



A Deeper History of the Chevy Chase Community

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Inclusion & Racial Justice Historic Review

Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church

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The land where Chevy Chase is located has been inhabited by humans since at least the end of the Pleistocene Era, about 20,000 to 10,000 years ago. (Humphrey/Chambers p7) The Native American cultures that we know of today had begun developing in about 1000 B.C.E., at the beginning of what is called the Woodland period. (Humphreys/Chambers p17) However, written records concerning the area's inhabitants begin in the 1500's when the early European explorers arrived.

According to Captain John Smith, one of the explorers connected to the Jamestown settlement established in 1606 in Virginia, the Maryland side of the Potomac River was inhabited by the Conoy (also spelled Kanoi, Kanawha, Canawese, Garawais in various historical documents). They were a tribe or tribal confederation of Algonquian-speaking people whose territory extended "northward from the Potomac to about Baltimore and included the several rivers and streams flowing into the Tidewater region of the Potomac and the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay". Smith identified two villages in what later became the Washington DC area. One unnamed village was located below Little Falls on the narrow terrace between MacArthur Boulevard and the C&O Canal. The village of Nacochtanke (or Nacostan) was located on the east bank of the Anacostia River. (Humphreys/Chambers p23)

The Province of Maryland was chartered in 1632 as a proprietary colony of George Calvert, Lord Baltimore and St. Mary's City on Maryland's eastern shore was established in 1634. (Wikipedia, Province of Maryland) However, as the settlers spread out from St. Mary's, conflict between the natives and settlers increased, the colonial government persuaded the Konoy to move, eventually establishing them on a large island in the middle of the Potomac River, near Point of Rocks, now called Heater's Island. (Humphreys/Chambers p27)

Most of the Conoy moved to the Susquehanna River near Bainbridge PA after an outbreak of smallpox took the lives of many. The final historical reference to these Conoy as a distinct tribe was made in 1777, at which time the tribe numbered 50 people. However, some Conoy remained in Maryland and their descendants have reestablished their identity as the Piscataway of southern Maryland. (Humphreys/Chambers p29)

By the time land grants were made to Europeans in the area that was to become Montgomery County Maryland, the native Americans were mostly gone from the area, leaving behind trails which became the main roads of Wisconsin Ave., River Road and Old Georgetown Road. (Offutt p3)

In the 1700's through to the mid 1800's, the main cash crop in Maryland was tobacco, which was very labor intensive and required an expansion of indentured servitude and later the importation of enslaved Africans. (Wikipedia, Province of Maryland)

In the Chevy Chase Maryland area, many early settlers had established large estates which originated from English land grants obtained before the Revolution. (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 8)

Owner of one of the oldest farms in the Chevy Chase area, Col John Courts obtained patent to the Clean Drinking farm and land in 1699. Charles Jones, who married into the family, obtained the land in 1750 and built a farmhouse there. The home was held in the family until 1911. Two local roads, Jones Bridge Rd and Jones Mill Rd, take their name from the Jones family. (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 22)

Charles Jones was a slave holder and raised tobacco on his plantation. His son, Charles Courts Jones, inherited the land in 1789, but was not a good manager, causing the plantation to go into decline. (CC Historical Society Newsletter, Fall 1998, article by Angela Lancaster). It was said that returning "from a trip to England, where he sold many thousand dollars' worth of tobacco raised upon his plantation, he had to show for his money only a gold lace coat and a jeweled sword". He served in the Revolutionary War and later entertained famous men at Clean Drinking. He married the daughter of Richard Hanson Harrison, aide to George Washington and afterward his private secretary. (Sunday Star, April 28, 1912)

In 1725, Joseph Belt received 560 acres of land in the area. His estate was named "Chevy Chase". Joseph Belt kept land south of what would become the Maryland line (once Washington DC was established in 1790) and gave his son Thomas 218 acres north of the Maryland line. (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 28) The Indian trail that traversed his property later became Belt Rd. (Offutt p 10) Thomas later sold his land to Abraham Bradley, who gave his name to Bradley Rd. Later this land became the site of the Chevy Chase Club. (Offutt p10)

Another estate in the Chevy Chase area was the No Gain farm, established on land bought by Zachariah MacCubbins in 1780. He built his farmhouse near Brookville Rd and Thornapple St. and today it is the site of the La Ferme restaurant. (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 26)

The land that formed these estates later became part of the new planned community of Chevy Chase established by Francis Newlands and his associates. (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 26)

Montgomery County was created at the Maryland Constitutional Convention in 1776. (Montgomery County Maryland, Our History and Government p 3)

In 1790, Congress approved the creation of a national capital and Maryland and Virginia were asked to donate land to form the city. Maryland donated land from Montgomery County, including the port city of Georgetown. Congress held its first session in Washington DC on Nov 17, 1800. (Wikipedia, Washington DC)

Tobacco wore out the soil, forcing farmers to clear more land to plant more crops. Poorer farmers could not compete and either became tenants or hired hands or moved west. (Offutt p14)

The collapse of tobacco markets, the silting of Georgetown harbor and the exhaustion of the land combined to leave much of Montgomery County poverty stricken and many farms abandoned by the mid-19th century. One historian said that "Montgomery County suffered from tobacco depleted soil more than any other county in the state." (Offutt p 19)

However, better farming methods and the development of road systems and railroads that allowed crops to be transported to customers eventually revitalized the County's agricultural economy. (Offutt p

19-25) By 1860, the area was once again prosperous. (Montgomery County Maryland, Our History and Government p 7)

There were Black residents, both free and enslaved, in the Washington D.C./Montgomery County area since before the Revolution. A 1775 Maryland census counted slightly more than 1,800 free people of African descent, 80% of whom were people of mixed racial origin. Few Black people of unmixed origin enjoyed freedom, with the vast majority being enslaved. (Free Blacks 1619 to 1860 – encyclopedia.com)

When created, Montgomery County started out with a sizable Black population, both enslaved and free. The 1790 County census, which included some parts of what would later become Washington D.C., counted 11,679 White and 6,324 Black inhabitants, with the Black inhabitants making up 33% of the population. (Offutt, p 16)

Negotiating the world as a free person of color was not easy in a society where slavery existed, but Captain George Pointer managed to build a career and raise a family under these circumstances. In 1829, he petitioned the Board of Directors for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company for work in a 11-page letter. In it, he outlined his accomplishments during his 40-year employment on the canals, which culminated with his position as Supervising Engineer in George Washington's Patowmack Company. Born in 1773, he had purchased his freedom at age 19 after beginning work as an enslaved laborer rented to the Patowmack Company at age 13. He became a Master of the Potomac River (see presentation from Sarah Toppins) doing the dangerous work of floating flat-bottomed boats carrying cargo, such as stone, down the Potomac before the construction of canals along the river in Virginia and Maryland. (Montgomery County, by Michael Dwyer, p 17) He and his family were able to purchase land of their own and maintain their freedom. In 1928, his great-granddaughter, Mary Moten, was interviewed by the Washington Post at her home at 5803 Broad Branch Road in Chevy Chase. She recounted the story of her mother, Mary Harris, who at 8 years old, piloted her grandfather George's canal boat as it carried President John Quincy Adams to the groundbreaking ceremony for the C&O Canal in 1828, one hundred years earlier. (Washington Post, 6/2/1928 from presentation – Sarah Toppins)

Maintaining their freedom was not always possible for free people of color, as they were required to carry proof that they were free. Without proof, they could be at the mercy of slave catchers, who went North to identify and kidnap Blacks that they suspected to be runaways. If they had no proof of their status as free people, they would be captured, labeled as fugitive slaves, and sold down South under the Fugitive Slaves Act of 1850.

Another former slave from Montgomery County, Josiah Hensen, felt that he had to leave the United States altogether to ensure that he and his family could be free. Born around 1789, Hensen was an enslaved man who lived on the Isaac Riley farm near Old Georgetown Road and Rockville Pike. He escaped to Canada in 1840 and established a community for fugitives like himself there. (Hensen memoir)

Hensen became a preacher and a businessman and wrote his memoir. Harriet Beecher Stow later used his story when writing "Uncle Tom's Cabin". (Bethesda & Chevy Chase, p 17, Escape to Dawn book)

During the Civil War, Maryland stayed in the Union, but the sympathies of many of the citizens were with the South. Union troops were stationed at Rockville and Poolesville and both armies marched through the area on their way to battle. (Offutt chapter 3)

Washington DC became the destination of many Blacks who hoped to find a new life there, after leaving the slave states during the war. There had been free Blacks living in Washington DC ever since it was created. The numbers had grown from 168 in 1820 to 564 in 1860. After the Civil War, in 1870, the

number of Black residents was 4,678. Many of these had settled near the forts built by the Union Army to protect Washington during the war, especially near Fort Pennsylvania, which later became Fort Reno. (Lankowski, "3506 McKinley Street NW", Chevy Chase Historical Website)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the countryside surrounding Washington DC was still mainly agricultural or undeveloped land. However, with the establishment of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, improvements in area roads, and establishment of electric trolley systems, the development of the modern suburbs around Washington DC began. (Offutt) However, at the same time, racial discrimination and segregation continued to exist and sometimes worsen.

After the Civil War and a brief "wave of emancipatory politics", racial discrimination and segregation increased in Washington DC. In the mid-1870s, "home rule in DC had been revoked, inaugurating a century during which U.S. citizens living in the District were denied the vote for any office", including president. There was no mayor, city council or other elected official. Instead, DC was governed by three commissioners appointed by the President who worked with committees of Congress. By 1907, these DC committees were chaired mainly by lawmakers from the South, committed to Jim Crow, a pattern that persisted into the 1970's. The Wilson Administration resegregated the federal workforce and sought to keep out African Americans. (Lankowski, "3506 McKinley Street NW", Chevy Chase Historical Website)

Major George Armes, a former officer whose combative behavior and multiple court martials eventually led to his dismissal from the Army, purchased a large country house called "Fairfield" in about 1888. It was surrounded by farmland and was close to the line between the District and Montgomery County. At this time, Connecticut Ave stopped at Dupont Circle. Major Armes had a successful real estate business and thought it would be a good idea to "find capitalists to purchase a tract of land that I have secured the prices of in order to get Connecticut Ave extended to the District Line." (Offutt p 139-141) He approached Senator William Stewart, who had built in the Dupont Circle area twenty years earlier and had seen the price of his land grow tenfold. Senator Stewart brought Senator Francis Newlands into the deal. Newlands had management of the Comstock Lode fortune of William Sharon, as he had married Sharon's daughter, Clara. He could provide the funding needed for the project and both he and Stewart had political clout within Congress, which ran Washington DC at that time, to help overcome any obstacles. (Offutt pp 141-145).

In 1890, Newlands organized the Chevy Chase Land Company for the purpose of "buying, selling, mortgaging, leasing, improving, disposing of and otherwise dealing with the lands in the state of Maryland and the lands partly in the District of Columbia and also, the construction, equipment and operation of a passenger railway". Most of the properties bought by Armes and others were retitled to the company. (Offutt p 147) He also obtained the charter to the Rock Creek Railway and began to build an electric trolley line from 18th and Calvert Streets up Connecticut Avenue to the newly-created Chevy Chase Lake, which would provide the electricity for the line. The railway, or trolley, was completed in 1892 after felling many trees for railway ties, creating two bridges, filling stream valleys and making deep cuts where necessary to smooth out the road. (Offutt p73). It was ready to provide a way for the people who would be living in the new Chevy Chase community to commute to their work in the city.

Chevy Chase was developed in several phases. Initially, it followed Newlands' vision of "grand homes along a broad (Connecticut) avenue and the most modern infrastructure (the streetcar, sewerage and indoor plumbing, electricity and telephone service), an elite enclave." In 1916, the focus seems to have turned to finding middle-class buyers. Beginning in 1917, the managers of the company began to focus on generating income. Properties were sold to other developers who agreed to build houses on speculation. By this time, potential homebuyers could use cars and were no longer dependent on the

trolley. (Lankowski, "3506 McKinley Street NW", Chevy Chase Historical Website; also general information found in Offutt)

Overall, Chevy Chase was developed over 50 years, from the 1890's to the 1940's. This was possible because Newlands' fortune was so vast that he was able to maintain the Company over time without the need to make a profit. (Offutt, p ?)

Many early developers, both those selling land in Chevy Chase and other early suburbs, wanted attractions that encouraged people to visit and eventually purchase their lots. The Chevy Chase Lake was created to generate power for the trolley cars, but it also featured an amusement park filled with twinkling lights and offering "boating, bowling, shooting and dancing" along with band concerts. (Bethesda and Chevy Chase, Roberts p 69) The Lake was drained when the trolley was discontinued, but the Chevy Chase swimming pool, built in 1925, had a longer life ending in 1972. (David Cranor, "The Chevy Chase Trolley station that moved to the country", 6/27/2018, <https://ggwash.org/view/68029/the-chevy-chase-trolley-station-that-moved-to-the-country>)

The Chevy Chase Club was set up in the early years when hunting was the preferred sport of the initial White residents. Kennels and stables were built in 1895. (WaPo, Fisher) Eventually, the Club gave up hunting in favor of golf.

But Newland's Chevy Chase was also an exclusive community, using the word "restricted" in advertising and specifying that houses built on Connecticut Avenue had to cost at least \$5,000 and have a setback of 35 and those on side streets had to cost a minimum of \$3,000 and have a setback of 25 feet. (Offutt p 154) The cost of these homes would exclude many purchasers. Like Washington DC and Montgomery County, Chevy Chase practiced racial discrimination. It was understood that only Whites (no Blacks or Jews) were expected to buy houses in Chevy Chase, although specific legal language outlining this was only added later. It did not matter how much education, money or talent a Black person had, "even those who looked almost white, discovered that each passing year made it harder for them to purchase or rent comfortable homes without paying exorbitant prices; by the 1890's they could rarely buy at all in a conveniently located, orderly neighborhood." (Offutt p 154 – quoting from Constance Green, *The Secret City* (1968))

An example of the language excluding sale to Blacks is found in a deed from 1946: *No lot or any part thereof shall ever be used, or occupied by, or sold, demised, transferred or conveyed unto or in trust for, leased, or rented, or given to negroes or any person or persons of negro blood or extraction, except that this covenant shall not be held to exclude partial occupancy by domestic servants of a different race employed by the owner or tenant.* (Lease provided by Ken Beam)

Newlands himself, like many of his compatriots, espoused racist views. In 1912, he proposed that the Democrats add a "White Plank" to their platform, which would disenfranchise Blacks and bar "the yellow races" from entry to the country. The plank stated: "Experience having demonstrated the folly of investing an inferior race with which amalgamation is undesirable with the right of suffrage, and the folly of admitting to our shores peoples differing in color, with whom amalgamation is undesirable, we declare that our Constitution should be so amended as to confine the right of suffrage to people of the white race, and we favor a law prohibiting the immigration to this country of all peoples other than those of the white race, except for temporary purposes of education, travel or commerce." Newlands's strategy was that by adding this plank, the Democrats could appeal to "the sentiment against the negroes in the Southern States and meet the views of the Pacific Coast on Chinese and Japanese exclusion". The article notes that the plank "would do away with the anomalous condition in the South, where the negroes are disfranchised in spite of the law, a discrimination which has come to be condoned

in the Northern States.” It also said that with this change, the “country would honestly stand for what it believes in”. (Washington Post, “Race Issue Plank for the Democrats”, 6/17/1912)

In the late 19th century, racial discrimination and exclusion was often unstated, but it was expected that it would be understood. The Washington Post published a letter to the editor on August 29, 1898, written by Henry Billings, which described an incident showing that Black people were not welcome at the Chevy Chase Lake. He wrote: “A gentleman and his wife, who are next door neighbors to me, went to Chevy Chase Lake a few weeks ago. Alighting from the (trolley) cars, they concluded to follow the crowd to see the sights, and in doing so came to a narrow footbridge, over which at least 50 people had preceded them. Before reaching the terminus of the bridge they were accosted by a watchman and told the grounds were private and that they could not cross. Unluckily for this couple, they are colored, yet they are classed among the most respectable colored people in the District. Submissive to the dictate of this guardian of snobbery, they retraced their steps and concluded to go around the little lake, and in doing so they were again halted, this time by a man whose rattling gibberish told plainly that he was not an American.... Billings was making the point that his neighbors were citizens of the US, but the guard, obviously a recent immigrant, had more rights and privileges than they did. Billing also noted that there “was no sign saying that people of color were not allowed at Chevy Chase Lake.” (“A High Class Park”, Chevy Chase Historical Society)

A similar incident occurred at the Bethesda Park which was also at the end of a different trolley line and was developed in 1892 to help sell land in North Bethesda. An article in the Post titled “Color Line at Bethesda Park” stated that the park had signs that read “private park for white people only” and that “Yesterday, the (trolley) cars took up the usual large crowd of colored people, who were so thoroughly mad when they reached the park and learned of their exclusion that an impromptu indignation meeting was held on the roadside, at which the proprietors of the place and white people in general were denounced.” (“A High Class Park”, Chevy Chase Historical Society)

Some of the early homeowners in Chevy Chase had Black servants. Sometimes they lived in servant quarters in their homes, but others chose to live elsewhere.

In 1903, the Chevy Chase Land Company sold some land in a subdivision called Belmont (later the location of the Chevy Chase Center and Saks Fifth Avenue) to developers to provide housing for “domestic and blue-collar workers, but not for blacks”. In 1909, the Company learned that the developer had begun to sell some of these lots to Black families. The Company filed suit against the developers for fraud and reacquired the property. (Washington Post, 2/13/1999, Marc Fisher)

Endemic racism was also behind the move to evict Black property owners from land they owned that was in the Chevy Chase area. In 1928, the Mary Moten and her Harris relatives, descendants of Captain George Pointer, had their land along Broad Branch Road taken from them by eminent domain. An all-White school, Lafayette Elementary, was built for the Chevy Chase community on the land and opened in 1931.

The Reno community of 370 families in the suburbs west of Rock Creek had evolved from a Civil War fortification that employed former freed and escaped slaves. It became a mixed neighborhood where African Americans could make a decent life, with churches, clubs and supporting businesses. However, with exclusive White suburbs growing up around them and real estate developers looking to maintain the status quo, the Reno community became a target for removal. From 1900 to the 1930’s various interest groups, including individuals (Harold Doyle and Edward Stellwagen) and organizations (the Thomas Fisher brokerage) associated with the Chevy Chase Land Company, supported plans that would replace the community with schools and parks. Activists James Neill, Thomas Walker and Thomas

Johnson testified before the Senate and House committees who needed to vote to support funding for the plan in 1926. They pointed out that “Racial prejudice, and not the public good... is the underlying motive” for the drive to take the land for other uses. They were able to delay the destruction of the community for a few years. But White absentee landlords began to sell their land, closing businesses in the community, which caused it to fall into disrepair and become a slum. The last residents were evicted in 1951 and the segregated Reno School, which had educated Black students from the neighborhood, was closed. (Washington City Paper, The Battle of Fort Reno, Neil Flanagan, 11/2/2017)

The 1948 Supreme Court decision in Shelley v. Kraemer did not fully eliminate racially restrictive covenants. The Court in that case ruled that *state enforcement* of racially restrictive covenants violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The ruling held that racially restrictive covenants, per se, do not violate the Fourteenth Amendment, and private parties could abide by the terms of such covenants. However, they could not seek judicial enforcement of such covenants. (Shelley v. Kraemer, 2021).

Racially restrictive covenants remained after 1948. Parties could and did write and voluntarily comply with them. For example, in DC, the “W.C. and A.N. Miller continued to include racial restrictions in deeds for its houses. Another clause required all subsequent sales to be brokered by the company and rentals to be approved by either the company or a majority of neighbors. In Chevy Chase, Maryland, covenants by agreement reportedly remained in use as late as 1969 even without judicial enforcement.” (Charkasky, 2021). Racially restrictive covenants were finally outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Real estate practices in DC reinforced racial discrimination, steering clients to neighborhoods based on race, placing different ads in White and Black newspapers for the purpose of racial steering. Some agents refused to share listings with agents who worked for Black clients, while others would tell Black buyers that they had nothing available then sell to White clients. (Shoenfeld, 2021)

Citizen Associations also played a role in reinforcing discrimination through their advocacy before Congressional committees responsible for government in DC. The Constitution and bylaws of the Citizen’s Association of Chevy Chase (1909) specified that members had to be adult and White. “A central, if officially unspoken, mandate of white citizens’ associations across the city was to maintain property values” which were thought to be threatened by the sales of homes to Black families. (Lankowski, 2021). In 1910 a Whites-only Federation of Citizens Associations was created, which excluded citizen associations that were racially open. In 1950 it had 65 member associations. That Federation “went on record in May 1966 in attempting to excise sections of the federal civil rights bill which “would force an individual homeowner to sell or rent his property against his desires.” (Lankowski, 2021)

The discrimination in housing was reflected in other aspects of life ranging from schools, which were not integrated until after the Supreme Court decision in Brown vs Board of Education in 1954, to restaurants to swimming pools. This history, which played out across the US, also occurred in Chevy Chase. For example, Raymond L. Popkin on a Chevy Chase Facebook group, recalls that “When I was about 13, I was asked to leave the Kenwood pool because one of my parents was Jewish. I formed Students Against Discrimination at Walter Johnson HS and faced expulsion. I was called a N--- lover by Montgomery County Policemen.” (Popkin, 2021) As late as 1976, the New York Times noted that the Chevy Chase Club

golf course and country club permitted “blackskinned members of the diplomatic corps” but not “black American residents of the area, not even the black mayor of the nation’s capital.” (Popkin, 2021)

Below added by Lynn J:

Today, the Washington DC area is more diverse but more segregated than it has been in the past, according to a study of census data done by researchers at the Othering & Belonging Institute at the University of California-Berkeley that was released on June 21, 2021. The study shows that, since 1990, the population of White residents had decreased, the population of Latinx and Asian residents has increased and the Black population has remained relatively stable. In 1990, the D.C. area was about 65% White, 27% Black, 6% Hispanic origin, and 5% Asian, according to 1990 sample data. Today, the breakdown is 45% White, 25% Black, 16% Hispanic origin, and 10% Asian, [per 2019 estimates](#). But most communities remain segregated.

Some communities appear to have become more integrated since 2000, but that trend could also mean that the area is undergoing gentrification and will become less integrated as time goes on, according to Samir Gambhir, one of the co-authors of the report. (dcist.com website, “The DC area has become more diverse but also more segregated, study finds”, 6/21/2021 by Ally Schweitzer)

Population Trends in Montgomery County, Maryland

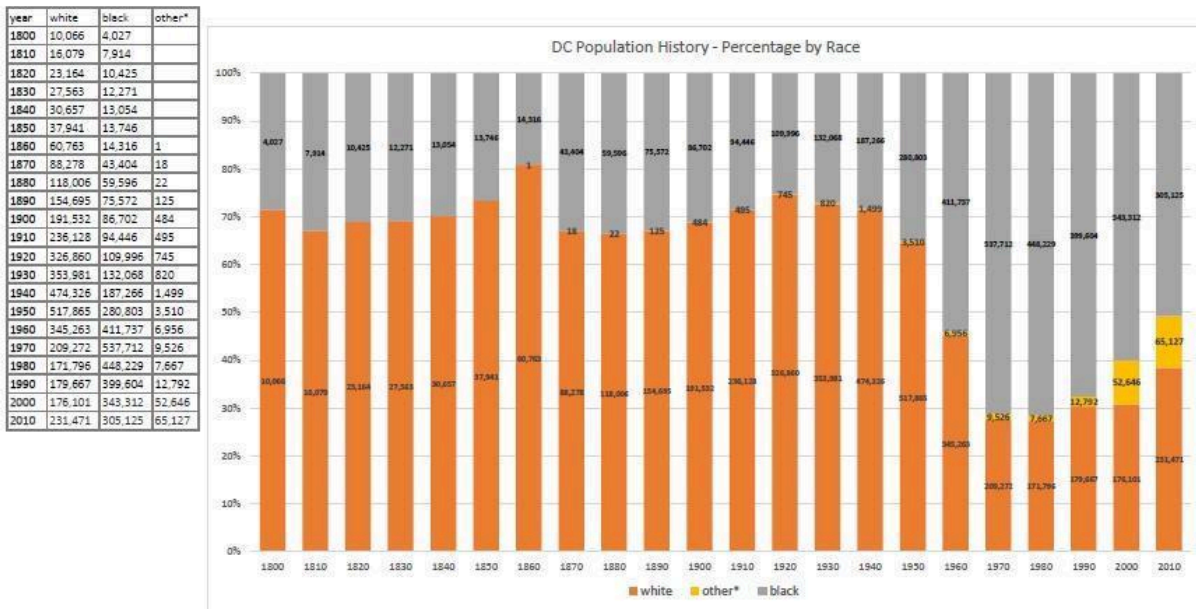
Reviewing population trends over time shows that Montgomery County had a sizable population of Black inhabitants, before the Civil War, and that the number of Black inhabitants after the Civil War continued to increase until the late 1880’s. At that point, most likely because of increasing restrictions on where Black citizens could live, the number of Black inhabitants dramatically decreased, reaching 4% of the total in 1960.

- The 1790 Montgomery County census shows a sizable Black population, both enslaved and free. The **1790** census counted 11,679 White and 6,324 Black inhabitants, with the Black inhabitants making up 33% of the population. (Offutt, p 16)
- The overall population of Montgomery County declined as tobacco took its toll on the land, , reaching its lowest point in **1840** when the county’s White inhabitants numbered 8,766 and Black inhabitants numbered 6,690. At this low ebb in population, Black inhabitants (both free and enslaved) accounted for 45% of the population. (Offutt, p 16)
- In **1860**, just before the Civil War, the White population had increased, probably due to the agricultural improvements that had been introduced. At that point the County census counted 11,349 Whites and 6,973 Blacks (38% of the population). (Offutt, p 16)
- The census numbers for 1840 and 1860 (above) do not differentiate between free and enslaved Blacks, nor do they indicate the number of indentured or apprenticed Whites or Blacks. However, there were many free Blacks in Maryland, and by the 1850’s Maryland had more free Blacks than any other state. In 1850, 8.3% (or 1,311) of the population in Montgomery County was free Black. In 1842, Blacks owned 5,371 acres of land in the county and in 1860 there were about 50 Black inhabitants listed as landowners with holdings of 17,142 acres. Free Blacks were tenant farmers, hired hands, and sometimes skilled craftsmen such as blacksmiths and coopers. (Offutt p 16)

- However, because Black Americans had such few options for housing due to deed restrictions and other discriminatory practices, the black population of Montgomery County went into steady decline, dropping from 40% in 1880 to 4% in 1960. (Montgomery County, by Michael Dwyer, p 43.)

Population Trends in Washington D.C.

For Washington D.C., the trend is an increase in the numbers of both Blacks and Whites over time. In 1860 the percentage of Whites as a total of the population increased (possibly because of the impending Civil War). In 1870, the percentage of Blacks as a total of the population increased, likely from Blacks fleeing to Washington DC from southern states. From 1900 to 1920, the percentage of Blacks as a total of the population decreased, perhaps because of the increasing segregation and restrictions. The total number of Blacks exceeds Whites beginning in 1960, probably due to “white flight” to the suburbs. There is also an increase in people of identifying as “other” races in the last 40 years.



**Other* was the Census category designation until 1970; it has been retained for graphical clarity but encompasses
 American Indian/Esquimo/Aleut
 Asian/Pacific Islander
 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander
 Hispanic is not a racial designation

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Source: [DC population by race 1800-2010 \[PDF\]](#), *Washington DC History* by Matthew B. Gilmore.

NOTE: Population figures are for the District of Columbia and do include Alexandria City/County up until the 1846 retrocession back to Virginia.

For more information: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-dc>