

Johns Hopkins and Slaveholding  
Preliminary Findings, December 8, 2020

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## **Overview**

Our research began when a colleague brought to the university's attention an 1850 US census return for Johns Hopkins: A "slave schedule" that attributed the ownership of four enslaved men (aged 50, 45, 25, and 18) to Hopkins. Preliminary research confirmed that the "Johns Hopkins" associated with this census return was the same person for whom the university was later named.<sup>1</sup>

This evidence ran counter to the long-told story about Johns Hopkins, one that posited him as the son of a man, Samuel Hopkins, who had manumitted the family's slaves in 1807. Johns Hopkins himself was said to have been an abolitionist and Quaker, the implication being that he opposed slavery and never owned enslaved people.<sup>2</sup>

The details of the 1850 census slave schedule for Johns Hopkins have generated new research along four lines of inquiry. How had the university for so long told a story about Hopkins that did not account for his having held enslaved people? Which aspects of the Hopkins family story can be confirmed by evidence? What do we learn about Hopkins and his family when we investigate their relationship to slavery anew? And, who were the enslaved people in the Hopkins households and what can we know about their lives?

Our observations are preliminary but important. The US census schedules for 1840 and 1850 report that in those years Johns Hopkins owed enslaved people who were part of his Baltimore household (one person in 1840 and four people in 1850.) The evidence also shows that in 1778 Johns Hopkins the elder – grandfather to Johns Hopkins – manumitted enslaved people (with important qualifications detailed below.) Samuel Hopkins – father to Johns Hopkins – dealt in the labor of free Black children and also may have dealt in slaveholding and manumission, but we have recovered no evidence that he manumitted enslaved people. About the enslaved people in the Hopkins' households, we have much more still to learn.

This report constitutes a record of our preliminary findings as of December 8, 2020. The Hard Histories at Hopkins Project, in cooperation with our partners at Hopkins Retrospective and the Institute for the History of Medicine, is committed to fully examining the archival record and to

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<sup>1</sup> Ellridge G. Hall, Assistant Marshal; 2<sup>nd</sup> Enumeration District, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Population; August 17, 1850; *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration; Ellridge G. Hall, Assistant Marshal; 2<sup>nd</sup> Enumeration District, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Slaves; August 14, 1850; *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration.

<sup>2</sup> Kathryn A. Jacob, "Mr. Johns Hopkins," *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, January 1974.

contributing to a new history of Johns Hopkins University that wholly incorporates these new findings.

### **How We Got Here**

The story told about the Hopkins family and slaveholding has changed over time. The earliest stories credited Hopkins' grandfather, also named Johns Hopkins, with having manumitted his slaves in or around 1778. Some of these stories also ascribed to Johns Hopkins himself the holding of enslaved people. As early as 1917, a second story surfaced, one that told of how Hopkins' father, Samuel Hopkins, manumitted enslaved people in 1807 (or 1812.) The latter story has been widely repeated and has been part of the university's official histories. Let's look at how we got here.

In 1873, at Johns Hopkins' death, news reports commented on the family's history of slaveholding. Of special note was Hopkins' grandfather – also named Johns Hopkins – who was said to have manumitted enslaved people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Typical was a *Baltimore Sun* obituary which described Hopkins' grandfather with having run his “landed estate” with “the aid of some hundred negroes, whom he afterward emancipated.” There was no mention in the *Sun* article of Hopkins' father, Samuel Hopkins, having owned or manumitted enslaved people.<sup>3</sup>

Other early reports ascribed slaveholding to Johns Hopkins himself. The *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* began its coverage of Hopkins' death with a recounting of how Johns Hopkins the elder had, after “doubts arose in his mind as the rightfulness of keeping negroes in bondage ... gave freedom to all his slaves.” As for Johns Hopkins himself, an editorial column titled “Death of a Useful Man” dubbed him an “honored citizen” who had been “an anti-slavery man all his life.” As evidence, the commentator reported how “many years ago” Hopkins had purchased an enslaved man whom he “emancipated.” This man, the story concluded, had remained “in service” until Hopkins death and was “provided for ... handsomely in his will.”<sup>4</sup> When reporting on Hopkins' funeral, the *Baltimore Sun* commented on the bequests that Hopkins had made to “three colored servants.” Among them was a man named James who “was once the slave of Mr. Hopkins, he having purchased him of a Mr. Tayloe [sic] in Virginia.” Hopkins, the paper reported, had given “him is freedom years ago, doing a good part by him, and the man remaining faithfully in his service ever since.”<sup>5</sup>

In the 1890s, details related to the same story about Johns Hopkins the elder were published in the *Friends' Intelligencer*, a publication of the Society of Friends. A first article, published in 1893, reprinted notes from a 1780 monthly meeting of Friends and mentioned Johns Hopkins'

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<sup>3</sup> “Death of Johns Hopkins,” *Sun*, December 25, 1873.

<sup>4</sup> “Johns Hopkins,” *Baltimore American*, December 25, 1873. “Death of a Useful Man,” *Baltimore American*, December 25, 1873.

<sup>5</sup> “The Late Johns Hopkins,” *Sun*, December 27, 1873. In contrast, at least one additional biographical sketch published close to the time of Hopkins' death omitted the family's slaveholding history altogether. J. Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1874): 709-711. Henry Hall sketch of Hopkins' early life, in his 1896 book *America's Successful Men of Affairs: An Encyclopedia of Contemporaneous Biography, Vol. II* (New York: New York Tribute, 1896) is consistent with Scharf's telling. In 1879, Caroline H. Dall repeated this story in her profile for *The Unitarian Review and Religious Magazine* in August 1879.

acts of manumission, though as an aside.<sup>6</sup> A second article, published in 1897, reprinted an extract of a journal kept by Quaker Margaret Cook who reported on her direct encounter with the elder Hopkins and his subsequent manumission of enslaved people.<sup>7</sup>

Through the 1890s, the few sources that reported on the Hopkins family and slaveholding told of Johns Hopkins the elder having manumitted enslaved people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The details of slaveholding by Hopkins himself were not repeated.

In 1917, the story of the Hopkins family took a turn. Henry M. Hurd, a former director of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, related in remarks to the “Historical Club” how Hopkins’ father, Samuel Hopkins, had manumitted enslaved people in 1812 in conformance with a “minute” issued by his local Quaker meeting. Hurd’s papers suggest that his article was based, in part, upon interviews with descendants of Johns Hopkins. He commented on slaveholding or manumission by Hopkins or his grandfather.<sup>8</sup>

In 1929, Helen Hopkins Thom, a grandniece to Johns Hopkins, also credited Samuel Hopkins rather than Johns Hopkins the elder with having manumitted enslaved people, in her book *Johns Hopkins: A Silhouette*, published by the JHU Press. Thom reconstructed Hopkins’ life from family tales, especially those of her late father, and she wrote from the perspective of an admiring descendant who generally depicted slavery as a benign institution and enslaved people as contented and loyal. Thom tells of Hopkins’ father Samuel having manumitted his slaves in 1807, in deference to the tenets of the Quaker faith.<sup>9</sup> Thom referenced no sources beyond first and secondhand recollections.

Thom’s story caught on and was regularly repeated after 1929. In that same year, Katherine Scarborough profiled Hopkins’ boyhood Anne Arundel County home for the Baltimore *Sun*. Referring to Hopkins’ father, Samuel, Scarborough reported that “the elder Hopkins, like most other Quakers” had freed “all his blacks.” Samuel Hopkins had, in her words, “yielded to qualms of conscience and emancipated his hundred slaves, many of whom left the place which became correspondingly more and more unproductive with the shortage of labor.”<sup>10</sup> Scarborough cited no sources. Also consistent with Thom, in 1951, Francis F. Beirne, a Baltimore businessman and writer, published *The Amiable Baltimoreans* and without citing his source(s) echoed Thom: “Being Quakers, the Hopkins had serious doubts about the institution of slavery. In the end Quaker conscience proved stronger than practical considerations. In the year 1807 they free all their able-bodied slaves, retaining only the aged and the young.”<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s, the university repeated Thom’s story when writing its history. A 1974 article for *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, reported: “But in 1807, the pleasant routine of the family changed dramatically. In that year, following the direction of the Society of Friends which had begun to

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<sup>6</sup> “West River Monthly Meeting,” *Friends’ Intelligencer*, October 28, 1893.

<sup>7</sup> “Journal of Margaret Cook,” *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal*, May 29, 1897.

<sup>8</sup> Henry M. Hurd, “Johns Hopkins and Some of His Contemporaries,” *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin* 28, no 311 (January 1917): 225-229.

<sup>9</sup> Helen Hopkins Thom, *Johns Hopkins: A Silhouette* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1929).

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Scarborough, “Time Spares Johns Hopkins’ Birthplace,” *Sun*, September 8, 1929.

<sup>11</sup> New York: E.P. Dutton, 1951.

preach that human slavery was inconsistent with their faith, Samuel Hopkins freed his slaves.”<sup>12</sup> Two years later, Caroline Jones Franz published her 1976 article, “Johns Hopkins,” in *American Heritage*. It is unclear whether she what she relied upon, but Franz’s story was consistent with both: “But the hard realities of the working life abruptly dropped onto his young shoulders when, in 1807, his father’s adherence to a new Quaker policy led him to free all his slaves.”<sup>13</sup>

The story first penned by Hurd and Thom and often repeated across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has met with little scrutiny until now, with two exceptions. In 2007, genealogist Jane Burgess researched a line of the Janney family that included Johns Hopkins and his mother Hannah Janney Hopkins. Burgess’s research looked to confirm the story that credited Samuel Hopkins with having manumitted enslaved people in 1807, but found no evidence for that claim.<sup>14</sup> The second exception is Antero Pietila’s book, *The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins*, which relied on a 1963 history of Quaker slaveholding and manumission in Maryland to tell the story of Johns Hopkins the elder as having manumitted enslaved people under pressure from the Society of Friends to do so.<sup>15</sup>

Burgess and Pietila appear to have been the first 20<sup>th</sup> century researchers to consult archival sources when telling the slaveholding chapter of the Hopkins’ family story. Their slim conclusions are borne out by the archives, while the story told by Thom has not been.

## **Research Methods**

Neither Johns Hopkins nor members of his immediate family preserved their private papers. Because generally in the US the purchasing, selling, mortgaging and indenture of enslaved people were private and contractual matters, our inquiry will be limited by this lack of personal papers. Similarly, for recovering individual views about slaveholding, manumission, the operation of a household, and related matters, the preferred sources would be ideas as expressed in published writings, or private writings including account books, letters, and diaries. We do not have a significant collection of such writings in the case of Johns Hopkins and his family.

Public records, much of them maintained by the Maryland State Archives, are another significant source for recovering the history of the Hopkins family and slaveholding, and our research has focused there. Most often these records were created only when disputes arose, including differences between buyers and sellers, freedom suits brought by enslaved people, and challenges to or extensions of indenture agreements. Public records also include ministerial dealings such as population and slave census returns; records of births, deaths and marriages; real property deeds; manumissions; freedom papers; and tax assessments. The public record also includes the recording of wills and estate inventories, snapshots of intentions and property holding at the end of a life.

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<sup>12</sup> Kathryn A. Jacob, “Mr. Johns Hopkins,” *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, January 1974.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Jones Franz, “Johns Hopkins,” *American Heritage* 27, no. 2 (February 1976): 30-102.

<sup>14</sup> Jane F. Burgess, “The Janney Ancestors of Johns Hopkins, (b. 1795 Anne Arundel Co., MD, d. 1873 Baltimore, MD) Businessman and Philanthropist,” *Maryland Genealogical Society Bulletin* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 440-470.

<sup>15</sup> Antero Pietila, *The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: The Life and Legacy that Shaped an American City* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), citing J. Reaney Kelly, *Quakers in the Founding of Anne Arundel County, Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1963): 96, and [Journal of Margaret Cook,] *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal*, May 29, 1897.

We find some traces of the Hopkins family scattered across a broad range of private collections. Small caches of these records are part of the university's archives. Other materials, especially correspondence, are located among the papers of peers who corresponded or did business with Johns Hopkins and his family. While business dealings or family goings-on are largely the focus of these writings, occasionally we glimpse the enslaved people who were part of the daily lives of Johns Hopkins and his family.

The surviving records are shard-like in quality. Our task is to collect the small traces of Hopkins, his family and the enslaved people associated with them. These materials, stark in their facts, do not provide extended, narrative explanations or context for what we find. Take, for example, census returns which recorded in bare terms what a federal enumerator learned when he visited the household of Johns Hopkins – such as his ownership of four enslaved people in 1850. The census return does not explain the circumstances under which those people came to be enslaved or the conditions of their daily lives. Nor does the census schedule tell us what happened next.

As we work to recover a fuller story about Johns Hopkins, his family and the enslaved people associated with their households, we are working with records that are fragmentary, unevenly preserved, and generally not created in the interest of reconstructing the ideas or the practices of a man such as Johns Hopkins. And while for historians this is not a novel challenge, the limits of the archival record may be new to lay readers. Our research will continue to be deliberate and even painstaking and still it is not likely to yield smoking guns or iron-clad truths. We are not likely to recover evidence of the Hopkins family or the enslaved people held in their households speaking directly to their conditions or circumstances. Still, our commitment is to collecting as much as we can know from the archival record, to interpreting it through a broader scholarly literature, and to providing conclusions that are both well-founded and frank .

We are at the start of a long-term research endeavor. Some readers may be tempted to fill-in the blanks, to substitute conjecture for silence, or to move quickly to speculative conclusions. It might be tempting to reach for myths or often repeated stories when the evidence does not answer our questions. We counsel a mix of rigor, curiosity and constraint. The revelations of the last months unseat stories about which we once had been sure. Still, it will require additional research to finally separate that which we know from that which we cannot know, and that which we once knew by lore from that which is rooted in the evidentiary record.

What follows is a chronicle of that which we have discovered in the last months.

### **What We Know**

Our independent research has examined records related to Johns Hopkins, his father Samuel, and his grandfather Johns Hopkins, and confirms that each man engaged in some degree of slave holding.

**Johns Hopkins the elder, grandfather of Johns Hopkins.** In 1778, Johns Hopkins the elder manumitted 9 adult slaves. At the same time, he transformed 32 enslaved young adults and

children into term slaves, girls to serve him until they reached the age 21 and boys until age 25.<sup>16</sup> Children were likely separated from their parents by Hopkins' scheme. If they lived out their terms, those young adults and children were intended to become free years later, depending upon their ages in 1778. Subsequently, in 1783, Johns Hopkins the elder, bequeathed 14 enslaved people to his children (including one enslaved person left to his son, Samuel, the father of Johns Hopkins) in his will. His estate inventory included an additional 14 enslaved people to be distributed among his heirs.<sup>17</sup> It appears that at his death, Johns Hopkins the elder held in total 28 enslaved people that were passed as property to his heirs.

**Samuel Hopkins, father of Johns Hopkins.** Upon his father's death in 1784, Samuel Hopkins inherited one enslaved boy ("negro boy named John").<sup>18</sup> We have uncovered no evidence of what happened to the boy John bequeathed to Samuel by his father. Similarly, we have uncovered no evidence that Samuel Hopkins manumitted enslaved people in 1807 or 1812 (as suggested by Thom and Hurd, respectively). At his death in 1814, Samuel's estate did not report enslaved people among his property.<sup>19</sup>

Samuel did deal in the bound labor of free Black children, as these fragments of evidence suggest. In 1807, he entered into an indenture contract with a free Black woman named Phillis, in which her sons – Thomas aged 7 and Jeremiah aged 10 – were bound to labor for Hopkins until they reached age 21. The boys received food and shelter but no wages for their labor. Upon completion of their terms of service, each was promised a suit of clothes.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in his recently published book, *A Question of Freedom*, historian William Thomas, III, briefly notes that Samuel Hopkins had a role in the manumission of an enslaved man, John Joice (aka John Joyce), owned by Charles Carroll of Carrollton.<sup>21</sup>

**Johns Hopkins.** In August 1850, Hopkins or a member of his Baltimore household reported to a U.S. census enumerator that Johns Hopkins owned four enslaved people: men aged 50, 45, 25, and 18 years.<sup>22</sup> In the prior census year, 1840, Hopkins' household included two free Black

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<sup>16</sup> Johns Hopkins; Will, August 7, 1783; Liber I. B. 5, ff 537-539; Register of Wills; Anne Arundel County; Maryland State Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Johns Hopkins; Inventory, April 15, 1788; Liber JG 1, 1787-1790; Inventories; Register of Wills; Anne Arundel County; Maryland State Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Johns Hopkins; Will, August 7, 1783; Liber IB 5, ff 537-539; Register of Wills; Anne Arundel County; Maryland State Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Hopkins; Inventory, June 10, 1818; Liber JG 9; Register of Wills; Anne Arundel County; Maryland State Archives.

<sup>20</sup> "Indenture for Jeremiah and Thomas [blacks?]" [Phillis to Samuel Hopkins; Indenture (for children Thomas and Jeremiah), November 16, 1807; Hopkins Family Collection; MS 0078; Special Collections, The Johns Hopkins University.

<sup>21</sup> William G. Thomas, III, *A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged Slavery from the Nation's Founding* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). Manumission. John Joice to Jemima and Anne. June 9, 1802. Anne Arundel County Court, Manumission Record, 1797-1807. Volume 825, Page 120. Manumission. Charles Carroll of Carrollton to John Joice aka Old Shoemaker John. December 7, 1802. Anne Arundel County Court, Manumission Record, 1797-1807. Volume 825, Page 128. Manumission. Charles Carroll of Carrollton to John Joice "a shoemaker." April 8, 1806. Anne Arundel County Court, Manumission Record, 1797-1807. Volume 825, Page 272. Manumission. John Joice to Sall Joice. April 24, 1810. Anne Arundel County Court, Manumission Record, 1807-1816. Volume 830, Page 95. Maryland State Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Ellridge G. Hall, Assistant Marshal; 2<sup>nd</sup> Enumeration District, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Population; August 17, 1850; *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration. Ellridge

members and one enslaved person.<sup>23</sup> We are not yet able to say who those enslaved people were, how they came into Hopkins' legal possession or what the full nature of their relationship to Hopkins was. Census enumerators were not tasked with noting the names of enslaved people.

Johns Hopkins was not alone among members of his immediate family in holding slaves. His brother Samuel, also a resident of Baltimore, held enslaved people in his household in 1850 (two people) and 1860 (one person).<sup>24</sup>

There is no record that we have found of Johns Hopkins, having manumitted enslaved people.

Further research may allow us to say more about the enslaved people in Johns Hopkins' household, the circumstances under which they became his property and their lives more generally. Preliminarily, we have uncovered some clues that suggest what a varied set of arrangements they may have been. There is the story of James, recounted above, who news reports indicated had been purchased by Hopkins in Virginia, brought to Baltimore and later manumitted.<sup>25</sup> There is also an 1884 news report of an interview with a Black Baltimorean named Isaac Queen who reported having been, years before, called from Anne Arundel County to serve Hopkins in Baltimore, though Queen's status at that time – enslaved or free – is not clear.<sup>26</sup>

Hopkins sometimes expected to acquire enslaved people in satisfaction of debts. In 1831, in a dispute with the Keech family in St. Mary's County, brothers Johns and Mahlon Hopkins sought possession of an enslaved person in satisfaction of a debt, while the Keech family squabbled over who among them actually owned the enslaved person in question.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, there is a reference in an 1838 letter from the Hopkins Brothers, an enterprise in which Johns Hopkins was a principal, in which the firm directed its agent to either collect cash on a debt or seize the enslaved people upon whom a lien had been placed to secure it.<sup>28</sup>

## **Future Research**

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G. Hall, Assistant Marshal; 2<sup>nd</sup> Enumeration District, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Slaves; August 14, 1850; *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration.

<sup>23</sup> Ward 9, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Population; 1840; *Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*. National Archives and Record Administration.

<sup>24</sup> George C. McGee, Assistant Marshal, Ward 11, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Population; 1850; *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration. George H. McGee, Assistant Marshal, Ward 11 Baltimore City, Baltimore, County, Maryland, Census of Slave Inhabitants 1850, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. National Archives and Record Administration. C.C. Dunn, Assistant Marshal, Ward 11, Baltimore County, Maryland Census of Population; 1860; *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*. National Archives and Record Administration. C.C. Dunn, Assistant Marshal, Ward 11, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, June 5, 1860, Census of Slave Inhabitants, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*. National Archives and Record Administration.

<sup>25</sup> "Death of Johns Hopkins," *Sun*, December 25, 1873. Johns Hopkins," *Baltimore American*, December 25, 1873. "Death of a Useful Man," *Baltimore American*, December 25, 1873.

<sup>26</sup> "A Playmate of Johns Hopkins," *Sun*, October 21, 1884.

<sup>27</sup> William L. Keech v. Johns Hopkins & Mahlon Hopkins, PAR 20982601 and PAR 20983106, Race & Slavery Petitions Project, UNC Greensboro.

<sup>28</sup> Hopkins Brothers to William B. Stone, March 13, 1838, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, 1493-1859, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

**Enslaved People in the Hopkins Household.** We anticipate finding further evidence about the lives of the enslaved people in the Hopkins household. We will ask: What can we learn about the identities of the enslaved people in the Hopkins household and what can we learn about their lives as enslaved people and also about their lives after their liberation?

**Hopkins and the Orphans' Court.** We anticipate finding evidence of further dealings by members of the Hopkins family in term-slaves by way of indenture contracts overseen by the courts in Baltimore and Anne Arundel County. We will ask: To what degree did Johns Hopkins and his family deal in term-slavery and indenture contracts?

**Hopkins' Bequest.** Hopkins anticipated establishing a segregated hospital. We will ask: What more can we know about Hopkins' views about segregation and anti-Black racism?

**Hopkins and the Union.** Hopkins was affiliated with Union-leaning civic organizations; he appears to have received one member of the Lincoln administration, Salmon Chase, at his Baltimore home. We will ask: Is there evidence that Hopkins' alliance with the Union was driven by anti-slavery or anti-racist beliefs?

**Hopkins and abolitionism.** There is no evidence that Hopkins was an abolitionist or supported the abolitionist cause. We will ask: What evidence, if any, is there that Hopkins held or acted upon anti-slavery or abolitionists beliefs?

**Hopkins and the Maryland Historical Society.** At the founding of the Society in 1844, Hopkins was included among its "Active and Corresponding Members."<sup>29</sup> We will ask: Was Hopkins, like many founders of the MHS, a colonizationist? (See below.)

**Hopkins and colonization.** There is a small bit of evidence that Hopkins supported the colonization movement (a one-time donation, as best we know.) This suggests he did anticipate that slavery would end and that he leaned toward exiling former slaves from Maryland and the United States and that he subscribed to the view that the US should remain a white man's republic. We will ask, as noted above: Was Hopkins a colonizationist and what was the degree of his involvement in the colonization movement?

### **Key concepts**

**Manumission**, as in the Hopkins family *manumitted* those they held as slaves. Oftentimes this term is understood to convey how slaveholders freely and unconditionally divested of their property interest in enslaved people. It is used to indicate that a one-time enslaved person had become immediately free and thus at liberty in every sense. However, in Maryland this same word is oftentimes used to describe a conditional or limited manumission, also sometimes referred to as term-slavery. Under this latter circumstance, manumission came in the form of an indenture contract that bound a person, who had been a slave for life, for a specific term of years. The number of years varied; it might be decades even. This period of term slavery was intended to compensate the slave holder for the loss of the property value that resulted from manumission. During the period of indenture, though promised future manumission, an enslaved person

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<sup>29</sup> <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015059488083&view=1up&seq=22>

remained subject to their contract holder's estate and the terms of their bondage could be extended by court order, especially if a disagreement arose related to the performance of contractual duties. It was typical in Maryland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for slave holders to transform their slaves for life into term slaves, ensuring that they would benefit from the labor of those persons even while promising future manumission.

**Abolitionist**, refers to a person who subscribed to radical antislavery politics. The abolitionist movement had its beginnings in the early 1830s, born of a mix of Christian critique, enlightenment egalitarianism and the long-standing resistance of enslaved people themselves. Abolitionists were committed to bringing about the immediate and unqualified end to slavery in the United States. The early movement worked by way of moral suasion but by the 1850s, abolitionism included factions that worked by way of law, politics and violence. The advocacy or espousal of abolitionism became illegal in Maryland by the 1830s. There was no open or organized abolitionist society in Maryland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though there were clandestine efforts to free enslaved people, especially on the Eastern Shore. In late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Marylanders organized under the principle of anti-slavery and viewed slavery's end as a gradual process and, criticizing slaveholding, they did not condemn those who held persons as property. Maryland's antislavery activists focused their work on ensuring that slavery operated pursuant to the rule of law, and they could even be allies to individual enslaved people who were held contrary to state law and they condemned slaveholders who operated outside of the law's bounds. Finally, many leading Marylanders were colonizationists who subscribed to the view that while slavery was likely to end – in a matter of years or more likely decades – there was no future for formerly enslaved people in Maryland. The Maryland State Colonization Society organized to remove free Black people from the state to West Africa in an effort to preserve the state and the nation as a white man's domain. Colonizationists varied in their abhorrence of slavery, but all agreed that there was no future in the US for those Black people who might be manumitted or otherwise gain their liberty.

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### **Recommended Reading**

For an introduction to slavery and freedom in Maryland see the [Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland](#) produced by the Maryland State Archives.

1. On the political economy of slavery and emancipation in Maryland:

Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

2. On Baltimore's transition from slavery to freedom, told from the perspective of Black Americans:

Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Freedom in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

3. On the legal history of free Black Baltimore before the Civil War:

Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

4. On the labor in early Baltimore:

Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage, Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

5. On race and policing in early Baltimore:

Adam Malka, *Men of Mobtown: Policing Baltimore in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

6. On the general political history of Baltimore:

Matthew A. Crenson, *Baltimore, a Political History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.)

7. On the colonization movement (to remove Black people from Maryland and the United States):

Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

Ousamane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

8. On enslaved people in early Maryland, including freedom suits, manumission and the threat of kidnapping:

Richard Bell, *Stolen: Five Free Black Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and Their Astonishing Odyssey Home* (New York: 37 Ink, 2019).

David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

Jessica Millward, *Finding Charity's Folk: Enslaved and Free Black Women in Maryland* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

William G. Thomas, III, *A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenge Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

9. On Quakers or The Society of Friends in Maryland (note this is not a scholarly history but it does provide a chronicle/overview):

J. Reaney Kelly, *Quakers in the Founding of Anne Arundel County, Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1963).