



# *Thomas Harper* *1870s Homestead*

Brookside Nature Center, Wheaton, MD

Learn how and where post-emancipation African American families lived in Montgomery County and how they used the local environment.

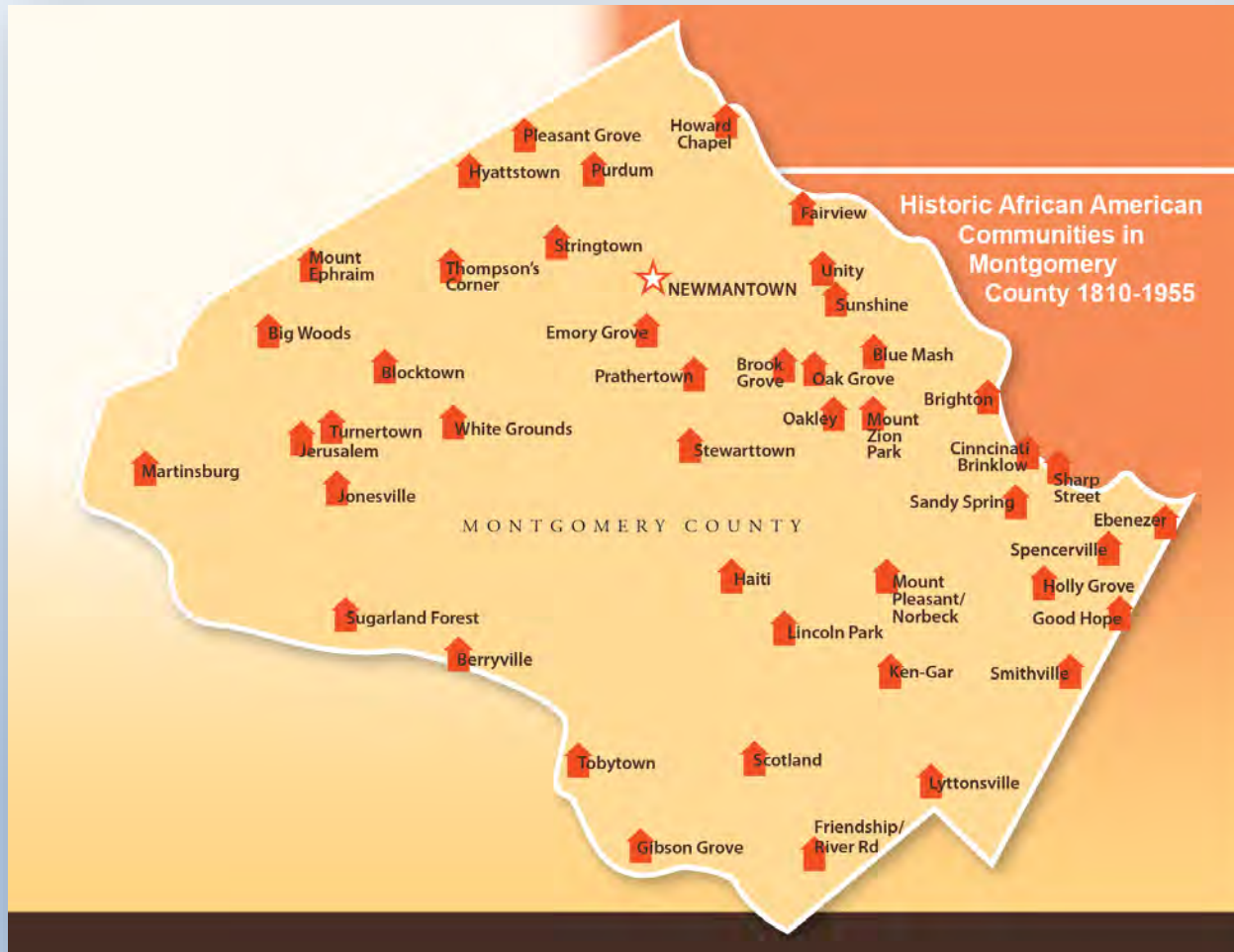




# Thomas Harper 1870s Homestead



# Historical Context



After the Civil War, African Americans, comprising over a third of the Montgomery County population, lived in more than 40 settlements throughout the county.

Courtesy of M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks, 2014





# Historical Context

Some former slaves chose to stay in the home where they had worked for their prior owners; some moved to farms of white land owners and became tenant farmers or sharecroppers.

Image:  
“The Way They Live” Oil painting by Thomas Anshutz, 1879. The Met Museum



# Historical Context



Harper Cabin in Poolesville, ca. 1975



Harper Cabin, relocated to Brookside Nature Center, ca. 2010

Many African Americans were able to purchase their own plots of land by making installment payments over the course of months or years.





**MARYLAND A FREE STATE!**—Gov. Bradford having declared the new Constitution adopted by the popular vote, it went into effect on Tuesday last, Nov. 1st. By it slavery is at once at an end in the State. But some of the slaveholders mean to hold on to their “people,” in order to test the legality of emancipation before the courts. Under the direction of the city councils of Baltimore, five hundred guns were fired, bells rung, and flags displayed, in that city on Tuesday, to attest the joy of the people at their great deliverance.

On November 1, 1864, a new Maryland state constitution freed all those held in bondage within its boundaries.

## Historical Context

*After the emancipation of Maryland's enslaved population in 1864, Alfred Harper is listed as a resident of Montgomery County, MD in the 1870 and 1900 census reports.*

*Alfred and his wife, Sallie Jones had two sons, John Thomas Harper and George Columbus Harper.*



# Start of a New, Free Life



*“The secret of success is self reliance. Get money, get land, sow your own acres.”*

John Mercer Langston, 1867

(Langston, a prominent African American attorney, abolitionist, educator, and politician advising freed Marylanders in 1867.)

Photograph of John Mercer Langston, Library of Congress, ca. 1860 - 1875





# Start of a New, Free Life



In 1866 Erasmus Jones purchased a tract of the 9 & 1/8 acres. He and his brother, Richard, founded *Jonesville* in Poolesville, Maryland.

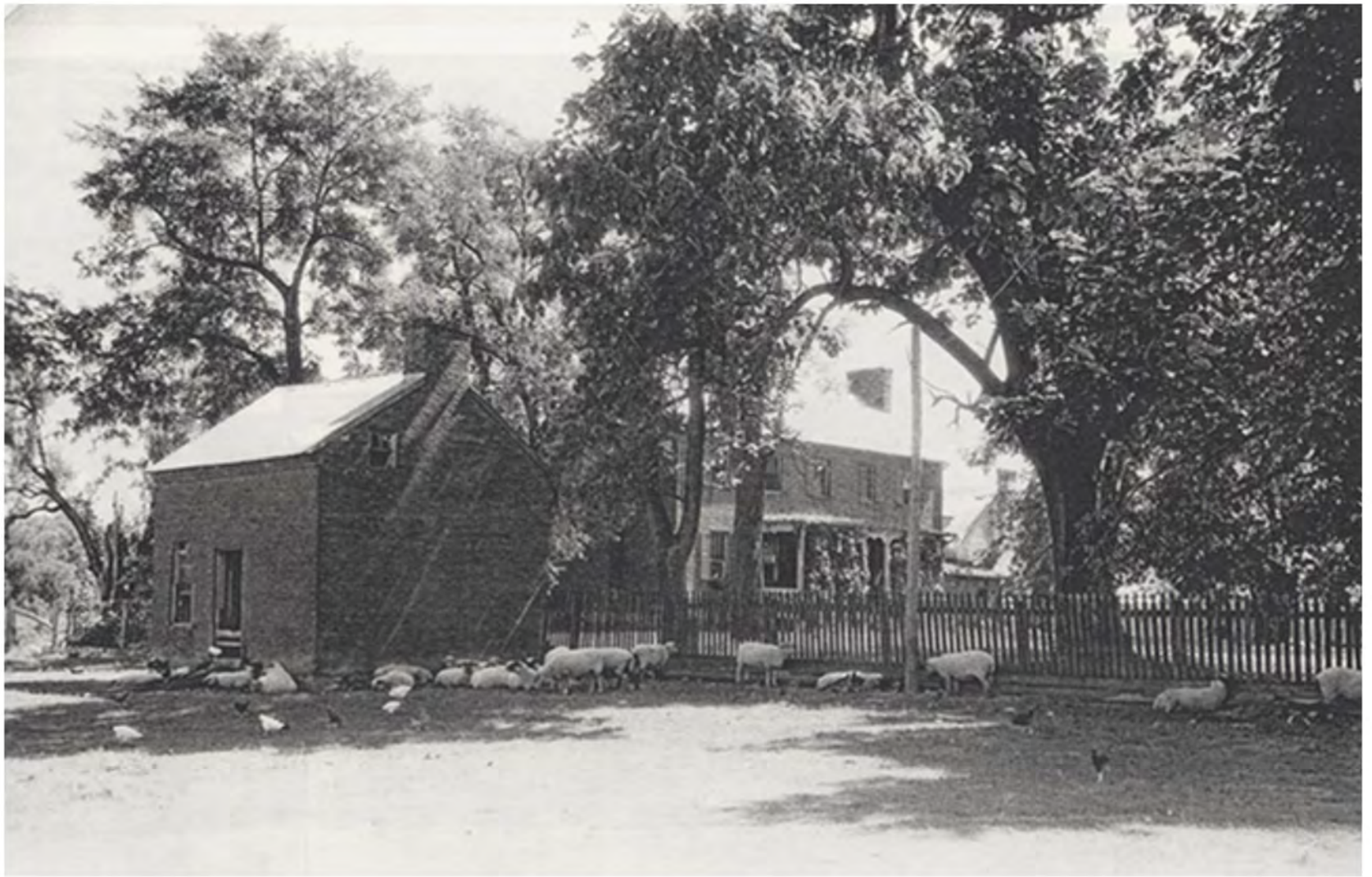
Jonesville is located on land that had once been apart of the ***Aix la Chapelle*** plantation.

Photo Source: Montgomery County Historical Society.

<http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/node/238>

Individuals not identified.





*Aix la Chapelle, the Brewer Farm (1936)*  
19124 Jerusalem Road, Poolesville MD





# Start of a New, Free Life

Using skills acquired while working as slaves for their previous owners, such as farming, blacksmithing, rail splitting and carpentry, these men and women were ready to build and maintain their own homes and farms.



Unidentified members of town of Nicodemus, Kansas, ca 1870s.  
Library of Congress, HABS Collection



# Harper Family History



Oral histories provided by Joseph Clyde Harper in 1978, indicate that his grandfather **John Thomas Harper** (1837-1912) pictured here, and then later John Thomas's first born, Richard Thomas Harper (Joseph Harper's father) both owned and occupied the structure known as the Harper Cabin.

John Thomas Harper was married twice: Elizabeth Galloway and Sarah Beal. He had a total of 9 children.

*Joseph Thomas Harper, ca. 1870s. Photo courtesy of Sylvia Ford George, Harper Descendant.*





# Harper Family History

**Richard and Rachel Harper** had 15 children between 1882 and 1912:

Cora Hilory, Richard V., John T., Elizabeth E., William Aaron, Kate Ines, Stanley Irvin, Genevieve, Ashley Levin, Ralph McKinley, Edith, Lauresse R., Patilla Ray, Joseph Clyde, and Cecil Cole.

Rachel died in 1960 and Richard in 1931.

*(Source: Harper Family Documentation, per Sylvia Ford George, 2013)*



**Rachel Hall Harper**, wife of Richard Thomas Harper  
*Photo from Harper Cabin Record, Maryland Historical Trust Archives*



# Harper Family History

Behind the house was a hen house, smoke house, and privy. There was a hog pen at a further distance. The family also had a vegetable garden and a large orchard with apple, peach, plum and crabapple trees, along with quince bushes. Harper's mother made jellies from these fruits, and canned them, in addition to vegetables.

*Source: George McDaniel's Interview with Joseph Clyde Harper, 1978*





# Harper Family History



*The logs not sheathed inside and were whitewashed. There was a wood cook stove.*

*The upstairs was frame, instead of log. One room was for the parents and infants room, and the other a bedroom for the children.”*

Joseph Clyde Harper, 1978

*“Inside the dwelling consisted of one room down and two up.*

*The downstairs room served multiple purposes: kitchen, dining, sitting room, washroom and family room for work and gathering.*



Source: George McDaniel's Interview with Joseph Clyde Harper, 1978



# Harper Cabin Structural Significance

**1864-1870: estimated construction period of Harper Cabin**

This structure is one of two “first generation” log homes being preserved from the Jonesville and Jerusalem free African American communities formed in the late 1800s.



Jonesville's older dwellings are significant because, although there have been extensive alterations over the years, they still reflect the transitions in housing of black landowning families from the period after emancipation through the 20th century and, indeed, up to the present.

*Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey, 1978*





# Harper Cabin Structural Significance

## 1864-1870: estimated construction period of Harper Cabin

The logs were originally bare, chinked with stones and plaster and whitewashed on the interior of the home. The method of whitewashing used then was to purchase rock lime in a barrel, add water to make the white washing.



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*Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey, 1978*



# Harper Cabin Structural Significance

**1864-1870: estimated construction period of Harper Cabin**

In 2009, the Smithsonian disassembled and removed the Jones-Hall-Sims House to become part of the new exhibits of the National Museum of African American History & Culture on the Mall in Washington, DC.



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*Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey, 1978*







Jones-Hall Sims House (c1874)  
18425 Jonesville Ter  
DONATED TO THE SMITHSONIAN  
2009

Mary Davis House (c1870-90) 18451 Cattail Ln  
Ruins

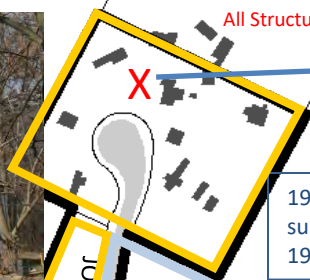


Current view



1995 condition

All Structures Demo'd



1989 subdivision  
1992 houses



George Martin Hse (c1880s)  
27 Jonesville Ct  
Demolished



Elmer Jones Hse (c1915-25)  
19008 Jonesville Ter



Basil Bailey Hse (c1899)  
18316 Cattail Rd

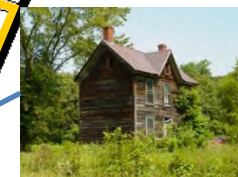



































Site of  
Harper Cabin

1975 Moved to  
Brookside Nature Center

**JONESVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
Locational Atlas #17/8

Solomon Owe Hse (c1901)  
18200 Cattail  
Demolished



CHURCH	
CEMETERY	
LODGE	
COMMUNITY CENTER	
STORE	
POST OFFICE	
SCHOOL	
WELLING	
PRIVY	
STABLE	
MEAT HOUSE	
HEN HOUSE	
MILK HOUSE	
CORN/FEED HOUSE	
PIG PEN	
GARDEN	
PASTURE	
CORNFIELD	
HAY FIELD	
ORCHARD	
FOREST	
THICKET	
WELL	
SPRING	
STREAM	
POND	
PARCEL BOUNDARY	
FENCED PARCEL BDY.	
FENCE	
DIRT ROAD	
LANE	
PATH	
STREAM FLOW	

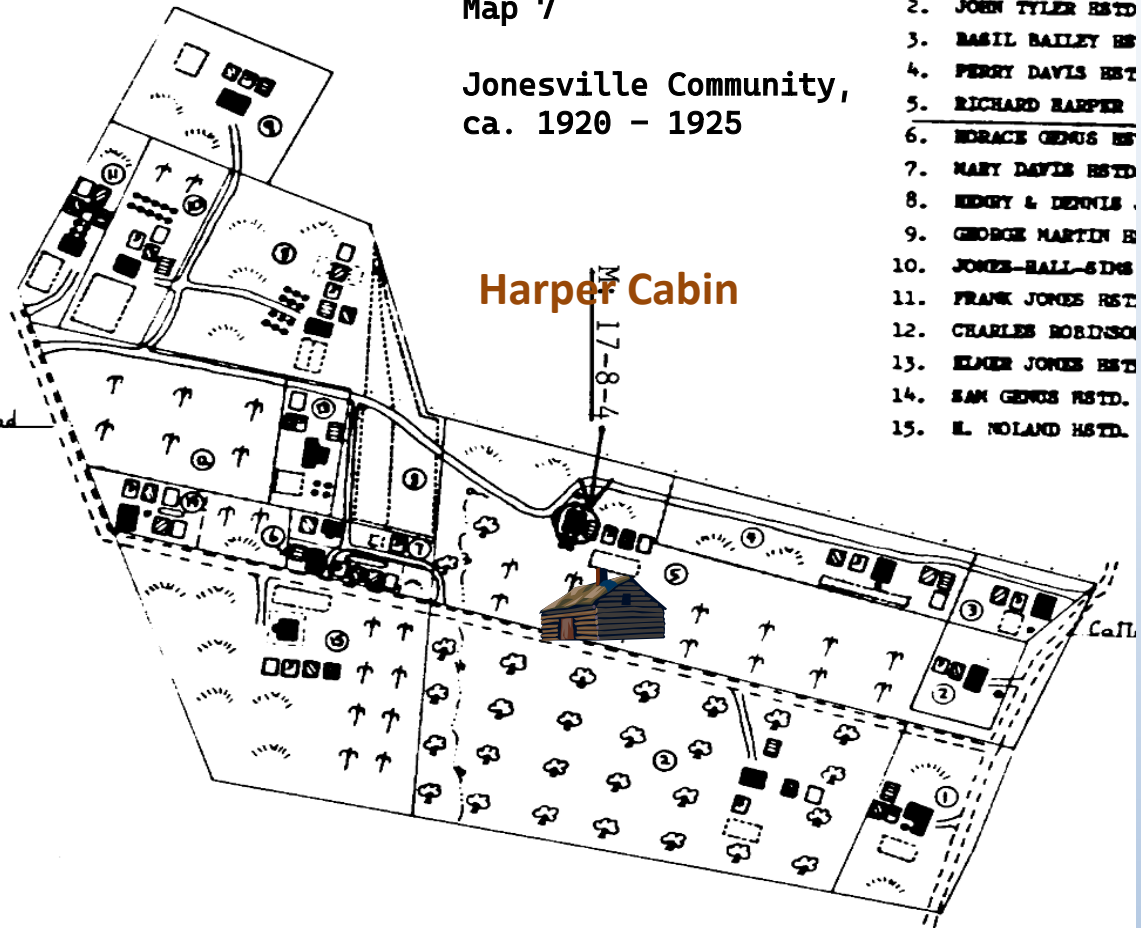
DWELLINGS AND OUTBUILDINGS NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

HSTD. = HOMESTEAD PROP. = PROPERTY

Map 7

Jonesville Community,  
ca. 1920 - 1925

Jonesville Road



Harper Cabin

Scale



1. SOLOMON OWENS H
2. JOHN TYLER HSTD
3. BASIL BAILEY H
4. PERRY DAVIS HST
5. RICHARD HARPER
6. HORACE GENUS H
7. MARY DAVIS HSTD
8. HEDDY & DENNIS
9. GEORGE MARTIN H
10. JONES-HALL-SIDE
11. FRANK JONES HST
12. CHARLES ROBINSON
13. ELDER JONES HST
14. SAM GENUS HSTD.
15. E. NOLAND HSTD.

“In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s other Black families settled in the Jonesville community. Many were either descendants of Erasmus and Richard Jones or had married into the family. Included were the families of Basil Bailey, Mary Genus, Horace Genus, Thomas Harper, Levin Hall, George Martin, Henry Noland, and Perry Davis.”  
Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey, 1978



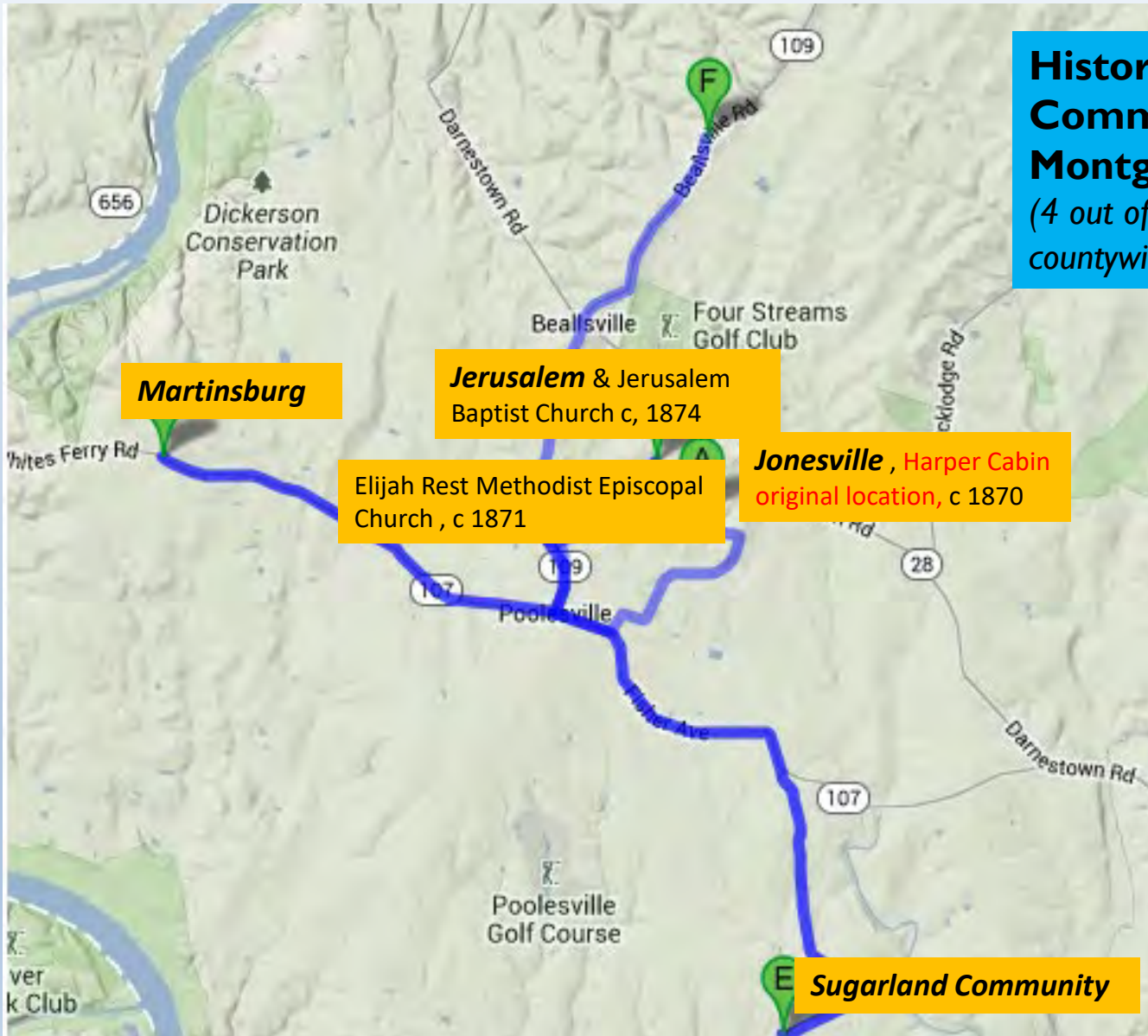
# Community of Friends and Relations

Out of necessity and familiarity 40 communities were settled by groups of friends and relations throughout the county; and grew up naturally, because the purchased plots of land were adjacent to each other.

*Note: There are 40 documented by Montgomery County Historic Preservation Office. Black leadership in the county noted there may have been approximately over 200 communities: (Source: Christina Jones, ancestor of Jonesville founders.)*



# Community of Friends and Relations



**Historic African American Communities of Western Montgomery County**  
(4 out of the 40 communities countywide.)

**Martinsburg**

**Jerusalem** & Jerusalem Baptist Church c, 1874

Elijah Rest Methodist Episcopal Church , c 1871

**Jonesville** , Harper Cabin original location, c 1870

**Sugarland Community**

Harper Cabin, originally located in historic Jonesville, in Upper Montgomery County, and was the home of several generations of the Harpers from 1870s to 1930s.

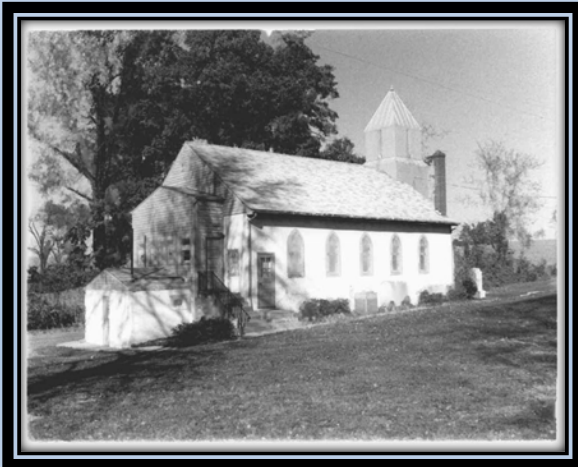
This early land-owning African American family and its descendants were active in the local church communities of the Jerusalem Baptist Church and Elijah Rest Methodist and Episcopal Church.





# Community of Friends & Relations

Towns and villages were self-contained as white county resources and affiliations were denied due to race.



# Community of Friends & Relations

**Three pillars gave strength and consistency to the families that resided in each community:**

- *Faith*
- *Hope*
- *Charity*





# FAITH



Jerusalem  
Baptist Church



Elijah United  
Methodist Church

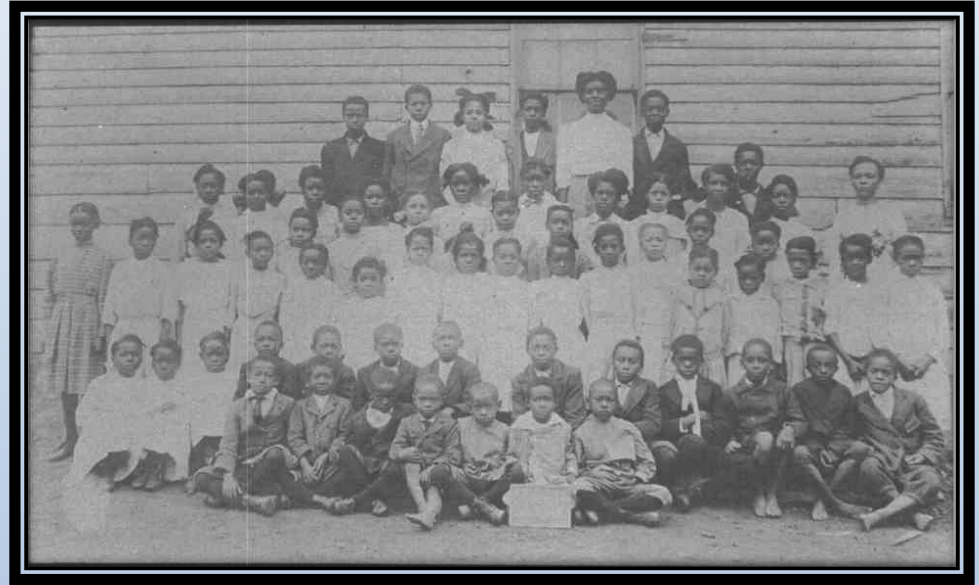
reason the members of the Jonesville community belonged to churches in Jerusalem, attended school in Jerusalem, and were probably members of the Loving Charity Society there.



# Education & **HOPE** Land ownership



Source: M-17-51



**Poolesville School 1909** (housed in Love and Charity Hall)

The Poolesville schools for Black students were located at two sites: the first in the first floor of the Love and Charity Lodge Hall north of Poolesville, a handsome two story frame building, three bays in depth, and with its gable roof accented with a modest spire; the second was in a two room frame building constructed with funds raised by the communities and from the Rosenwald Fund. These were important centers of the communities.





# CHARITY

## Benevolent Society, Community Gatherings



Jonesville Love and Charity Hall (date unknown), demolished. Similar to existing Martinsburg Hall pictured.

impressive two story frame building, stood at the back of the present-day cemetery of the Elijah United Methodist Church. It served as both a school for the Black community and as a meeting hall for the Love and Charity Society, a sickness and burial organization. The first floor was used as the school and the second as the meeting hall. In the 1920's, another school was built at the junction of Jonesville and Jerusalem Road, replacing this one, according to oral informants in Jerusalem, Joe and Evelyn (Harper)

# Harper Family History

Ability to support their family, make a living , participate in the larger Poolesville commerce-- as shown by receipts for medical accounts, land purchases and mercantile orders.

Poolesville, Md. Nov. 13. 1877.  
Received of Dequies Jones  
Through Mr. Geo. H. Pool.  
Ten Dollars & fifty - cents  
in full for Medical account  
B. W. Walling.

May 12<sup>th</sup> 91  
Mollie Jones Jr

To 9 1/4 yds Linen 10 -	98
" 5 " Quilting 10	50
" 2 3/4 " Cottonade 25	68
" 1 " " "	18
" 2 Sprinkles Cot	10
" 1/2 Gal Oil	08
	<hr/> 247

(Source: Harper Family Documentation, per Sylvia  
Ford George, 2013)

# Harper Family History

The Maryland Historical Trust has a detailed report on the **Jonesville Historic District** - search for site M 17:8.

Many descendants still live in the Jonesville and Jerusalem neighborhoods and are active in the local churches and community life.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY M.17-8

**1 NAME**  
HISTORIC Jonesville Historic District (#17-8)  
AND/OR COMMON -

**2 LOCATION**  
STREET & NUMBER -  
CITY, TOWN North of Folesville, between Dawsonville and Sealsville (Off Route 28)  
STATE Maryland VICINITY OF Folesville 8th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
COUNTY Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
NAME Various  
STREET & NUMBER -  
CITY, TOWN - Telephone #: -  
VICINITY OF - STATE, zip code -

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
COURTHOUSE  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. -  
STREET & NUMBER Montgomery County Courthouse Liber #: - Folio #: -  
CITY, TOWN Monroe Street  
Rockville, Md. STATE -

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**  
TITLE Montgomery County Inventory of Historic Sites  
DATE 1979  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS - NCPPO, Park Historian's Office, Mont., Md. STATE -  
CITY, TOWN Rockville, Md. STATE -



# Harper Family History

In 2009, Jonesville was listed on the historic Locational Atlas and submitted for historic designation by Montgomery County due to its significance as an early African American community.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY M:17-8

**1 NAME**  
HISTORIC Jonesville Historic District (#17-8)  
AND/OR COMMON -

**2 LOCATION**  
STREET & NUMBER -  
CITY TOWN North of Poolesville, between Dawsonville and Sealsville (Off Route 28)  
STATE Maryland VICINITY OF Poolesville CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 5th  
COUNTY Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
NAME Various  
STREET & NUMBER -  
CITY TOWN - Telephone #: -  
STATE, zip code -

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
COURTHOUSE  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Montgomery County Courthouse Liber #: -  
STREET & NUMBER Monroe Street Folio #: -  
CITY TOWN Rockville, Md. STATE MD.

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**  
TITLE Montgomery County Inventory of Historic Sites  
DATE 1979  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS - FEDERAL - STATE -X- COUNTY -LOCAL  
CITY TOWN MOPHC, Park Historian's Office, Mont., Ct. STATE MD.  
Rockville, Md.

# *Thomas Harper 1870s Homestead*

*This is an example of how African Americans moved forward out of slavery through the resiliency of their own community that led to a legacy of generations of family.*

