/frederick-douglass-walking-tour/>, accessed 1 September 2011.

²⁵Orlando Ridout, interview with the author, 16 December 2009, Annapolis, MD. For descriptions of the Ridout house, see Deering Davis, *Annapolis Houses, 1700–1775* (New York, NY, 1947).

²⁶Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 195.

²⁷Douglass does not reveal who the men are that assist in Williams’s manumission. A public historian of black Annapolis, Janice Hayes Williams, notes that free black Smith Price assisted with the manumission. Price also

established Mount Olive Church with Thomas Folks, the husband of Charity Folks, Janice Hayes Williams, interview with the author, 1 November 2009, Annapolis, MD.

^{18a}Darlene Clark Hine, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women’s History*, ed. Vicki Ruiz (New York, 1990), 292–97; Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, 1st ed. (New York, 1985); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985); Brenda E. Stevenson, “Gender Convention, Ideals, and Identity among Antebellum Virginia Slave Women,” in *More Than Chattel: Black Women in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington, IN, 1996), 169–90; Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

^{19a}Marks, *Moses and the Monster and Miss Anne*.

^{20T}Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington, KY, 1997).

^{21T}The parents of Ann Tasker were among the most prominent members of Chesapeake slaveholding society. Benjamin Tasker, Sr. was a founder of the Baltimore County Ironworks, a successive mayor of Annapolis, the provincial governor of Maryland from 1752 to 1753, and he actively profited from the international slave trade. Tasker’s mother, Anne Bladen Tasker, was from an equally prominent family. The Bladens included wealthy slaveholders, landowners, court officials, and governors. The extended branches of the Ogle-Tasker family included not only the Bladens but the Carrolls, Carters, Dulans, Ridgelys, and Snowdens among others. Like most slave owning families the Taskers transferred their bondpeople between properties and family members as labor was needed. See Ronald Hoffman and Sally D. Mason, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: A Carroll Saga, 1500–1782* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); and Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Low Country* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 535–37.

^{22T}It is also equally plausible that one of the many men who assumed control of the plantation after the death of Benjamin Tasker fathered Charity. One of these men was John Ridout or another Tasker relation. Samuel Ogle Estate Inventory 1752, and Benjamin Ogle Estate Inventory 1815, courtesy Pamela Williams, Belair Mansion, Col. Benjamin Tasker, Jr. Estate Inventory 1763, Robert Carter Papers, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter, VHS); Anne Ogle to Benjamin Tasker, 1758 Deed to Belair; Robert Carter Papers, VHS; Benjamin Ogle vs. Anne Ogle, Robert Carter, et al., 1774–75, Anne Arundel County Chancery Papers, Maryland State Archives (MDSA).

²³Samuel Ogle Will, 1752, Wills and Death Notices, Public Records Office, Kew, Richmond, UK; Anne Ogle to Col. Benjamin Tasker, 1758 Deed to Belair; Robert Carter Papers, VHS.

²⁴Description based upon public and private tour of Belair Mansion, 16 July 2009.

²⁵Orlando Ridout, interview with the author, 16 December 2009, Annapolis, MD; Janice Hayes Williams, interview with the author, 1 November 2009, Annapolis, MD; Pamela Williams, interview with the author, 16 July 2010, Bowie, MD. See also Joan Scutlock, “The Bishop Family of Annapolis: Unpublished Family History,” 1999. For an experience similar to that of Rachel Burke and Charity, see Kent Anderson Leslie’s discussion of Amanda America Dickson’s mother, Kent Anderson Leslie, *Woman of Color: Daughter of Privilege: Amada America Dickson, 1849–1893* (Athens, GA, 1995).

²⁶Jessica Millward, “‘The Relics of Slavery’: Interracial Sex and Manumission in the American South,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31, no. 3 (December 2010): 22–30.

²⁷Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland*, 109, note 111.

²⁸John Ridout, Last Will and Testament, 1797, Ridout Family Papers; Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1797, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records; Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1807; and Charity Folks, Certificate of Freedom, 1811, Anne Arundel County Freedom Records, 1811, MDSA.

²⁹Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993): 1707–1791.

³⁰Lorena Walsh, “The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins and Some Implications,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): esp. 147–48. Walsh estimates that nearly sixty-nine percent of these individuals were taken from their communities in Senegambia, Sierra Leone, or the Windward and Gold Coast. See also Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 20. Nearly 18,000 Africans entered the system of chattel slavery through the port of Annapolis, Maryland, during the 18th century. Gomez suggests that 64 percent of all Africans entering the colonies from 1701 to 1775 did so through the Chesapeake Bay.

³¹Walsh, “The Chesapeake Slave Trade,” 148.

- ³³Samuel Galloway Ledgers, Galloway-Maxie-Markhoe Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).
- ³⁴Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: 14 Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York, 2007).
- ³⁵Samuel Ogle Estate Inventory 1752, and Benjamin Ogle Estate Inventory 1815, courtesy Pamela Williams, Belair Mansion; Col. Benjamin Tasker, Jr. Estate Inventory 1763; Anne Ogle to Benjamin Tasker, 1758 Deed to Belair; Robert Carter Papers, VHS; Benjamin Ogle vs. Anne Ogle, Robert Carter, et al., 1774-75, Anne Arundel County Chancery Papers, MDSA.
- ³⁶Col. Benjamin Tasker, Jr. Estate Inventory 1763, Robert Carter Papers, VHS.
- ³⁷Orlando Ridout IV, interview, Annapolis, MD, 16 December 2009.
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 5; King, *The Essence of Liberty*, 45. See also Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom*, Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham, NC, 1997).
- ⁴⁰John Ridout, Last Will and Testament, 1797, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA; Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1797, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records, MDSA; Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1807, MDSA; and Charity Folks Certificate of Freedom, 1811, Anne Arundel County Freedom Records, 1811, MDSA; Mary Folks Certificate of Freedom, 1811, Anne Arundel County Freedom Records, 1811, MDSA; Hannah Folks, Certificate of Freedom, 1811, Anne Arundel County Freedom Records, 1811, MDSA.
- ⁴¹See White, *Ar'n't I a Woman*, especially chapters 1 and 2.
- ⁴²Hannah Murray Testimony in *Moses Lake and Wife vs. William Bishop and Wife*, 1836, Anne Arundel Chancery Court, MDSA.
- ⁴³Samuel Ogle Estate Inventory 1752, and Benjamin Ogle Estate Inventory 1815, courtesy of Pamela Williams, Belair Mansion; Col. Benjamin Tasker, Jr. Estate Inventory 1763, Robert Carter Papers, VHS; Anne Ogle to Benjamin Tasker, 1758 Deed to Belair; Robert Carter Papers, VHS; Benjamin Ogle vs. Anne Ogle, Robert Carter, et al., 1774-75, Anne Arundel County Chancery Papers, MDSA. There are no known inventories for the Ridout Papers.
- ⁴⁴Scutlock, "The Bishop Family," 5.
- ⁴⁵John Ridout to Mary Folks, Deed of Manumission, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁴⁶Anne Arundel County Census, 1790, "U.S. Federal Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
- ⁴⁷John Davidson Account Book, April 1787, Library of Congress (LOC).
- ⁴⁸James Jackson Testimony in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ⁴⁹Henry Folks, Certificate of Freedom, Anne Arundel County Certificate of Freedom, MDSA.
- ⁵⁰1783 Tax List for State of Maryland, MDSA.
- ⁵¹Several note the business and social circle of the Ridouts; Shirley V. Baltz, *Belair from the Beginning* (Bowie, MD, 2005); Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore, MD, 1973); Rosalie Stier Calvert, *Misses of Riversdale: The Plantation Letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, 1795-1821* (Baltimore, MD, 1991).
- ⁵²Credit accounts for Charity Folks and other bondpeople appear in John Davidson's Daybook, 1781-1782, John Davidson Daybook, 1781-1782, MDSA, and John Davidson Account Book, 1785-1787, LOC.
- ⁵³Ronald Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: A Carroll Saga, 1500-1782* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).
- ⁵⁴Walter C. Rucker, *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2006).
- ⁵⁵John Ridout, Will and Codicil, 1797, MDSA.
- ⁵⁶This is based on the fact that the Ridout home was in close proximity to William Farris, an Annapolis silversmith. Ferris notes in his diary of trading herbs with local free blacks and enslaved people. Moreover, Farris often employed Thomas Folks to do day labor. See Mark Letzer and Jean B. Russo, eds., *The Diary of William Farris: The Daily Life of an Annapolis Silversmith* (Baltimore, MD, 2002).
- ⁵⁷Mark P. Leone, *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).
- ⁵⁸Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, NY, 2007); Cecily Barker McDaniell and Tekla Ali Johnson, *African Legacy: Diasporic Studies in the Americas* (Littleton, MA, 2007); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1978).

- ⁵⁹Descriptions of the John Ridout house and garden are found in Leone, *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital*; Paul A. Shackel, *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake* (Washington, DC, 1994).
- ⁶⁰Leone, *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital*.
- ⁶¹William Bascom, *Shango in the New World* (Austin, TX, 1972); Kenneth Lunn, *Praising His Name in the Dance: Spirit Possession in the Spiritual Baptist Faith and Orisha Work in Trinidad, West Indies* (New York, 2000); Rucker, *The River Flows On*.
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- ⁶³Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1797, Anne Arundel County Court Manumission Records, 1797-1844, MDSA.
- ⁶⁴For discussions of emancipation laws during the revolutionary and early national periods, see Catherine Adams, *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England* (New York, 2010); Peter J. Albert, *The Proven Institution: The Geography, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA, 1976); Jennifer Dorsy, *Hirelings: African American Workers and Free Labor in Early Maryland* (Ithaca, NY, 2011); Wilma King, *The Essence of Liberty: Free Black Women during the Slave Era* (Columbia, MI, 2006); Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana, IL, 1997); Lovett Schweininger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," *Journal of Women's History*, 17, no. 1 (1999): 294-328; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery: Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore, MD, 2011); Whitman, *The Price of Freedom*.
- ⁶⁵Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA, 1982).
- ⁶⁶Anne Ogle to James Folks, 1789, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records, MDSA.
- ⁶⁷John Davidson to Thomas Folks, 1794, Anne Arundel County Land Records, MDSA.
- ⁶⁸John Ridout to Harriet Jackson, 1786, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records, MDSA.
- ⁶⁹John Ridout to Mary Folks, 1791, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records, MDSA.
- ⁷⁰See the lengthy codicil to the 1807 manumission document for Charity Folks. Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1807, Anne Arundel County Manumission Records, MDSA.
- ⁷¹See John Davidson Daybook for 4 March 1782, 22 March 1782, 23 October 1782, MDSA, and John Davidson Account Book for 10 December 1785, John Davidson Daybook, 1781-1782, MDSA, and John Davidson Account Book, 1785-1787, LOC.
- ⁷²John Ridout, Will, 1797, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁷³Ibid.
- ⁷⁴Ibid.
- ⁷⁵Ibid.
- ⁷⁶Ridout Family Manumissions, 1770-1830, Jessica Millward unpublished dataset.
- ⁷⁷Jessica Millward, "'That All Her Increase Shall Be Free': Enslaved Women's Bodies and Maryland 1809 Law of Manumission," *Women's History Review* 21 (June 2012): 363-378.
- ⁷⁸Mary Ridout to Anne Ogle 1797, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁷⁹Samuel Ridout to Charity Folks and Mary Folks, 1817, Anne Arundel County Land Deeds, MDSA.
- ⁸⁰Rosario Ridout to Samuel Ridout Bond, 1797, Anne Arundel Chancery Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸¹Mary Ridout to Anne Ogle, 1797, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸²Mary Ridout to Anne Ogle, September 1807, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸³Mary Ridout to Charity Folks, 1807, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸⁴Mary Ridout to Anne Ogle, December 1807, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸⁵Ibid.
- ⁸⁶Dylan Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003).
- ⁸⁷1810 Federal Census, Washington, DC; and Janice Hayes Williams, interview, 1 November 2009, Annapolis, MD.
- ⁸⁸"The Estate of Mary Owings 1835," Dr. John Ridout Account Book, Ridout Family Papers, MDSA.
- ⁸⁹Adams, *Love of Freedom*; Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom*; Hine and Gaspar, *Beyond Bondage*; Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington, IL, 1999); Lynn Hudson, *The Making of "Mammy Pleasant": A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*

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- ⁹²Census for Anne Arundel County, 1820, "U.S. Federal Census, 1820" (Washington, DC, 1820); and "Census for Anne Arundel County, 1830," U.S. Federal Census, 1830 (Washington, DC, 1830); see also Woodson, "Free Negro Owners of Slaves," 16.
- ⁹³Census for Anne Arundel County, 1830, "U.S. Federal Census, 1830" (Washington, DC, 1830). See also Woodson, "Free Negro Owners of Slaves," 16.
- ⁹⁴Woodson, *Free Negro Owners*, 16.
- ⁹⁵For origins of free black caste structure in the Chesapeake, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*; Koger, *Black Slaveowners*; and Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*.
- ⁹⁶James Jackson Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*, Anne Arundel Court Chancery Papers, MDSA.
- ⁹⁷1798 Tax list; and James Jackson Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ⁹⁸James Jackson Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*, Anne Arundel Court Chancery Papers, MDSA.
- ⁹⁹bid.
- ¹⁰⁰Anne Arundel County, 1800, "U.S. Federal Census, 1800" (Washington, DC, 1800).
- ¹⁰¹Hannah Murray Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ¹⁰²bid.
- ¹⁰³See the testimonies of Mary Folks Bishop, Hannah Murray, James Jackson, and Stephen Rummels in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ¹⁰⁴*Lake v. Bishop*.
- ¹⁰⁵Hannah Murray Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ¹⁰⁶bid.
- ¹⁰⁷Dr. John Ridout Testimony, in *Lake v. Bishop*.
- ¹⁰⁸Charity Folks Will, 1828, in *Lake v. Bishop*; Last Will and Testament of Charity Folks, 1828, Anne Arundel County Register of Wills, 1835, MDSA.
- ¹⁰⁹Last Will and Testament of Charity Folks, 1828, Anne Arundel County Register of Wills, 1835, MDSA.
- ¹¹⁰bid.
- ¹¹¹Testimony of Hannah Murray, in *Lake v. Bishop*, 1835, Anne Arundel Court Chancery Papers, MDSA.
- ¹¹²bid.
- ¹¹³bid.
- ¹¹⁴bid.
- ¹¹⁵Several credit this house as belonging to William Bishop when in fact it was the home of Thomas and Charity Folks. Property deeds show that Charity Folks bought the home in 1816. The elder Charity Folks decided it to Charity Bishop upon her death. Shackel, *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake*, 201; William L. Calderhead, "Slavery in Maryland in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1790" (2003): 308; William L. Calderhead, "Anne Arundel Blacks: Three Centuries of Change," in *Anne Arundel County, Maryland: A Bicentennial History* (Annapolis, MD, 1977), 18; Paul Mullins, *Race and Affluence: An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture* (New York, 1999); "Anne Arundel County Census, 1830," U.S. Federal Census, 1830.
- ¹¹⁶Testimony of Hannah Murray, in *Lake v. Bishop*, 1835, Anne Arundel Court Chancery Papers.
- ¹¹⁷Scarlock, *The Bishop Family*, 17.
- ¹¹⁸Family Genealogy Chart, William Bishop Papers, MDSA.
- ¹¹⁹Gordon-Reed, *The Heminges of Monticello*; Morrison, *Beloved*; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC,

- 1988): Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Hunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts* (Charlottesville, VA, 1997).
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- ¹²¹About Banneker-Douglass Museum," Banneker-Douglass Museum, <http://www.bdmuseum.com/index.html>, accessed 1 September 2011.
- ¹²²bid.
- ¹²³William L. Calderhead, "Anne Arundel Blacks: Three Centuries of Change," in *Anne Arundel County, MD: A Bicentennial History*, ed. James Bradford (Annapolis, MD, 1977), 18.
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- ¹²⁵Scarlock, *The Bishop Family*, 87.
- ¹²⁶Calderhead, "Anne Arundel Blacks," 18.
- ¹²⁷Robert J. Schmeidler, Jr., "The First Black Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 48 (Summer 2005): 104–7.
- ¹²⁸*Reaching Out: An Epic of the People of St. Philip's Church* (New York, 1986), 57.
- ¹²⁹bid.
- ¹³⁰Rev. Shelton Hale Bishop Dies," *New York Times*, 25 August 1962, 19, Religious Leaders of America Collection, box 1, University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA (hereafter, Religious Leaders Collection).
- ¹³¹*Reaching Out*, 36–37.
- ¹³²Some two hundred families lived in the apartments on West 135th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenue. The apartment tenements as well as the YMCA established by Bishop and Nail were awarded landmark status in the late 20th century. *Reaching Out*, 36–37; and "St. Philip's Landmark Status," http://www.sphilipsharlem.dio.ceseny.org/history.htm#Landmark_Status, accessed 2 September 2011.
- ¹³³"Deed of Property, 1910," container 38, St. Philip's Episcopal Church Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.
- ¹³⁴Co-organizers for the march included W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and poet Countee Cullen. *Reaching Out*, 38–39.
- ¹³⁵bid., 57.
- ¹³⁶Harlem's St. Philip's," *Time Magazine*, 7 January 1952, 50–52, box 1, Religious Leaders Collection.
- ¹³⁷*Reaching Out*, 53.
- ¹³⁸Rev. Shelton Hale Bishop Dies," *New York Times*, 25 August 1962, 19, box 1, Religious Leaders Collection.
- ¹³⁹Dennis C. Dickerson, *African American Preachers and Politics: The Careys of Chicago* (Jackson, MS, 2010).
- ¹⁴⁰Elizabeth Bishop Davis Trussell: Obituary," 4 February 2010, *New York Times*, 18, copy in Elizabeth B. Davis Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.
- ¹⁴¹Professional Papers, Elizabeth B. Davis Collection.
- ¹⁴²Elizabeth Bishop Davis (Trussell) obituary; and Elizabeth Davis Trussell, "Funeral Program," St. Philip's Church, New York, 10 February 2010.