to burn churches and schools, the KKK sought to discourage blacks from striving for additional political and civil rights. However, the fact that the KKK was not successful in burning churches and schools in Cecil County set it apart from other southern states. This could be the case because Cecil County was close to federal power in the North and that Cecil County's authorities would not tolerate such acts of violence.

The Vigilance Committee that Cecil County's whites created in the 1870s grew out of whites' fears about black crime. Similar to anti-black organizations in other southern states, this society attempted to lynch African Americans whom they believed were not properly punished by the courts. The Vigilance Committee may have been more popular in southern Cecil County since this area was dominated by more conservative Democrats than other parts of Cecil County, such as Elkton. However, the fact that authorities prevented this group from lynching a black man shows that unlike other southern states, Cecil County's officials would not tolerate "Lynch Law." This paints a more moderate picture of Cecil County during the 1870s.

During the 1870s, violence against blacks continued to be publicized, but blacks were also punished for minor offenses. There are several cases in the Cecil Democrat explaining that some whites brutally treated colored children who did not obey them. A July 22, 1876 article in the Cecil Democrat indicated, "A brutal farmer on this side of Brick Meeting House is reported as having whipped a small colored boy who he obtained from the Philadelphia Almshouse in the most unmerciful manner, lacerating his flesh in a shocking degree." Another case published in the Cecil Democrat on November 2, 1878 revealed, "W. M. Miller, of the eighth district, held a hearing. Sam Cummings is charged with the cruel treatment of a colored girl named Mary Coley. The girl testified

\footnote{Ibid., 22 July 1876, p. 1.}
to the terrible beating she received. The defendant was found guilty.\textsuperscript{422} Both of these cases point to the violent behavior of some of Cecil County’s whites during the 1870s. They also signify that as late as the 1870s, some of Cecil County’s whites considered blacks as animals whom they felt justified to punish if they disobeyed. However, the fact that the black girl was allowed to testify against the white man whom had treated her harshly suggests that at times, Cecil County’s court system supported the rights of African Americans.

After 1880, Klan activity and white violence significantly decreased. For example, there are approximately 8 cases between 1880 and 1900 against blacks recorded in the \textit{Cecil Whig} and \textit{Cecil Democrat} as opposed to 48 articles on anti-black violence published during the 1870s. This reduction may coincide with the fact that during these decades, no significant developments occurred in African American struggle for their rights in Cecil County, and Reconstruction was over nationally.

Even though in the early twentieth the Kerwin Act was passed and Democrats attempted to disenfranchise blacks, as in the 1880s and 1890s, there were few cases of violence directed at blacks by whites. For example, only 10 cases of violence were reported during the decade in the \textit{Cecil Whig} and the \textit{Cecil Democrat}. This is notable because further south the Jim Crow and disenfranchisement elections were often very violent. The decrease in crime may be attributed to the fact that whites did not feel that they had to use violence to intimidate blacks not to question their rights. Instead, by the early twentieth century, segregation laws ensured that blacks in Cecil County would occupy separate public accommodations from whites. Still, there are some cases of violence against blacks in the early twentieth century Cecil County. A June 17, 1905

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 2 November 1878, p. 1.
article in the *Cecil Democrat* indicated, "Walter Stearling, a white man from Elkton, beat Mary Lee, colored, for speaking against him. Her injuries are severe. Also, John Williams, colored, was shot in the neck by a white living in Port Deposit." Another article in the July 25, 1908 edition of the *Cecil Whig* revealed, "Joseph Wallace, colored of Port Deposit, had his throat cut badly with a razor by James Barlett, a white man, for telling him that he was going to work for another white man in the County." Both of these cases are similar to the crimes committed from the 1860s to the 1890s in that they involved blacks who had attempted to speak against whites. The punishment of disobedient African Americans served as an important reminder to other blacks in Cecil County not to challenge white dominance. In these accounts reported, there is no evidence of arrests or punishment of whites who committed these crimes.

Unlike other southern states, Cecil County developed along a "middle ground" in politics, and less violence and threats were directed against African Americans living in Cecil County. Maryland differed from other Border States in that it had issued a statewide emancipation of its slaves in 1864. Conversely, Delaware freed its slaves only when the Thirteenth Amendment was passed. A two-party system existed in Cecil County from 1864 to 1910. In other states further South, the Democratic Party ran unopposed. Another distinguishing factor of Cecil County is that the Republican Party never attempted to "lily white" their party by excluding blacks. In fact, some African Americans gave speeches and held minor positions within the Republican Party. However, unlike blacks under federal Reconstruction, Cecil County's African Americans never held elective office.

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423 Ibid., 17 June 1905, p. 2.
As a result of their inferior position within the Republican Party, blacks sometimes formed their own Colored Republican Clubs. They were active in registering new voters. Even though Democrats tried to issue legislation to amend the constitution, such as the Poe, Straus, and Digges Disenfranchisement Amendments. They were not successful, and from 1870 to 1910, African Americans enthusiastically cast their ballots in large numbers at the polls.

Also, Cecil County differed from other southern states since there were less threats and violence directed at blacks. There were few instances in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat in which the Ku Klux Klan committed crimes against blacks. Whereas in other states, Lynch Law was frequent, in Cecil County, it was virtually nonexistent. Despite the fact that minstrel shows were popular forms of entertainment and were sometimes used as political propaganda, it is significant that violence rarely occurred at these shows. However, threats sometimes materialized into violence against blacks.
Chapter Four:

African American Churches

The Primary Institutes of Social and Political Progress

Cecil County’s African American churches not only were important facilities of worship but they were also key training institutions for the assertion of black social, economic, and political rights. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, both white and African American Methodists had worshiped alongside one another in churches. However, Cecil County’s whites would not allow blacks to preach sermons or be trustees of the church.\textsuperscript{425} As a result of their inferior treatment in white-dominated churches, blacks in Maryland and Pennsylvania broke with these churches in the late eighteenth century and set up their own churches, such as the African Methodist

Episcopal (A.M.E.) denomination. This denomination was founded in 1787 in Philadelphia and was the oldest black church in the United States. The most prominent blacks who contributed to the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church were the free African Americans, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and Richard Strawbridge of Baltimore. Likewise, African Americans in Cecil County had grown disillusioned with white domination of Methodist churches throughout the county. The *Cecil Whig* in a September 5, 1864 article on the history of the A.M.E. Church explained:

In Cecil County, the First Methodist Society began meeting at Bohemia Manor in 1771 where Reverend Richard Wright, the first Methodist missionary proclaimed the gospel 25 years after the influence of Reverend George Whitefield. By the year 1806, ¼ of the church’s membership was black. In 1849, black members withdrew from the church and formed the First Methodist Society in a house on Water Street. Eventually, a two-story frame chapel was built on Collins Street.

Indeed, long before the emancipation of Maryland’s slaves in 1864, the leaders of Cecil County’s strong free black community were instrumental in laying the groundwork for both A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) and A.U.M.P. (African Union Methodist Protestant) Churches in Elkton, Chesapeake City, Port Deposit, and Cecilton, areas where many blacks lived. Some of the pre-emancipation African American churches in Cecil County included the Friendship Church, the Providence A.U.M.P. Church, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit, the Cokesbury United Methodist Church, the Wrights A.M.E. Church, and the Ebenezer Church. It is significant that so many African Americans churches existed before 1864 because blacks in other southern states did not establish separate churches until after the Civil War. A February 21, 1872 article in the *Cecil Democrat* quoted a black preacher referring to the formation of African American

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426 *Elkton Appeal*, 5 June 1865, p. 2.
427 *Cecil Whig*, 10 January 1860, p. 2.
428 Ibid., 5 September 1864, p. 1.
churches in Cecil County before emancipation and extolling blacks' independence from white-dominated churches: "The colored people in this town have overcome prejudice by forming their own churches and by having no connection with white churches whatsoever. This proves that they are capable of self-government." Like schools and other community institutions, blacks viewed churches as necessary for the success and advancement of their race since important meetings on social and political rights were held in them. The formation of African American churches before the Civil War pointed to the strength of Cecil County's free black communities and was important in leading to the establishment of additional black churches after the Civil War.

During the Reconstruction era and in the decades following it, African Americans in former slave states saw the establishment of their own churches as key in setting up their own spaces and in asserting their independence from the white community. In addition, participation in churches brought together the entire black community to work together in organizing social and political movements for the betterment of their communities. Both before and after the Civil War, black members of Methodist churches may have found Christianity so appealing because of its emphasis on the equality of all people. Similarly, Cecil County's African Americans may have viewed churches as symbols of pride for the black community.

The strength and organization of Cecil County's African American churches during the Reconstruction era and in the years up to 1910 may be attributed to the fact that free blacks had established many churches before the Civil War. Cecil County had one of Maryland's largest free black populations prior to 1864 with their own churches, schools,

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430 *Cecil Star*, 3 May 1868, p. 3.
and social institutions. In an October 25, 1972 edition of the *Cecil Whig*, Pastor James Anthony, of Elkton, emphasized the hope that nineteenth century churches had created among the black community in Cecil County. In this speech commemorating African American churches, he stated, “One-hundred and fifty years ago, this church in Port Deposit survived the hardest of times and taught the voiceless to find a voice.”431 Indeed, some of Cecil County’s most prominent black political leaders had actively participated in African American churches before their involvement in politics or business.

**An Analysis of Six Individual African American Churches in Cecil County**

By analyzing both church records and deeds at the Cecil County Historical Society and the Cecil County Courthouse, I discovered that there were six major African American churches in Cecil County before the Civil War. These churches were not only influential in the black community before emancipation, but also continued to be important religious, social, and political centers through the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, many of these churches grew in their membership and moved to newer and larger buildings. In most, there was a continuity of leadership from the years before the Civil War to those following it.432 According to the 1858 and 1877 Residential Maps of Cecil County, the six main African American churches extant in 1858 were also important institutions in 1877.433 All of these churches are located in towns with highly concentrated black communities from 1864 to 1910: Elkton, Port Deposit, Cecilton, and Hawkinsville.

Indeed, the continuity of black leadership in Cecil County’s African American communities signified the organization and strength of pre-Civil War black communities.

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433 *Martinet Map of 1858 and 1877*. 
The leaders of these churches had been influential in uniting the free black community and in establishing churches, schools, and self-help organizations before the War. 434 By the time of their emancipation in 1864, blacks had already laid the groundwork for their communities. This reveals why African American churches were strong institutions after the Civil War. Also, since the same leaders who had headed churches before emancipation ran post-Civil War black churches, these churches were better organized than those in other southern states. 435 In fact, even elite free blacks in Charleston, South Carolina did not establish separate churches until after their emancipation. The existence of African American churches before the Civil War points to the exceptional character of black leadership in Cecil County, which contributed to the emergence of influential black communities throughout the county in the Reconstruction era and in the decades following. The following sections summarize the history of some of the most important black churches in Cecil County and analyze why these churches were successful institutions in Cecil County’s black communities both before and after the Civil War. Friendship Church Once located at Perrytown in southern Cecil County, the Friendship Church best symbolized the efforts of free blacks before the Civil War to develop their own communities with social institutions, schools, and churches. In Bishop Levi Coppin’s memoirs, Unwritten History, written in the late 1870s, he indicated the importance of religion to African Americans before emancipation by stating, “Free black communities in Perrytown expressed their faith and gave vent to their feelings by setting up small log houses, which served as churches.” 436 He further recalls that free blacks and slaves alike assembled in these makeshift churches to read the Bible, sing hymns, and

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434 Cecil Whig, 2 June 1859, p. 1.
435 Cecil County News, 19 February 1864, p. 3.
436 Levi Coppin, Unwritten History (New York: Negro Universities, Reprinted 1968), 44.
discuss issues that were pertinent to the community. Coppin describes the value blacks placed on their early churches by stating, "The church served as a social and religious center where free people and slaves would gather in the church and send their children to the school there." Clearly, the presence of the Friendship Church before the Civil War served an important function in the African American community in uniting both free blacks and slaves and in establishing the foundations for the assertion of black social and political rights after the Civil War.

In the years preceding the emancipation of blacks in 1864, the Court of Equity determined that the Friendship Church rightfully belonged to the black community. Some of the most notable black leaders who took an active role in shaping church policy were James Sisco and Nathan Wilson, who according to Coppin, had been influential free black leaders before emancipation and had owned plots of land in Cecil County. For instance, a land deed from 1871 indicates that James Sisco owned $151 worth of property and owned 5 acres of land. The fact that Coppin cited both of these black leaders as influential in shaping church policy before the Civil War clearly signifies a continuity of black leadership in Cecilton. Later, these same blacks would be responsible for expanding the Friendship Church.

After the Civil War, the Friendship Church (later called Union Bethel A.M.E. Church of Cecilton) served as a testament to blacks' commitment to set up churches independent from white control and reveals the importance of churches as socio-religious organizations. Coppin reinforced the influence of the Friendship Church as an institution

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437 Ibid.
438 Ibid.
439 Ibid.
440 James Sisco land deed, issued 1871, Cecil County Land Records.
441 Midland Journal, 26 June 1872, p. 2.
for the betterment of his race by noting, "Later the Church was used as a forum for the
discussion of moral reform. This was necessary before the discussion of political
matters." According to Coppin, Pastor James Hopkins, who had been an influential
free black before emancipation, convinced blacks that they had a promising future and
that they must earn the respect of whites in Cecil County through their participation in
churches.  

In 1871, the Friendship Church was moved to a newer and more spacious building. In
Thomas Ford's 1871 will, he deeded his land to the new church. Coppin emphasized
blacks' efforts to work together to raise money to build the new church by stating,
"Blacks throughout Cecilton raised money for the new Friendship Church by holding
cake sales and concerts." In fact, a September 24, 1874 Cecil Whig article revealed
that both Helen Ford and Elsie Wilson, two blacks living in Cecilton, recalled the
spaciousness of the new church and its beautiful stained-glass windows. The fact that
African Americans in Cecil County had expanded the Friendship Church inside and had
added improvements, such as expensive stained-glass windows, suggests that influential
black leaders had given large sums of money for the improvement of the church. The
willingness of Cecil County's African Americans to raise money for their churches would
be vital to the survival of their communities in Cecil County. In 1898, the new
Friendship Church was renamed as the Union Bethel A.M.E. Church of Cecilton.

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442 Coppin, 104
443 Ibid.
444 Thomas Ford, will dated July 5, 1871, Cecil County Registry of Probate.
445 Coppin, 44.
446 Cecil Whig, 24 September 1874, p. 1.
Providence A.U.M.P. Church The Providence A.U.M.P. (African Union Methodist Protestant) Church, on Booth Street in Elkton, represents African Americans' urge to break away from the Methodist Society run by whites. The A.U.M.P. denomination was formed around 1860 when the Colored Methodist Protestant Providence Church joined with the African Union Methodist Episcopal Conference, which had been present since 1848, to form the African Union Colored Methodist Protestant Church.\textsuperscript{448} The Providence A.U.M.P. Church, which was founded circa 1860 in Elkton, served as both a religious center and a school. It was one of the first African Methodist Protestant Churches in the country and like the Friendship Church, shows a continuity of black leadership from before and after emancipation.\textsuperscript{449} The fact that the church was also a school prior to Maryland's reconstruction points to blacks' quest to better their children by educating them in morals as well as in other subjects. The competence of black leaders and their ability to efficiently organize this church before the Civil War allowed them to make the church into one of the strongest African American churches in Cecil County.

In 1887, African Americans improved the church by moving it to a new building.\textsuperscript{450} A deed from 1887 indicated that Pastor W.T. Savoy bargained with Mr. Jacob Collins for the purchase of a lot on the corner of High and Collins Avenue. The deed stated:

\begin{quote}
Jacob T. Collins, of Cecil County, Maryland, for a sum of $400, hereby grant and sell said parcel of land to Colored Methodist Protestant Providence Church of Elkton. Sold to W.H. Fax, minister.\textsuperscript{451}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{448} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 18 October 1868, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{450} Jacob T. Collins land deed, issued August 7, 1887, Cecil County Land Records.
\textsuperscript{451} Ibid.
Also, according to an 1887 article in the *Cecil Whig*, "One hundred of the most influential colored men in Elkton raised $100 for the construction of the church." In addition, the Providence A.U.M.P. Church held religious services as well as moral improvement programs, such as Children’s Day, which taught children about the importance of proper behavior.

Finally, in 1890, a deed was issued for another new church on North High Street. This deed stated:

William Wright and his wife, Susan Wright, in the town of Elkton grant onto the Colored Methodist Protestant Providence Church of Elkton the parcel of land located on the North side of High Street. Witnessed by A.J. Scott.

In 1927, the church was renamed the African Union Colored Protestant Providence Church, and during its dedication ceremony, many blacks extolled the efforts of their ancestors to set up their own churches.

By replacing windows and by setting up moral improvement programs, blacks attempted to put this church on an equal footing with white churches. In my opinion, this church best symbolizes the strength of Cecil County’s black communities because African Americans in Elkton led a united effort to raise money for their church and its school. The fact that a new Providence A.U.M.P. Church was built in 1887 and was moved only three years later to a larger building shows the popularity of churches among the African American community in Cecil County. Also, the length of time this church was in existence shows the success and prosperity of blacks in Cecil County.

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452 *Cecil Whig*, 20 November 1887, p. 1.
453 Ibid.
454 William Wright and Susan Wright land deed, issued November 2, 1890, Cecil County Land Records.
455 *Cecil Whig*, 10 March 1942, p. 2.
Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit The Bethel A.M.E. Church is one of the oldest African American churches in Cecil County. In 1834, it was the site of the ordination of William Douglas, the first black deacon south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Unlike in other southern states, blacks in Cecil County had developed a strong leadership, formed their own churches, and appointed prominent African American preachers before the Civil War. The fact that six churches had existed before the Civil War indicates that Cecil County developed along a “middle ground.” According to church deeds, the first Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit was set up in the home of Rachel Gibson in 1848. The eagerness of slaves to attend camp meetings, held by the church, symbolized the hope that Christianity brought to them that they would someday be free. In 1869, the church moved to a new building. The 1869 deed stated, “A certain parcel of ground, issued by William Lee, was granted onto Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit. Witnessed by John Martin.” Also, the mortgage for this church revealed, “The church justly was indebted to Jacob Lome of Cecil County, Maryland in the sum of $1,800.”

By 1877, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit greatly expanded in both size and membership. According to the Cecil Whig during this time period, 103 members of the church met at revivals in Patterson’s Woods to discuss moral progress. Later, the church moved from Bethel Hollow to Rock Run in order to make room for the Tome School. The second church was completed in 1911.

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456 Ibid., 8 December 1864, p. 2.
457 Rachel Gibson land deed, issued March 28, 1848, Cecil County Land Records.
458 William Lee land deed, issued April 15, 1869, Cecil County Land Records.
459 Jacob Lome Mortgage, issued August 5, 1870, Cecil County Land Records.
460 Cecil Whig, 29 May 1877, p. 2.
461 Ibid., 19 June 1912, p. 1.
rebuilt many times signified that black churches were well funded and supported by the African American community of Cecil County.

Cokesbury United Methodist Church A 1978 article in the Cecil Whig expressed the sorrow that Cecil County’s blacks felt about the loss of their church, which was destroyed by fire that year. The article emphasized, “The Cokesbury United Methodist Church in Port Deposit succumbed to a fire a few months ago.”\(^{462}\) Pastor Elmer Dean expressed the sorrow felt by the black community concerning the loss of the symbol of black historical progress by stating:

> We should be proud of what we have inherited from our forefathers. Through this church, they were able to keep their community together. We should now be courageous enough to live up to their expectations.\(^{463}\)

Indeed, the Cokesbury Church is a fitting testament to the hard work that Cecil County’s blacks put into constructing churches in Cecil County. Doctor Thomas Coke (white), an early District Superintendent of the Methodist Society, helped blacks establish the Cokesbury Church in 1789 by setting aside a meeting and burial ground for black Methodists.\(^{464}\) It is very significant that a white person in Cecil County was willing to donate land for the establishment of a church for blacks. Nowhere else in the South did whites encourage blacks to establish separate churches from those of whites during the eighteenth century. Not until federal Reconstruction did white-led organizations, such as the Freedmen’s Bureau, promote the construction of African American churches. The fact that blacks had separate churches since the eighteenth century shows the continuity of black leadership in Cecil County, which was vital in shaping strong black communities. Also, Coke’s willingness to help blacks set up a church by giving them

\(^{462}\) Ibid., 8 June 1978, p. 1.
\(^{463}\) Ibid.
\(^{464}\) Ibid., 10 March, p. 2.
land points to the more accommodating attitudes whites held toward blacks in Cecil County. In 1830, Samuel Hawkins, a free black, built the church on land that his former master had given him.\footnote{Ibid., 11 May 1867, p. 2.} By 1859, a second wood-frame church was built by Francis Harvey and rebuilt again in 1885 after a fire destroyed it.\footnote{Ibid., 29 July 1886, p. 2.}

\textbf{Wrights A.M.E. Church of Elkton} In 1848, blacks in Elkton formed the Wrights A.M.E. Church in a small house overlooking Water Street.\footnote{Ibid., 22 June 1867, p. 1.} By 1882, the black community of Elkton decided to move the church to a new building, which was more spacious than the previous one. An August 25, 1882 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} noted, "Wrights A.M.E. Church was dedicated last Sunday where Alexander Wayman preached a sermon to honor Richard Wright, in which the church is named."\footnote{Ibid., 25 August 1882, p. 1.} Pastor John Collett, a prominent black leader, was instrumental in setting up Wrights A.M.E. Church. He used $400 that had been donated by black church members towards the construction of the new church.\footnote{Ibid.} The cooperation of whites and blacks in building this church may represent the willingness of both races to improve churches.

\textbf{Ebenezer A.M.E. Church} The Ebenezer A.M.E. Church is located in the southern agricultural region of Cecil County, seven miles south of Chesapeake City and near Bohemia Manor.\footnote{Martinet Map of 1858.} According to a January 11, 1864 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig}, the plot of land that the church sits on was given to blacks in 1836 for the construction of a new church, but this transfer of land was not recorded in the deed book until 1862.\footnote{Cecil Whig, 11 January 1864, p. 1.} It may not have been recorded until 1862 since the original land deed from 1836 may have been
lost. The deed issued in 1862 states, "John Brown and Timothy Tilghsman, all free
colored persons of Cecil County, do grant said land to African Methodist Episcopal
Ebenezer Church of Cecil County. Signed by W.M.H. Ricketts."\(^{472}\) African American
members of the church saved money to improve it. They hid their money under a brick
hearth in an old house. By 1864, a dining hall and a one-room school were added.\(^{473}\)

In 1886, the seventy-five-member school, established at the church, was one of the
few schools for black children in southern Cecil County. Essie Raison remembered
attending the school when she was a child. She indicated, "I recall walking miles to that
school, and we are always strictly disciplined."\(^{474}\) The establishment of Ebenezer A.M.E.
Church and its school reveals blacks' quest for knowledge and pride in their self-
 improvement through participation in churches.

**Other Black Churches in Cecil County, Maryland**

I have included some information on other African American churches that I have
read about in the *Cecil Whig* and the *Cecil Democrat*. However, I do not have much
information on them.

**St. Marks A.U.M.P. Church** In July 2004, I was fortunate enough to travel to Elk Neck in
Northeast, where I saw the St. Mark's A.U.M.P. Church. The cornerstone on the church
indicates that the church was completed in 1887.\(^{475}\) An 1888 article in the *Cecil Whig*
refers to St. Marks A.U.M.P. Church. The article stated, "Reverend Scott of Elkton will
preach at St. Marks Church, where whites and blacks alike will gather for the church's
dedication.\textsuperscript{476} The fact that blacks still worship at the church indicates the pride Cecil County’s blacks have in their heritage.

**First Colored Methodist Protestant Church of Northeast** This church was founded in 1881. The deed states, “Jonathan Simpers and his wife, Rachel, in Northeast, grant unto Peter Jordan, George Anderston, Benjamin Harrod, and Nathaniel Mitchell, trustees of the church, the said parcel of land. It is located in the fifth election district of the county, on the public road leading from Northeast to Elkton.”\textsuperscript{477}

**St. Phillips A.U.M.P. Church** According to the *Cecil Democrat*, this church was dedicated in 1881, where a large crowd of blacks assembled for the cornerstone laying.\textsuperscript{478}

**Elkton A.U.M.P. Church** The *Cecil Democrat* indicates that this church was founded in the 1880s, where E.W. Scott, a noted black preacher, delivered his sermons.\textsuperscript{479}

**Trinity A.U.M.P. Church** Both blacks and whites assembled for the dedication of this frame church in 1890. They later donated money for furniture.\textsuperscript{480}

**Chesapeake City A.U.M.P. Church** According to the *Cecil Democrat*, on July 27, 1896, Reverend Sides and Reverend Scott assembled for the dedication of the church.\textsuperscript{481}

**Bayview A.U.M.P. Church** The church was founded in June 1878 where Reverend Scott delivered the dedicatory sermon.\textsuperscript{482}

**Cedar Hill A.U.M.P. Church** The church was dedicated in 1874. Both Reverend C.H. Williams and the Providence A.U.M.P. Church’s choir were present.\textsuperscript{483}

\textsuperscript{476} *Cecil Whig*, 23 May 1888, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{477} Jonathan and Rachel Simpers land deed, issued June 16, 1881, Cecil County Land Records.
\textsuperscript{478} *Cecil Democrat*, 9 August 1882, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid., 17 December 1880, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{480} *Midland Journal*, 10 January 1891, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{481} *Cecil Democrat*, 28 August 1896, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{482} *Cecil County News*, 17 June 1878, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{483} *Cecil Whig*, 25 June 1874, p. 2.
Reeds A.U.M.P. Church According to the *Cecil Democrat*, this church in Northeast was established in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{484}

Both before and after the emancipation of Cecil County’s blacks, churches served as the focal points of Cecil County’s African American population where they could worship together and discuss their political and social rights. The Friendship Church, the Providence A.U.M.P. Church, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Port Deposit, the Cokesbury United Methodist Church, the Wrights A.M.E. Church of Elkton, and the Ebenezer A.M.E. Church were all prominent institutions in Cecil County before emancipation. All of them were founded in the pre-emancipation era. It is significant that most of these churches were founded during these decades since most churches in southern states were not established until after the Civil War. During the early to mid-nineteenth century, slaves in Cecil County were less important than they had been in the eighteenth century because the tobacco economy had shifted to one based on wheat growing.\textsuperscript{485} As a result, many slaveholders manumitted their slaves. The presence of a large free black community in Cecil County precipitated the emergence of black churches.

Also, all six of the churches, set up in the pre-Civil War era, were initially established in makeshift buildings and lacked funding. The locations of these churches are also similar. All of them are set up in areas with highly concentrated black communities, such as Elkton, Cecilton, and Northeast. According to the 1858 and 1877 Residential Maps for Cecil County, the six pre-Civil War churches were in the vicinity of black neighborhoods and schools. One such area was Snow Hill in Elkton, which was one of

\textsuperscript{484} *Cecil Democrat*, 9 November 1893, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{485} *Midland Journal*, 8 July 1864, p. 2.
the most prominent black communities in Cecil County during the 1850s. In addition, these six churches were the training grounds for black leaders before the Civil War. In fact, Cecil County was the site of the first black deacon south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The existence of strong black church leaders prior to emancipation signified the exceptional leadership of blacks in Cecil County.

In the years after the Civil War, these six churches continued to be important socio-religious centers for unifying African Americans in Cecil County, and they all greatly expanded in size and membership during the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. These churches may have been so popular during these decades since African Americans focused more on improving the moral character of their own communities and in forming their own social institutions. In all these churches, black leaders organized fund raising events where blacks donated money to better their churches. Also, all six churches held camp meetings and lectures, which primarily focused on social and political rights. Furthermore, many of these churches served as schools that taught Cecil County’s black children moral principles.

Moreover, all six of these churches were either the A.M.E. or the A.U.M.P. denominations, but none were of the A.M.E.Z. (African Methodist Episcopal Zion) branch. The A.M.E. Church was first established in Philadelphia by blacks who broke away from the white Methodist Church as a result of their inferior treatment by whites. Bishop Richard Allen was one of the most notable black leaders in establishing the A.M.E. Church, and in the 1840s, Cecil County’s free blacks set up A.M.E. Churches

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486 Martinet Map of 1858.
489 Ibid.
throughout the county. At A.M.E. Churches in Cecil County, both slaves and free blacks worshiped alongside of one another, which was important in solidifying community bonds. Most of the churches in Cecil County were A.U.M.P. Churches. These churches were prominent in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. The A.U.M.P. Church was an offshoot of the older A.M.E. denomination and was first chartered by Peter Spencer in Wilmington, Delaware in 1813 as the Union Church for Africans.\textsuperscript{490} By the 1860s, this church merged with the African Protestant Church to form the African Union Methodist Protestant (A.U.M.P.) Church.

Although I was not able to find documents specifically noting the exact membership for each of the six pre-Civil War churches in Cecil County, a January 25, 1910 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} revealed that the average number of black church membership in the 1860s was 68, 72 in the 1870s, 110 in the 1880s, 121 in the 1890s, and 150 in the first decade of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{491} These numbers indicate that all six churches greatly expanded in membership over each decade and served as important meeting grounds for the African American community.

Furthermore, in my section "Other Black Churches in Cecil County, Maryland," these post Civil War African American churches were all similar in that they were set up during the 1870s, 1880s, or 1890s and most were established in areas where strong free black communities were located, such as Elkton, Northeast, Chesapeake City, and Cecilton. Two out of nine of these churches were set up in the 1870s, four were set up in the 1880s, and three churches were founded in the 1890s. The fact that so many black churches were established during these decades indicates the emphasis blacks placed on

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{491} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 25 January 1910, p. 2.
improving their communities in these years. At this time, blacks in Cecil County gained few additional civil and political rights. As a result, they apparently concentrated more on strengthening institutions within their own communities, such as churches and schools.

Similar to pre-Civil War churches, most the post emancipation churches in Cecil County were A.U.M.P. or A.M.E. churches. Nine out of twelve of these churches were of the A.U.M.P. denomination. All twelve of these churches held fundraising events as well as moral improvement programs.\textsuperscript{492} Indeed, both the pre-Civil War era of Cecil County and its reconstruction period were vital times when African Americans were searching for a sense of self-worth and well-being. The church was the primary foundation and the focal point of the black community, which brought together African Americans of all social backgrounds to worship and to discuss both their political and social rights. The churches’ spiritual and social activities built stability within the black community, and prominent church leaders later led movements to petition whites for African Americans’ social and political rights. By meeting at churches, Cecil County’s African Americans realized that they could no longer be silent concerning their rights. Indeed, the church was vital in teaching the voiceless to find a voice.

One of the most important indicators of blacks’ dedication toward building their own churches in Cecil County was their willingness to donate capital for the construction and improvement of African American Methodist and Episcopal churches. Unlike African American churches in the 1880s and 1890s, in the period immediately following the Civil War, Cecil County’s churches were in poor condition and needed money for repairs. An October 18, 1863 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} indicated, “Wrights A.M.E. Church in this

\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., 3 May 1872, p. 3.
county lacks ventilation and space for all its members." As in the 1860s, the
conditions of African American churches in Cecil County remained poor during much of
the 1870s. For example, there are approximately 125 articles in both the Cecil Democrat
and the Cecil County News concerning the poor conditions of black churches, while in
the 1870s, there are about 108 accounts. A September 18, 1873 article in the Cecil
Democrat reinforces that black churches were in a substandard condition by revealing,
"Blacks conduct church services in an old foundry building in Elkton." The lack of
supplies and inferior conditions of black churches coincided with whites' racist attitudes
toward blacks. Some whites may have seen the establishment of African American
churches as a symbol of black progress and may have feared that a successful black
community would press for additional social and political rights.

Since blacks took great pride in improving their community, they donated money for
new churches from the 1860s to the early twentieth century. The most common way
blacks raised large sums of money in the 1860s for their churches was through collections
at African American Methodist conferences held in Cecil County. Starting in the
1860s, black ministers held these meetings to discuss the condition of their churches,
what programs they needed to implement, and whom they should appoint as leaders of
the Cecil County Circuit of Preachers. In a May 12, 1869 article, the Cecil Whig reported
that the fourth annual African American Methodist conference was held in Elkton. The
article revealed:

The conference was extremely successful and to defray expenses, black preachers
raised $26.75 on the first day to support the missionary cause in Africa. On the
last day, the Finance Committee reported $121.50 as the total amount of their

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493 Ibid., 18 October 1863, p. 2.
494 Cecil Democrat, 18 September 1873, p. 2.
495 Cecil Whig, 12 May 1869, p. 1.
collection. They will use $60.25 towards the construction of a new church in Elkton.  

The *Cecil Whig* further explained, "Although blacks' mode of worship (at this Conference) is primitive, and their preaching contains all antiquity, the business of the Conference is done remarkably well. The black reverends are respectable and well addressed. For their race, they are very polite and obtrusive."  

In addition, black Methodist conferences were an important means of raising money in the 1870s for black churches. An October 2, 1875 article in the *Cecil Democrat* indicated, "The Reverend Thomas Hinson, colored of Elkton, held an eight-day Methodist conference in this town (Elkton). At the meeting, $72.15 was raised for the A.M.E. Church of Elkton, and Hinson gave a sermon on the Old and New Testaments."  

Clearly, both articles symbolized African Americans' efforts in Cecil County to raise money for their churches through organizing Methodist conferences. This method of raising money was the most popular in Cecil County, and there are over 56 articles in the *Cecil Whig* and the *Cecil Democrat* describing such events in the 1860s, while there are 48 articles on this topic in the 1870s. It is significant that whites extolled blacks for their respectable conduct and efforts to raise money. Whites' accommodating attitudes towards blacks points to the more moderate views of some of Cecil County's whites as opposed to people living in other Southern states. Also, the good condition and spaciousness of the Elkton Church, where the conference was held, shows the pride and determination of blacks to place their churches on an equal footing with those of whites.

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496 Ibid.
497 Ibid.
in Cecil County. Indeed, blacks saw the raising of money for their churches as key in improving their communities.

In fact, when many African American churches expanded in the 1870s, Cecil County's blacks were now able to hold lectures, picnics, concerts, festivals, and other events to raise small sums of money for their churches. The articles on these events first appear in the late 1870s in both the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat. For instance, an October 5, 1878 article in the Cecil Whig noted, "A church fair, held among the colored folks, at Bethel A.M.E. Church raised $200 for hard times." From the 1870s to the 1880s, the number of articles on fundraising in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat increased from approximately 31 in the 1870s to 53 during the 1880s. In 1887, a strawberry festival was held among young black ladies to raise money for a church in Port Deposit and was symbolic of blacks' efforts to organize fundraising events in their communities. According to a June 12, 1887 article in the Cecil Democrat, "The strawberry festival among colored ladies in Port Deposit was one of the largest fairs in the county in which all proceeds were donated on behalf of the church."

In addition, African American festivals, lectures, and fairs continued to be a popular means of raising money for churches throughout much of the 1890s and early twentieth century in Cecil County. The number of these events increased significantly during both of these decades. For instance, in the 1890s, the average number of articles on fundraising events was 93, while that number increased to 127 in the first decade of the twentieth century. Both picnics and concerts were most popular fundraising events during the 1890s and the early twentieth century. About 85% of the articles in the Cecil

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499 Cecil Whig, 5 October 1878, p. 1.
500 Cecil Democrat, 12 June 1887, p. 1.
Whig, the Cecil Democrat, and the Cecil County News concerning African Americans’ efforts to collect money for churches describe concerts and picnics. In the 1890s, concerts, which charged small admission fees, almost always had a large turnout among African American church members. A January 5, 1894 article in the Cecil Whig reported, “A concert was held by the Cokesbury Church for the benefit of the church. A total amount of $25.58 was raised. As usual, there was a large turnout.”

Also, an April 24, 1908 article in the Cecil Star noted, “A picnic at the Providence A.U.M.P. Church was largely attended by devoted members, and the $44 raised will help reduce church indebtedness.”

The fundraising events blacks sponsored for the benefit of their churches were vital to the improvement of African American churches. They used the money they raised to expand their churches by moving them to new and more spacious buildings. In Cecil County, African Americans may have taken great pride in setting up organizations within their community. They may have believed that in order to earn the respect and praise of whites, they first had to improve their living conditions as well as demonstrate their independence from the white community. Indeed, this was the first step in the long and arduous struggle for their social, economic, and political rights.

One of the most telling signs of African Americans’ efforts to strengthen their own community and reputation among whites was their donations of small amounts of money for the construction of black churches. From the 1860s through the early 1900s, both the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat reported many cases where black men, women, and even children donated whatever money they could gather together for new churches in

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501 Cecil Whig, 5 January 1894, p. 2.
their community. A March 12, 1867 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “Negroes in Elkton gave $12 towards the improvement of the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Elkton.”

By the 1870s and the 1880s, the number of instances in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat, which described African Americans’ efforts to contribute their own money toward churches, was approximately 23 in the 1870s and 35 articles in the 1890s, while there were only 8 articles on this subject during the 1860s. A January 24, 1879 article in the Cecil Whig explained, “The members of a colored church in Chesapeake City each contributed 20 cents toward the construction of a new and more spacious church since their present church was overcrowded and old.”

Also, a May 30, 1880 article in the Cecil Whig reported that black members of Bishop William Alexander’s (colored) congregation in Elkton dropped small contributions in a tin bucket. The $20 raised was used toward the construction of Wrights A.M.E. Church in Elkton.

Furthermore, an October 15, 1886 article in the Cecil Whig indicated, “Active church members gave $49.50 toward the purchase of a lot on the corner of High and Collins Avenue in Elkton for a new colored church in this town.”

In 1880–1900, blacks’ contributions to the construction and betterment of churches within their communities increased significantly. For example, there are 67 articles published in the 1890s on this topic, while there are approximately 119 accounts in the early twentieth century. A January 14, 1893 article in the Cecil Whig emphasized, “A colored church in this town is presently located in an old foundry. Its members are donating some money toward the establishment of a new church that will accommodate

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504 Cecil Whig, 24 January 1879, p. 2.
505 Ibid., 30 May 1880, p. 2.
506 Ibid., 15 October 15 1886, p. 1.
its 58 members. 507 Also, a February 18, 1908 article in the Cecil Whig indicated, “The members of the Reeds A.U.M.P. Church in Elkton gave a total of $45 toward the improvement of their church.”508 The fact that both poor and wealthy blacks contributed capital for the construction of churches demonstrates just how important it was to Cecil County’s African Americans to develop their own institutions within their communities. Also, the willingness of all church members to donate small amounts of money signifies the unity and strength of Cecil County’s black community and, as with schools, revealed the enthusiasm and pride blacks took in setting up separate institutions from those of whites.

Since some of Cecil County’s whites saw African Americans’ efforts to set up their own churches as commendable, they often donated capital toward the construction of black churches. Starting in the 1860s, some whites extolled Cecil County’s blacks because of their willingness to work independently from whites to establish their own churches, schools, and moral improvement societies. A Cecil Whig article from September 18, 1869 praised the efforts of blacks to raise money at a Methodist conference for a new church by stating, “Colored members of the Methodist Protestant Colored Church at Elkton on Saturday conducted themselves in the most excellent manner by raising money for a new church.”509

Although this article lauds African Americans’ efforts to set up their own churches in Cecil County, nowhere does it indicate that whites gave money to black churches. Not until the 1880s are there newspaper articles in the Cecil Whig or the Cecil Democrat on this topic. An August 25, 1880 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “Colored and

508 Ibid., 18 February 1908, p. 1.
509 Ibid., 18 September 1869, p. 2.
whites attended a tent congregation where both black and white brethren raised $20 to aid in the construction of a new colored church.\textsuperscript{510} Furthermore, the Cecil Democrat indicated in a June 12, 1895 edition, "During a grand rally held by the A.U.M.P. Church in Elkton, a large congregation contributed $437 toward the church. Whites gave over two-thirds of the money to Reverend E.W. Scott for the liquidation of the church debt."\textsuperscript{511} A July 5, 1910 article in the Cecil Whig reported, "At a camp meeting attended by whites and colored in this town, whites gave a total of $45.51 toward the construction of a new church on Booth Street."\textsuperscript{512}

Therefore, through a careful analysis of these newspaper articles and similar accounts, I conclude that in the 1860s and 1870s, blacks raised money for their own churches. There are no reports either in the Cecil Whig or the Cecil Democrat indicating that whites raised money for African American churches during the 1860s and 1870s. However, the fact that whites gave $20 to set up a new church in Cecil County during the 1880s suggests that whites frequently attended black events, such as tent meetings where they contributed money for the betterment of African American churches.\textsuperscript{513} There are over 21 articles on this topic in both the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil Whig in the 1880s, 39 in the 1890s, and 155 in the early twentieth century. Cecil County's whites' contribution of money toward the black churches may be attributed to the fact that by the 1880s, the black community in Cecil County had grown into a formidable force, which whites may have respected.

\textsuperscript{510} Cecil Democrat, 25 August 1880, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., 12 June 1895, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{512} Cecil Whig, 5 July 1910, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{513} Ibid., 10 January 1885, p. 1.
Indeed, the donation of money by some whites toward African American churches suggests that in Cecil County they extolled blacks’ efforts to strengthen their own communities. A church represented the moral advancement of the black community, which may have been appealing to whites who feared crime among the African American community in these decades. Whites apparently believed that unless African Americans bettered themselves, Cecil County would be plagued with crime and immorality. Cecil County’s whites’ views are evident in an article from the *Cecil Democrat* published on May 21, 1890 that stated, “The black people of our county attended a cornerstone laying last Saturday at the Trinity A.U.M.P. Church. Reverend E.W. Scott delivered an eloquent sermon, which warned colored church members to always behave in the best manner and to improve themselves.”\(^{514}\) The fact that some whites were willing to assist blacks in funding new and better churches points to the moderate attitudes of Cecil County’s whites concerning African Americans. In other southern states, there were some incidents of whites assisting blacks in setting up schools and churches. However, in Cecil County, whites regularly donated money toward black churches. For example, in the first decade of the twentieth century, there were over 55 occurrences in which whites contributed money toward the betterment or construction of new black churches.

In addition, whites may have given money to blacks for the establishment of churches since they saw blacks’ efforts to develop independence from the white community as commendable. A *Cecil Democrat* article published on January 5, 1907 clearly demonstrates even some conservative whites’ positive attitudes in Cecil County toward blacks’ solidarity. The article stated, “Much praise must be given to the blacks of our county for their hard work in setting up schools and churches. This shows the respectable

\(^{514}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 21 May 1890, p. 1.
character of the blacks in this county." The donation of money by whites was key in the building of new and better churches in the African American community. Without white financial support and cooperation, blacks' quest for their own institutions developed more slowly.

Once blacks raised money from preachers, fellow church members, and whites, they allocated most of their money towards repairs and the construction of new churches. According to the 1877 Martinet Map, most churches were built in highly settled black communities in Port Deposit, Elkton, and Cecilton. A July 6, 1880 article in the Cecil Whig explained the prosperous condition of African American churches in Cecil County, "A new colored church in this town is spacious and can easily accommodate all the members of the church." Also, an August 14, 1890 article in the Elkton Appeal reported, "The members of the A.U.M.P. Church, on East High Street, have determined to remodel their church building. The present ceiling will be removed, new windowpanes will be installed, and a partition near the door will be torn down." In addition, a June 5, 1907 article in the Cecil Whig indicated that the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Elkton was in good order and that the walls had been recently painted. Unlike African American schools funded by white public school boards in the 1870s, by the 1880s, black churches were in excellent condition and were improved on a daily basis.

From the 1860s to the early twentieth century, African American churches were used as training grounds for the assertion of their social and political rights, as well as forums for the discussion of the moral improvement of the black community. Cecil County's

515 Ibid., 5 January 1907, p. 3.
516 Martinet Map of 1877.
517 Cecil Whig, 6 July 1880, p. 1.
518 Elkton Appeal, 14 August 1890, p. 1.
519 Cecil Whig, 5 June 1907, p. 2.
African Americans used some of the money they raised for their churches to fund entertainment events and lectures in black communities, which both focused on their rights and also addressed problems. Starting in the 1870s and growing in importance during the 1880s and 1890s, church camp meetings were events at which blacks enjoyed eloquent sermons and lectures encouraging them to press for their political and social rights. In the summer of 1879, the black congregation of the A.U.M.P. Church in Elkton sponsored a tent meeting in nearby Mitchell’s Woods. A July 21, 1879 article in the Cecil Democrat explained, “The order of Light and Truth and other colored societies will tend and discuss the moral advancement of colored people.” Also, a May 19, 1880 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “A camp meeting was held in the grove near the Elkton A.U.M.P. Church. Reverend J.H. Moore lectured blacks on the importance of respectable conduct.” A September 2, 1891 article in the Cecil Whig further noted:

The Reed’s A.U.M.P. Church held a camp meeting on a plot of land opposite of the church. Many preachers from neighboring churches were present and gave excellent lectures on the moral improvement of the colored race. One such lecture was given by the Reverend James Manley, a celebrated colored preacher. He spoke on the prejudice of the white man towards his colored brother.

Furthermore, in an August 22, 1904 article in the Cecil Democrat, blacks from the Elkton A.U.M.P. Church organized a camp meeting on a vacant lot on Main Street. The Reverend Richard Wright gave a lecture on the need for blacks to advance intellectually and morally before petitioning for social concessions from whites.

Clearly, camp meetings in Cecil County were popular among the black community from the 1870s to the early twentieth century. In fact, during each decade, the total

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520 Cecil Democrat, 21 July 1879, p. 1.
521 Ibid.
522 Cecil Democrat, 19 May 1880, p. 1.
523 Cecil Whig, 2 September 1891, p. 1.
524 Cecil Democrat, 22 August 1904, p. 2.
number of articles in the *Cecil County News*, the *Cecil Democrat*, and the *Cecil Whig* increased significantly. For example, in the 1870s, the number of articles on this topic was approximately 52, increasing to 93 in the 1880s, then 112 in the 1890s, and 167 in the first decade of the twentieth century. The significant rise in the number of reported camp meetings in the early twentieth century may be attributed to the fact that by the late 1890s and early 1900s, more blacks participated in politics and in organizing movements for the assertion of their political and social rights. Camp meetings and lectures, held by black churches, may have been so appealing to blacks at this time because not only were religious topics discussed at these events, but also social and political issues. Therefore, camp meetings were important in instructing blacks how they should petition whites for concessions and how to solve problems that plagued the African American community. Also, camp meetings acted as the glue that brought together African Americans of all classes to discuss moral advancements. In addition, these meetings offered an outlet for them to peacefully vent their frustrations concerning their inferior treatment by whites in Cecil County.

Furthermore, churches served as forums for the discussion of the moral improvement of Cecil County's African American community. Members of black churches frequently held discussions on social issues that were pertinent to a particular community or the entire African American population in Cecil County. One of the most vital issues in the black community was the promotion of the Temperance Movement, which many blacks saw as key in bettering their communities. From the 1870s through the early 1900s, temperance societies in Cecil County were popular organizations among blacks and whites. In the 1870s, there was an average of 61 articles on African American  

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temperance meetings. By 1880, that number had increased by 5%, and in 1890, it had risen by over 10% since the 1870s. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the number of temperance events recorded in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat was 20% higher than it had been in the 1870s. African American members of temperance organizations may have believed that by limiting or banning alcohol sales, the moral character of Cecil County’s citizens would greatly improve. Indeed, African Americans who promoted the moral progress of their community were often active members in such societies.

Since churches in the black community symbolized both middle-class morality and race pride, they were used as institutions to hold temperance meetings. The Cecil Whig featured an article on a meeting of the Colored W.C.T.U. (Women’s Christian Temperance Union). On October 15, 1886, the Cecil Whig reported, “In Elkton last Tuesday, Mrs. Milligam and other black members of the Colored W.C.T.U. addressed the colored people at a church in Elkton on the need to stop alcohol abuse in their community.” In addition, a May 5, 1897 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “The Colored People’s Temperance Society of Elkton held a meeting Monday at the Bethel A.U.M.P. Church to discuss the need to ban alcohol in Cecil County.” Furthermore, according to a March 29, 1905 article in the Cecil Whig, the Black Gospel Temperance Society held a meeting at Reed’s A.U.M.P. Church where they outlined the effects of alcohol. By holding temperance meetings at churches, blacks addressed issues that they felt would contribute to the betterment and strength of their community. A stable

526 Cecil Whig, 15 October 1886, p. 2.
527 Cecil Democrat, 5 May 1897, p. 2.
528 Cecil Whig, 29 March 1905, p. 2.
and well-organized community was key before blacks could ask whites for their social and political rights.

Another important social and moral improvement issue considered by Cecil County's blacks as vital to the survival of African American communities was how to reduce both crime among blacks and crimes by whites against blacks. A March 12, 1898 excerpt from an article in the *Cecil Star* described a meeting on crime held by African Americans at Reed's A.U.M.P. Church. This article indicated:

> The trustees of Reed's A.U.M.P. Church offer a reward of $200 for information which will lead to the arrest and conviction of parties who break glass in the windows of churches and stores. This window glass breaking is an outrage, and those guilty deserve punishment. The colored folk have been annoyed by these vandals, and a stop must be put to their reckless acts.\(^{529}\)

Although this article does not specify if the vandals were white or black, they could have been white vandals since at this time, newspaper articles, such as the *Cecil Whig* and the *Cecil Democrat*, reported some instances in which white vandals destroyed black property. For instance, a March 21, 1893 article in the *Cecil Democrat* noted that white vandals had frequently broken windows in black churches near Cecilton and threatened to burn black schools.\(^ {530}\) Therefore, if blacks were denouncing the actions of white vandals, their meetings on crime could have served a more political purpose. By holding meetings on issues of prejudice, African Americans could have sent a powerful message to whites that they would not tolerate prejudice or violence directed against them. The portrayal of blacks as active participants in organizing meetings to press for their rights could have been useful in convincing some whites to give them additional political and social concessions.

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\(^{529}\) *Cecil Star*, 12 March 1898, p. 1.

\(^{530}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 21 March 1893, p. 1.
Cecil County’s blacks did not only discuss ways to eliminate prejudice and violence committed by whites, but also held church meetings concerning the issue of criminals within their own communities. A September 12, 1903 article in the *Cecil Whig* indicated:

Negroes in this town held a meeting at the Bethel A.M.E. Church to discuss the recent increase in crime among some blacks in the areas of Water, Booth, and High Street. They emphasize that a stop must be put to this activity.  

Such meetings concerning black-on-black crime were an effective way in bringing together Cecil County’s blacks to discuss a common concern and to come up with different ways of reducing crime. Also, the moral improvement of the African American community through the decrease in crime may have been seen as useful in convincing whites to award blacks additional social and political rights.

Not only did churches serve as forums for the discussion of social rights and issues, but they were also were institutions to commemorate and celebrate African American history and the accomplishments of the black race. Children’s Day events, grave decorating ceremonies, and lectures on historical and current events informed blacks about issues as well as reminded them of their relatives, who had initiated the movement for black political and social rights. In order to instill self-confidence and integrity in their children, black church members used church funds to hold Children’s Day events and Sunday school sessions to indoctrinate African American children in religious and moral values. Such events urged black children to have pride in their culture and taught them to develop independence from the white community. Both Children’s Day events and Sunday school sessions were more popular in the 1890s than they had been in the 1860s, 1870s, and the 1880s. From the 1860s through the 1880s, there had been only

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531 *Cecil Whig*, 12 September 1903, p. 1.
532 *Elkton Appeal*, 12 May 1884, p. 1.
25 recorded instances of children's events in the Cecil Whig, the Cecil Democrat, and the Cecil County News, while in the 1890s alone, there were approximately 89 articles. The increase in the number of Children's Day events may coincide with the expansion of churches in the 1890s when blacks built more spacious churches. Earlier, many black churches had been set up in small buildings. As a result of African American churches moving to larger buildings, blacks now had enough space to hold separate Sunday school sessions for children and Children's Day events.

One of the largest and best-organized African American Children's Day events was held on May 20, 1891. A Cecil Whig article noted:

Children's Day was observed last Sunday at the Bethel A.M.E. Church in this town of which Reverend Thurston is pastor. It was the best ever held in the church. Mr. Flanders, teacher of the Northeast School and a graduate of Lincoln University, made an excellent address to the children on the Negroes' past and future.533

By the early 1900s, the number of black Children's Day events increased. While there were 69 articles in the Cecil Whig, the Cecil Democrat, and the Cecil County News concerning Children's Day events and Sunday School sessions, that number had risen to approximately 85 articles in 1900-1910. An August 25, 1906 edition of the Cecil Whig revealed, "A black Sabbath school was held at the Elkton A.U.M.P. Church where young and old colored people spoke to children about the need to learn about their heritage."534

In addition to organizing Sunday school events, African Americans in Cecil County funded lectures to educate children and adults about current events as well as black history. These lectures were most popular in the 1880s and 1890s. For example, an April 25, 1887 article in the Cecil Democrat explained that the Elkton A.U.M.P. Church

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533 Cecil Whig, 20 May 1891, p. 2.
funded the lecture, *Recollection of Army Life*, given by Edward Boyer.\(^{535}\) Also, the *Cecil Whig* on February 6, 1893 noted, "Professor Frank Sturgis, of Baltimore, informed an African American audience at the St. Augustine A.M.E. Church on the great earthquake at Summerville and Charleston, South Carolina that occurred in 1887."\(^{536}\)

Through lectures and events held at African American churches, children and adults could better understand historical events and how blacks in neighboring states structured their communities during the Reconstruction era and in the decades following it. Also, it is significant that blacks instructed their children in history and on the need to better themselves because many parents may have hoped that their children would someday lead movements through which African Americans would win concessions from Cecil County's whites. The fact that Republicans in the *Cecil Whig* newspaper approved of Children's Day events may indicate that blacks had already convinced some whites that the African American communities in Cecil County focused on moral improvement and as a result, were worthy of social and political rights.

Indeed, in Cecil County, black churches served as quasi-official sites for the memory and the commemoration of African American history and heritage. They reminded blacks about their shared past and the struggles their relatives encountered while fighting against discrimination and the prejudice of Cecil County's whites. Churches allowed blacks to celebrate their patriotism and to honor their relatives who had fought in the Civil War on the Union side. One of the most meaningful events organized and funded by black churches was the commemoration of African American Civil War veterans. These events were popular from the 1860s on and continued to grow in importance from

\(^{535}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 25 April 1887, p. 2.

\(^{536}\) *Cecil Whig*, 6 February 1893, p. 2.