

"African American History Month"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

For a number of years, the Historical Society has sponsored a special lecture during Black History Month. Some past programs have explored an introduction to local history sources, church history, schools and education and military service. These programs have served to present the work of local researchers and to encourage an interest in an oft neglected aspect of our local history.

This year's program will be held at 7:30 p. m. on Thursday, February 29th, in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium. Our guest speaker will be Duane Doxzen who will present a program on local history sources for researching African-American history in Carroll County. Mr. Doxzen is a 1994 graduate of Western Maryland College and a Society volunteer who has been researching and preparing a manuscript on this topic for nearly a year. His presentation will focus on the use of a variety of public records including, wills, estate inventories, chattel records, marriage licenses, census and military records, in the research process. He will also summarize the use of other sources including newspapers, church and cemetery records. The program is free to the general public.

Mr. Doxzen will discuss the use of a wide variety of pre-Civil War public records created by the Federal, Maryland and local county governments. The section on Federal records will include the use of decennial census data from 1790. Up until 1840, these records provide the names of the head of the household and the numbers free and slave men, women and children who lived in the house. Beginning in 1850, the names of all persons, their ages, race and occupations are given.

An important Maryland record is the Tabular Statement of Ownership of Certain Slaves compiled in 1869. This source was created by an 1867 act of the Maryland Legislature which sought to compile the names of former slaves and owner. While far from being a complete record, this source provides many names of local slave owners and their former slaves. These records also note that a number of former slaves enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War. Mr. Doxzen has transcribed and indexed all the names from this record.

County records constitute the bulk of the material reviewed in the study. Mr. Doxzen examined a variety of pre-1837 records of Baltimore and Frederick Counties for information prior to the founding of Carroll County. After Carroll County was founded in 1837, the new county government began keeping records; most of these records are still maintained in Westminster. Mr. Doxzen made a number of trips to the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis to abstract some of the early records Baltimore and Frederick Counties.

Land Records often included documents relating to the sale or manumission of slaves. These records often provide a starting place for tracing a slave family. For example, the earliest reference to a slave purchase by Jacob Sherman, builder of the Society's house museum, is a 1784 sale of a girl recorded in the Frederick County land records. This young girl was the progenitor of several generations of slaves and free blacks who lived in the house during the nineteenth century.

A great number of local slave owners freed their slaves prior to the Civil War. References to manumissions can be found in a variety of county records. Some owners freed their slaves by recording a manumission in the land records or in chattel records. Other owners chose to free their slaves by

means of their will. These references can be found in the records of the Register of Wills. A copy of the will was filed as part of the estate process and a special book of manumissions was also maintained. Each record provides details about the slave and master. Mr. Doxzen has also examined the books of Freedom Certificates which record the issuance of these important documents. These interesting documents often include a detailed physical description of the former slave, the only way to positively identify someone in the age before photographs and fingerprints. These records also can provide a full name of the former slave a necessary piece of information for tracing the individual in other records.

County marriage licences are another source for determining family relationships. The earliest local records indicate which applicants were black which helps the modern day researcher. Mr. Doxzen has compiled a list of licences issued to local black couples during the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, the Society would like to publish the information compiled by Mr. Doxzen so that it would be widely available to researchers. The publication would be divided into a number of sections for each type of source material. Each section would include an introduction that explains why the source was created, the type of information recorded, where the originals can be found and its significance to the researcher. Some sections will include transcribed or abstracted information so that the researcher does not necessarily have to travel to the record repository to use the information.

The public is invited to attend Mr. Doxzen's lecture at 7:30 p. m. on Thursday, February 19th. The program will be held in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium 210 E. Main St. in Westminster. The program is free to the public.

Photo Caption: Historical Society volunteer Duane Doxzen will present a lecture on researching black history in Carroll County. The program is free to the public and will be held at 7:30 p. m. on Thursday, February 29th in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St. in Westminster.