

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: MAPPING A PARADOX: THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN ANTEBELLUM
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Slavery sites and other cultural resources associated with antebellum African-American life in Baltimore County, Maryland, and nationally, have historically been under-researched. Thus, many of these buildings and sites are unrecognized as historically significant and are needlessly demolished or neglected. The losses are particularly tragic because these resources are some of the only remaining records of lives that were largely undocumented in writing. Consequently, the failure to document America's slavery sites is indirectly resulting in the destruction of history itself.

This thesis presents historical geography as an innovative research approach for identifying and protecting Baltimore County's slave past through the partial construction of an atlas to portray the county's antebellum African-American experience. This

research approach extends recognition of resources beyond the slave cabin to the larger cultural landscape that included the farmstead, towns, and other types of physical environments. This Baltimore County cultural landscape is one of the country's most complex and intriguing. By 1860 this county had the largest free black population in the country living within in a slave society, and bordering on the free state of Pennsylvania.

An antebellum African-American atlas illustrating the paradoxical nature of slavery in Baltimore County provides a comprehensive geographic perspective for efficient study and presentation of the locations of, and relationships between, sites of slavery, runaway slaves' sites of origin, free black communities, and other resources. Foremost, this prototype map strengthens the case for protection of these sites as both records and as monuments to convey the country's largely untold story of slavery.