

In Slavery and in Freedom: Oliver C. Gilbert and Edwin Warfield Sr.

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Oliver Gilbert went shopping for a new suit at Rogers, Peet & Co. on Broadway in New York City in 1884. A music teacher and father of five, he had not been in the habit of shopping for expensive clothing. For this special occasion, he needed gentleman's attire, including a hat and a silk umbrella. Rogers, Peet advertised wise counsel for occasions such as courtship or marriage. Full dress suits, hats, shoes, and vests could all be purchased to create a complete outfit.¹ Gilbert sought the complete look. Every detail had to be perfect, for he was preparing to visit his Maryland past. Thirty-six years had gone by since he had escaped at age sixteen from forced service to the Watkins family near Clarksville.

In 1884, Gilbert was living on North Twentieth Street in Philadelphia with his wife and children.² His life had been far different from those of the white tradesmen who were his neighbors. Born Oliver Cromwell Kelly about 1832 to Cynthia Snowden, a slave, he and his siblings had become the servants of a Revolutionary War hero, Col. Gassaway Watkins, on his plantation—Walnut Grove—near Clarksville. Gilbert's father was Joseph Kelly, a free black from the nearby town of Owingsville, Maryland. At Watkins's death in 1840, Gilbert and his immediate family had been dispersed among Watkins's heirs. Gilbert became a servant to Watkins's daughter Margaret, who had married Albert Warfield. Because Margaret Watkins Warfield had a surplus of servants, she gave Oliver Gilbert to her brother, Dr. William W. Watkins, who lived at Richland, nearby.

After several unsuccessful attempts, Gilbert fled Richland in 1848 with a small group of slaves. In a state where nearby urban employment, easy access to shipping, close proximity to Pennsylvania abolitionists, and a large free black population, such a move was possible.³ The slaves slipped away from a St. James Parish camp meeting, then Gilbert made his way from Maryland into Pennsylvania, eluding capture several times along the way. In Pennsylvania he and one of his brothers adopted the surname Gilbert after Amos Gilbert, an antislavery activist in Lancaster. In 1849 he found work as a waiter on the steamboat *Penobscot*, running from Philadelphia to New

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York, but in the spring of 1850 he moved to the resort city of Cape May, New Jersey, to become a waiter at the Columbia House. Later he moved to New York, where he worked as a waiter in the Hotel Earle until he saw his former master's brother enter the hotel. Fearing he might be captured and returned to slavery, Gilbert moved on to Boston and joined that city's population of fugitive slaves.⁴

Oliver Gilbert might have remained longer in Boston had the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 not been passed. As slave catchers came to Boston with the law on their side, African Americans in the city began to look for safer shelter. After the arrest of fugitive slave Shadrach Minkins in February 1851, Gilbert, with the help of the Boston Vigilance Committee, left for Halifax, Nova Scotia, intent upon sailing to England, but changed his mind after a terrible storm at sea. He then returned to Boston, and was there only briefly when, on April 12, 1851, Thomas Sims was captured and returned to slavery. At that point, again with the help of the vigilance committee, he traveled to Lee, New Hampshire, with a letter of introduction from William Lloyd Garrison to the Cartland family.⁵

After two years in New Hampshire, Gilbert briefly returned to Massachusetts before moving west to Rochester, New York, the home of Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1838. In 1854 Gilbert gave a speech at Rochester's Zion Church about the slave hunt in Boston. The following year, he was accused of soliciting money for fugitive slaves on the streets of Rochester and pocketing it himself, an accusation that recurred six months later. Gilbert made no mention of this activity in his memoir or his letters, but he might have viewed it as a necessary means of survival. The following year Gilbert moved to Troy, New York, where again he was accused of begging. An acquaintance, black abolitionist William J. Watkins Jr., excoriated him in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* as damaging the antislavery movement with his behavior, and expressed his fear that Gilbert would end up in the state prison.⁶ Born in Baltimore to free parents, Watkins had never been enslaved, so he had a less-than-full understanding of what the institution might do to an individual.

Gilbert left Troy for another resort city, Saratoga Springs, where he found legitimate work in a hotel. While there he married and began a family. He also corresponded with William Lloyd Garrison and actively promoted the advancement of his peers by serving as temporary secretary of the New York State Colored Labor Convention in 1870, and as a member of the executive committee of the state labor union.⁷ He took his wife and children to the Philadelphia Centennial celebration in 1876 and by 1880 had moved the family to Philadelphia, where he died in 1912. Throughout his life Gilbert gave lectures about his own experiences as a slave and the future of his race, and performed with his family, the Gilbert Family Jubilee Singers, at churches and opera houses throughout the Northeast.⁸

a 22-1W"

\$600 REWARD will be given for the delivery in Baltimore or Howard District Jail, or \$200 for either, of the following described NEGRO BOYS, who left the Camp-Meeting at Hobbs' School House, Howard District, on Sunday evening, 20th instant:

BEN, a tall Black Boy, about 20 years of age.
SAM, a tall Mulatto; impediment in speech; brother of Ben.
OLIVER KELLY, a stout, thick set Black, about 20 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches high. Address Clarks-ville, Howard District.

WM. CLARK, or
DR. WM. W. WATKINS.
a 22 St*

Runaway slave ad for Oliver Kelly, later known as Oliver C. Gilbert (Baltimore Sun, August 22, 1848.)

Back to the Past

In 1876, Gilbert had sent a copy of the *Progressive American* to Dr. William W. Watkins, his former master, whom he had not seen since 1848.⁹ Gilbert sent the newspaper because it contained his letter about organizing the “colored” voters of New York, one of several projects to which he devoted his efforts in middle life.¹⁰ The reply came in the form of a letter written by Watkins’s son, because the elderly Watkins was in ill health. “Father told me to say that he was much gratified to learn that you still remember him and how well you must have educated yourself to have been able to have written such a fine letter,” J. S. Watkins wrote, “which only shows what industry and perseverance will accomplish. He also says should you sometime visit Maryland, you surely must come to the place and see him.”¹¹

Eight years later, Gilbert accepted Watkins’s invitation to visit, although his former master had since died. Having already made an impression with his literacy, Gilbert had plans to expand that impression on his former owner’s family. Gilbert later wrote in his memoir:

Going back to Dixie after an absence of thirty years to the place where I was born. . . . When I left there I was very coarsely dressed in rags. Now that I am a freeman, I want those who are still at the old home, let them see what freedom has done for me. I went to Rogers and Petes great clothing house, Broadway and Houston Sts and bought myself a fine suit of clothes. I went to Dunlap, the hatter, near Union Square and bought a bell crown hat and a 26 inch silk umbrella. When I arrived at Broad Street station Philadelphia, I found that I still lacked something in the way of a complete outfit. It was a Cabber or handbag. I was bound to go looking all night to let the Maryland-

ers see what freedom had done for me. So, while waiting for a 6 o'clock train to Baltimore, I went to Wannamaker's and bought the desired articles. My family departed me at the depot and went uptown to our home 1954 N.20th Street and away I went for Baltimore, where I arrived about 9 o'clock p.m. I spent the Sabbath in Baltimore with some of my relatives.¹²

In middle age with a family of his own, Oliver Gilbert knew exactly what he hoped to accomplish in this visit. He approached it with a spirit of redemption, a sense of curiosity, a remembrance of childhood attachments, and complicated feelings for the families who had enslaved his own for several generations. He was determined to establish himself as a free man of value and status in the eyes of his enslavers, even if that status was partial fiction. His memoir continued:

On Monday, March 17, St. Patrick's Day, I left on the Baltimore and Ohio RR for Ellicot City. When I arrived there it was raining and I was some ten miles or more from the Old Plantation. How to get there was the question. If I undertook to walk it would look bad. It would show no improvement on my side, and besides, it might spoil my fine suit of clothes and my patent leather shoes walking in the mud. So, I was puzzled for a time what to do. Finally, I put on a bold front and inquired for a first class livery. I was told that a man by the name of Kaiser kept the best. I went to his stable and introduced myself as Prof. O. C. Gilbert of Philadelphia, and that I wished to obtain a turnout or a carriage to go out to Walnut Grove, the old Col. Watkins Plantation. He said he could accommodate me. I saw from his manner of talk that he was a pleasant German. I told him I wanted the finest team he had in livery, and that I wanted a span of horses and a coachman and that I would like, if possible, a white man. I had my reasons for such a request. I wanted to see how it would look down in Maryland, a white man acting as a coachman for a black man. A fine looking young German was selected and the turnout was superb. The silver mounted horses and carriage shone so bright you could see your face in it. When I entered the carriage, I could hardly believe my own eyes. When I sat down on those soft cushions they were so soft I kept sinking down and sinking down. I said to myself, this is you, Gilbert, back in old Maryland seated in this fine vehicle, and with supreme reflection and satisfaction I sat back and gave directions to the coachman, how to reach the Old Home. As we passed along Montgomery Turnpike, the colored people as well as the whites looked with great astonishment. You could hear some of them say I wonder who he is. He must be Fred Douglass or a Bishop. I enjoyed it hugely. We went by the way of Clarksville. The Watkins Post Office address was 3 miles away. I arrived at Walnut Grove. There stood the immense Walnut Tree on the fine lawn and where the gate once hung, still stands the

old Locust Tree, but none is there now. No white wash pail fence greeted my eyes. Old things seem to have passed away, all things had become new. I called to the coachman to stop. I got out of the carriage and walked up to the front door. Not as a poor, old slave expecting 9&30 lashes, but as a man. I rapped on the door soon an aged white man came to the door.”¹³

The white man who came to the door was John S. Watkins, son of Col. Gassaway Watkins. The younger Watkins, who had inherited Walnut Grove, was described as “genial, hospitable, and popular” in family records. His sister spoke with Gilbert, remembering his mother and all of the children, and Watkins, who had been a state senator from Howard County at the beginning of the Civil War, invited him to stay for dinner.¹⁴ Gilbert had staged his display to impress and had not considered the possibility of an extended visit and a dinner invitation. “Something I was not dreaming of. I did not know where they wanted to put me to eat. I was afraid they might send me to the kitchen and if they did, it would take down all of my style. So I politely declined by saying my coachman was waiting for me now.” In fact, Gilbert had never had much money, he had invested much in this visit, and he was not about to sacrifice the effect he had so expensively created.

Still uncertain about his current relationship with his former enslavers, Gilbert made his excuses and moved on to locate other Watkins family members nearby. As household servants, the members of Oliver Gilbert’s immediate family had known and interacted more closely with the white family than they would have had they been agricultural slaves. Their psychological entanglements were more complex.¹⁵ Gilbert knew where he stood with former slaves, but he had relationships to alter with white slaveholders. He had returned to Maryland not to converse with former slaves and servants but to meet former slaveholders on equal ground. At the courthouse, he found Dr. Lewis Watkins, clerk of the court and another son of his former master; he met Lewis Watkins’s son, and then visited Lewis’s sister, Mrs. Dorsey, whose maid wanted him to enter by the back door. Gilbert insisted on the front entrance.¹⁶

Gilbert’s visit to Maryland resulted in a decade-long exchange of letters with Governor Edwin Warfield Sr., grandson of Col. Gassaway Watkins and nephew of Dr. William Watkins. To date no evidence has been found that Gilbert used his return to Maryland as the subject of any speaking engagements, although he did claim to praise the Warfields and Watkinses in his “public engagements.”¹⁷ He would return again, and these visits to Maryland formed part of Gilbert’s series of reunions with people from his past at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1898, he took one of his sons to visit the Cartland family of Lee, New Hampshire, who had taken him in forty-five years earlier. He also spoke with M. M. Fisher, a Massachusetts abolitionist who contributed to Prof. Wilbur Siebert’s extensive research about the Underground Railroad. After performing at a concert in Orchestra Hall in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1880, he told the story of his escape from slavery and mentioned that Thaddeus

Stevens had been one of the men who had helped him in Lancaster.¹⁸ Evidently, Gilbert was trying to ensure his place in the historical record of the Underground Railroad. His return visit to Maryland figured prominently in his memoir, which he probably wrote early in the twentieth century from motives that appear to have been both personal and financial, in that they were intended for future publication.

The exchange of letters between Gilbert and Edwin Warfield reveals much about the skills Oliver Gilbert acquired in slavery and honed in freedom, and about an old southern slaveholding family's sense of identity. His worries about status aside, Oliver Gilbert held his own in conversation with the man who would become governor of Maryland. Warfield had been a child when Gilbert escaped from slavery. Definitions of liberty, family, childhood attachments, attitudes about race and identity, and mutual recognition of a sense of obligation on the part of the slaveholder—all are revealed in this correspondence.

Oliver Gilbert spent his post-slavery life lecturing, writing, organizing, and singing against slavery. He remained driven by the “past, present, and future of his race.”¹⁹ He looked toward a new future, a vision he shared with fellow escaped slave Frederick Douglass, of a redefined nation. But he was intelligent and experienced enough to know that he would have to work for it.²⁰ On the other hand, Edwin Warfield Sr. spent his adulthood focused on the veneration of his family's past: benevolent slaveholding, Revolutionary War ancestry, political prowess, and Confederate service. Warfield saw a future for himself based only on the past, and it turned out that he, too, would have to work to maintain that vision. The contradictions he embraced in advocating liberty for some at the expense of others, and his limited perspective on the lives of those whom his family had enslaved, set him apart from Oliver Gilbert in a number of ways. Both men, it might be said, were enslaved by their life experiences: Gilbert in his continuing need to assert his rightful place in a racially charged society, and Warfield in his need to defend the only life he had known as a valid and honorable one. Each man's identity was determined and challenged by his relationship with the other.²¹

It is not known if Gilbert had any contact with his former master's family in the twelve years between his visit to Walnut Grove in 1884, and his first letter to Edwin Warfield, which was dated October 10, 1896, and which Warfield answered five days later. Gilbert's letter has been lost, but, with the assistance of Aunt Caroline Watkins, Warfield replied with information about Gilbert's early life. The stories included the death of Gilbert's grandmother, Rachel Snowden, by lightning as she sat in the chimney corner at Richland.

The differences between this free black man and this former slaveholder revealed themselves almost immediately. Gilbert had sent Warfield a program from a performance of his Gilbert Family Jubilee Singers, and Warfield promised to attend a concert should one take place in Baltimore. To Warfield, the Gilbert Family Singers were a “glee club.” Newspaper accounts reported that they sang “plantation

songs.”²² To the Gilberts, their music was a form of social activism. Warfield ended by praising Gilbert’s family in Maryland as of “honest upright stock” and “connected to quite a number of leading colored people in our county.” He meant they were formerly enslaved people who were a credit to their masters, slaves who reinforced their masters’ self-images. However, Warfield could not ignore the fact that Gilbert took his own freedom and challenged Warfield’s identity in the process.²³

Liberty

Edwin Warfield Sr., described in newspaper accounts and in family histories as social, sentimental, domestic, and always pleasantly interested in the past, held his Revolutionary War associations dear.²⁴ A devoted Democrat, he hosted political soirees and made speeches on request. His political affiliations led to his holding the offices of register of wills, state senator, surveyor of the Port of Baltimore, delegate to the National Democratic Committee, and, in 1903, the governorship. He was a founder of an insurance company and a bank. Warfield was president of the National Congress of the Sons of the American Revolution and served six terms as president of the Maryland Historical Society. He was a man of means, whose personal and family power had originated before Emancipation. The Warfield family heritage included the institution of slavery, but they preferred to see themselves as kind and gracious masters caught up in a system beyond their control.

Aware that slavery was “inconsistent with the character of our republican institutions,” the Warfields of the early twentieth century recast their past to be as benign as possible.²⁵ Warfield’s maternal grandfather, Gassaway Watkins, held twenty-four slaves in 1840, the year he died. Warfield’s uncle, Dr. William Watkins, owned six slaves of various ages and genders in 1850, when he was seventy. Edwin Warfield knew life only in the context of slaveholding. Liberty for some and slavery for others coexisted in Warfield’s Maryland. More than just a financial investment, slaveholding remained part of Edwin Warfield’s culture, and his family employed household help of color long after slavery ended (two white servants and four black servants in 1900).²⁶

Warfield’s understanding of “liberty” assumed a hierarchical social structure, with slaves or servants forming the lower tier, and he continued throughout his life to master the lives of others. As a politician, Warfield placed himself at the center of Maryland’s political responses to the Civil War. The “Negro problem” recurred throughout his career in Maryland politics, particularly in his 1903 run for governor.

During the Civil War, Maryland assumed the ambiguous stance of the border states: aligned with the Union, but expecting life to continue after hostilities ceased as it had been before the war. Maryland slaveholders clung to the belief that the war was about disunion, not slavery. After President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed the slaves in Confederate states but not in the Union state of Maryland, the temporarily Unionist-controlled (later Republican) legislature in 1864

passed a new constitution that outlawed slavery in the state. Many of Maryland's slaves had already escaped and sought protection with the Union army. "Had it not been for ballots cast by soldiers in the field—in a procedure that many considered irregular—the inevitable would have failed to muster a majority in Maryland."²⁷ On November 1, 1864, Maryland's new constitution took effect, replacing its constitution of 1850, which had forbidden passage of "any law abolishing the relation of master or slave, as it now exists in this State."²⁸ But Maryland's Union party were in control only briefly, and after the war Republicans continued to look to black voter support as a means of regaining some of that power, something they accomplished—again only briefly—in 1895.²⁹

National support for Reconstruction waned quickly. Less than three years after the state constitution of 1864 went into effect, Maryland adopted its fourth constitution, which is still in effect today, although it has been amended over the years. The "Negro" of Maryland would not vote until the congressional election of 1870, after the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—unanimously rejected by the Maryland legislature—outlawed discrimination in voting based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.³⁰

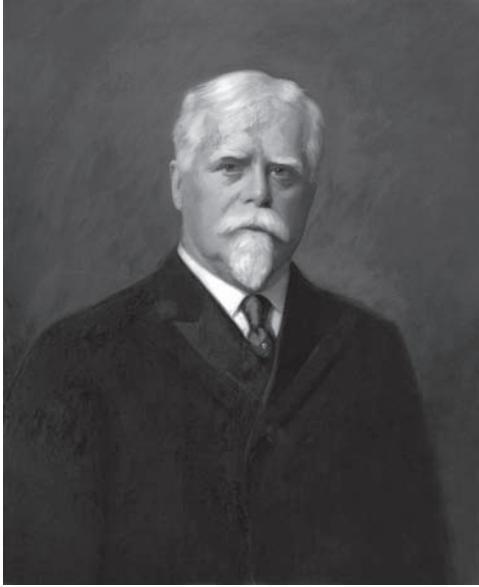
By the late nineteenth century, bitter factional fighting within and between political parties in Maryland continued, with disfranchisement of the "Negro" taking center stage in the debate. Blacks in Maryland did not remain silent.³¹ The possibilities inherent in a black electorate loomed as a threat to many of the state's white politicians, and several unsuccessful attempts were made to disfranchise black voters in Maryland over the first decade of the twentieth century. At a Baltimore rally of Democrats in 1899, during his unsuccessful first run for governor, Warfield was quoted as fearing the 39,120 black voters could march to the polls and "slaughter" the white vote. He said in an election speech of 1903, "I do not want to be Governor of this State unless I am elected to that high office by a majority of the white voters of Maryland. This election is a contest for the supremacy of the white race in Maryland. . . . The elevation of the negro is a well-nigh hopeless task, so long as they exercise like dumb driven cattle, solidly and without intelligence or reason, their right of suffrage as a weapon of offense against the Democratic party, directed and guided by Republican politicians."³² Warfield called for a Democratic vote in order for whites to retain control.³³

A complete and immediate end to slavery in Maryland affected more than the enslaved, particularly in the southern counties and on the Western Shore, where slaves had lived in greater numbers. In his 1903 run for governor, according to the *Baltimore Sun*, Warfield "brought an appeal from the women of Southern Maryland, that the state go Democratic and give them a feeling of safety from the negro population."³⁴ Fears of sexual and other forms of violence by former slaves toward whites continued to drive a political movement to disfranchise black voters, and still drove white southerners' understanding of liberty as endangered by the prospective

political power of those they had once dominated. Emancipation ruptured a social and economic structure that supported the superiority of wealthy slaveholders over other whites as well as over blacks enslaved and free. Changing the old ways promised to be politically, physically, and socially threatening for former slaveholders, while holding the only hope for blacks in Maryland. Politics, racism, and an intense desire on the part of former slaveholders to regain their prewar power had forged a powerful movement. Edwin Warfield participated fully in that movement as he corresponded politely and warmly with Oliver C. Gilbert, organizer of “colored” laborers and “colored” voters.

Warfield explained to Gilbert that the Warfields and the Watkinses were not responsible for slavery, an opinion common among other slaveholding families.³⁵ Edwin Warfield’s hierarchical concept of liberty obligated him to see his slaves as humans but with a separate place in “God’s scheme.”³⁶ The white man’s liberty remained his top priority. In Warfield’s recollection, Oliver Gilbert ran away because “the longing for freedom became so intense in him that he could not resist the temptation, and that he did not run away because of bad treatment, but was, on the contrary, kindly treated.” Warfield seemed oblivious to the inherent contradictions in his position, although his continued correspondence with his family’s former slaves—Oliver Gilbert was not the only former slave with whom Warfield remained in contact—betrays the complexity of his feelings. Gilbert’s escape challenged everything Warfield believed about himself and his family’s past, but in order to preserve his sense of his own identity he had to welcome Oliver Gilbert back as only a benevolent slaveholder would.³⁷

Oliver Gilbert quite naturally held a different view of liberty. Warfield’s maternal grandfather, Gassaway Watkins, had reveled in his Revolutionary War service to preserve the liberties of American colonists from British interference. Gilbert had listened to those stories as a child servant and now told Warfield, “I . . . heard the Colonel, time and time again, give his thrilling reminiscences of the daring and bloody conflicts he had in the Revolutionary struggle,” adding, “Perhaps he thought me too ignorant to understand his talk.”³⁸ Gilbert agreed that he had been relatively well treated, but he always knew that his situation was precarious: He could have been sold by the Watkins family at any time, and the threat of physical punishment was a fact of life. Interestingly, he did not repeat to Warfield the allegations made in his memoir of his physical and psychological punishment at the hands of the Watkins family. In fact, throughout this correspondence, Gilbert repeatedly complimented Warfield and mentioned little that was negative about his early life in slavery. Gilbert knew he had to act respectfully with Warfield in order to continue this conversation, from which he stood to benefit. So he let Warfield repeat his version of the family’s humane treatment of its slaves without much contradiction. He did, however, describe the overwhelming fear of being sold South. On that point Gilbert did not compromise.³⁹



Edwin Warfield (1848–1920), scion of an old and influential slaveholding family denied responsibility for the institution in his correspondence with Gilbert and later ran for governor on a platform that endorsed white social and political control. (Maryland Historical Society.)

The chances that members of Gilbert's family would be sold South increased as time passed. On its Western Shore, Maryland's fertile farm lands had once produced bumper crops of tobacco, so much so that the land eventually grew depleted. Less labor-intensive crops supplanted tobacco, and large numbers of slaves eventually proved a financial burden to slaveholders. Some slaves were hired out to urban employers to earn money for their masters. Others were sold to slave traders who in turn sold them to larger plantations farther south, where the rise of cotton and sugar plantations paralleled the fall of tobacco production in the eastern states. Being sold South (Gilbert called it being sold to Georgia) was known as a horrible fate because of separation from one's family and the fear of inhumane treatment. The possibility of being sold to slave traders loomed before Gilbert early on and inspired his escape.⁴⁰

In a letter to Warfield, Gilbert recalled that a slave trader (probably one Isaac Anderson) once visited the Watkins plantation leading two slaves tied together. William Watkins toyed with the young Gilbert, asking if he wished to go with them. Gilbert replied that he thought his mistress, Dr. Watkins's wife, could not spare him. In Gilbert's mind, he had not begged but simply stated his importance to the family. Watkins then told the slave trader that he would not sell Gilbert, his wife's waiter, but he did sell Gilbert's cousin William Dorsey, whom they never heard from again. Gilbert was haunted by the image of Dorsey's free wife Lousie begging them to let her husband go. Warfield said of this incident, "I never heard of Uncle Doctor selling William, and I presume the only reason he did so was because of some insubordination; however, those were the painful things connected with the institution of slavery."⁴¹ The details of this incident as described in Gilbert's letter vary slightly

from his memoir, but clearly the Watkins family used the threat of selling their slaves South and, on occasion, followed through on the threat. This incident would prove an important crossroads for Oliver Gilbert. It taught him the lifesaving importance of the ability to communicate effectively and the insecurity of his position.

To Oliver Gilbert, liberty would include the ability to profit from his labors, to keep his immediate family together, to live free of prejudice against his race, and to express his own opinions in politics and as a human being. Although he could indeed be slyly manipulative, the evidence indicates he cared deeply what others thought of him, and he struggled with his own feelings of worthiness. Not only did Gilbert want to impress his former masters on his return visit, but he wanted the black people of his former home to mistake him for Frederick Douglass or a bishop. Being Oliver Gilbert was not enough for him.⁴² He remained determined to stand as a man among men despite his background in slavery and continually felt compelled to prove his equality in a world dominated by white men. As a former slave, he bore the scars of that institution long past the term of his enslavement.⁴³

Family

Edwin Warfield exemplified the evolution of the perception of eighteenth-century slave ownership into a sentimental, “paternal” view of slaveholding in the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ As the nineteenth century progressed, sentimentality with regard to slavery tinged much of American culture, not just the South. Wrapped in images of benevolence, generosity, religion, and patriotism, former slaveholding families came to view their past proudly as a service to mankind.⁴⁵ The Warfield family forgot not only the details of manumission but also the slave-trading that characterized much of Maryland’s nineteenth-century slavery. Edwin Warfield could not remember his family selling slaves despite Oliver Gilbert’s remembrance of William Dorsey’s fate. Warfield did finally admit that they may have sold the disobedient slaves, but his remembrance would not allow for the harsh realities of a slavery-based economy; only when pressed did he admit that the preservation of order took precedence.

Warfield wrote, “As long as I live I shall always feel a warm affection for all of the colored people who belonged in our family, and my heart goes out to them with the same affection almost that I feel for my own blood and kin.”⁴⁶ Warfield’s definition of family expanded enough to include the dependent slaves of his immediate family. The rise of slavery early in the nineteenth century altered the concept of family for many slaveholders of the western Chesapeake. The number of slaves in some slaveholding households increased until they far outnumbered the white family and created a wider hierarchical community, a “landscape” of interrelationships.⁴⁷ The workings of an estate depended on large numbers of people all under the guidance and authority of the master. Almost as if gathering his extended family to reminisce, Warfield intended to bring former field and house servants whom his grandfather and father had “endeavored to rear and care for humanely and faithfully” together



“The Old Folks at Home Again at Oakdale.’ Reunion—August 16, 1902. Governor Warfield seated on porch of old servants quarter. (1)Asbury Snowden, (2) Hanson Dorsey, (3) Warner Cooke, (4) Remus Cooke, (5) Laura, daughter of Henny Bond, (6) ‘Aunt’ Betty Bowie, (7) ‘Aunt’ Henny Bond, (8) Clagett Bowie, (9) Susan Garner, (10) George Garner, and (11) Charles Asa Harriday.” (Courtesy of the Howard County Center of African American Culture, Howard Community College.)

with their former masters and mistresses in a formal reunion. Any incidents of ill-treatment had vanished from the slaveholder's memory. He had no reason to believe that his family's former slaves would not want to reunite with the Warfields.

On Saturday, August 16, 1902, Warfield hosted "Old Home Coming Day" at Oakdale, the family estate built by his father in 1838. He sent written invitations to the "colored people" who had been born at Cherry Grove—the home of his paternal great-grandfather Joshua Warfield—and Oakdale prior to 1862, the year in which they were "liberated or rather emancipated by President Lincoln." [Warfield's memory was indeed foggy—Lincoln never emancipated Maryland slaves.] A local newspaper's account together with Warfield's own description of the gathering mentioned an extensive luncheon menu and fond memories of the past. Among the ten survivors, of the seventy once enslaved who returned for the occasion, Warfield noted discussion of "happy incidents" and "pleasant times."⁴⁸ Warfield's father Albert has been described as "one of the largest slave-owners in this section of the state."⁴⁹ The fact that ten people returned to the old plantation hints at the complex of relationships between master and slave. The location of their childhood, Oakdale, must have also rekindled mixed feelings about the Warfields for those ten. Three of them were still employed at Oakdale at the time of the reunion, and seeing old friends and relatives may have been the primary motivation for the other seven to return. They may have felt undeniable attachments to the location and associations of their childhoods and been influenced by the widespread feeling of sentimentality for the past stirred by the nation's centennial celebrations and the revival of rural colonial traditions. The newspaper account claimed the plantation was "home" to every one of them, including those who had not been back since emancipation. With no record of their thoughts and feelings, their voices must remain silent. Oliver Gilbert was not present at the reunion, whether because he turned down an invitation, was not invited, or could not attend is not known. He was not born at Oakdale, as were some members of his extended family, so perhaps he was not invited. Certainly such a setting would have proved unsettling for a man like Gilbert, who preferred to put his own subordination in the past in his correspondence with Edwin Warfield. Gilbert's sister Betty's sons, Remus and Warner Cooke, did attend; they were born on the Oakdale plantation after Betty's marriage to Stephen Cooke in 1855. One newspaper described "old Aunt Betty," at age seventy-seven, one of the oldest attendees, as standing "spellbound" before a portrait of Albert Warfield. Twice Oliver Gilbert asked Warfield for a copy of the photograph of the reunion, which had been posed before the servants' quarters at Oakdale.⁵⁰ Gilbert neglected to specify whether he wanted the photograph for the image of his family members, or of Warfield, or perhaps for both reasons.

Gilbert rarely mentioned his relatives who remained in Maryland, although he wrote frequently about his immediate family in Philadelphia. It could be that he tailored his comments in his memoir and in his letters to the white audience of his imagination.⁵¹ Perhaps discussion of his extended family in Maryland would have

reminded him of a life he preferred to rise above. While the institution of slavery may have expanded Warfield's ideas about family, its repercussions apparently restricted Oliver Gilbert from close relationships with some of his own relatives.

Slavery separated families, but escape from slavery often did the same. Though some of Gilbert's siblings remained enslaved in Maryland, many had escaped. As late as 1870, Gilbert's mother "Sinthey" lived in Howard County with her second husband John Brook. Gilbert's sister Betty and her husband lived next to them. His brothers Remus and Reuben, and his sister Sarah, had all escaped before he did. Reuben had settled in New Brunswick, Canada. Gilbert heard at one point that Sarah was in Massachusetts at the same time he was in New Hampshire. We do not know if they ever reunited. Gilbert's sister Isabella reportedly escaped with the assistance of William Lloyd Garrison's connections in Maryland, although she eventually returned to Maryland in freedom.⁵² Gilbert's half-sister Harriet remained in Maryland with family as did many other extended family members.⁵³ Gilbert lived in New York State from the mid-1850s through the 1870s. He had married and was building a family of his own. Maria, Gilbert's wife, is rarely mentioned specifically in his writings, although he frequently promoted the Gilbert Family Jubilee Singers. Maria, intelligent and supportive, transcribed his memoir and wrote one of their family's last letters to Edwin Warfield.⁵⁴

If Oliver Gilbert felt a sense of kinship with any of the Watkins/Warfield family, he remembered the women with the most pleasant associations. Although he may have been connected by blood to the Watkins men, Gilbert remembered Margaret Watkins Warfield more fondly. He stated "without flattery" that he might have remained in slavery until "Lincoln's emancipation" had he been allowed to stay with her. Women slaveholders, particularly those subjugated by a patriarch, often made some connection with their enslaved as people, although they too were caught up in the system. Gilbert was only eight years old when he was moved into Margaret Warfield's household while his mother remained behind. His memoir details the sympathy and kindness of the Watkins women toward their slaves, including William Watkins's young sister's reassurance to Gilbert's mother that her son Remus had not been captured in his escape attempt. Dr. Watkins had told them Remus had been caught and "sold to Georgia," even though it was apparently not true. This young woman counteracted the psychological torment inflicted by her brother, but feared for her own safety in doing so. Owning slaves freed white women from many of the tasks of running a household to devote themselves to the human interactions expected in an ideal family environment, but women remained as complicit in the business of slavery as their husbands and fathers. Oliver Gilbert may have been fond of Margaret Warfield, but she received him as property and gave him as property to her brother, a man who treated his slaves less than kindly.⁵⁵

Aside from the threat of being sold, Gilbert recognized in his correspondence the fair treatment extended him by his owners, although doing so may have been

partly a means of manipulating Warfield. Gilbert did feel some connection to Walnut Grove, simply because, for better or for worse, those slaveholding families belonged to his childhood. Perhaps because he had been treated better, Gilbert did not exhibit the overt bitterness of Frederick Douglass toward his old master, or perhaps Gilbert used his bitterness in more subtle ways to inform his actions. Ever conscious of his own status as a free man, Gilbert maintained a gentlemanly yet firm communication with the masters and mistresses of his past. What was at work beneath that gentlemanly veneer is open to speculation.

Race

Oliver Gilbert and Edwin Warfield Sr. did eventually meet, as described in Warfield's dictated account of a visit from Gilbert on February 4, 1908.⁵⁶ Warfield praised Gilbert for his musical talent and his children, who had become the Gilbert Jubilee Singers. Indeed, Warfield delighted in the visit. He wrote:

Your call gave me great pleasure, and I shall always cherish the memory of it. I am very proud of the fact that you and your children have been making such an honorable record in life, because it bears out what I have always asserted, that the relation existing between the master and his servants in the old days was one of affection and loyalty. Your bearing was just as I wanted it to be, that of a man who was not ashamed of his parentage and early environment and one who realized that he had an honored self respecting ancestry.⁵⁷

In 1908, after a hiatus of several years, the exchange of letters between the two men resumed shortly after news of their meeting had spread through two Maryland newspapers. It was the two newspaper accounts, one original to the *Sun* and reprinted in the *Philadelphia Record*, and another article in the *American*, that brought Gilbert and Warfield to the uncomfortable subject of race.⁵⁸

The most blatantly racist article, published in the *Sun*, was entitled "Back to Massa Edwin." Particularly hurtful to Gilbert because of its caricature of him as a shuffling old man with a pronounced dialect deferring to his master, this article was also printed in Philadelphia where Gilbert lived. Whether the reprint was intended to hurt Gilbert in his hometown the record may never show, but Gilbert confronted Warfield with it almost immediately. In a letter dated February 13, 1908, he told Warfield that he had received a copy of the *Baltimore American* article, which he assumed Warfield had sent to him. He noted that he also had seen the article from the *Sun* reprinted in Philadelphia, its offensive headline set in capital letters. Gilbert said that although the reporter may have been trying to be witty and funny, "the day for the educated Negro, though once a slave, to use such language has passed and we don't do very much reckoning up this way."⁵⁹ Gilbert did not blame Warfield for the article in the *Sun*; he had "too much respect" for the Warfield family to think that

they could possibly ridicule someone who had served their family, and he knew “the good feelings that you entertain toward the Negroes of Maryland especially those that were once in your family.” Did Gilbert know of Warfield’s white supremacist views, and were his comments sarcastic? Or did he really mean what he said? Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between. Warfield did feel “kindly” toward those who had been enslaved and were “part of” his own family, but a larger conviction of racial equality never entered his thinking.

Warfield took no responsibility for the article. “I am glad that you received the newspaper clipping from the American which I sent you,” he wrote.

I was pained at the manner in which the facts were misrepresented in the other article to which you refer. The young man who wrote the story was unfamiliar with the conditions, and his negro dialect was anything but perfect. He made a mistake in writing in the vein that he did, and I think he realized the fact. I furnished him a copy of the data I dictated to my secretary in your presence, and he drew very largely upon his imagination.⁶⁰

Warfield considered as minor an incident that Gilbert took as a major assault on his dignity as a man and on the people of his race. In writing his memoir, Gilbert had reverted to dialect only when recreating his enslavement and escape; he used no dialect in discussing his life as a free man. A newspaper reporter characterizing him by dialect and submission in effect denied everything Gilbert had accomplished as a free man, an antislavery lecturer, and a political activist for men of color. In refuting the newspaper account, Gilbert wrote to Warfield of the visit with his own sort of condescension:

Returning from Washington where I had been and called on the President, I concluded not to slight you. I did not slip by the door minder to enter your office. I handed him my card and he asked me in, and showed me a seat, as he would any other man. I did not call for the purpose of rekindling the old feelings of ante bellum days. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. I called because I knew you to be friendly to the colored race and in my public speeches, I have had occasion to say a good word for you and your father’s family.⁶¹

Therein was the chasm between Gilbert and Warfield: Gilbert in word and action continually affirmed his status in his new life as a free man, while Edwin Warfield never moved on from his experiences based on the institution of slavery.

Obligation

Relationships within the system of slavery were never simple, and that which

existed between Oliver Gilbert and Edwin Warfield Sr. retained that complexity after the institution had died. Although Gilbert sought to move beyond his previous life, he evidently believed that former slaveholders remained obligated to their former servants, and he used his considerable talents to make that point. In a letter to Warfield dated November 29, 1910, Gilbert began one of his most polished performances, addressing Warfield as “Dear Sir and Friend.” Gilbert said his family had been ill but had recently recovered. “If I live to see the 13th of Dec. I will have been married 50 years a Golden Wedding. Think of it Governor. I would love dearly if you would not consider it presumptuous on my part to ask you to send a present of some kind in remembrance of the Warfields and Watkins family to a former servant to both. I hear of your good deeds as a philanthropist . . . through a source of my relatives near the old home in Howard Co. who like myself hold you and your family in high esteem.” He had, he claimed, never failed to talk about the good deeds of the “Southern White People” and “what you have done for our unfortunate race.” Claiming to be of “strictly temperate habits,” Gilbert assured Warfield that, if he cared to make a donation, it would be greatly appreciated and not wasted by “your Mother’s and Grandfather’s old servant.”⁶² This is the Oliver Gilbert who prided himself in his own accomplishments and independence, but who compromised that independence several times when he solicited the assistance of others. As it happened, Gilbert was once more desperate, just as he had been in New York when accused of begging. He was elderly and ailing with a wife and son whom he could not support. There were medical bills to be paid. When he had no resources, Gilbert used his creativity and intelligence to do whatever he deemed necessary to survive. His escape from slavery would not have been possible without that instinct for survival. Cleverly, Gilbert appealed directly to Warfield’s pride in his benevolence and sense of family honor. In a later letter, he stressed to Warfield that he had “little of this world’s goods, having devoted the best part of my life working for the progress of my race.”⁶³ Warfield sent a check for ten dollars, but Gilbert had played his last act. In a final letter, Gilbert’s widow Maria thanked Warfield as she notified him of her husband’s death. On July 14, 1912, Gilbert’s son Leon also thanked Warfield but requested that he send a replacement check made out to his mother since she could not cash one written to her deceased husband. The money, he added, would help with Gilbert’s medical and funeral expenses.⁶⁴

The Legacy of Walnut Grove

Toward the end of Oliver Gilbert’s life, Edwin Warfield wrote to him, “I expect I shall have to bring you back to Walnut Grove, and let you end your days in peace and quietude where you were born.”⁶⁵ Gilbert never lived to read those words, but ending his days at Walnut Grove would not have been as peaceful for him as it would have been for Edwin Warfield. Clearly Warfield had no concept of the man Oliver Gilbert had become or the vision Gilbert held so dear. Warfield’s Walnut Grove was not the

Walnut Grove of its enslaved people. Although their lives intersected, their stories differed. In 2011, the house still stands in Ellicott City, but its complex history has been simplified as it is reinterpreted centuries later. Visitors to the 2009 Decorator Show House in Ellicott City could pay to explore the house to benefit the preservation of historic sites in the area. The preservationist organization Historic Ellicott City, Inc., the sponsor of the event, described the house as built around 1780, . . . once the home of Colonel Gassaway Watkins, of the Army of the Revolution. The site overlooks some of the most beautiful farmland in Maryland. Located in Ellicott City, near Clarksville, the impressive stone building offers the designers such features as rich moldings, large fireplaces and beautiful hardwood floors.⁶⁶

Walnut Grove knows stories beyond those of architectural refinement. Within its walls, Maryland's history of liberty and slavery played itself out in microcosm. Historic Ellicott City was not the first to preserve the story of this house built by a Revolutionary War patriot. When Col. Gassaway Watkins's son John died in 1894, Edwin Warfield Sr. bought the house and combined it with an adjoining estate to restore Walnut Grove to six hundred acres of "the finest hay lands in Maryland."⁶⁷ With his own reverence for the past, Warfield made improvements to the house that his grandfather had built as "a commodious cottage of stone," with a walnut tree at the door. In fact some of those impressive architectural features of the house may have been Warfield's nineteenth-century improvements.⁶⁸ Watkins's Walnut Grove and Warfield's Walnut Grove will be preserved by Ellicott City. Oliver Gilbert's Walnut Grove lives in his surviving words.⁶⁹

NOTES

Several years ago, I expected to write an essay focused on Gilbert's stay with the Cartlands, a Quaker family in Lee, New Hampshire. I had been researching Oliver Gilbert's life for a decade and thought I had exhausted all possible sources. With his letters to the Cartland family as evidence, I successfully applied to add the Cartland house, where he had stayed, to the National Park Service Network to Freedom. I spoke at local gatherings about him in the context of the Underground Railroad in New Hampshire. Then the unexpected happened, and I was contacted by an antiques dealer from Philadelphia who had read on the Internet of my work on Gilbert. She had just purchased the papers of Oliver Gilbert, including his memoir, and was curious about my research. She generously shared the New Hampshire-related pages of Gilbert's memoir with me, but we came to no agreement over the disposition of the papers. Months after our correspondence had ceased, a descendant of Oliver Gilbert from the Philadelphia area contacted me. She also found me via the Internet, and I gave her the contact information for the antiques dealer who possessed her family's papers. The sequence of events almost seemed orchestrated by Oliver Gilbert himself. Much of this essay has been made possible through the generosity of the Gilbert family and that antiques dealer. The details of Oliver Gilbert's return to Maryland in 1884 come directly from his memoir. The memoir opens with his reconnection with the Watkins family of Howard County.

I would also like to thank Prof. J. William Harris of the University of New Hampshire for his insightful comments and criticisms, and Prof. Emeritus T. Stephen Whitman of Mt. St. Mary's University for sharing his expertise in Maryland history.

1. *New York Herald*, April 26, 1884.
2. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Federal Census of the Population for 1880, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 389.
3. A Quaker community of former Pennsylvania residents was established in 1772 in Ellicott City, where Oliver Gilbert was enslaved. See Alison Ellicott Mylander, *The Ellicotts: Striving for a Holy Community* (Ellicott City, Md.: Historic Ellicott City, Inc., 1991). Also see Kate Clifford Larsen, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004). Larsen examines the activities of Quakers in the manumission of slaves on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.
4. "Grandfather Gilbert" by Julia Gilbert. This is an unpaginated, shortened version of Gilbert's memoir copied by a descendant. Gilbert Family Papers, private collection.
5. Boston Vigilance Committee activities were financed primarily with contributions from white abolitionists, while black abolitionists like William C. Nell gave direct aid to the fugitives. Nell is listed as being reimbursed for aiding Oliver Gilbert in the Vigilance Committee records of March 31, 1851. See *Account book of Francis Jackson, Treasurer, 1850-1861*, of the Vigilance Committee of Boston (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1924). Unpublished memoir of Oliver Gilbert, 42-43, Gilbert Family Papers; O. C. Gilbert to Charles Sumner Cartland, January 9, 1904, Cartland Family Papers, MS Am1752, Series 4, 600, Houghton Library, Harvard University; "The Colored Labor Convention," *New York Herald* August 25, 1870.
6. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 30, 1854, July 27, 1855, and December 7, 1855. In the July 27, 1855, issue, junior editor William J. Watkins Jr. warned the public against men like Gilbert who used begging as a means of "getting along" and claimed men who preferred begging to work caused "serious damage to the Anti-slavery cause." Watkins targeted Gilbert again the following December in response to a reader's complaint about him. Watkins said he had known Gilbert for six years and had reasoned with him but feared Gilbert might end up in the state prison unless he stopped his "thieving career."
7. Gilbert to W. L. Garrison; Saratoga Springs, July 22, 1874, Garrison Collection, Ms.A.1.2, v.37, p.117, Boston Public Library.
8. Death certificate for Oliver C. Gilbert dated July 12, 1912, copy in the collection of the Gilbert Family Papers. *New Haven Evening Register*, June 16, 1883, p. 1; *New York Herald*, August 27, 1870, p. 8.
9. *The Progressive American* was an African American newspaper published from 1871 to the 1880s. Based in New York City, it was edited by John J. Freeman, who chaired the Republican Central Committee in New York.
10. He was appointed temporary secretary of the New York State Colored Labor Convention in Saratoga Springs in 1870. Other participants included Henry H. Garnett and a group of women who formed the committee on female labor and education. *New York Herald*, August 25, 1870.
11. Oliver Cromwell Gilbert memoir, untitled and undated, 51, Gilbert Family Papers.
12. *Ibid.*, 1-2. Gilbert was born and spent most of his childhood at Walnut Grove, Col. Gassaway Watkins's last home. He escaped from Dr. William Watkins, the son of Gassaway Watkins, at his home, Richland, nearby.
13. *Ibid.*, 2-4. Gilbert's mention of thirty-nine lashes may have referred to the capture and return to slavery of Thomas Sims in Boston in 1851 while Gilbert was there. Sims was said

to have been punished by his master with thirty-nine lashes, a number commonly meted out as punishment.

14. Joshua Dorsey Warfield, *The Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland* (Baltimore: Kohn & Pollock, 1905), 416.

15. Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 33. Household servants were more closely watched by whites and considered superior to field hands. See Jennifer Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

16. Julia Gilbert.

17. Gilbert to E. Warfield, February 13, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, Warfield Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park. [Hereinafter WFP.]

18. M. M. Fisher to Wilbur Siebert, March 23, 1893, cited in, "Underground Railroad in Massachusetts," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, New Series, vol. 45 (1936): 43. The original is in the Wilbur H. Siebert Manuscript Collection, Ohio Historical Society Archives/Library, Columbus. *The [Lancaster, Pennsylvania] Weekly Examiner-Herald*, August 4, 1880.

19. Julia Gilbert.

20. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 300–304.

21. Warfield held a reunion of ex-Confederates at Oakdale in June 1899. See "Reunion Dinner" in *Baltimore Sun*, June 12, 1899, copy in series 1, box 1, folder 9, WFP; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1–5.

22. Warfield to Gilbert, February 15, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP; *New Haven Evening Register*, June 16, 1883.

23. Warfield to Gilbert, October 15, 1896, Gilbert Family Papers.

24. Warfield, *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland*, 455. "The Nominee for Governor Mr. Edwin Warfield Descended from Distinguished Line," *Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1903; "Edwin Warfield Re-Elected Maryland Historical Society President for Sixth Term," *Baltimore Sun*, February 12, 1918.

25. Warfield, *Founders of Anne Arundel*, 455. *Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1903, and February 12, 1918. *Baltimore: Its History and Its People, Volume 2, Biography* (New York, 1912).

26. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Federal Census of the Population, 1870, Maryland, Howard County, Ellicott City; *Slave Inhabitants in Howard District in the County of Anne Arundel, State of Maryland, . . . 21st day of October, 1850*. U.S. Census, Howard County, Maryland, Election District 4, 1900.

27. Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 130.

28. *Archives of Maryland Historical List, Constitutional Convention of 1864* accessed at: <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc2600/sc2685/html/conv1864.html>.

29. Margaret Law Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870–1912* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 82.

30. *Ibid.*, 20–23.

31. Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 90–130.

32. Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 107–8.

33. "Rally of Democrats . . .," *Baltimore Sun*, November 3, 1899; Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990," Washington, D.C., U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, September 2002. Working Paper Series No. 56.

Accessed at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/twps0056.html>. See Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 107–8.

34. “Wait for Mr. Warfield,” *Sun*, October 29, 1903. See Michael Perman, *The Struggle for Mastery: Disenfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 233–34, for details of Warfield’s involvement in disenfranchisement of blacks in Maryland.

35. J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 47–49, 157. Southern slaveholders commonly absolved themselves of blame for the practice of slavery. Henry Laurens of South Carolina blamed the British. Warfield to Gilbert, February 15, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.

36. Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah*, 45.

37. Scott E. Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008). Warfield also corresponded with Charles Asa Harriday. See series 1, box 3, folder 1, WFP.

38. Gilbert to Warfield, May 1, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.

39. Special thanks to Stephanie Gilbert for pushing me to closely examine Gilbert’s treatment of Warfield. There is sufficient evidence of Gilbert’s ability to cleverly manipulate others, a skill he undoubtedly acquired in slavery.

40. See Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) for data on movement of slaves throughout the South.

41. Edwin Warfield Sr. to Gilbert, May 5, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.

42. Gilbert to Warfield, May 1, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP. Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 24–25.

43. Certainly immigrants, women, and the poor experienced intense discrimination at that time, but slavery robbed its victims in an especially brutal way.

44. Philip Morgan, “Three Planters and Their Slaves: Perspectives on Slavery in Virginia, South Carolina, and Jamaica, 1750–1790,” in Winthrop D. Jordan and Sheila L. Skemp, eds., *Race and Family in the Colonial South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 37–79; “At Oakdale Again: Mr. Edwin Warfield Holds Reunion of Former Slaves,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 1902; Warfield, *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties*, 455–56.

45. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) for a detailed interpretation of the basis for southern slaveholders’ view of slavery. Also see Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), for detailed definitions of patriarchy and paternalism.

46. Warfield to Gilbert, May 5, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.

47. Daniel Blake Smith, “In Search of the Family in the Colonial South,” 21–36 and Morgan, “Three Planters and Their Slaves,” in Jordan and Kemp, *Race and Family in the Colonial South*, 37–79.

48. “At Oakdale Again,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 1902. See also “Saturday August 16, 1902, Old Home Coming Day,” a handwritten description signed by Warfield, in series 1, box 4, folder 5, WFP. Volume 2 of the Oakdale Log Book, Historical Manuscripts, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Md.

49. Warfield, *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties*, 455.

50. A photograph of this reunion at Oakdale has been published in Joetta M. Cramm, *A Pictorial History of Howard County* (Norfolk, Va. : The Donning Co., 1987). The image is from the NAACP collection in Howard County.

51. Evidence exists in the page numbering and setup of Oliver Gilbert's memoir that it was intended for publication.
52. Garrison to J. Miller McKim, March 19, 1853, in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison: From Disunionism to the Brink of War: 1850–1860*, ed. Louis Ruchames, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), 4:54. Garrison noted that he had been approached by "a very worthy colored young man, (a fugitive slave from Maryland) who has a sister at Baltimore, also a slave." Gilbert, described as very intelligent by numerous sources, fit Garrison's description, and his sister Isabella fit the description Garrison gave to McKim of a woman who could pass for white (descendants describe her as having blue eyes). Garrison assured McKim there would be no risk of detection if he would follow instructions to get the girl out of Baltimore and on to Boston.
53. "At Oakdale Again," *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 1902. See series 1, box 4, folder 5, WFP. Volume 2 of the Oakdale Log Book. Historical Manuscripts, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Md.
54. Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon*, 115.
55. Gilbert to Warfield. May 1, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP. See Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 185. Mistresses were well aware that their slaves were commodities, since many received them as gifts, as did Margaret Watkins Warfield.
56. Series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP. Warfield made a practice of dictating accounts of incidents in his life to his secretary.
57. Warfield to Gilbert, February 15, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
58. *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1908; *Philadelphia Record*, March 1, 1908; *Baltimore American*, February 6, 1908. How much Warfield had to do with the accounts is uncertain, although he and members of his family owned interests in the *Ellicott City Times* and the *Daily Review*, and he was a high-profile political figure in Maryland.
59. Gilbert to Warfield, February 13, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
60. Warfield to Gilbert, February 15, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
61. Gilbert to Warfield, February 13, 1908, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
62. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1910, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
63. Gilbert to Warfield, May 1, 1911, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
64. Leon Gilbert to Edwin Warfield, July 14, 1912, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP; Maria Gilbert to Hon. Edwin Warfield, July 12, 1912 also folder 11, WFP.
65. Warfield to Gilbert, July 14, 1912, series 1, box 2, folder 11, WFP.
66. Historic Ellicott City, Inc. Presents Walnut Grove accessed at www.historicec.com/2009WalnutGrove.htm.
67. Warfield, *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties*, 416.
68. *Ibid.*
69. See Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon* for more about the preservation of historic sites associated with slavery.