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Southwestern Virginia

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History

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A Manumission in the Mountains: Slavery and the African Colonization Movement in Southwestern Virginia

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In late August, 1847, an auspicious letter landed on the desk of William McLain, the secretary of the American Colonization Society (ACS). The letter was from Nicholas Chevalier, a 37-year-old Presbyterian pastor from Christiansburg, a town in mountainous southwestern Virginia. Chevalier's message was that a local widow, 70-year-old Dorothea Bratton, wanted to free 20 of her slaves and send them to Liberia in West Africa. Yet her initial efforts to transport her slaves overseas had not gone smoothly, Chevalier explained. Bratton was financially unable to give the would-be emigrants the supplies needed for their relocation, reported the pastor. She was also concerned about what would happen to the party once they reached Africa, for she had heard that newcomers to Liberia were sent to outlying settlements "where they are alone & in danger & deprived of the privileges of the town." In addition, Bratton's son-in-law (and heir) was opposed to the venture, wrote Chevalier. Finally, the minister noted that the slaves were growing anxious, knowing that if the elderly Bratton were to die they would remain in bondage. In closing, Chevalier indicated that he was a life member of the ACS, and that, in his estimation, Bratton's situation was "exactly one of the cases contemplated by its [ACS] founders & those who contribute to its funds."¹

Chevalier's letter came at a propitious moment for the American Colonization Society, whose leaders were hoping to revitalize the colonization movement. The organization had been founded with great fanfare in 1816. In the early 1820s, the ACS rallied an interregional constituency, garnered the support of national statesmen, and, with the help of the U.S. government, founded Liberia as a place for black settlement. During the next 25 years, more than 5,000 black Americans emigrated to Liberia. But as time passed, the ACS

struggled to remain an active organization. Abolitionist and pro-slavery attacks, when combined with the financial burden of governing a distant



Life Membership Certificate for American Colonization Society (Source: Library of Congress, *The African-American Mosaic*)

colony, had enervated the ACS by the mid-1840s. A turning point occurred in July 1847, when Liberia, with the ACS's blessing, declared its national independence. Freed of the burden of colonial administration, ACS leaders expected a renaissance. The organization's officers eyed Appalachian Virginia, where white residents had voiced support for colonization and some free blacks had intimated an interest in

emigration, as a potential epicenter for a resuscitated movement. As a result, secretary McLain was intrigued by the letter from Christiansburg.²

Chevalier's letter triggered events that illuminate much about southwestern Virginia, the American Colonization Society, and manumissions (i.e., the freeing of individual slaves). First, the Bratton episode sheds light on the flexibility, profitability, and brutality of Appalachian slavery. Second, the venture demonstrates that many things encumbered ACS activities in Southern Appalachia, including financial and logistical problems, an inexperienced agent, pro-slavery opposition, and African Americans' reservations about the ACS and Liberia. Finally, the Bratton enterprise shows that manumissions were prolonged, multi-party affairs. As secretary McLain soon learned, white Appalachians' commitment to slavery, the myriad impediments to ACS operations, and the expansive nature of manumissions, all meant that the Bratton affair would fail to reignite the colonization movement.

Pre-Manumission Activity

When Chevalier's letter arrived at American Colonization Society headquarters in Washington, D.C., secretary McLain was trying to secure two agents for western Virginia. McLain hoped that one of the positions would be filled by William H. Ruffner, a young, educated man who was familiar with the Shenandoah Valley. Born in Lexington, Virginia, Ruffner was the 23-year-old son of Henry Ruffner, the president of Washington College. An affable person with passing interests in mesmerism, pacifism, temperance, and other reform movements of the day, the young Ruffner had graduated from Washington College in 1842 and returned for a Master of Arts degree in 1845. He subsequently went to Union Theological Seminary in Prince Edward County, Virginia, where the eclectic liberal admired the piety of the conservatives who ran the institution but found them intellectually hidebound. Ruffner then

attended Princeton Theological Seminary until a severe illness compelled him to forego his ministerial exams and leave school. He had been recuperating in Lexington, Virginia, uncertain about his future, when McLain, an old family friend, asked him to become an ACS representative.³

In some respects, Ruffner was ideally suited to be an ACS agent. Ruffner knew the Valley well, delighted in socializing, and had a reputation as a capable public speaker. Even more important, he was familiar with the colonization cause. In 1830, when Ruffner was just seven years old, he witnessed the departure of several black Lexingtonians for Liberia, an episode that piqued his interest in the ACS. Ten years later, at the age of 17, he argued in favor of colonization during a public debate. In 1843, Ruffner joined a local ACS auxiliary and gave a speech to the body soon thereafter. In addition, when Ruffner was at Princeton, he studied under Dr. Archibald Alexander, who in 1846 had written *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa*, a lengthy book that Ruffner owned. Moreover, Ruffner's own father, Henry Ruffner, had just published a pamphlet that advocated the colonization of Virginia's slaves, who were also called bondspersons. Simply put, secretary McLain had good reasons to think that Ruffner would excel as an ACS spokesman.⁴

As McLain and Ruffner discussed the proposed position, the latter's liabilities became evident. For starters, Ruffner was inexperienced—this would be the 23-year-old's first job. In addition, Ruffner held very traditional notions about an agent's responsibilities: he supposed that he would simply solicit donations for colonization at church gatherings, a tactic that the ACS had used for decades but with diminishing results over time. Finally, there was the fact that Ruffner was a cautious man. Notwithstanding his promise to tackle every obstacle "boldly & unflinchingly," he hoped to avoid trouble altogether, and told McLain that he would prefer an assignment "where the cause is popular." In fact, Ruffner was in no hurry to enter any field. He informed McLain that he planned to spend several weeks studying colonization literature before becoming a "public advocate." As for the pressing situation in Christiansburg, where Dorothea Bratton's son-in-law was trying to dissuade her slaves from emigrating, Ruffner passed the buck, suggesting that Chevalier might "disabuse their minds."⁵

Perhaps even more problematic than Ruffner's inexperience and cautiousness was his understanding of the colonization movement. Since the ACS's founding in 1816, it had been unclear whether the organization had pro- or anti-slavery goals. Some ACS supporters wanted to deracinate only free blacks and thereby strengthen slavery; others hoped to remove all black Americans and end slavery in the process. Ruffner vacillated on the subject. He conceded slavery's evils, noting that it hurt western Virginia's economy and necessitated laws that prevented slaves from learning how to read the Bible, but he stopped short of calling bondage a sin. In any event, Ruffner intended to focus on the removal of free blacks from the Shenandoah Valley. Thus when he heard that McLain had endorsed a plan which overtly connected colonization and emancipation, Ruffner penned a letter to his boss,

lecturing the ACS secretary on the history and objectives of the colonization movement. According to Ruffner, the Society's founders had never intended to abolish slavery. Moreover, a blatantly emancipationist brand of colonization, like that advocated by his father and evidently by McLain, would achieve "nothing." Perhaps realizing that his harangue had been injudicious, the neophyte Ruffner started backpedaling, professing to McLain that he was willing "to sit at your feet as a learner." After the outburst, McLain was left to wonder how his new agent would handle himself in public.⁶

Ruffner's approach to an ACS agency differed from that of Rufus W. Bailey, a Congregational pastor whom McLain had also asked to be an ACS representative. Although he had been born, raised, and educated in the North, the 54-year-old Bailey had spent most of his adult life in the South. Working in the fields of education and religion, Bailey had moved to South Carolina in 1827 and then to North Carolina in 1839. In 1842, he relocated again, this time to Staunton, Virginia, a town located 113 miles up the Valley from Christiansburg. Unlike Ruffner, Bailey believed that an ACS agent should not merely solicit donations from parishioners. Instead, Bailey proposed to actively recruit emigrants, lobby state lawmakers to provide a subsidy for colonization, and cajole local authorities into cracking down on free blacks who resided illegally in the state (with the expectation that the harried African Americans would depart for Liberia). Though eager to begin working for the ACS, Bailey informed McLain that he had some business to attend to before devoting himself to the agency. Until then, the colonization movement in the Shenandoah Valley rested in Ruffner's hands.⁷

True to form, Ruffner proceeded slowly. Remaining in Lexington from mid-October through early November, 1847, Ruffner perused ACS pamphlets and encouraged local free blacks to emigrate to Liberia. Finally, in mid-November, Ruffner turned his attention to the Bratton expedition. The new ACS agent organized a meeting to raise money for the Bratton party, but had little success. Years later, Ruffner recalled, "I [s]aid a few words, being so overcome with diffidence that I closed prematurely—when in fact I had read & thought more on the subject than anybody in the house." Despite the inauspicious beginning, Ruffner labored on. Within a few days, he had collected \$112. He also met with Rev. Chevalier, who had come up from Christiansburg to insist that Ruffner be in Montgomery County when the Bratton party departed for Baltimore. Christiansburg residents were going to be "agog" on the subject, explained Chevalier, and Ruffner needed to be on site should any problems arise. Ruffner was less sure that his presence was needed, telling McLain that there was little to be gained "by going among that people." In the end, however, McLain persuaded Ruffner to make the 80-mile journey south to Christiansburg. Riding horseback, the ACS agent left for Montgomery County on 2 December 1847.⁸

Montgomery County had changed greatly over the years. During the Revolutionary era, the county encompassed much of southwestern Virginia. As time passed, the region experienced extraordinary population growth. Virginia lawmakers consequently partitioned and re-partitioned the county.

By the late 1840s, it had been whittled down to 388 square miles of steep mountains and broad meadows at the south end of the Shenandoah Valley. By then, approximately 5,825 white people lived there, and the demographics of the county (relatively even sex ratios and a youthful population) suggested that the number of white residents would continue to increase rapidly.⁹

Montgomery County's growth during the 19th century was fueled by two interconnected phenomena: state-funded internal improvements and an influx of slave laborers. In the late 18th century, Montgomery residents, chagrined by their lack of access to a major waterway and recoiling at the costs of overland transportation, tended to be land speculators, self-sufficient farmers, livestock keepers, or producers of light-weight goods like wool. Within this economic milieu, slaves were relatively inconspicuous. In 1790, they comprised only 6 percent of the local population. When the economic orientation of the county changed in the early 1800s, slavery became a more prominent institution.¹⁰

In the early 19th century, government-financed turnpikes and canals reduced the costs of transporting goods, and Montgomery County residents responded by increasing their agricultural and manufacturing output and utilizing more slave labor. The first important development came in 1809 with the completion of the state-funded Allegheny Turnpike, which ran seven miles from Christiansburg to the Roanoke River. Six years later, in 1815, the Roanoke Canal opened, an event that provided area farmers still greater access to eastern markets. In the decades that followed, Montgomery County residents continued to push for government-subsidized internal improvements. In the meantime, local whites turned to slave labor in an effort to increase production. By 1840, 20 percent of the county's residents were slaves. Montgomery County hardly rivaled its Tidewater counterparts in this respect, but black bondage had become a central component of the area's social, economic, and demographic character.¹¹

When Montgomery County slaveholders could not find sufficiently profitable employment for their slaves, they turned to slave-hiring and slave-trading. Many Shenandoah Valley slaveholders leased their bondspersons to the salt mines, iron works, and hot springs resorts that dotted the Appalachians. Even more slaveholders sold their human chattel to traders, who conveyed them either south to markets in Natchez and New Orleans, or east to Richmond. The auction block cast a long shadow in the mountains: Appalachian slaves had a one-in-three chance of being sold before age 40. Indeed, as ACS agent Ruffner made his way to Christiansburg in early December 1847, he may have encountered several slave coffles: between September and April, at least one or two, and as many as four, slave traders visited Christiansburg every week. When combined, slave-hiring and slave-trading placed a tremendous strain on the area's black kin networks. According to one study, 23 percent of slave families in Montgomery County had no father present. Ruffner may not have regarded slavery as a sin, but local slaves were painfully familiar with the injustices of Appalachian bondage.¹²

Ruffner arrived in the small town of Christiansburg on Saturday, 4 December 1847. In the 18th century, Christiansburg had been a resting stop

for westward migrants trekking the Wilderness Road. It had grown some over the years, but when Ruffner showed up, only 563 people lived there, two-thirds of whom were white residents, 28 percent were slaves, and four percent were free blacks. Christiansburg was home to 18 traders and merchants, a dozen carpenters, and a number of blacksmiths, saddlers, tanners, tailors, and boot makers. Clearly, the local economy was based on commerce and small manufacturing—and slavery.¹³

Slavery was spread widely, if thinly, across Christiansburg society. Slaves resided in half of the town's households, though most of these dwellings had just a few slaves present. The slaveholders' occupations were similar to those of the non-slaveholders, a fact that encouraged the latter group to believe that they too would someday own slaves. Such assumptions often proved correct. As one aged in Christiansburg, the more likely one was to obtain unfree laborers: half of the town's white men aged 40 or older were slaveholders. In Christiansburg, owning slaves was not an aberration; it was an expectation.¹⁴

Christiansburg slaves had distinct demographic characteristics. As a group, the slaves were young—half of the bonded population was age 15 or younger. They also had skewed sex ratios, with females predominating among the children and males constituting a majority of the adults. Finally, one-third of the slaves were identified by the census enumerator as being mulatto. Such figures suggest that Christiansburg slaveholders, like other Appalachian slaveholders, sold or rented young males, retained some adult bondsmen, and utilized bondswomen for both domestic and non-domestic work. Reaping profits from a dynamic, diversified economy, mountain masters proved just as calculating as their counterparts elsewhere in the South.¹⁵

Ruffner had barely arrived in Christiansburg on that December day in 1847 when he started hearing bad news. Rev. Chevalier rushed up to the ACS agent, telling him that Bratton's son-in-law intended to quash the venture to send 20 slaves to Liberia and that prejudice against colonization was widespread. Asking local residents for financial contributions, Chevalier opined, would be pointless. The pastor's analysis was astute: that night Ruffner solicited donations from Chevalier's congregation, a plea that netted just \$3.¹⁶

Ruffner next sought out Dorothea Bratton. Born in 1777, Dorothea had lived in Christiansburg her entire life. In 1797, she married James Bratton who, like Dorothea, came from a well-heeled family. In quick succession, the couple had four children—three girls and a boy. The family's financial well being, like that of many other wealthy Appalachians, was based on diversified economic pursuits and slave labor. James owned land in the Montgomery countryside, town lots in Christiansburg, and tracts in Botetourt County, Virginia, and in Kentucky. He also acquired slaves, owning 22 by 1810. The slaves were farmers, artisans, and keepers of livestock. Simply put, in the early 19th century, James Bratton was one of Christiansburg's most prosperous men, and slaves were his most valuable possession.¹⁷

When James died in 1814, he bequeathed one-third of his slaves to Dorothea, as Virginia law demanded. Dorothea, James wrote in his will, could retain title to her portion of the slaves during her life, and then they would

pass to their children. Three of the children (Nancy, Melvina, and Cary), upon turning age 21, were to inherit the other two-thirds of his slaves. Why James excluded his daughter Ann from his will is unknown.¹⁸

If Dorothea Bratton harbored colonizationist sympathies, she was slow to reveal them. She owned slaves for 33 years before she had Chevalier contact the ACS. According to census records, in 1820, six years after becoming a widow, she owned 21 slaves. Ten years later, that figure dropped to 14 slaves, with seven of them under the age of ten. In 1840, Dorothea Bratton owned 23 slaves. By 1847, she owned approximately 38 slaves. In all likelihood, the fluctuations in Bratton's slaveholdings resulted from, on one hand, births and deaths of slaves, and, on the other hand, Bratton's children turning 21, marrying, and, in at least two cases, dying. The end result was that Bratton had much experience with slave management.¹⁹

Bratton did not say much about her managerial philosophy, and census records do not clarify the matter. In 1820, when she owned 21 slaves, there was one white male, age 16-26, in the household. Ten years later, in 1830, there were two young white men living with Bratton. These individuals may have been overseers, since some records suggest that Dorothea's son Cary lived in Botetourt County. Many female slaveholders hired overseers. Such men exacted labor from slaves and thereby allowed widows like Bratton to profit from slavery without sullyng their reputations as ladies. Up to this point, Bratton appears to have been a typical slaveholding widow, one who used gender and class norms in an attempt to master black bondspersons and white employees.²⁰

Then, around 1840, something strange happened: Dorothea Bratton, the owner of 23 slaves, became the only white person in the household. It is difficult to know what prompted this change in household composition. Maybe Bratton continued to rely on white men to run her plantation, but these individuals did not reside with her. Or perhaps Bratton concluded that she could manage her own affairs. All that can be said with certainty is that in 1847, seven years after the census enumerator had indicated that Bratton was living alone, the septuagenarian widow decided that she wanted to send some of her slaves to Liberia.²¹

Bratton's house was located two miles outside of Christiansburg, and ACS agent Ruffner expected to talk with her there. But "by some accident" they met in the home of Bratton's son-in-law, Dr. Hugh Kent. A 55-year-old physician, Kent had married Bratton's daughter, Ann, in 1822. Over the next quarter century, Kent's slaveholdings quintupled: eight years after his marriage to Ann, Kent owned five slaves; by 1840, he owned 16 slaves; ten years later, that figure increased to 21. In addition, Kent coveted Dorothea Bratton's slaves. Because Ann was one of Bratton's surviving children (perhaps her only one), Kent, as Ann's husband, expected to assume control over Bratton's slaves, once the elderly widow passed away. Such an acquisition would have made Kent the largest slaveholder in Christiansburg and one of the largest in Montgomery County. In short, Kent, like many of the area's white residents, had become intoxicated with slavery, and Bratton's plans to send her bondspersons to Liberia had a sobering effect.²²

The conversation between Kent, Ruffner, and Bratton centered on Bratton's slaves, who had reservations about the ACS and Liberia. The slaves suspected that the ACS might sell them to slave traders. Or even if the organization transported them overseas, they feared that Liberia's insalubrity would decimate their ranks. As Ruffner conversed with Bratton and Kent, he learned that black incredulity would be a great stumbling block to colonization.²³

In deliberating whether or not they would go to Liberia, Bratton's slaves may have drawn on recent Montgomery County history. In the 1830s and early 1840s, among a smattering of manumissions in Montgomery County, none of the people emancipated had gone to Liberia. In 1845 and 1846, another local widow, Polly Taylor, had liberated 20 slaves. Virginia law demanded that new manumitees leave the state, and the Taylor freedpersons may have done so. But they did not go to Liberia, and their example may have been on the minds of Bratton's slaves as they contemplated the question of emigration.²⁴

It seems likely that Bratton's slaves also thought about their free black kin. Seven of the Bratton's slaves had the surname Campbell. At the time, approximately two dozen free blacks in Montgomery County had the last name Campbell. Some of these individuals were long-time residents. Caroline Campbell had been born free in Montgomery County in 1804 and had raised several free children there. In like fashion, William Campbell, a 49-year-old grocer, had been in Montgomery County for decades. Simply put, the free black Campbells were a large and well-established group. As such, they were probably in a good position to pool their resources and purchase the freedom of their bonded kin. For some of Bratton's slaves, then, leaving for Liberia would have entailed separation from free black relatives and perhaps a shot at freedom in America.²⁵

The slaves' misgivings about the ACS and Liberia may have reflected their knowledge about the colonization movement. Prior to 1847, relatively few black residents of southwestern Virginia had moved to Liberia. In 1830, 43 African Americans, most of them new manumitees, left for Liberia from Franklin County, which borders Montgomery County to the southeast. Two years later, another 19 manumitees made the same journey from nearby Bedford and Henry counties. These parties, like so many others, struggled in Liberia. Eighty percent of the emigrants were dead within ten years of landing there, most of them victims of malaria; another ten percent quit the colony, with the majority fleeing to Sierra Leone. By the time Ruffner came to Christiansburg in early December 1847, only a handful of the emigrants were still alive in Liberia. Bratton's slaves' concerns about Liberia were probably informed by the sorry fate of these previous parties.²⁶

Bratton's slaves may have also been alarmed by what they heard about Samuel Harris, a manumittee who in 1846 had gone to Liberia from Lexington, Virginia, a town 80 miles north of Christiansburg. In his letters to friends and family, Harris disparaged Liberia and wished himself back in America. ACS agent Ruffner later remarked that Harris's missives had

Our last Expedition, by the Amazon.

The Brig Amazon sailed from Baltimore on the 5th ult. with the following list of emigrants, viz:

No.	Names.	Age.	Where from.	Remarks.
1	Abram Melville, farmer,	30	Christiansburg,	Liberated by Mrs. Do-
2	Louisa Melville - -	27	Va.	ratha Bratton.
3	Rasmus - - -	13	do.	Louisa's son.
4	Howard - - -	11	do.	do. do.
6	Emeline Melville - -	10	do.	
6	Mary Melville - - -	9	do.	
7	Uriah Melville - - -	5	do.	
8	Elizabeth Agnes Melville	2	do.	
9	Doratha M. Melville	1wk.	do.	
10	James Cammell - -	21	do.	Wheelwright.
11	William Cammell - -	20	do.	
12	Thomas Cammell - -	18	do.	
13	Emily Cammell - - -	25	do.	
14	Daniel Cammell - - -	8	do.	Emily's son.
15	Charles Cammell - -	4	do.	do. do.
16	Tilly Virginia Cammell	9ms.	do.	do. daughter.
17	Henry Stewart - - -	14	do.	
18	Fleming Gardiner - -	15	do.	
19	Rosabella Gardiner - -	18	do.	
20	Henry Freeman - - -	27	do.	Shoemaker.
21	Elmira Freeman - - -	23	do.	
22	Jas. Carey H. Freeman	8ms.	do.	
23	Cary Braddle - - -	11	do.	
24	Allen B. Hooper - - -	32	New York	Farmer.
25	Moore Worrill - - -	47	North Carolina	Farmer & Carpenter.
26	John Evans - - -	40	Philadelphia	Farmer.
27	Charlotte Evans - - -	28	do.	Teacher.
28	John Evans, jr. - - -	11	do.	
29	Livinia Evans - - -	13	do.	
30	Daniel Evans - - -	9	do.	
31	Walter Evans - - -	3	do.	
32	Wilmot Proviso Evans -	2	do.	
33	Daniel Shackleford - -	16	do.	
34	George Smith - - -	14	Petersburg, Va.	[binson, Esq.
35	Grace Ann Clarke - - -	22	Richmond, Va.	Liberated by C. Ro-
36	Frances Clarke - - -	5	do.	Grace Ann's daughter.
37	William James Clarke -	2ms.	do.	do. do. son.
38	Archer Ransom - - -	45	Shepherdstown,	Liberated by L. Moler.
39	Cecelia De Lyon - - -	32	Savannah, Ga.	
40	Matilda Ann De Lyon - -	16	do.	Cecelia's daughter.
41	Samuel De Lyon - - -	14	do.	do. son.
42	Marion De Lyon - - -	10	do.	do. daughter.
43	John De Lyon - - -	9	do.	do. son.
44	Mary Ellen De Lyon - -	7	do.	do. daughter.

These, added to the total number previously, (5,917) make 5,961 persons already landed in Liberia and on their way thither. The number at Cape Palmas is not included in the above. There have been sent there about 1,000.

Ship register, the Amazon embarked Jan. 1848, from *African Repository* (March 1848 edition)

damaged the colonization cause. "That babyish, narrow-souled Sam Harris has created a panic here on the subject of Liberia, among his old acquaintances," Ruffner fumed. Had Harris's accounts been favorable, he thought wistfully, black interest in colonization would have blossomed. "As it is," Ruffner sighed, "they all wait for more news."²⁷

In the end, Bratton's slaves agreed to go to Liberia. That they would voluntarily leave their long-time home and their free black kin reveals much about their desire for freedom and the tribulations of slave life in Montgomery County. While the Appalachian economy provided some slaves with autonomy and even opportunities for self-purchase, it also inflicted extraordinary hardships on African Americans. Within this milieu, perhaps it is understandable why Bratton's slaves preferred to face the hazards of Liberia to those of Appalachian bondage.²⁸

The Manumission

Getting Bratton's slaves to Africa was no simple matter. Although Dorothea Bratton had managed her household's economic affairs for 33 years, Ruffner felt obliged to help her with the deeds of manumission. Whether Bratton requested Ruffner's aid is unknown. She apparently did not spurn his assistance. For Appalachian women like Bratton, buying supplies, selling commodities, and running a farm was one thing; freeing slaves was another.

On Monday, 6 December 1847, two days after the ACS agent had come to town, Ruffner and Bratton went to court. Years later, Ruffner recalled that he had encountered "repeated, continued efforts to divert the attention of the court to other matters & thus defeat the movement for the time at least." Despite the obstructionism, by late evening, Ruffner and Bratton, with the help of a Mr. Gardiner, had secured the 21 deeds of manumission.²⁹

Bratton liberated only 21 of the approximately 38 bondspersons that she owned. On one hand, such selectivity shows that ACS manumitters expected to benefit from slave liberations, that they dispensed freedom at intervals in an attempt to promote diligence and faithfulness among their slaves. On the other hand, the selective character of the emancipation illustrates the importance of pre-manumission maneuvering on the slaves' part. Some of the slaves that Bratton freed were listed in her husband's 1814 will. They had known Bratton for decades and were consequently in a comparatively good position to attract her favor. As Bratton's slaves knew, manumitters played favorites.³⁰

The Bratton freedpersons epitomized the importance of black Virginians' familial bonds and the strains that Appalachian slavery put on those bonds. The Bratton party consisted of several families. The Melvilles were led by Abram, a 37-year-old farmer, who was accompanied by his sister, 27-year-old Louisa, and Louisa's seven children. The whereabouts of Louisa's husband is unknown; he may have been sucked into the abyss of the interstate slave trade, like so many other young male slaves in Appalachia. The Melvilles were similar to the Campbells, the second family in the party. It appears that James Campbell, a 21-year-old wheelwright, journeyed to Liberia with his brothers

William and Thomas, aged 21 and 18, respectively. The Campbell brothers were joined by their 25-year-old sister Emily, who, like Louisa Melville, went to Liberia with several children but no husband. A third group in the Bratton company consisted of four youngsters, ranging in age from 11 to 18, who, while probably related to the Campbells and Melvilles, sailed to Liberia without their parents. A fourth family—that of 27-year-old Henry Freeman—is discussed below. All totaled, the Christiansburg party, nearly two dozen strong, included only three men over the age of 21. Ruffner was all too aware of this fact, and informed ACS headquarters, “the emigrants are mostly females & boys.”³¹

On 10 December 1847, a few days after he had helped secure the manumission papers, Ruffner penned a long letter to ACS secretary McLain. He surveyed his recent activities, focusing on three things in particular: first, he explained in great and perhaps exaggerated detail the session at the courthouse; second, he discussed several unexpected problems that had arisen; and third, he offered advice regarding where the Bratton contingent should be settled in Liberia. It was a telling letter, and it was Ruffner’s last to McLain for nearly a month.

“Such a day of trial I never before spent,” remarked Ruffner of his experience at the courthouse:

A large number of people were in town. All had heard of Mrs. Bratton’s intention to send her negroes to Liberia and all had their disapproving remarks & looks to throw around. Some thought that Mrs. B. was in her dotage, others thought that Dr. Kent ought to put his veto upon the whole transaction; some thought most all the emigrants died directly after they reached Liberia, some that it was an abolitionist scheme—all very knowing upon the whole subject, facts only excepted, & all very ready to express an opinion, & were not very particular who heard them.”³²

Omitting the role of Bratton and Gardiner, Ruffner proclaimed, “I finally succeeded in getting the proper papers drawn & signed.” In Ruffner’s telling of the story, he had performed a minor miracle.³³

It is difficult to know whether Ruffner was portraying the court session accurately. His is the only description of the event. On one hand, it is reasonable to suppose that Ruffner overstated the extent of opposition. The fact that no other Christiansburg resident commented on the episode and that no newspapers covered the story suggests that Ruffner may have stretched the truth. Indeed, as a new agent, Ruffner had good reasons for amplifying his heroics when writing to his boss. On the other hand, maybe the Bratton manumission did cause a stir—the social and political milieu certainly discountenanced large slave liberations. As previously noted, another Christiansburg widow had freed 20 slaves two years earlier. Pro-slavery advocates in the area might have taken exception to another such venture. Perhaps even more important were the actions of Ruffner’s father, Henry Ruffner. In 1847, the elder Ruffner published a tract that called for

democratic reforms in the state legislature, the abolition of slavery in western Virginia, and the colonization of the region's black population outside the United States. Ruffner had hoped to rally western Virginia's white majority, but his pamphlet only galvanized pro-slavery leaders in the region. Finally, it is important to recall that the Bratton affair occurred at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War, a conflict that exacerbated the debates over slavery. Given the local, regional, and national conflicts over black bondage, perhaps Ruffner's depiction of the court session was not so fanciful.³⁴

Continuing with this missive to McLain, Ruffner informed the ACS secretary about several problems that had arisen. The first concerned getting the Bratton freedpersons out of Christiansburg. Ruffner told McLain that he wanted to depart town soon. The ACS agent still feared the local opposition, and he was equally concerned about the ex-slaves' lingering doubts about Liberia. Though "a smart, well behaved company," the group was starting to waver. Ruffner worried that if one manumittee declined to emigrate, the others would do likewise. Ruffner consequently proposed that the contingent be sent to Lynchburg and thence to Baltimore.³⁵

Dorothea Bratton, he sighed, would hear nothing of it. According to Ruffner, "in a quite excited manner she replied, 'I will not consent to that at all[.] I am sure that if Mr. McLain knew all the circumstances, he would see the propriety of your accompanying them all the way to Baltimore.'" Pressed between local anti-ACS forces, vacillating freedpersons, and the insistent Bratton, Ruffner gave in to Bratton's demands. He informed McLain that he expected to shepherd the party out of Christiansburg on 20 December 1847, proclaiming, rather prophetically, "I w[oul]d rather bear their expenses in Baltimore myself than have them here very longer than that time."³⁶

Ruffner then addressed a second problem: how African Americans' kin networks were complicating the venture. A local free black shoemaker, 27-year-old Henry Freeman, wanted to join the expedition. Engaged to one of the Bratton manumittes, Freeman was hastily arranging his affairs so that he could accompany his fiancée and their eight-month-old child to Liberia. Similarly, two of Bratton's ex-slaves, 72-year-old Cyrus Melville and 67-year-old Milly Melville, also hoped to emigrate to Africa. Bratton had liberated Cyrus and Milly, but she evidently had not expected them to go to Liberia with the rest. The two insisted that they would not be left behind. Cyrus was especially adamant. "He says he will go if he dies along the road," reported Ruffner. "He says he wants to 'set his foot on freedom's shore.'" As it turned out, neither Cyrus nor Milly embarked for Liberia with their kin.³⁷

Near the end of his letter to McLain, Ruffner took up a third topic: the wisdom of locating the company in the Liberian upcountry. "Christiansburg stands right on the top of the Allegheny Mountains," he explained, "& the highest & healthiest spot among the settlements should be selected for them." Ruffner's geographic recommendation was not unprecedented. As early as 1832, the ACS had evidence that emigrants from the upland South fared poorly in the Liberian lowlands. The matter remained a source of concern for colonizationists. John Hartwell Cocke of Fluvanna County, Virginia, for

example, expressed unease over the issue. "We know that a degree of mortality has prevailed among emigrants from the high & healthy parts of Virginia," he stated. The ACS's foes, he continued, had used these unfortunate episodes to discredit the colonization program. The inventive Cocke offered an imaginative solution to the problem: as a form of pre-emigration acclimation, would-be freedpersons from alpine regions should live, prior to their departure, in Tidewater areas or, better yet, in the Lower South. Cocke himself established a "school for freedom" for his slaves in Alabama, but such a far-flung enterprise was unfathomable to most emancipators. Dorothea Bratton certainly was either unwilling or unable to finance such a project.³⁸

After sending his lengthy letter to McLain, Ruffner left Christiansburg. He went to Wytheville, a small city 44 miles to the southwest. He made two speeches in Wytheville, but did not attempt to raise money. The ACS agent returned to Christiansburg a week later, on Saturday, 18 December 1847. In a move that must have worried the Bratton freedpersons, Ruffner lodged with Kent, who, despite his opposition to the enterprise, had been civil to the ACS spokesman. Ruffner then gave another public address in Christiansburg, later claiming that his audience had been large and attentive. Still, he collected only \$8 that night, opining that the white residents of Christiansburg had "hardly gotten up to the subscribing point."³⁹

The paucity of public support meant that the ACS should provide the freedpersons with supplies, or so Dorothea Bratton contended. Although Ruffner had portrayed Bratton as a feeble, pious old lady, in truth the septuagenarian widow was a shrewd negotiator, who sought to advance her own and her ex-slaves' interests by manipulating Southern notions of feminine dependence and masculine responsibility. "It was out of my power to furnish them with any thing except their clothing," she told McLain. "[I] shall expect you to furnish them with all the articles that it is desirable for them to have agreeable to the pamphlet which you sent me." Bratton was no supplicant. She *expected* McLain to equip her former slaves. That expectation was derived, in part, from her understanding of gender and class: ladyhood had instilled in Bratton a sense that she was responsible for the ex-slaves' well being, and it provided her with a mechanism with which she could cajole white men into effectuating her desires. In the end, McLain accommodated the freedpersons to Bratton's satisfaction.⁴⁰

On Wednesday, 22 December 1847, the Bratton manumittees, Kent, and Ruffner all departed Christiansburg. With Ruffner riding horseback, the contingent headed up the Shenandoah Valley, "the people in two 4-horse covered wagons—the men walking." The following day, the group, having traveled 37 miles, reached Salem. At this point, Ruffner left the emigrants and took the stage another 66 miles to Lynchburg, where he intended hold a colonization meeting and secure a canal boat which would convey the party to Richmond. At Lynchburg, however, Ruffner failed to organize the meeting and discovered that the river was still frozen, rendering the canal boats inoperable. The ACS agent then followed the river eastward, looking for breaks in the ice, finally locating a navigable spot 12 or 15 miles from Lynchburg. Ruffner hired

a boat and some experienced boatmen. While the craft was being repaired and outfitted, Ruffner returned to Lynchburg, reunited with the Bratton emigrants, and shepherded them to the embarkation point. On Saturday, 1 January 1848, eight days after leaving Christiansburg, the group boarded the bateau and headed toward Richmond.⁴¹

With the vessel packed tight and the river running shallow, traveling proved difficult. At one point, the boat was hitched to a mule, which pulled the boat along, the craft rubbing the river bottom and occasionally stopping altogether. At the end of the day, Ruffner dined with the emigrants and then lodged with the lock-keeper, leaving the freedpersons to sleep on the boat. On Monday, 3 January 1848, the party, having traveled 40 miles, reached Scottsville. At this juncture, Ruffner again left the emigrants, taking the evening packet to Richmond.⁴²

Arriving in Richmond on Tuesday, 4 January 1848, Ruffner booked a room in the Columbian Hotel, made arrangements to transport the Bratton party to Baltimore, and looked to bolster his sagging finances, perhaps by organizing a colonization meeting. When the meeting fell through, Ruffner wrote a letter to his boss, William McLain, who had not heard from the spokesman in nearly a month. "It may be some satisfaction to know what your Agent has been about for the last 3 or 4 weeks," began Ruffner. Ruffner described his efforts on behalf of the ACS. The agent's account of the journey from Christiansburg was especially vivid. "The roads were indescribably horrible & it snowed & blowed & froze ... in different & uncomfortable combinations," wrote Ruffner. As for why he had failed to hold more meetings, Ruffner assured his employer that the "reasons were good and ... I will explain fully when I see you." Ruffner then turned to finances, a subject that soon dominated his relationship with McLain and the Society. Upon arriving in Richmond, Ruffner had received \$86.50 from two colonizationists, an amount that the agent claimed would cover the costs of transporting the Bratton emigrants to Baltimore but leave him "without enough money left to pay for getting them off the boat!!" Indeed, the entire venture had been expensive, lamented Ruffner. "The cost has been heavy," he conceded, "but it was unavoidable.... I have expended nothing unnecessarily." Ruffner was certain the ACS would see things his way, and reimburse him accordingly.⁴³

The Bratton emigrants soon caught up to Ruffner in Richmond. On Thursday, 6 January 1848, Ruffner and the group boarded a boat destined for Norfolk. Later that day, while the party transferred to a steamer that would take them to Baltimore, a slave trader approached Ruffner. This was exactly what the Bratton slaves had feared in early December, when they had debated whether they would hazard the trip to Liberia. "[He] pressed me to sell him a likely black boy—perhaps two—offering to pay me a good price in hand," Ruffner recalled. The trader assured Ruffner "that he could ship them off in a way that would not give me trouble!" The ACS agent refused, but the trader continued to make offers. An unsettled Ruffner later remarked, "This made me realize more than anything else what a task I had undertaken in moving these people."⁴⁴

The next day, Friday, 7 January 1848, Ruffner and the Bratton party landed in Baltimore. Here, Ruffner handed over the freedpersons to Dr. James Hall, a long-time colonizationist who had helped establish Maryland In Liberia. A separate settlement south of the ACS's former colony, Maryland In Liberia was run by the Maryland State Colonization Society, an organization that had defected from the ACS in 1833. Relieved to have turned over the emigrants, Ruffner said he "felt like singing, 'Here I Raise My Ebenezer.'" As Ruffner made plans to leave Baltimore for Philadelphia, he contacted a friend, Dr. William Plummer, to look after the party. He also asked Plummer to marry one couple. Plummer later informed Ruffner, "I went to see your immigrants. I do not know how they settled the 'marriage question.' I told them I was ready [but] Dr. Hall advised them to see Mr. McLain." Plummer gave the emigrants some books and money, remarking that "they seemed grateful."⁴⁵

Plummer also loaned \$20 to Ruffner. With the cash in hand, the ACS agent went to Philadelphia on Saturday, 8 January 1848. Within a week Ruffner was down to \$5. He told McLain that the ACS owed him at least \$100, though he was willing, for the time being, to accept \$75. "It is unpleasant ... to make this decided appeal," he wrote on 15 January 1848, "but necessity, stern & absolute, compels me to do so." In the meantime, Ruffner had a chance meeting with one of his Princeton professors, who convinced him to take his exams for a ministerial licensure. In this instance, Ruffner acted boldly: on 2 February 1848, he passed "the trials," as he called the tests. Then, he headed for Washington, D.C., to settle up with McLain.⁴⁶

While Ruffner was pleading for money and studying for exams, Hall had been fretting over the *Liberia Packet*, the vessel that was scheduled to convey the Bratton party and other emigrants to Africa. "Something must be wrong," Hall wrote McLain on 19 January 1848, nearly two weeks after he had received the Bratton party from Ruffner. The *Liberian Packet* was long overdue, and nobody could predict when, if ever, the ship would show up. Hall knew that Baltimore free blacks, who had a long history of opposing the colonization movement, were likely to encourage the Bratton company to forego emigration.⁴⁷ He may have had this issue in mind when he asked McLain, "How long must we wait before chartering a vessel?" McLain soon told Hall to book an alternate ship. Finally, on 5 February 1848, a month after they had arrived in Baltimore and over five months after Rev. Chevalier had first contacted the ACS, the Bratton party sailed for Liberia aboard the *Amazon*.⁴⁸

Post-Manumission Activities

The *Amazon* arrived in Monrovia, Liberia, on 14 March 1848. Ruffner had suggested that the Bratton party be located in one of the upriver settlements, and McLain took the agent's advice. McLain sent instructions that the Bratton contingent was to be sent to Bexley, a community situated 20 miles up the St. John's River. But as was often the case, circumstances in Liberia necessitated a change in plans. In this instance, the problem stemmed from the paucity of physicians in Liberia and the simultaneous arrival of another ACS vessel, the *Nehemiah Rich*. Dr. James W. Lugenbeel, the

surgeon who might have tended to the Bratton party's medical needs, was obliged to accompany some of the *Nehemiah Rich* emigrants 150 miles south to Greenville. Lugenbeel consequently advised Liberian officials to keep the remaining newcomers in Monrovia or to convey them to a nearby settlement called Virginia. The recent arrivals were likely to contract malaria, explained Lugenbeel. If they were scattered too widely, they would never receive adequate medical care. Thus the Bratton party stayed near the seaside town of Monrovia.⁴⁹

Monrovia was the commercial and political epicenter of Liberia. Nine hundred colonists lived there, making it nearly twice as large as Christiansburg. Among its inhabitants were the country's most powerful men. Yet the majority of the town's population was female. In fact, women comprised 24 percent of Monrovia's household heads. As the Bratton company soon discovered, the prevalence of female householders stemmed in part from the devastation that diseases wrought on the settlers.⁵⁰ Two of the Bratton party's 23 members died shortly after landing in Liberia. This was not unusual; in truth, the Bratton contingent fared better than most. Twenty-five percent of all ACS emigrants perished within a year of landfall. Most victims succumbed to malaria, commonly called "the African fever." As demographer Antonio McDaniel has noted, Liberian colonists seemed to have suffered "the highest mortality ever reliably recorded."⁵¹

Among the deceased was Abram Melville, the 37-year-old farmer whom Dorothea Bratton described as "the protector and guide of all the rest." Bratton observed, "They seem to be discouraged in consequence of his loss." The receipt of unfavorable intelligence portended problems for the ACS. According to one ACS agent, the future of the colonization cause in western Virginia rested on the Bratton company's reports. Black Appalachians' decisions concerning emigration, opined the Society's representative, would largely "depend on what they hear about those that went out from Christiansburg."⁵²

African Americans in Montgomery County were not likely to hear upbeat accounts, for things continued to go badly for the Bratton party. Louisa Melville not only had to cope with the passing of her brother Abram, but also with suspect land dealings by Liberian authorities. The mother of seven, Louisa expected officials to follow their stated policy and grant her a holding based on the size of her family. Instead, she was allotted just five acres. Moreover, after Abram's death, his land was not given to the family but rather reverted back to the public domain. "This is a grief to her," Bratton wrote to the ACS, "and she feels lost."⁵³

Some evidence suggests that the Bratton party's opinions of Liberia improved as the months passed. This would not have been unusual. Emigrants' responses to Liberia went through a fairly predictable pattern: a period of initial joy upon arriving in Africa, followed by a sense of despair as disease and penury waylaid newcomers, and then a growing satisfaction with their adopted homeland. Indeed, in September 1848, six months after the Bratton company had settled in Liberia, Ruffner wrote, "Mrs. Bratton's people have written

favorable accounts from their new home. If they continue to be pleased, it will be a great thing for the colonization cause in Southwestern Va.”⁵⁴

Ruffner had kept abreast of the Bratton company despite having resigned his commission as an ACS agent in May 1848. In early February 1848, after passing his ministerial exams, Ruffner went to Washington, D.C., to settle his accounts with McLain. In Ruffner’s estimation, the meeting did not go well. McLain failed to fully reimburse the agent. On 12 February 1848, a somewhat disgruntled Ruffner left Washington for western Virginia.⁵⁵

When Ruffner returned to Lexington, local ACS supporters naturally associated him with the colonization movement. In March 1848, Dr. Benjamin Rice, an acquaintance of Ruffner’s from his days at Union Theological Seminary, told Ruffner that his sister-in-law in Prince Edward County wanted to send her slaves to Liberia. The situation described by Rice mirrored that which Ruffner had just experienced in Montgomery County: an elderly woman intended to transport a large number of slaves in the face of local opposition. Ultimately, Ruffner did not go to Prince Edward County. Instead, he contemplated quitting the ACS. From Ruffner’s perspective, resigning made sense, given his tribulations as an agent, his father’s ouster as president of Washington College, his mother’s deteriorating health, his desire to utilize his new license as a Presbyterian minister, and his ongoing dispute with the Society. In short, Ruffner had personal and professional reasons to leave the ACS. Even so, his resignation was a graceless affair.⁵⁶

The episode began innocently enough. On 20 May 1848, Ruffner sent a letter to McLain, describing his ill health and consequent inactivity as agent. Though he loved the colonization cause, Ruffner felt it was time to end his agency. “I do not believe that I was cast in the right mould for the work,” he confessed. The only reason he had continued this long was his fear that the ACS would not find a suitable replacement—that, and the fact that the Society still owed him \$36. This sum, insisted Ruffner, “had better be paid of the treasury, as I have use for the money.” Having broached the subject of compensation, Ruffner grew more agitated. He finished the letter with a flourish, telling McLain that his demands were justified because his effort on behalf of colonization had been “much larger than you suppose.”⁵⁷

When McLain failed to respond after two months, Ruffner penned an even more churlish letter, questioning how the debt-ridden ACS could continue to send emigrants to Liberia when it could not even pay its own agents. Ruffner declared that his contributions to the colonization movement were “as large as I am able to stand.” A week later, after McLain had sent the \$36, Ruffner apologized for the “peevish” letter he had just sent. As for the “ill-natured communication” of 20 May 1848, Ruffner wrote, “please don’t bind it up in the book, but throw it into your spittoon & let the tobacco chewers spit their juice all over it.” Ruffner conceded that he may never again be an ACS agent, but he hoped that he could give the colonization movement “a lift once & a while in my feeble way.” Despite everything that had happened, professed Ruffner, “I shall always feel the cause to be most dear to my heart.”⁵⁸

Like Ruffner, Dorothea Bratton also continued to support colonization. In mid-July 1848, Bratton informed McLain that she hoped to send more slaves to Liberia. Her second emancipatory enterprise was as trying as her first: Dr. Kent again opposed the transaction; pro-slavery detractors bewailed the venture; would-be emigrants expressed reservations about Liberia; Bratton and ACS officials haggled over supplies and logistical matters; local free blacks became involved in the affair; and funds had to be raised (this time to purchase the child of a prospective emigrant). Bratton had expected to send a dozen slaves to Liberia, but, in the end, only four made the transatlantic journey. Among the four were Cyrus and Milly Melville, the couple who had been thwarted in their attempt to travel with the first party. For Bratton and others like her, being a “repeat manumitter” did not make the emancipatory process any simpler.⁵⁹

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, the ACS continued to canvass the Shenandoah Valley. Rufus W. Bailey succeeded Ruffner as ACS agent, proving himself to be a more capable spokesman than his predecessor. During Bailey's six years as ACS representative, hundreds of black Appalachians emigrated to Liberia. Even so, Bailey's successes were limited in scope. As the Bratton episode illustrated so well, the ACS had much to overcome, for slavery was critically important in southwestern Virginia, manumissions were inherently expensive, conspicuous enterprises, and numerous financial, logistical, and socio-political impediments hampered ACS operations. Ultimately, this phalanx of problems foiled the ACS renaissance that secretary McLain had envisioned when he received Chevalier's letter from Christiansburg back in August 1847.

NOTES

1. The author thanks Nikki Berg, Kirsten E. Wood, and *AppalJ's* anonymous reviewer for their insightful comments. He also extends his gratitude to Steven Ruggles for the opportunity to use the resources at the Minnesota Population Center. Nicholas Chevalier to William McLain, 24 Aug. 1847, Reel 53, n. 235, Records of the American Colonization Society (hereafter RACS), located in the Library of Congress (both quotations).

2. On the ACS and Liberia, see Early Lee Fox, *American Colonization Society, 1817-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1919); P.J. Staudenraus, *African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961); Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971); George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1-42; Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of An African Prince Sold Into Slavery in the American South* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977); Tom W. Shick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980); William W. Freehling, *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 138-57; Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The*

Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995); Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), 182-237; Howard Temperley, "African-American Aspirations and the Settlement of Liberia," *Slavery and Abolition* 21.2 (August 2000): 67-92; Douglas R. Egerton, *Rebels, Reformers, and Revolutionaries: Collected Essays and Second Thoughts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 107-20, 147-59; Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002), 136-94; Harold D. Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2003), 1-115; Richard L. Hall, *On Africa's Shore: A History of Maryland in Liberia, 1834-1857* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2003); Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004); Alan Huffman, *Mississippi in Africa* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004); Kenneth C. Barnes, *Journey of Hope: The Back-to-Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 2004); Amos J. Beyan, *African American Settlements in West Africa: John Brown Russwurm and the American Civilizing Efforts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2005).

3. Walter Javan Fraser Jr., "William Henry Ruffner: A Liberal in the Old and New South," (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Tennessee, 1970), 37-114; Anne Howell Ruffner Barclay, "William Henry Ruffner, LL.D.," *West Virginia Historical Magazine* 2.4 (1902): 33-43.

4. Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 37, 66-70, 95-96; n.d., Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, Box 5, Folder 7, William H. Ruffner Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, North Carolina (hereafter PHS); William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 18 Oct. 1847, Reel 53, n. 58, RACS; William Gleason Bean, "The Ruffner Pamphlet of 1847: An Antislavery Aspect of Virginia Sectionalism," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. 61 (1953): 260-82.

5. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 30 Oct. 1847, Reel 53, n. 109, RACS (all quotations).

6. Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 52-53, 70; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 30 Oct. 1847, Reel 53, n. 109, RACS (quotations).

7. Ellen Eslinger, "The Brief Career of Rufus W. Bailey, American Colonization Society Agent in Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 71.1 (Feb. 2005): 39-74. Both Ruffner and Bailey believed they could work together. R.W. Bailey to William McLain, 30 Oct. 1847, Reel 53, n. 110, RACS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 3 Nov. 1847, Reel 53, n. 128, RACS.

8. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 17 Nov. 1847 (first quotation) and 2 Dec. 1847, both in Box 5, Folder 7, PHS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 18 Nov. 1847, Reel 53, n. 161, RACS (second and third quotations); William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 1 Dec. 1847, Reel 53, n. 223, RACS.

9. http://www.myviriniagenealogy.com/va_maps/va_cf.htm; (2004) Historical Census Browser, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

10. Alvin Morris Shelton III, "Montgomery County and Economic Growth, 1776-1860," (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State Univ., M.A. thesis, 1978), 8-10; J. Susanne Schramm Simmons, "Augusta County's Other Pioneers: The African American Presence in Frontier Augusta County," in Michael J. Puglisi, ed., *Diversity and Accommodation: Essays on the Cultural Composition of the Virginia Frontier*

(Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1997), 159-71. See also, Gail S. Terry, "An Old Family Confronts the New Politics: The Preston-Trigg Congressional Contests of the 1790s," in Puglisi, ed., *Diversity and Accommodation*, 227-51.

11. Shelton, "Montgomery County and Economic Growth," 14-62; Walter K. Wood, "Henry Edmundson, the Allegheny Turnpike, and 'Fotheringay' Plantation, 1805-1847: Planting and Trading in Montgomery County, Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 83.3 (July 1975): 304-20; (2004) Historical Census Browser, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

12. Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003); Charles B. Dew, *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994); Charlene M. Boyer Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 2001); J.B. Murphy, "Slaveholding in Appalachia: A Challenge to the Egalitarian Tradition," *Southern Studies*, 3.1 (1992): 15-33; Phillip D. Troutman, "A 'Sorrowful Cavalcade': Enslaved Migration through Appalachian Virginia," *The Smithfield Review*, Vol. 5 (2001): 23-45; Christine Calorusso, "Rethinking the Role of the Landscape in Historic Interpretation: A Constructivist Design Approach to Interpreting Slavery in Appalachian Virginia," (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State Univ., 2002), 149. See also, John C. Inscoc, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina*. (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1989); William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell, eds., *Blacks in Appalachia* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1985); John C. Inscoc, ed., *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2001); and Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, eds., *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).

13. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS; Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 2 Dec. 1847, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS. Using the 1850 federal census, I created two comprehensive databases for Christiansburg, the "Christiansburg Free Population Database" and the "Christiansburg Slave Population Database." See <http://content.ancestry.com/Browse/View.aspx?dbid=8054&path=Virginia.Montgomery.Christiansburg.9>.

14. Statistics drawn from the Christiansburg Free Population Database.

15. Statistics drawn from the Christiansburg Slave Population Database.

16. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, no. 255, RACS; Fraser, "William H. Ruffner," 117; Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 2 Dec. 1847, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS.

17. James Bratton's Will (1814) in James L. Douthat, *Montgomery County, Virginia Will Book #2, 1809-1817*, Reel 14.

18. Douthat, Reel 14. See also, Richard B. Dickenson, *Entitled!: Free Papers in Appalachia Concerning Antebellum Freeborn Negroes and Emancipated Blacks of Montgomery County, Virginia* (Washington, D.C.: National Genealogical Society, 1981), 62-63.

19. Statistics on Bratton's slaveholdings come from the U.S. federal census, 1820-1830. Malvina married in 1829 and died in 1831; Cary died in 1838. <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/va/montgomery/cemeteries/kyle.txt>; Anne Lowry Worrell, compiler, *A Brief of Wills and Marriages in Montgomery and Fincastle Counties, Virginia, 1733-1831* (1932; rpt., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, Inc., 1976), 19.

20. Statistics on Bratton's household come from the U.S. federal census, 1820-1830. See also, Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the*

American Revolution through the Civil War (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004), 48-53. On Cary Bratton, see Lyman Chalkley, *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement of Virginia* (1912; rpt. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1974) Vol. 2, p. 222.

21. Statistics on Bratton's household come from the U.S. federal census, 1840. In 1850, the only other person in Bratton's household was a ten-year-old free black named James Brown, who, according to the census enumerator, owned \$3,000 in real estate.

22. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, no. 255, RACS (quotation). Kent's slaveholdings are drawn from the U.S. federal census, 1820-1850. See also, Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Dec. 1847, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS.

23. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, no. 255, RACS.

24. Dickenson, *Entitled*, 2-16, 64-65.

25. According to the 1840 census, there were only 87 free persons of color in Montgomery County. It is evident that the census enumerator failed to record all of the free blacks living in the area. (2004) Historical Census Browser, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>; Dickenson, *Entitled*, xiv-xv.

26. Statistics on ACS emigration come from ACS ship registers. I have used these documents to compile a database of the 10,939 African Americans known to have moved to Liberia during the antebellum period (hereafter ACS Database). The ship registers are located in four different sources: first, the ACS's *African Repository*; second, the organization's *Annual Reports* (1818-1910; rpt., New York, 1969); third, the U.S. Congress's *Roll of Emigrants that have been sent to the colony of Liberia* (28th Cong., 2d sess., S. Doc. 150); and fourth, handwritten passenger lists in the Records of the American Colonization Society (RACS), microfilm edition, reel 314, Library of Congress. See also, *African Repository*, Vol. 6 (Nov. 1830): 282-83; *African Repository*, Vol. 8 (Apr. 1832): 63-64; *African Repository* Vol. 8 (May 1832): 94.

27. ACS Database; Samuel D. Harris and Polly D. Harris to William McLain, 3 May 1849, in Bell I. Wiley, ed., *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1980), 225-26; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 14 September 1848, Reel 56, no. 281, RACS (both quotations).

28. Calorusso, "Rethinking the Role of the Landscape in Historic Interpretation," 156, 157.

29. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Dec. 1847, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS.

30. James Bratton's Will (1814) in James L. Douthat, *Montgomery County, Virginia Will Book #2, 1809-1817*, Reel 14; Dickenson, *Entitled!*, 63.

31. ACS Database; Nicholas Chevalier to William McLain, 2 Nov. 1847, Reel 53, n. 122, RACS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS (quotation). Although the ship register lists the age of Abram Melville as 30, letters from Chevalier and Ruffner indicate that Abram was 37.

32. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS (both quotations).

33. Ruffner to McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS.

34. The Lynchburg *Virginian* ran a few items concerning the ACS and Liberia, but none of the pieces concerned the Bratton affair. See Lynchburg *Virginian*, 2 Dec. 1847, p. 3; 27 Dec. 1847, p. 2; and 6 Jan. 1848, p. 1; Dickenson, *Entitled!*, 9-13; Bean, "The Ruffner Pamphlet of 1847," 260-82; Lee A. Wallace Jr., "The First Regiment of Virginia Volunteers, 1846-1848," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 77.1 (Jan. 1969): 50. See also, Fraser, "William H. Ruffner," 122-23.

35. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS (quotation).
36. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS (both quotations).
37. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS. Ruffner indicated that Milly Melville was 52. According to the *Liberia Packet* ship register, however, Milly Melville's age in 1850 was 69. *African Repository* (Apr., 1850): 105. See also, Nicholas Chevalier to William McLain, 2 Nov. 1847, Reel 53, n. 122, RACS.
38. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS (first quotation); John Hartwell Cocke to William McLain, 18 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 298, RACS (second quotation); Randall M. Miller, ed., *"Dear Master": Letters of a Slave Family* (1978; rpt., Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 36 (third quotation). See also, Cornelia Gainshaw to William McLain, 7 July 1848, Reel 56, RACS.
39. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 5 Jan. 1848, Reel 54, n. 21, RACS (quotation); Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Dec. 1847, PHS; Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 118.
40. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 10 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 255, RACS; Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 23 Dec. 1847, Reel 54, n. 313, RACS (both quotations).
41. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 22 Dec. 1847 (quotation), 23-25 Dec. 1847, all in Box 5, Folder 7, PHS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 5 Jan. 1848, Reel 54, n. 21, RACS.
42. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 1-3 Jan. 1848, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS.
43. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 3, 5 Jan. 1848, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 5 Jan. 1848, Reel 54, n. 21, RACS (all quotations).
44. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Jan. 1848, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS (quotations).
45. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 7 Jan. 1848, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS (first quotation); Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 121 (second and third quotations). On Hall, see Hall, *On Afric's Shore*, 41-42, 44-55.
46. Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Jan. 1848, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 15 Jan. 1848, Reel 54, n. 69, RACS (first quotation); Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 121 (second quotation), 122.
47. Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1997), 213-34.
48. James Hall to William McLain, 19 Jan. 1848, Reel 54, n. 90, RACS (first and second quotations); *African Repository* (Mar. 1848): 94.
49. *African Repository* (June 1848): 11; (July 1848): 212; (Aug. 1848): 251, 252; (Sept. 1848): 264-65, 267. See also, *African Repository* (Aug. 1850): 103-06, 233.
50. Statistics on Liberia come from the 1843 Liberian Census.
51. Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 19 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 199; ACS Database; McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, 104 (quotation).
52. Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 19 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 199 (first quotation); G.W. Leyburn to William McLain, 20 Sept. 1848, Reel 56, RACS (second quotation).
53. Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 19 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 199 (quotation)
54. Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 144-46; William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 16 Sept. 1848, Reel 56, n. 281, RACS (quotation)

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55. Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 122.
56. Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 122-24.
57. William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 20 May 1848, Reel 56, n. 5, RACS (all quotations).
58. Ruffner to William McLain, 25 July 1848, Reel 56, n. 18, RACS (first quotation); William H. Ruffner to William McLain, 3 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 135, RACS (all other quotations).
- Four years later, in 1852, Ruffner, while living in Philadelphia, worked on behalf of colonization and published a sermon entitled *Africa's Redemption*. In the sermon, Ruffner contrasted the abolitionists' "anti-slavery madness" with "calm, dignified, wise, efficient and beneficent" work of colonizationists who had liberated thousands of Southern slaves. The ACS, he argued, remained "the star of hope to all true and rational lovers of Negro freedom" (Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 213). More than 20 years later, Ruffner continued to praise the Society. The ACS, he told his children in 1873, was the noblest charity to ever dignify the continent (Fraser, "William Henry Ruffner," 125). In the 1890s, however, Ruffner concluded that Liberia was a "failure" and described Kent's actions in 1847 as not "contrary to the laws of human nature" (Ruffner Diary, 1843-1847, 6 Dec. 1847, Box 5, Folder 7, PHS).
59. Cyrus and Milly Melville, along with Iremus Barnett, another member of the second Bratton party, died soon after landing in Liberia (*African Repository*, Aug. 1850: 233). On Bratton's second manumission, see Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 17 July 1848, Reel 56, n. 71; Nicholas Chevalier to William McLain, 8 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 150; Dorothea Bratton to William McLain, 19 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 199; G.W. Leyburn to William McLain, 28 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 232; G.W. Leyburn to William McLain, 29 Aug. 1848, Reel 56, n. 233; William Ruffner to William McLain, 14 Sept. 1848, Reel 56, n. 281; G.W. Leyburn to William McLain, 20 Sept. 1848, Reel 56; F. Johnston to William McLain, 22 Sept. 1848, Reel 56; all in RACS.