

**The Power of Place
Understanding the African American Experience
in The Journey Through Hallowed Ground**

**A Paper Presented at the Meeting of the Blue Ridge Torch Club
February 12, 2008**

**By Deborah A. Lee, PhD
120 N. 18th Street
Purcellville, VA 20132-3126**

Nearly every American has heard the story of John Brown at Harpers Ferry, but few have heard the story of Dangerfield Newby, one of his black followers. He was from Culpeper County originally, the son of a white man and an enslaved woman, owned by a friend of his father's, but who lived with him in a common law marriage. When the family moved to Ohio, Dangerfield and his mother became free. But Dangerfield Newby had married a woman named Harriet, enslaved to a doctor who moved his family to Prince William and now threatened to sell Harriet and the couple's young children. Newby tried unsuccessfully to raise funds for their purchase. Harriet wrote her husband, "Oh, Dear Dangerfield, com this fall without fail, monny or no monny. I want to see you so much." In another, "It is the grates comfort I have in thinking of the promist time when you will be here.... My baby commenced to crall to-day." And the third: "their has been one bright hope to cheer me in all my troubles, that is to be with you, for if I thought I should never see you this earth would have no charms for me."

Two months later, Dangerfield Newby became the first of John Brown's men to die in the raid on Harpers Ferry; shot in the armory, his body defiled by townspeople and thrown into hogs' alley for further desecration. Harriet and her children were sold to the Deep South.

This story, even with its tragic ending, invites us to engage deeper into the story of the raid on Harpers Ferry, the world that gave rise to it, and its meaning for us then and now.

W.E.B. Du Bois understood the importance of place, of historical memory, and the role of ordinary people in the struggles to make a more just society. He and other Niagara Movement leaders gathered in 1906 for their second meeting (the first convened in Canada) at Harpers Ferry and Storer College. Historians today recognize the conference as the cornerstone of the modern civil rights movement. Du Bois enjoined attendees to reconsecrate themselves, "in the place of John Brown's martyrdom," to the "final emancipation of the race." In his book *John Brown*, he surmised that, "To most Americans, the inner striving of the Negro was a veiled and unknown tale: they had heard of [Frederick] Douglass, they knew of fugitive slaves, but of the living, organized, struggling group that made both these phenomena possible they had no conception." Today we can add Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, and the statement is *still* true for most Americans, white and black.

Such lost history impoverishes us in a spiritual sense. Carter G. Woodson, the father of Black History, wrote, "Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history."

There is today an organization devoted to preserving and promoting the places where history was made and the memory of those who made it.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising national awareness of the unparalleled history in the region, which generally follows the Old Carolina Road (Rt. 15/231) from Gettysburg, through Maryland, to Monticello in Albemarle County, VA. From its communities, farms, businesses and heritage sites, we have an opportunity to celebrate and preserve this vital fabric of America which stands today in the historic, scenic and natural beauty of this region.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground® is dedicated to encouraging both Americans and world visitors to appreciate, respect, and experience this cultural landscape that makes it uniquely American.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground is also a proposed National Heritage Area. The House of Representatives has approved the bill introduced by Congressman Frank Wolf, and it is on its way to the Senate. In the meantime, the organization has been building educational and promotional programs to help preserve and share the history of the region. At first, they drew from the National Register of Historic Places for information on the places within the Journey, but they found that such sources lacked information on African American history. They enlisted my participation as a consultant. We obtained grants from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, the Loudoun Restoration and Preservation Society, and others who have supported us in researching, documenting, and interpreting African American history in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground.

We enlisted the help of African American advisors, heritage organizations, and individuals who have collaborated with us on the project. At our last annual meeting, the African American heritage committee persuaded JTHG to adopt a goal of developing programs that are world class in integrating and interpreting minority history. We are inspired by Carter G. Woodson, the Father of Black History, who wrote, "We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice."

We have found that the stories of people in the places are the most effective way to do that. Today I will share with you some of the life stories we uncovered.

Leonard A. Grimes (1815-1874)

Leonard Grimes, a free black man, operated a successful hackney carriage business—similar to today's taxi service—in Washington, D.C. in the 1830s. Grimes also helped people escape from slavery, and became an early organizer of the underground railroad. In 1839 authorities arrested Grimes and charged him with aiding a woman named Patty and her six children flee from slavery in Loudoun County. Prosecutors tried Grimes at the courthouse in Leesburg in early 1840. Noted attorneys argued his case and prominent white patrons from Washington testified to his good character. Grimes was found guilty but given the lightest sentence possible: two years in prison in Richmond. After his

release he became a minister, moved with his family to Massachusetts, and became pastor of Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston. It became known as "the Fugitive's Church," since it helped people fleeing slavery. One member, Anthony Burns, attracted national attention when authorities captured and re-enslaved him. When Grimes and members of his congregation could not free him from jail or secure his release through the courts, they raised money to purchase him from his owner in Virginia. During the civil war, Grimes lobbied the government to allow black soldiers to fight for the Union and, when successful, recruited for the Army. After general emancipation he helped freed people improve their lives.

Daniel Alexander Payne (1811-1893)

Daniel Alexander Payne was probably the most influential African American christian of the nineteenth century. A member of South Carolina's free black elite, he traveled north for higher education. He studied at the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg under abolitionist founder Samuel Simon Schmucker, and opened a school for African Americans there. He became active in the Underground Railroad and was the premier Bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Frederick Douglass had high praise for Payne's wisdom. When the Anti-slavery Committee asked him to become a public lecturer for them, Payne said, "When God has a work to be executed he also chooses the man to execute it. He also qualifies the workman for the work."

Joseph R. Winters (1830-1907)

Few people know it outside the black community, but Joseph Winters arranged the meeting between Frederick Douglass and John Brown at the quarry in Chambersburg. He was born in Loudoun County and lived for a time with his grandmother Betsy Cross, known as an "Indian doctor woman," in Waterford while his parents made bricks for the armory at Harpers Ferry. The family later moved to Chambersburg. Winters was known for his great nature skills, especially fishing and fly tying, but if you Google him today, you'll see he's most recognized today as the inventor of a fire escape ladder.

James W. C. Pennington (1807-1870)

Jim Pembroke, escaped from slavery at Rockland, the home of Frisby Tilghman, in Washington County, Maryland, in 1828. He lived with the William and Phebe Wright for six months, helping William on the farm. Phebe taught him to read. He adopted the name James W. C. Pennington and settled in New York. There he studied theology, became an ordained Presbyterian minister and pastor, author, international abolitionist, and recipient of an honorary doctorate of divinity from the University of Heidelberg. In his memoir, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, he expressed his gratitude and continuing affection for the Wrights, calling William his "dear friend." The regard was mutual. He quoted a letter from William and a postscript from Phebe in which she wrote, "James, I hope thee will not attribute my long silence in writing to indifference. No such feeling can ever exist towards thee in our family. Thy name is mentioned almost every day. Each of the children claims the next letter from thee. It will be for thee to decide which shall have it."

William and Phebe Wright are buried in the Huntington Burial Ground with their son, General William Wierman Wright, buried beside them.

John W. Jones (1817-1900)

In 1844, at the age of twenty-seven, Jones, his two younger brothers, and two other men escaped from slavery in Loudoun County. They traveled north almost 300 miles along the Old Carolina Road and settled in Elmira, New York. Jones found work as a sexton there, maintaining the Baptist church and burying the dead in the cemetery. He also married and had children. Additionally, with funding from prominent whites such as Jervis Langdon, Jones ushered around 800 other refugees from slavery onto the train bound for St. Catherine's, Canada. He kept in touch with friends in the South and received communication about freedom seekers.

During the Civil War, the federal government established a Confederate prison camp in Elmira. John Jones buried the dead in neat rows and kept careful records. One casualty he recognized as his former overseer's son, and Jones notified the family. After Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Jones invited his sister in Loudoun to live with him, and she moved to Elmira with her children. After the war, Jones visited his old home place where he was received as a guest. Families of the prisoners he had buried traveled to Elmira, but most chose to leave their loved ones interred at Woodlawn Cemetery. Jones saved enough money to purchase first a house near the church and later a farm on the edge of town. His house, moved to a spot near Woodlawn Cemetery, has been preserved as a museum.

Catherine "Kitty" Payne (1816-1850)

Mary Maddox inherited her husband Samuel's estate when he died in 1839, with any remainder at her death to go to their nephew Samuel Maddox. In 1843, Mary emancipated all seven of the people she held in slavery. They included 27-year-old "Kitty" and her two children, Eliza (5), and Mary (4), and four males. Virginia's manumission laws required them to leave the state within a year. Mary Maddox accompanied them to Adams County, Pennsylvania, to help them settle there, even filing a deed of manumission with the local court. Her nephew Samuel Maddox, who was deeply in debt, went to Adams County to claim his future inheritance. He and other men kidnapped Catherine "Kitty" Payne and her now three children and took them back to Rappahannock County. He was about to sell them but Payne somehow charged him with trespass, assault, and battery. The young family was imprisoned for safekeeping and charged for it by the day.

Meanwhile incensed citizens in Adams County tried and convicted the kidnappers in their absence, with white and black witnesses testifying against them. For almost a year, the family remained in jail. Quakers in Adams County and Loudoun County, Virginia, devoted themselves to her case, but Maddox was acquitted on a technicality. Eventually, his accomplice was captured and sentenced in Adams County, and Maddox renounced

his claim. The family was liberated again. They resided with Loudoun Quakers over the winter before returning to Adams County in the spring.

Willis Madden (1799-1879)

Willis Madden was ambitious and multitalented. He learned many skills, including blacksmithing, shoemaking, distilling; and he did them all while also working as a teamster. He married Kitty Clark in the early 1820s. They had two children by 1827 when Kitty's mother came to live with them, and then had seven more. In 1835, Willis Madden bought eighty-seven acres of farmland and a run-down old house where his mother had once lived as a tenant. It was poor land, he knew, but it was also located on a well-traveled road midway in the two-day journey between Culpeper and Fredericksburg. Willis Madden built a blacksmith shop, a wheelwright shop, and general store. He allowed drovers and other travelers to camp on his property and he provided provisions and services. Then, he and his sons built a house with two sections—one for the family and one for paying guests. By the 1850s, Madden's Tavern was a popular stop for travelers as well as men from the local community. His accomplishments were remarkable by any standard, but they were especially so given the many laws and social customs that restricted free blacks in antebellum Virginia. During the Civil War years, however, Confederate and especially Union troops ravaged Madden's property, reduced him to near-poverty, and drove him into a depression that he never recovered from. He died in 1879.

Lloyd W. Watts (1835-1918)

Lloyd and his brother John W. were born in Carroll County, Maryland, but moved with their family to Adams County in the 1840s. They both served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Afterward, Lloyd was a founding member of the Sons of Goodwill. Among other activities, they established Lincoln Cemetery in Gettysburg for African American veterans of the Civil War, who were excluded from the National Cemetery. He taught in the town's colored school and served as a deacon in St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church in Gettysburg.

Jennie Dean (c.1852-1913)

At the age of fourteen, Jane Serepta "Jennie" Dean of Prince William County set out for Washington, D.C. to find a job and save her family's farm. Formerly enslaved, she and her father Charles both strove to improve their lives. Charles had learned to read and write, and so had Jennie, even though she had just two years of formal education in the new Freedmen's Bureau school. Charles was trying to buy a small farm when he died suddenly. Jennie determined to help her family hold onto it. In Washington, D.C., she found domestic work for prosperous whites and a supportive black community in 19th Street Baptist Church. Not only did she secure the farm, she financed her sisters' educations. On visits home, she evangelized and organized Baptist missions that became full churches. Some survive today. Troubled by the lack of educational opportunities for black children, she encouraged schools in the churches. In the 1880s she conceived and

campaign for the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth. It opened in 1894 and eventually educated over 6,500 students on a 100-acre campus. Jennie Dean remained active on the managing board, fundraising, and supervising the women's dorm until her death in 1913. One who knew her observed, "She taught that life is a privilege as well as a responsibility and that birth or origin have but little bearing on success or failure if the will to help one's self is cultivated and encouraged." Today, besides a memorial at the original campus, an elementary school on the property bears her name.

Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery in eastern Maryland but escaped to freedom in the North in 1831. There he read William Lloyd Garrison's antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* and joined the abolition movement. Through his speeches and his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he became the movement's most powerful witness against slavery and the most famous black abolitionist. Unlike many of them who denounced the Constitution as a proslavery document, however, Douglass thought that it, together with the Declaration of Independence, supported freedom, justice, and equality. During the Civil War, he helped persuade President Abraham Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and allow black men to fight in the Union Army. Lincoln called Douglass "the most meritorious man of the 19th century." After the War, Douglass continued to advocate for civil rights for all men and women and continued his role as the leading spokesman for his race. He was the clear and eloquent voice of the national conscience in his era and helped the United States grow into its early promise.

In the late nineteenth century, Douglass delivered at least three addresses in The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Region: one in Purcellville, Loudoun County, Virginia, in 1879; one on John Brown at the fourteenth anniversary of Storer College in Harpers Ferry in 1881; and the last at the opening of the Manassas Industrial School in 1894. Place. In the last, he talked about the importance of place—he thought there was no better site for a secondary school for the children of slaves than Manassas, where thirty years earlier opening battle of the Civil War took place.

Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1964)

Nannie Helen Burroughs left a lot of family history behind when, at the age of five, she and her mother moved away from Orange. Her father's father, a woodworker, had purchased his freedom and a small farm. Her father John aspired to the ministry and studied at the Richmond Institute but couldn't find a church that needed a pastor. Her mother Jennie, born in slavery, supported the family with domestic work and became the only breadwinner when her husband died. Wanting a better education for her daughter than she could get in Orange, they went to live with Jennie's sister in Washington, D.C., and found a church home at 19th Street Baptist. Nannie excelled in school, but upon graduation she was unable to win a teaching assistant job. The color line in D.C. barred black women from jobs in white schools and an entrenched, light-skinned black elite controlled the few positions in colored schools.

Burroughs determined to found a school someday that would educate black women of all social backgrounds and prepare them for success. She found work for the *Christian Banner* in Philadelphia and then, in 1900, with the National Baptist Convention. She delivered an address at the national convention in Richmond, Virginia, that year, "How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping." The speech and her continuing efforts earned her national fame and promoted the formation and growth of black women's organizations, including a Women's Convention auxiliary that grew to 1.5 million members worldwide. By 1909, Burroughs had the support she needed to establish the National Training School for Women and Girls. In 1926 it became the National Trade and Professional School for Women and Girls, with the motto "We specialize in the wholly impossible." Burroughs was a stirring orator and a tireless civil and women's rights advocate. One supporter observed, "She has dynamic power. Measured, not as a Negro woman, but as a woman, she has extraordinary ability, and her living faith in God and all His children, of whatever race, her spirit of service and sacrifice have energized her gifts as only faith and love can do."

Mary Carr Greer

Mary Carr grew up at River View Farm, the eldest child of Hugh and Texie Mae Carr. She and her five sisters—Fannie, Emma, Peachie, Hazel, and Virginia—and brother Marshall attended school at Union Ridge Graded School in the African American community now buried under the reservoir. After their primary education they attended Piedmont Industrial Institute in Charlottesville. Their mother died in 1899, when Mary was fifteen years old and Marshall was two, but the family held fast to their educational goals. Mary earned a teacher's certificate and taught nearby for some years, then earned a college degree at Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now Virginia State University) in Petersburg. She then taught at Albemarle Training School, which had replaced Union Ridge when it burned in 1893. In 1913 she married Conly Greer, who had attended the same college. He took over the farm management from her father and became Albemarle County's first black extension agent, teaching other African Americans modern farming practices. Mary Carr Greer became principal of the Albemarle Training School, where she helped it expand its curriculum and facilities into a four-year high school, while agitating for full inclusion of the school into the Charlottesville-Albemarle system. It was done soon after her retirement in 1950, and in 1979 the school system honored her by naming Mary Carr Greer Elementary School for her.

Billy Pierce (1890-1933)

In the early twentieth century there was little opportunity in Virginia for a man of color as talented and ambitious as Billy Pierce. Educated at Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and Howard University in Washington, D.C., he also served in the Army during World War I. Pierce then worked as a newspaper editor in Washington and Chicago, but his real love was the arts. He performed for a time, then opened the Broadway Dance Studio in New York City. He started small but soon attracted noted white clients such as Fred and Adele Astaire, and choreographed dances for Broadway shows. Trade

magazines credited him with dances such as the Charleston and Black Bottom that became popular worldwide. They were part of the African American cultural flowering known as the Harlem Renaissance. In the early 1930s Pierce took a show of African American dance to European cities including London, Paris, and Rome. Despite his fame he held fondly to his roots. On the wall of his New York dance studio, he kept a large tinted photograph of his parents standing in front of their Purcellville home. He and his young family returned for an extended visit each summer. In 1929, a newspaperman reported that Pierce “comes back to Virginia annually to see his aged mother, and never fails to write down the steps observable in the breakdowns and barn dances of the Old Dominion.” He died suddenly at the age of forty-three and returned home one last time to a large funeral service with memorials and visitors from afar. He was buried in his church’s cemetery in Lincoln.

Jessie Mathews Vann (1885-1967)

Jessie Mathews Vann was the granddaughter of underground railroad activists Edward and Annie Mathews from the Yellow Hill community of Adams County, Pennsylvania. Her father and three uncles served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. She was orphaned at an early age and lived mostly with extended family. She married Robert L. Vann, attorney and publisher/editor of the Pittsburgh Courier, a prominent African American newspaper, but he died in 1940. She became publisher/treasurer and under her ownership it reached circulation of 400,000 and became the most popular black newspaper in the country. Its success was due in part to its “Double V” campaign—victory for democracy at home and abroad—over prejudice and discrimination here and against foreign enemies abroad. Jessie served on national boards such as the national NAACP and Urban League. President Eisenhower appointed her to his International Development Advisory Board, which set policy for the Point Four Program, which provided international assistance; and a board that set retirement tables for the Armed Forces. He wanted her to serve and as an alternate delegate to the United Nations, but she declined because of her business duties. Human rights and veterans were her two biggest interests. She returned for visits to Gettysburg and spoke in 1950 at the National Military Park in a memorial service to honor African Americans killed in battle. She received many honors in her day, appeared on the TV show “This is Your Life,” and recorded an audio essay for Edward R. Murrow’s radio program, “This I Believe.”

Edna Lewis (1916-2006)

Growing up in Freetown in the 1920s, Edna Lewis enjoyed the birth of farm animals in the spring, eating and preserving garden fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer, attending Emancipation Day and Race Day in the fall, and Christmas celebrations in the winter. In the 1930s, however, Edna felt the pull of the bright lights and rode a bus to New York City. She worked first as a seamstress, then as a cook at a friend’s new restaurant, Café Nicholson in Manhattan. There she prepared fresh meats and produce in a refined yet traditional southern manner. She once told a reporter, “As a child in Virginia, I thought all food tasted delicious. After growing up, I didn’t think food tasted the same, so it has been my lifelong effort to try and recapture those good flavors of the

past.” While recuperating from a broken leg, she handwrote *A Taste of Country Cooking* (1976) that included recollections of rural life in Freetown along with seasonal menus and recipes. With her cookbooks and her growing reputation as a master chef, Edna Lewis helped launch the culinary movement that celebrates regional cooking with farm-fresh seasonal foods. Edna Lewis became known as the “first lady of southern cooking.” Throughout her life she was also deeply committed to civil rights and social issues. She found much of value in Freetown that she wanted to share with the world. She wrote, “Although the founders of Freetown have passed away, I am convinced that their ideas do live on for us to learn from, to enlarge upon, and pass on to the following generations.”

John Jackson (1924-2002)

Born in 1924 in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the seventh of fourteen children, John Jackson grew up steeped in Piedmont agricultural and musical traditions. Instead of attending school, he performed farm labor with his family, and learned the guitar from his father at age four. His parents played often at house parties and, when John was six, bought a phonograph and 78RPM blues and country records. John played along and learned open tunings and slide guitar from “Happy,” a water boy on a chain gang constructing Route 29. In the tough economic times following World War II, however, house parties sometimes became violent, and he gave up playing.

In 1949, John Jackson moved to Fairfax County with his wife and young children to find work. He took up the guitar again in the 1960s when a cash-strapped friend pawned him an old Gibson. Folklorist Chuck Perdue heard him and convinced him there was an audience eager to hear his style of music. In the decades that followed John Jackson released nine albums, played in more than sixty countries, and became widely known as “King of the Piedmont Blues.” Jackson was also a strong proponent of civil rights and an active member of the Falls Church Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). One fan wrote in 1970 that he “sings music that cuts across centuries, racial lines and regional differences.” In 1986 the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded him the Lifetime Honor of National Heritage Fellow. Shortly before his death in 2002, he helped establish the John Jackson Center for Piedmont Blues at the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation in Falls Church, Virginia.

Many other musicians didn’t achieve fame beyond the region, but were also outstanding. Chauncey Brown, for example, of Loudoun and Fauquier counties, was known as “a society musician” who played mostly at elite whites-only social gatherings. He and Duke Ellington played frequently together; Ellington described their professional relationship as “one hand washing the other.” Brown could possibly have achieved greater fame, but he didn’t want to go to New York and leave his beloved hunt country behind.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground has done a tremendous job of bringing people together all along the corridor to share information, pool our resources, and energize one another in our love for history and education.

Today I'm going to tell you some stories of the places around us and the people who once lived here. We'll begin with Peter Deadfoot, the first documented escape from slavery in Loudoun County. The reward advertisement demonstrates another truth: whether someone was a slave or a slaveholder actually tells you little about them as a person, about the skills they develop or the "content of their character."

Others in JTHG

W.E.B. Du Bois understood the symbolic importance of place and my epiphany about the black experience. He and other Niagara Movement leaders chose Harpers Ferry and Storer College for the site of their second meeting in 1906. There he enjoined attendees to reconsecrate themselves, "in the place of John Brown's martyrdom," to the "final emancipation of the race." In his book *John Brown*, Du Bois wrote, "To most Americans, the inner striving of the Negro was a veiled and unknown tale: they had heard of Douglass, they knew of fugitive slaves, but of the living, organized, struggling group that made both these phenomena possible they had no conception."

Freetown

Freetown began after the Civil War when a slaveholder gave grants of land to three people he had formerly held as slaves. Eight other families joined them, with the houses and their separate kitchens radiating in a circle. Chester and Lucindy Lewis, who lived in the center with their many children, established a school in their living room. They hired first a nearby West Indian man and later Isabella Lightfoot, a graduate of Oberlin College, to teach. Students paid one dollar per month and walked as far as eight miles to attend. Lucindy Lewis served lunch each day to the thirty students. One student, with money raised by family members, continued her education at the Manassas Industrial School. In Freetown, residents built Bethel Church and a school that they named for Miss Lightfoot. Except for an early vocational building, the school is no longer standing, but a newer school that bears her name is still in operation today.

Edna Lewis, a daughter of Freetown, fondly recalled sharing work that was close to nature and celebrating culture through plays, poetry readings, singing quartets, and special events such as Emancipation Day and Revival Week. She wrote that the community's adults "showed such love and affection for us as children, at the same time asking something of us, and they knew how to help each other so that the land would thrive for all. Each family had its own talents, its special humor, but they were bound together in an important way." But as adults themselves, most moved away to find suitable employment. Notable among them, Edna Lewis introduced southern cuisine to the elite culinary world in New York City, and Mathew Lewis, Jr. won a Pulitzer Prize for his photography.

Edna Lewis (1916-2006)

Growing up in Freetown in the 1920s, Edna Lewis enjoyed the birth of farm animals in the spring, eating and preserving garden fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer, attending Emancipation Day and Race Day in the fall, and Christmas celebrations in the winter. In the 1930s, however, Edna felt the pull of the bright lights and rode a bus to New York City. She worked first as a seamstress, then as a cook at a friend's new restaurant, Café Nicholson in Manhattan. There she prepared fresh meats and produce in a refined yet traditional southern manner. She once told a reporter, "As a child in Virginia, I thought all food tasted delicious. After growing up, I didn't think food tasted the same, so it has been my lifelong effort to try and recapture those good flavors of the past." While recuperating from a broken leg, she handwrote *A Taste of Country Cooking* (1976) that included recollections of rural life in Freetown along with seasonal menus and recipes. With her cookbooks and her growing reputation as a master chef, Edna Lewis helped launch the culinary movement that celebrates regional cooking with farm-fresh seasonal foods. Edna Lewis became known as the "first lady of southern cooking." Throughout her life she was also deeply committed to civil rights and social issues. She found much of value in Freetown that she wanted to share with the world. She wrote, "Although the founders of Freetown have passed away, I am convinced that their ideas do live on for us to learn from, to enlarge upon, and pass on to the following generations."

John Jackson (1924-2002)

Born in 1924 in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the seventh of fourteen children, John Jackson grew up steeped in Piedmont agricultural and musical traditions. Instead of attending school, he performed farm labor with his family, and learned the guitar from his father at age four. His parents played often at house parties and, when John was six, bought a phonograph and 78 RPM blues and country records. John played along and learned open tunings and slide guitar from "Happy," a water boy on a chain gang constructing Route 29. In the tough economic times following World War II, however, house parties sometimes became violent, and he gave up playing.

In 1949, John Jackson moved to Fairfax County with his wife and young children to find work. He took up the guitar again in the 1960s when a cash-strapped friend pawned him an old Gibson. Folklorist Chuck Perdue heard him and convinced him there was an audience eager to hear his style of music. In the decades that followed John Jackson released nine albums, played in more than sixty countries, and became widely known as "King of the Piedmont Blues." Jackson was also a strong proponent of civil rights and an active member of the Falls Church Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). One fan wrote in 1970 that he "sings music that cuts across centuries, racial lines and regional differences." In 1986 the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded him the Lifetime Honor of National Heritage Fellow. Shortly before his death in 2002, he helped establish the John Jackson Center for Piedmont Blues at the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation in Falls Church, Virginia.

Conclusion

The people whose life stories I've shared with you today illustrate what Rachel Naomi Remen calls one of the best-kept secrets in America: You don't have to have an easy life to have a good life. She points out that sometimes hardships, even catastrophes, make a strong foundation from which to build a good life. They complete our identity and equip us to serve others in a special way.

Rachel Naomi Remen is a physician and storyteller, author of the bestseller, *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal*. She is a pioneer in holistic medicine linking mind, body, and spirit. She advocates what she calls integrative medicine, that combines the scientific and spiritual dimensions of healing.

Her ideas, I think, apply to us in the collective sense, and offer a way to heal a nation still recovering from the wounds of slavery. Slavery was cured in sense, by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. But healing, Remen says, is different from a cure. It means to understand how it, and how we responded to it, has shaped who we are and equips us to serve humanity in a special way.

John Jones, Jennie Dean, Frederick Douglass, John Jackson, Edna Lewis, and so many others demonstrate for us ways to find the good life; to break the bonds, even internal ones, that hold us back.

When we remember and tell and listen to these stories, we honor the people in the past. In a sense they live on in our hearts and minds—their stories are unfinished because we carry them on in our words and deeds. They inspire us to create that world void of prejudice that Carter Woodson and so many others dreamed of.

In closing, I'd like to share a poem called "Frederick Douglass," by African American poet Robert Hayden, himself inspired by black history.

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to all,
when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole,
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.