

MARYLAND *Historical Magazine*

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The Journal of the Maryland Historical Society

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Cover

“The Notorious Belle of Baltimore”: Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte, 1785–1879

In 1803, Elizabeth “Betsy” Patterson, daughter of Baltimore merchant William Patterson and Dorcas Spear Patterson, married Jerome Bonaparte, Napoleon’s younger brother. The furious emperor recalled Jerome to France and annulled the marriage, leaving Betsy alone to raise their son. Remembered more for her beauty, wit, scandalous clothing, celebrity marriage, and divorce, this talented and tenacious child of an enterprising and successful Irish merchant also spent decades working to secure the imperial title for herself and her son. What’s more, through the remaining seventy years of her life, she transformed the annuity from Napoleon into a fortune that totaled over one million dollars—upwards of twenty-three million dollars today. (*Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte*, by George D’Almaine after Gilbert Stuart, 1856, Maryland Historical Society.)

PDA

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Cecil Meeting House, Kent County, Maryland, photographed c.1900–1910. Eastern Shore Quakers aided runaway slaves and protected free blacks as fear and tension escalated following passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. (Maryland Historical Society.)

“A Local Question”: Kent County Quakers, the Underground Railroad, and a Woman Named Harriett

LUCY MADDOX

The history of the Underground Railroad on the Eastern Shore of Maryland is closely identified with the name of Harriett Tubman—for good reasons: she was an extremely effective agent, an intriguing person, and by now a figure of almost mythical status. As her most recent biographer notes, “We all believe that we know Harriett Tubman.” Her notoriety, however, has probably drawn attention away from others who were active on the Eastern Shore at the same time. Tubman was very likely assisted in her initial flight to freedom by Quakers in Caroline County, and it is becoming clear that the Quaker presence across the Eastern Shore was crucial to the success not only of Tubman’s subsequent trips to the area but of the Underground Railroad in general. In Kent County, a small group of Quakers put their lives in danger to aid runaway slaves and abused freedmen, and there is strong evidence that they shared their work with another intriguing black woman named Harriett whose tracks are every bit as hard to follow as Tubman’s.¹

It is impossible to know how many slaves escaped from Kent and other Eastern Shore counties in the years immediately before the Civil War. Contemporary estimates can be either vague or subject to one bias or another. To take one example: a representative from Georgia announced in Congress in 1860 with clear outrage but fuzzy statistics that abolitionist activity in the border states had accounted for “thousands and millions of dollars worth of property” lost annually. Even in the absence of hard numbers, it is clear that the rates of escape were high enough from the late 1840s through the first years of the Civil War to disturb slaveholders on the Eastern Shore and intensify their anger against abolitionists. As an early historian of the Underground Railroad asked rhetorically, “Can it be thought strange that the disappearance week by week and month by month of valuable slaves over the unknown routes of the underground system should have produced wrath, suspicion and hostility in the minds of people who could justly claim to have a constitutional guarantee, the laws of Congress, and the decisions of the highest courts on their side?”²

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Maryland's northern border is the Pennsylvania line, a geographic advantage for fugitive slaves. Henry S. Tanner, *Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware*, 1839. (Maryland Historical Society.)

Slaveholders in Kent County had already formed a “Mutual Protection Society” in 1846 to insure themselves against financial loss from runaways. In September 1849, an antislavery newspaper in Ohio reported on the large number of slaves who had recently fled from Maryland and observed that their flight was causing “great commotion” among slaveholders. The paper noted with satisfaction the “absconding of whole gangs and families of slaves, who are seldom ever caught.” Three months later, the same paper again reported on the excitement in Maryland, this time shifting its rhetoric significantly by referring to the “panic” among slaveholders “especially on the Eastern Shore,” and observing that many slaves were being sold to traders, “their owners considering them very unsafe property while the facilities of the ‘underground railroad’ remain so available.” The paper singled out the specific situation in Kent County, quoting a slaveholder there as predicting that at the current rate of escapes, in five years the number of slaves in the county would be reduced by one-third. About the same time, a proslavery newspaper in Delaware, the *Wilmington Chicken*, also reported on the increasing number of runaways from Maryland and Delaware, though with alarm rather than complacency. The *Chicken* expressed a belief that “the underground railroad extends a considerable distance down the State, and that branches have even entered Maryland.” Noting that slave property was “insecure” in both Maryland and Delaware, the paper concluded that soon “we shall not have a



Kent County, Maryland, bottom center, less than sixty miles from the free state of Pennsylvania. Detail, Tanner, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.

slave worth keeping. The young and hearty who are able to work, run away, leaving behind the old and children, too young to be of much service.”³

The number of escapes from Maryland did not decrease after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850; in fact, it is likely that the number increased. In October 1855, the *Kent News* reported “another stampede” of eighteen slaves from Kent County in a single day and concluded, “if this underground railroad is not put a stop to, we advise [slaveholders] to ship their negroes to the South.” By 1858 the *News* was registering the serious ramifications of the runaway problem in the county:

It is well known that this county, for some years, has suffered severely from the loss of slaves, and that this number has been so great that in some sections there is now an insufficiency of this kind of labor for agricultural purposes. Few are willing to invest their capital in supplying this deficiency, on account of its admitted insecurity. In the year 1856, not less than 60 slaves ran away from their owners in this county, whose aggregate value exceeded \$60,000. . . . The fact that negroes who had never been within many miles of the northern limits of the county make good their escape without leaving behind them any evidence of their direction, has forced the conviction upon the public mind that they have derived assistance from some one. So successful have been past attempts

to run away, that a few hours' start has been ample to prevent apprehension. These circumstances have naturally excited alarm, suspicion and conjecture on the part of slaveholders.

The newspaper's estimate of sixty runaways in a year seems unrealistically low and may reflect the newspaper's fear that higher numbers would alarm slaveholders and further encourage potential runaways.⁴

It is not surprising that slaves frequently ran away from Kent County. The county's proximity to the free state of Pennsylvania and to the active Quaker communities in Delaware and Pennsylvania encouraged escapes. There were also a large number of free blacks in the county—3,100 in 1850, as compared to 2,625 slaves—who were available to help escapees. Slaves also helped other slaves. In 1855 Thomas Garrett wrote to William Still of George Wilmer, a Kent County slave, that he “was a true man, and forwarder of . . . some twenty-five [slaves] within four months.”⁵ In addition, slaves in the county had before them the prospect of being sold by owners who no longer needed them, or feared losing their investment if a slave ran away, or preferred to hire seasonal workers who would not need to be cared for when they could no longer work. Newspapers in Kent and surrounding counties regularly ran advertisements from slave dealers, such as Chestertown's own John Denning, eager to buy Eastern Shore slaves and sell them farther south through the Baltimore markets.⁶

The consternation caused by these “stampedes” of slaves from Kent County was not limited to owners who saw profitable assets disappearing. The anger and especially the anxiety and fear that spread across the Eastern Shore in the antebellum period affected most of the population—slaveholders, slaves, free blacks, and antislavery whites, including those who were not willing to declare themselves abolitionists. The extent of the nervousness and fear, and some indication of its causes, are indicated by a letter written from Kent County by Kate Kennard on the first of October 1855, three weeks before the *Kent News* reported on the flight of eighteen slaves. Kate was the daughter of Thomas Kennard, a physician from Still Pond who was listed in the 1850 census as owning nineteen slaves. She wrote to her brother Tom in St. Louis:

I suppose John told you about the negro excitement; fifty-odd left in less than a week and also of Mr. Newman's shooting at Mr. Wm Spry because he thought he had induced his woman to ask to be sold, Mr. John Comegys is broken up by their loss has rented the farm and intends living with [unintelligible]. It must be very painful, to have to sell old family servants, but I do not know what else we are to do under such circumstances. Ours have been very uneasy since, and talk incessantly about it. Andy says it gives “me great stress of mind to think cause one sent away, all have to be sold,” and I think it does seem hard that the servant should suffer for the guilty.

If Kennard was right, or even close to being right, about the number of runaways

*William Still (1821–1902), member of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and author of *The Underground Railroad, an account of the society's work containing detailed information on many of the runaways they helped.* (Maryland Historical Society.)*



from the county in less than a week, then the *Kent News* estimate of sixty for all of 1856 seems very low indeed, as does the U.S. census report of only 279 escapees from all of Maryland for the year ending June 30, 1850. Whether her estimate is accurate or not, her letter describes a pattern that was common across the Eastern Shore: reports of the flight of a very large number of slaves; suspicion among neighbors that led to violence; a farmer's abandonment of his farm, apparently because he no longer had enough slave labor to work it; other slaveholders' anticipation of having to sell their own slaves to prevent a severe financial loss; the slaves' fear of being sold to unknown owners in unknown places; and a general atmosphere of perplexed anxiety.⁷

RUNAWAYS FROM THE Chesapeake could count on finding help among the Quakers of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, who married into each other's families and communicated with one another regularly, and whose network of safe houses and conductors was well used. William Still of Philadelphia remarked that "Underground Railroad operations were always pretty safe and prosperous where the line of travel led through Quaker settlements." The identities of some of the busiest of the Quaker conductors, such as Thomas Garrett and John Hunn in Delaware, were well known during their lifetimes. Garrett was quoted as declaring publically in 1858 that he had already assisted more than two thousand runaways, most of them from the Eastern Shore. On the Eastern Shore itself, though, while there was clearly a network in place, the identities of most of those who were actively involved have remained obscure. In Wilbur Siebert's 1898 list of Underground Railroad conductors, for example, over 250 names from Pennsylvania are included, as compared to only five names from Maryland, none of whom was from Kent County.⁸

Cecil Meeting in Kent County provided at least two men who left evidence of their involvement in the Underground Railroad, especially during the 1850s and early 1860s, when the number of runaways was greatest.⁹ James Lamb Bowers and Richard Townsend Turner were both descended from strong Maryland Quakers—the Bowers family in Kent County and the Turners in Baltimore. Richard Townsend Turner’s father, Joseph, a successful merchant in Baltimore, served as clerk of the Lombard Street Meeting in the city. His mother, Rebecca, who remained in Baltimore after her husband’s death in 1850, was a minister among Friends at the Lombard Street Meeting, one of the founders of Swarthmore College, and a founding member of the Friends Association in Aid of Freedmen. During the Civil War, she spent most of her days at the headquarters of the association to help with the rush of sometimes desperate former slaves who had been set free with no resources and no place to go. Richard married Elizabeth Betterton, who came from an established Philadelphia Quaker family. Shortly after his father’s death, Richard moved his family from Baltimore to a place on the Chesapeake Bay in Kent County, which he named Betterton after his wife, and ran a profitable business from there, selling lumber and shipping grain to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. He and his mother corresponded and visited often. A Turner family member later remembered Rebecca as a woman of “vast energy, powerful constitution, and fine capability—emphatically a ‘Flame,’ the Bonaparte of her race.” The same family member recalled Richard, with somewhat less veneration but in ways that are borne out by his public actions, as “a free thinker; readily won over by kindness; may be made a strong friend of, or as much of an enemy. A man of veracity and strict integrity. Exceedingly sensitive with strong prejudices.”¹⁰

James Bowers had strong Baltimore connections as well. His sister Mary Ann married John Needles, a prominent Quaker furniture-maker and activist in Baltimore who was a president of the Friends Association in Aid of Freedmen and a founding member of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the Colored People. In the brief autobiography Needles wrote late in his life, he described putting antislavery materials into the drawers of furniture he made and using it for packing material when shipping furniture to buyers in the south, many of whom, reportedly, were not pleased. Mary Ann Bowers Needles was appointed a traveling minister by Cecil Meeting in 1847; John Needles joined her in her travels when he retired from his furniture business. The memorial produced by Baltimore Monthly Meeting after John Needles’s death emphasized his “fearful integrity” as an abolitionist living in a city with a busy slave-trading port. “He would go to the slave pens and ask permission to go through to look for those legally entitled to their freedom; and through his efforts many were set at liberty, to their great joy and his satisfaction.” Ellwood, the house that Richard Townsend Turner built at Betterton, contained at least one piece of furniture built by John Needles.¹¹

James Bowers first got into trouble with his slaveholding neighbors and with the

law in 1853, when he was charged with helping a slave to escape by forging a pass for him. The slave, who belonged to a Dr. Davidson in neighboring Queen Anne's County, was captured and subsequently named Bowers as the one who had signed Davidson's name to the pass.¹² In what now seems a nice irony, the slave was not able to testify against Bowers, since Maryland law decreed that no black person could testify against a white person in a court of law. No white witnesses could be found who were willing to confirm that the handwriting on the pass convicted Bowers, and the case was abandoned, although, as subsequent events made clear, it was not forgotten by many in the county. Five years later, an anonymous letter to a newspaper in neighboring Cecil County from "a Citizen of Kent" claimed that Bowers had been "emboldened" enough by his escape from the law in the Davidson case to have "again and again obtruded his opinions insolently upon men, even after many warnings as to what might be the result. . . . He declared upon all occasions, his abolition proclivities, until they became intolerable."¹³

One sign of the extent of the continuing anger against Bowers, and the nervousness induced by the explosive atmosphere in the county, appears in a letter sent to the *Kent News* in January 1856 by a neighbor of Bowers, J. W. Corey. Corey explained that he was writing to refute rumors that he had been complicit in the recent escape of several slaves, rumors based on the fact that he had left Kent County for a few days, during which time some of the escapes took place, and that he had visited James Bowers on his return. Corey explained that he visited Bowers in an effort to collect a debt and assured readers that his views on slavery, while really no one's business, were "not materially at variance with those entertained by slave-holders generally of this county."¹⁴

A particularly horrific outcome of the slaveowners' panic occurred in June 1856, when a white resident of the county was killed by a black man, probably a free black. A month earlier, county officials had responded to the "stampede" of slaves by authorizing a special police force to patrol the borders of the county, especially the northern border, and instituting a schedule of bounties for the capture of runaways: anyone who captured an escaping slave within the county was entitled to 20 percent of the sale price of the slave; if the capture occurred outside the county but within the state, the bounty was 30 percent; for a capture outside the state, it was 50 percent. On June 23, George Vansant and another white man, apparently in response to the county's new policies, were patrolling in Head of Sassafras (now Sassafras), when a black man carrying a scythe approached. Vansant and his companion, at least one of whom was armed with a pistol, accosted the man and tried to arrest him. An altercation ensued, and the black man struck Vansant with the scythe, nearly severing his head. The black man fled, and no arrests were made in the case until after the governor of Maryland offered a two hundred dollar reward for the apprehension of the killer. A free black named Albert Reed was arrested in late July and charged with murder. The reward for his conviction went unclaimed, however, since the statement

of charges against Reed was so riddled with errors that the case finally had to be dismissed, after several changes of venue and at least one effort at a retrial.¹⁵

The anger directed specifically against James Bowers had resulted in at least one court case, in 1857, when John Biddle, a slaveholder, was fined five dollars and costs for injuring Bowers by throwing a pitcher at his head.¹⁶ On a night in June of 1858, local anger against Bowers turned much more violent, with results that had far-reaching effects on whites and blacks, slave and free, within the county and beyond. In reporting on the events of that night, the *Kent News* cited the Davidson case as a source of the troubles:

Since then, suspicion has been directed against [Bowers], and possibly it may have been confirmed, from the fact that his immediate neighborhood has suffered to a considerable extent from the loss of [slave] property. Reports say that the proceedings of Wednesday night had its origin in recent preparatory consultations and arrangements of sundry slaves to abscond, their arrest, and the developments made by them, connected with various antecedents of a similar character.

In his account of the same night, the "Citizen of Kent," quoted above, similarly implied that Bowers had brought all his problems on himself: "The present time, several negroes were caught in the act of running off, and they laid the blame upon Mr. Bowers. Finding that he could not be detected, and being fully satisfied that he was an incendiary amongst our community, a number of gentlemen waited upon him and gave him ample time to leave, but Bowers disregarded all their admonitions and threats."¹⁷

On June 20, the "gentlemen" returned to Bowers's home, this time determined to supply the kind of justice they had not been able to secure elsewhere. What happened next inflamed the county and attracted national attention. The men called Bowers out of his house at midnight on the pretext that a neighbor needed help with a broken wagon. Taking him into the woods, they tarred and feathered him and extracted a promise from him that he would leave the state within twenty-four hours. Bowers's pregnant wife tried to come to his assistance but was forced back into the house. Reports about whether or not she was injured, or how badly, vary so widely as to make it impossible to determine the truth. The mob, of somewhere between ten and thirty men, then moved on to the house of a free black man named Butler in search of a woman named Harriett Tillison, also a free black, whom they apparently suspected of working in collusion with Bowers. Butler denied that Tillison was in his house. When a search of the house revealed her hiding there, the mob whipped Butler, then stripped Tillison to the waist and tarred and feathered her. In its report of the event, the *Kent News* took some trouble to describe Tillison:

The woman, who has a strong infusion of the Anglo-Saxon, was taken some

distance from the house, and the upper portion of her person subjected to a similar application of tar and feathers. This woman, it is alleged, lives in Cecil [County], and for several years has frequently visited almost every section of the county, without any ostensible business, exerting, wherever she goes, her wonderful powers of conjuration and fortune-telling. . . . She is represented to be about fifty years of age, dwarfish in appearance, scarcely weighing fifty pounds, and is calculated to excite a great influence upon the more superstitious portion of blacks. She leads a migratory life, and is usually found in the houses of free negroes. Her advent in this county has been followed by the escape of slaves on more than one occasion.¹⁸

The slaveholders of Kent County, who were eager to rid the county of as many free blacks as possible, even the law-abiding ones, were especially intent on being rid of this migratory female troublemaker.

The news of the attack on Bowers spread rapidly in the county, as did the fear engendered by the violence of the mob, especially among other Quakers. Two days after the event, Richard Townsend Turner wrote to his wife, who was away from home, expressing his outrage and grief and tacitly acknowledging that his own participation in the Underground Railroad had put him and his family in danger:

James Bowers has been taken from his own house by a party of disguised ruffians and tarred and feathered. His wife lies very ill from the effect upon her spirits and mind,—verily Slavery is a most efficient aid to the Evil one. How my very soul abhors the institution and it seems to me so strange that so many very excellent and correct people are dead and lifeless on this great abomination and some even countenancing and supporting. . . . I feel that my position is but little better than that of J.B. The midnight hour may yet be disturbed with savage cries of brutal men thirsting for my blood. Yet I do not feel alarmed. I have done nothing that my conscience condemns, nor anything unpeaceful.¹⁹

Richard Turner was right to anticipate more organized attacks on abolitionists and more violence in the summer of 1858, although he and his family managed to escape it themselves. The *National Era* described the situation in Kent County as “a kind of guerrilla warfare between the Anti-Slavery and Pro-Slavery men of the vicinity, in which the former seem to have been so far the winners.” The town of Chestertown erupted in fights on the Saturday following the tarring-and-feathering, but the real battles occurred at the Fourth of July celebrations, when the Bowers sympathizers were reported to have gone on a rampage, thrashing the editor of the *Kent News* with a cane, knocking down a reported twenty-five of the proslavery party, running two of them out of town, and sending another into hiding for two days. The *National Era* cited “men who know” in reporting that “at least three-quarters of the people are on Bowers’s side: nearly all the laboring class or non-slaveholders, with a

part of the slaveholders themselves, condemn it." The "Citizen of Kent" who wrote to the *Cecil Democrat* took a more sanguine and less political view of events, attributing the uproar in Chestertown to the effects of "firewater and some misunderstanding by parties who had their hearts peculiarly tender at the effects of liquor."²⁰

The proslavery forces, led by Dr. Thomas Kennard, U.S. Senator James Alfred Pearce, and Ezekiel Chambers, chief judge of the Second Judicial District, met in Chestertown on July 17 to plan, consolidate their forces, and make a public statement about the legality and morality of their position. The inclusion of a judge and a senator in the leadership must certainly have given encouragement to any who had qualms about the legality of the actions against Bowers. The meeting, held just over a month after Abraham Lincoln's "house divided" speech, echoed the Illinois senatorial candidate's characterization of the country as dangerously split on the issue of slavery. Rather than issuing a call for unity, however, as Lincoln had done, Kent slaveholders issued a call to take sides and stand tough. Attendees at the meeting endorsed a declaration that "in such a contest there can be no neutrality; he that is not for us must be regarded as against us." Judge Chambers had begun the proceedings by declaring that, even if one disapproved of the methods used to restrain James Bowers, he had to be restrained, given his "criminal and mischievous intercourse with our slaves." It was now the duty of all law-abiding citizens to align themselves against the abolitionists, who were surely under the influence of "religious fanaticism or political organizations." The alternative, in Chambers's eyes, was to submit to being "gradually stript of our property by the great machinations of those who operated in the dark and only in communion with blacks, who could not legally testify against them, and to the threats and assaults of their adherents." Senator Pearce spoke next, abjuring the judge's high moral tone to declare Bowers a "perfidious scamp—an enemy of the community in which he lived, and dangerous to its peace and security." Interestingly, Chambers's mention of "religious fanaticism" as one source of abolitionist activity is the only statement in the published record of the meeting that could be construed as a reference to Bowers's Quakerism. Similarly, in all the press coverage of the entire Bowers affair, the proslavery papers were more likely to mention that Bowers was a Quaker than were the antislavery papers, as if editors on both sides recognized that, at least in the slave states, his Quakerism would be a strike against him.²¹

The posse that originally went after James Bowers was also in search of Harriett Tillison, whom they knew by name. It is therefore fair to assume that she had been working with Bowers in aid of runaway slaves, or at least that the posse had reason to suspect her. It can hardly be coincidence, then, that three days after the proslavery meeting, on July 20, a circuit court judge required the sheriff of Kent County to detain a woman named Harriett Lee and to hold her under "whatever name she shall be called."²² It is possible that Harriett Lee and Harriett Tillison were the same person, that the judge's stipulation recognized her history of using different

names, and that her arrest was a follow-up to her tarring and feathering. If Harriett Tillison and Harriett Lee were indeed the same person, she left a deeply fascinating but frustratingly obscure trail that leads at least through Baltimore, Cecil County, and Kent County.

Shortly after Harriett Lee's reported arrest in Chestertown, the *Baltimore Sun* reported on the breaking-up by police of a meeting at the Zion Independent A.M.E. Church at Howard and Montgomery Streets in Baltimore, at which an address was to be given by "a colored woman named Tillison, who was handled rather indignantly by the residents of Chestertown, Kent County, several weeks ago." According to the *Sun*, the woman had spoken at the same church the previous week about her experience in Chestertown, including her incarceration, and had promised to return and describe a plot against the black people she had heard discussed while she was in jail. The second meeting was broken up before Tillison could speak, on the grounds that it violated an 1831 Maryland law forbidding blacks to hold a religious meeting without a white person in charge. A few days later, the *Cecil Democrat* reported on what was apparently the same meeting at Zion Independent Church, setting the number of black people present at the alarmist figure of five thousand and calling the speaker Harriett Lee, "a kind of itinerant preacher, who was recently sent to the Chestertown jail for having in her possession incendiary documents for distribution among the negroes of that locality. The excitement and indignation of the sable multitude ran high," the newspaper story continued, "and the police finally had to disperse them." For the *Democrat*, the event was one more disturbing bit of evidence of the increasing "excitements" among "the sons of Ham." In these parallel stories, Harriett Tillison and Harriett Lee seem to be the same person.²³

As if sorting out the identity of Harriett Tillison/Lee (or the identities of Harriett Tillison and Harriett Lee) were not confusing enough, the *Sun* had reported in February 1857 on a meeting at the same Zion Independent Church, at which an estimated fifteen hundred people had come to hear an unnamed "colored woman, said to be uncommonly intelligent and with very meritorious power of language." This time the meeting was disrupted, apparently deliberately and maliciously, by shouts of "Fire!" that sent the audience into a frantic scramble for the exits and resulted in several injuries and serious damage to the building. Six months later, in July 1857, the *Easton Gazette* reported that the sheriff of Kent County had committed to jail, as a runaway, a woman calling herself Harriett Lee.²⁴

In their various reports, which of course drew on one another for information, the newspapers may well have made mistakes in printing the last name of this woman named Harriett, perhaps conflating Harriett Tillison and Zarena Lee, an itinerant black preacher who had preached widely in Baltimore and on the Eastern Shore in the 1840s (but was probably no longer living by the mid-1850s).²⁵ More likely, Harriett Tillison changed her name, probably more than once, to help hide her identity and her whereabouts.²⁶ Her presence in Kent County, at a time when slave escapes

were frequent enough to send slaveholders out with their buckets of tar, suggests that she was probably one of a number of free blacks (such as the unidentified Butler, in whose house she was found) who were actively working with area Quakers like the Bowers and Turner families in assisting runaways to make it out of the county. A letter to the *Cecil Democrat* published on September 11, 1858, spoke of the numbers of free blacks coming and going around Elkton who might well be enticing away local slaves. The letter went on to say, tantalizingly, that one of the roving free black persons “is believed by many here to be the *agent* of the ‘underground railroad’ at this point, but of this there is perhaps no *positive* proof, though abundance of circumstantial.” One would like to fit Harriett Tillison into that role of agent in Elkton, but, like the letter-writer, one has no positive proof, only circumstantial.

Her subsequent history is even more elusive than her history in the 1850s. Shortly after the attack on her, the antislavery *Delaware Republican* reported that the woman who was tarred and feathered had died “in consequence of the shock given to her system on that occasion.” The *Cecil Democrat* was quick to declare the story a “gross falsehood” perpetrated by abolitionists. A “colored woman named Harriett Tillison” reappeared in Elkton much later, in 1879, when she reportedly saved an elderly man by pulling him out of the way of a train. According to the newspaper account, the man was a boarder at Tillison’s house. The 1880 census lists Harriett Tillison, widow, age fifty, living in Elkton and running a boarding house, and Cecil County documents record the death of a Harriett Tillison, “colored,” in 1884. She was buried somewhere in Cecil County, her goods and chattels sold for \$67.94.²⁷

James Bowers left the county after the attack on him in June 1858, but only after pressing charges against the eight men in the mob that he was able to recognize. He returned in mid-October to testify against them, bringing his wife and staying at his sister’s house, where his wife gave birth almost immediately. The news of his return re-energized the local proslavery faction, many of whom had, under the leadership of Chambers and Pearce, virtually pledged to do their duty, whether they owned slaves or not, in helping to rid the county of lawbreaking abolitionists. This time, they were determined to see that Bowers left the county. A large crowd, some armed with pistols, appeared at the house of Bowers’s sister and demanded that Bowers come with them.²⁸ He at first resisted and then relented, for reasons he explained in a letter he sent to the *North American*, written from Philadelphia: “Under certain solemn promises of protection to myself, and of attention to be rendered to my wife—whom I can hardly hope again to see alive, after such great excitement in her prostrate condition,” he agreed to be driven to the railroad station and packed off to Philadelphia. Bowers went on to deny a charge that had been leveled against him—that he was being funded by an abolitionist society. He also identified by name a total of thirty-three men who had been part of the group surrounding his sister’s house. Clearly, these were people he knew personally.²⁹

Tom Kennard in St. Louis received another letter about the Bowers episode,

this time from his father, Thomas Kennard. “Last week we had some excitement created by the return of James Bowers, to our County, from which he was expelled last spring, after receiving a coat of tar and feathers, and a promise never to return, in consequence of his complicity in the underground railroad scheme for assisting our Negroes to run away from their owners.” Doctor Kennard recounted the mob kidnapping of Bowers and his forced journey to Philadelphia, “with the distinct and full understanding it would be the last time he would ever leave in safety.” He then supplied the information, which was absent from the newspaper accounts, that a prominent local lawyer, Leeds Barroll, had attracted trouble to himself by encouraging Bowers to return to Chestertown when the court met. “Leeds denies his complicity in his return,” Kennard wrote, “but is not believed, and a strong feeling is excited against him for his conduct throughout and threats are common to subject him to the same ordeal as Bowers.”³⁰ The threats against Barroll were, apparently, more common than serious, since he escaped any retribution.

The *Cecil Democrat* reported rather gleefully on the expulsion of Bowers and noted that he was lucky not to suffer serious injury, since:

we are assured the whole county was in motion, fights occurred between the Bowers and anti-Bowers men, culminating in knock-downs, black eyes and bloody noses, in every direction. . . . After what happened [to] him before, we should not have thought him so fool-hardy as to venture on the Eastern Shore even for business purposes, much less to make a foolish effort to regain a residence so basely forfeited as in his case. As to the leaders of the party effecting so happy a riddance, it is enough to say that they were among the first men in the community—men of wealth and men of intelligence—who, after smarting for years under injuries inflicted by underground railroad agents, came to the wise conclusion, in convention, sometime ago, to execute summary vengeance upon every trespasser.³¹

After this second assault, Bowers remained away from Kent County for several years. The 1860 census lists him as living in Camden, New Jersey. In 1865 his sister Mary Ann and her husband John Needles sold Bowers three tracts of land in Kent County near the village of Worton—the same three tracts that Bowers had sold to John Needles for the same price in 1852—and in the 1870 census Bowers is listed as living in Worton. Apparently none of his attackers, in either group, was ever brought to trial.³²

There is no evidence that the family of Richard Townsend Turner was ever disturbed by the kind of midnight mob that attacked Bowers, although his antislavery activities did give him cause to fear retaliation. In April 1857 he had taken the bold step of securing as a cook for Ellwood a young free black woman named Hannah Houston who had recently been released from the penitentiary in Baltimore. When

Garrison's death the most of a stand by among Friends
 at Chester Neck, has left the County with his family
 removing to Wilmington - So now his maker & family
 gone from our Monthly Meeting. A few more demonstra-
 tions of the Mob kind will dispose of our Society in
 these parts. Unless some come forward to sustain the
 cause I much ^{fear} that Cecil in meeting will be ere long in
 the Category of things which were but are not.
 For myself I am abiding in the patience awaiting the
 coming of events, which in my poor judgment seem
 now like the distant storm just discernable in its approach,
 - the light rustle of the leaves stirred and agitated by the
 coming wind so perceptible. If the tempest is not pre-
 about us then my feeling and impressions belie me.
 The present and next year will chronicle events joyful
 to millions of hearts both of this generation and others to come
 or those hearts will shrink within their receptacles, and sorrow
 will be their portion. Believing thus I am content to trust
 in the Great Being and wait and watch for the coming of these
 events and be guided in my future; if spared, - by the developments
 of Circumstances
 thy son R T Turner

Quaker abolitionist Richard Townsend Turner wrote to his mother Rebecca "[slavery] . . . is a local question—as well as one of general nature and common humanity." (Rebecca Turner Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.)

she was fifteen or sixteen, Houston had been convicted of setting fire to the barn of Judge Ezekiel Chambers. She served a five-year sentence, was released, and then apparently remained in Maryland for at least two months. Under a law first instituted in 1826 and still in effect in 1857, all free black persons who served a prison term in Maryland were banished from the state when released. Those not leaving the state within sixty days could be apprehended and sold as slaves for the term of their original conviction. Turner apprehended Houston—presumably by prearrangement and with her cooperation—and was awarded ownership of her for five years. Turner then immediately sold her for a nominal price to another Quaker abolitionist, William Kelley, from Caroline County. That same day, Kelley manumitted Houston, and she went to work for the Turners as a free woman.³³

Turner wrote often to his mother, Rebecca, in the prewar years, speaking plainly to her about his fears in increasingly pessimistic terms. At the end of 1858 he wrote to her about his concern that he was becoming tiresome with his constant talk of slavery. For him, the problem was everywhere and inescapable: "With me it is a local

question—as well as one of a general nature and common humanity.” By 1859 he was worried about the fate of the local Quaker community. He reported to Rebecca that three families had left the area recently, presumably out of fear for their safety. “A few more demonstrations of the mob kind will dispose of our Society in these parts. Unless some come forward to sustain the cause I much fear that Cecil Meeting will be ere long in the category of things which were but are not.” Aware of the “distant storm” he was sure was coming, Richard did not know whether to hope or fear:

The present and next year will chronicle events joyful to millions of hearts both of this generation and others to come or those hearts will shrink within their receptacles and sorrow will be their portion. Believing thus I am content to trust in the Great Being and wait and watch for the coming of these events and be guided in my future—if spared—by the developments of circumstances.

Richard was not as content to just wait and watch as his letter indicates. In April 1860 he wrote to Rebecca about his response to the latest machinations of the pro-slavery faction in the county. This time, a grand jury had instructed local postmasters to refuse delivery of antislavery newspapers. This high-handed move had led Turner to circulate a petition of protest (whose signatories included Thomas Kennard and several other slaveholders) and to pay a visit to the circuit court judge, but with no success in finding a sympathetic ear. “In the mean time,” he assured his mother, “don’t give thyself any uneasiness. I think we will be sustained ultimately in our rights and rest assured I shall endeavor to vindicate them in a Christian way only.”³⁴

A year later, despite his reassuring words to his mother, Turner and his family fled in fear from the toxic atmosphere of Kent County. On April 30, 1861, Elizabeth Turner wrote to relatives from Camden, Delaware, where the family was staying with Hunn Jenkins, a member of another prominent Quaker family. Elizabeth was clearly frightened.

I dare say you have heard through the folks in Philadelphia of our flight from home last 5th day with only such of our clothes as we could take in the carriages. It became unbearable, with all the exciting news from Baltimore, Washington and other places, to have daily reports that R was to be hung that week, that a mob was to burn our property, and other things,—so at last I got Richard to consent to leave, then I was afraid he would be molested before he got out of the state, so we concluded we would all go, so what happened to one, the rest would share. . . . *I think* I would rather live on bread and water than be subjected to the torture of mind, that has so often been my lot for more than 2 years.³⁵

Richard Turner explained the family’s departure more specifically in a letter to William Bowers, a Quaker cousin of James Bowers:

I expect it took thee and many of our friends by surprise, when you heard of our departure. The fear of *impressment* into the military service determined me early on 5th day morning. I thought there was a plot on hand to get possession of some 2 or 3 of us in that way, and thus under guise of military law, every description of evil could be practiced. I had no fears for the rest of the Republicans—and I think you may, if you do not, rest in peace.³⁶

Turner and his family did not stay out of Kent County very long after their flight to Delaware. The flight, however, and the fear that produced it, seem to have made him even more disheartened about the prospects for any reasonable resolution of the conflicts he saw in his neighborhood as well as in the nation as a whole. He wrote to his mother in September 1861 that “I am so inoculated with abhorrence to slavery that most of the time I feel but little joy and less hope in the Union cause. I fear it will but strengthen the Bonds instead of loosing them.” For the slaves in particular, he wrote, “I see no relief from bloodshed.” By March 1862 he had become even more despondent and despairing of his own ability, or anyone else’s, to have any effect on ending slavery or the war. “I have lost most of my interest in the war. . . . The virus of slavery is too thoroughly impregnated throughout the body politic and moral to admit of [reform]. No, the judgments alone of Providence will be required to purge us of this taint, this leprosy.”³⁷

At the end of the war, Richard Turner once again became embroiled in disputes with his neighbors over racial matters, and once again he turned to his mother for advice and aid. This time, the trouble arose over the indenturing of black children to their former owners or to other whites. Since Maryland had not seceded from the Union, the state’s slaves were not freed by the Emancipation Proclamation but by a new state constitution that did not go into effect until November 1, 1864. The new constitution, ratified by only four hundred votes out of sixty thousand cast, granted slaves immediate freedom but did not provide them with the legal rights necessary to fully protect themselves and their families from those who had once claimed them. Former slaveholders rushed to take advantage of an old statute that allowed local orphans courts to bind out as apprentices any free black children—which, under the new constitution, now meant *all* black children—whom the courts considered in need of the discipline and material support that apprenticeship to a white master could provide. In practice, of course, the statutes allowed whites to secure for themselves a very cheap workforce while insisting that the indentures were in the best interests of the children. Although the statutes stipulated that the parents of the child should be present at the indenture hearing and must agree to any indenture agreement, this requirement was generally overlooked. Kent County, like other counties on the Eastern Shore, saw a rush of whites, mostly former slaveholders, to the orphans court as soon as the new constitution went into effect. In November and December of 1864 alone, 153 children were bound out as apprentices in the county. Though a

handful of these were white children, the vast majority were black. The *Cecil Whig* reported on a “great run . . . on the Orphans’ Court for the indenturing of the little darkies”; the *Whig* saw the indenturing as a good solution to the problem of “great numbers of colored children run[ning] at large.”³⁸

Richard Turner responded to these developments by soliciting the help, through his mother, of the Friends Association in Aid of Freedmen. He wrote to her in November of 1864, lamenting that,

the slaveholders with Judge Chambers at their head are dragging the little children of Emancipated parents before proslavery magistrates and a proslavery Orphans Court, and are having them bound to their former masters without even a regard to the forms of law. . . . Many wish to leave here and my object is to solicit the aid of your Society in providing places of refuge in the City until homes in the Country can be had. I have one family to look after now mother and four children.³⁹

Turner’s letter found its way into the possession of his mother’s friend, John Needles, who enclosed it in a letter of his own to General Lew Wallace of the Freedmen’s Bureau, who had taken responsibility for providing government aid and protection to recently freed slaves in Maryland.

Wallace was hearing about indentures from others in the state as well; he responded by requesting that the orphans courts in the state suspend the indenturing and that they turn over to him the names of all black children indentured since the adoption of the new state constitution and the names of those to whom they were bound. In reporting the suspension, the *Kent News* expressed some surprise that there was “evidently a disposition among negro parents to hold on to their children, even in cases where they have no visible means of supporting them.”⁴⁰ In Kent as in other counties, the suspension did not last long. On December 17, 1864, the *Kent News* published a long editorial in support of the practice of indenture, insisting that its impulse was entirely humanitarian and its aim only to provide support and training to the children involved. Before the end of the year the flood of indentures had recommenced.

One of those former slaveholders of Kent County who hurried to indenture children at the end of 1864 was Sewell Hepbron, a neighbor of Richard Turner, a vocal southern sympathizer, and a member of the mob that had run James Bowers out of town. Hepbron, who had been listed in the 1860 census as owning fifteen slaves, successfully indentured nine black children through the orphans court on December 27, 1864. The sequence of events from this point on is not clear, nor is the extent of Richard Turner’s involvement in them, although his involvement was at least deep enough to lead Hepbron to file a lawsuit against him. The *Kent News* reported on January 7, 1865, that Sewell Hepbron had just returned from Baltimore, where he

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RELEASED.—Sewell Hepbron, Esq., of this county, who was arrested by military authority and taken to Baltimore a few weeks ago, was released on Tuesday upon taking the oath of allegiance, and giving \$2,000 bond to report for trial when so ordered.

—•••—

Former slaveholder and southern sympathizer Sewell Hepbron indentured black children through the Orphan's Court following Maryland's 1864 decision to abolish slavery. Kent News, January 7, 1865.

had been held by military authorities until he was released after taking an oath of allegiance and paying a two-thousand-dollar bond. (Since 1861, the federal troops who were occupying much of Maryland had been allowed to arrest Confederate sympathizers in the state and to require loyalty oaths as a condition of release.) The author of a Hepbron family history attributes Sewell's arrest to his politics: "During the Civil War, he was so emotionally identified with the cause of the confederacy and so outspoken in his views that he was imprisoned for a time in Maryland as a dangerous Confederate sympathizer." The timing of the arrest, however, suggests that it could well have been the indenturing of the children that finally landed Hepbron in jail. Not surprisingly, he had the sympathy of the local newspaper. In an 1865 test case, the Maryland Court of Appeals reversed a lower court's decision and declared that binding out apprentices was legal and constitutional. In reporting, and applauding, this decision, the *Kent News* spoke supportively of a group of "our citizens," among whom was probably Sewell Hepbron, who had been forced to appear in court more than once "to answer for the alleged illegal holding of apprentices which had been legally bound to them by the Orphans Court of this county."⁴¹

The conflicts over the issue of apprenticeship continued in the newspapers and in the courts for the next two years. The effort to keep indentures legal was led in the Maryland legislature by a delegate from Kent County, George Vickers, who introduced a bill in the state senate in March 1867 making valid all indentures and contracts of apprenticeship made since the beginning of 1865; the bill passed by a vote of 16-1. Not until October 1867 did Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, who also served as a judge of the U.S. Circuit Court for Maryland, end the practice of indenture by ruling that apprenticeships were a form of forced servitude and therefore unconstitutional. By

Sewell Hepbron family marker. (Courtesy Steve Keefe, Calvert, Maryland.)



that point, thousands of Maryland children had been indentured. The Freedmen's Bureau estimated that in May 1867 there were still 221 children indentured in Kent County and 3,281 in the state of Maryland. The bureau also estimated that more than two thousand children had already been released from their indentures because of the threat of legal action.⁴²

Richard Turner and Sewell Hepbron came into open conflict over apprenticeships shortly before the practice became illegal, although again the sequence of events is difficult to sort out. In an article reprinted in the *Chestertown Transcript* of September 21, 1867, the *Philadelphia Press* reported, without supplying any dates, on Sewell Hepbron's abduction of a black child from its parents' home while they were absent. Richard Turner, according to the *Press* story, wrote a letter to the governor of Maryland asking him to intervene and accusing Hepbron of kidnapping. The governor sent the letter to the district attorney of Kent County, who took no legal action but instead made the governor's letter public. Hepbron in turn sued Turner for slander, asking for the astonishing sum of forty thousand dollars in damages. The *Transcript* took the publication of the story of Hepbron's abduction of the child as one more "effort of the Radical press to array the public mind of the Northern States against the government and people of Maryland." The *Transcript* also offered Hepbron the chance to respond to the *Press*. Declining to give his version of the theft of the child and not referring to Turner by name on the grounds that his suit was still impending in court, Hepbron instead offered a sardonic and irrelevant defense of the state of Maryland, declaring that "no where in the United States, not even in Philadelphia itself, are the true rights of the negro better cared for than here, in the

State of Maryland, nor any where is he more kindly treated, even by those monsters, their former masters.”⁴³

The absence of dates from the story is perplexing, since the diaries of Rebecca Turner suggest that Turner and Hepbron had somehow settled their differences by the spring of 1866. Rebecca’s entry for April 15 of that year includes a note that she has received a letter from Richard “giving an account of a satisfactory settlement of a difficulty between one of his neighbours and himself, on account of a boy being claimed by the person who was former master.”⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Richard’s letter has not survived, nor are court records available to indicate the outcome of the suit. It is possible that either the *Philadelphia Press* or the *Chestertown Transcript* had resurrected a year-old story, for its own reasons; it is also possible, although not likely, that Turner was involved in two very similar incidents, or that Turner and Hepbron settled their “difficulty” but that for some reason Hepbron was allowing the suit to go forward in the courts.

Turner made the local news again in 1866, when he represented the “Unconditional Union Men of Kent County” at a meeting in Baltimore. Of the six delegates from the county, three were Quakers, members of Cecil Meeting (the others were Bartus Trew and Thomas E. Norris). The name of the group called attention to its platform of unconditional support of the federal government’s reconstruction policies; since these policies included black suffrage, the local press was quick to publicize the names of the members and assure readers that it was quite a small organization.

Turner died at his home in Kent County in 1892; the memorial contributed by Cecil Monthly Meeting was revealing but appropriately modest and understated:

It is due to his devotion to the principles of George Fox and his untiring attendance that Cecil Monthly meeting has been kept up. . . . His sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed led him into more political prominence before and during the War than was pleasant, but believing it to be his duty to maintain all testimonies of the Society at any cost, he maintained a steadfast friend of the slave—never in disguise—but openly and with great eloquence.

In her history of Cecil Meeting, Elizabeth Chandlee Forman called Richard Turner “Cecil’s foremost advocate of liberty for those in bondage. . . . Richard worked for the Negroes’ freedom and saw it accomplished. But his attitude was at variance with accepted southern tradition and caused him much suffering.”⁴⁵

James Bowers seems to have lived quietly after his return to Kent County—though less comfortably, apparently, than Richard Turner. Little is known about his life after his return until his death in 1882. When his accounts were settled after his death, it was revealed that his property consisted of little more than two horses, a grind stone, old wheels, some damaged corn and wheat, and four hundred chestnut rails, and that he had outstanding debts of nearly eight hundred dollars. These records

suggest that Bowers's last years in Kent County must have been years of financial struggle, and they seem to have been lived in quiet isolation.⁴⁶

The work of Kent County's Quaker families on behalf of slaves and freedmen was an important component of the mission of Cecil Meeting, and while the violence of the conflicts over race in the county may have frightened away some Quaker families, those conflicts may also have kept the Meeting alive and energized. It is certainly not coincidental that the Meeting dissolved after the deaths of James Bowers (1882), his sisters Mary Anne (1879) and Annie (1883), and of Richard Turner (1892). Speaking of these deaths, a historian of the Kent County Quakers says that "the losses were great and the Meeting did not survive."⁴⁷

NOTES

1. Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriett Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), xiv, 80–84.
2. William Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 342, 351.
3. Jeffrey Richardson Brackett, *The Negro in Maryland: A Study of the Institution of Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1889), 91; Salem, Ohio, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, September 22, 1849, December 22, 1849; from the *Wilmington Chicken*, reprinted in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, December 22, 1849.
4. *Kent News*, October 27, 1855; June 23, 1858.
5. William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, Etc.* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 638.
6. The antislavery *Delaware Republican* observed in 1853 that the number of reported runaways from Delaware was being skewed by the fact that some slaves were being kidnapped and sold. "From all we have heard, we have not the least doubt that a great many slaves, who have the credit of running away from this State, have been conveyed on the back-track of the underground railroad—going to the South instead of the North." Reprinted in the *National Intelligencer*, February 2, 1853.
7. Kennard Papers, Historical Society of Kent County; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 16.
8. Cited in the *Cecil Democrat*, August 28, 1858; Still, *The Underground Railroad*, 485; Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*. Two of the men Siebert named were Quakers from Caroline County, and one was a Quaker from Baltimore. The fourth was a free black man from Caroline County.
9. Two other Quaker meetings in Kent County declined earlier than Cecil Meeting. Head of Chester Meeting closed in 1840 and Chester River Meeting in 1860.
10. Richard Chandlee Forman, *The Rolling Year on Maryland's Eastern Shore* (Centreville, Md., 1985), 44, 123.
11. Edward Needles Wright, ed., "John Needles (1786–1878): An Autobiography," *Quaker History* (Spring 1969): 11; "Memorial of Baltimore Monthly Meeting concerning John Needles," Baltimore Monthly Meeting Records, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.
12. James Davidson advertised in 1851 for a runaway named Tom Barrett; Barrett may have

been the person who implicated Bowers in his escape. *Kent News*, April 19, 1851. The *New York Tribune* (July 21, 1858) reported that Bowers had been accused of assisting “some negroes” to escape and that the escapees “were induced, by threats of punishment and promises not to sell them out of the country, to charge Mr. Bowers with furnishing them with a forged pass.”

13. *Cecil Democrat*, July 24, 1858.

14. *Kent News*, January 5, 1856.

15. Accounts of the Reed case, with some slight variations among them, can be found in the *Kent News*, August 4, 1856; March 21 and 28, April 11, 18, and 25, and May 2, 1857; *The Liberator*, August 1 and October 17, 1856; *Baltimore Sun*, May 4, 1857; *Cecil Whig*, August 2, 1856; April 11, 18, and 25, 1857; January 23, 1858; *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, July 8, 1857.

16. Kent County Circuit Court records, Grand Jury, April term, 1857.

17. *Cecil Democrat*, July 24, 1858.

18. Reprinted in *The Liberator*, July 9, 1858.

19. Richard Townsend Turner to Elizabeth Betterton Turner, June 25, 1858; Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. H. Chandlee Forman, a descendant of the Turner family, recounts the family story that Richard Turner's children were often afraid to go to bed because from the upstairs windows in their house, Ellwood, they could see strange men hiding in the trees and watching the house. For this reason, Forman says, Turner installed two very small windows, one upstairs and one down, so that he could better keep an eye on who was approaching the house. *The Rolling Year on Maryland's Eastern Shore*, 64–65.

20. *National Era*, July 29, 1858; *Cecil Democrat*, July 24, 1858.

21. *New York Times*, July 20, 1858.

22. Circuit Court Records, Kent County, 1858.

23. *Baltimore Sun*, July 29, 1858; *Cecil Democrat*, August 7, 1858.

24. Cited in the *Kent News*, February 21, 1857; *Easton Gazette*, July 3, 1857.

25. The newspapers may also have confused Harriett Tillison and Harriett Tubman, especially since Tubman is known to have made a number of trips to the Eastern Shore between 1855 and 1860.

26. The *Cecil Democrat* referred to her once (July 24, 1858) as “the negro woman Tillotson.” There was a black family named Tillotson in Cecil County that gave its name to the community of Tillotsontown, a mile below Elkton. One branch of that family was practicing unlicensed medicine and surgery in the 1820s. A free black man in Kent County is referred to in one record as Cuff Tillison and in another as Cuff Tillotson.

27. *Cecil Democrat*, July 24, 1858; *Baltimore American Citizen*, April 18, 1879.

28. The size of the crowd was variously reported in the press. The *Easton Gazette* and the *Cecil Democrat*, both proslavery papers, put the number at about three hundred, while the *Lowell [Mass.] Daily Citizen and News* offered an estimate of one hundred.

29. Reprinted in the *National Era*, November 18, 1858.

30. Thomas H. Kennard to Thomas H. Kennard Jr., October 27, 1858, Kennard Papers, Historical Society of Kent County.

31. *Cecil Democrat*, October 23, 1858.

32. Other accounts of the Bowers story can be found in Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 63–66 and Kevin Hemstock, “For Opposing Slavery, They Were Tarred and Feathered,” *Tales of Kent County* (Chester town, Md.: Kent News, n.d.), 26. Another Quaker, Arthur Leverton, was run out of Caroline County in the late 1850s for helping runaway slaves.

33. Kent County Bills of Sale and Bonds, 1851–1857, Kent County Courthouse.

34. Richard Townsend Turner to Rebecca Turner, April 24, 1860, Rebecca Sinclair Turner papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.
35. Elizabeth Betterton Turner to John and Hannah Turner, April 30, 1861, Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers.
36. Richard Townsend Turner to William Bowers, April 29, 1858; Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers.
37. Richard Townsend Turner to Rebecca Turner, September 4, 1861; October 16, 1861; March 17, 1862; Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers. In 1860, the census still listed more than six hundred slaveholders in Kent County
38. See Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation*, series I, vol. II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 493–530; Kent County Orphans Court Records, 1864; *Kent News*, November 19, 1864.
39. Richard Townsend Turner to Rebecca Turner, November 10, 1864; Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers.
40. *Kent News*, December 3, 1864.
41. Frank Snowden Hopkins, “The Hepburn Family of Kent County, Maryland (1665–1932),” Kent County Historical Society; *Kent News*, November 11, 1865.
42. *Kent News*, February 11, 1865; *Baltimore Sun*, October 17, 1867.
43. *Chestertown Transcript*, September 21, 1867.
44. Journals of Rebecca Sinclair Turner, 1866; Rebecca Sinclair Turner Papers.
45. Memorial to Richard Townsend Turner, Rebecca Sinclair Papers. Elizabeth Chandlee Forman, *Old Cecil Meeting on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, 1696–1900* (n.p., n.d.), 20.
46. Kent County Inventories, microfilm copy, Miller College Library, Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland.
47. Evelyn Detherage Hughes, *Minding the Light: A History of Quakers in Kent County, Maryland 1650–2006*, n.d., 15.