

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY OF JENNIE DEAN'S HOMEPLACE

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"In Memory of Jennie Dean. 1852-1913. Founder of the Manassas Industrial School. Not dead, but sleepeth. She was doing a good work." – *Tombstone Inscription at Mount Calvary Baptist Church Cemetery*

The purpose of this document is to raise awareness of the existing landscape which illustrates the life of Jennie Dean in Prince William County. Her birthplace, enslavement, settlement, and death are encompassed within or nearby the top northeastern corner of the proposed PW Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan Amendment. It is with the upmost hope that I present this information to inspire further research and preservation of meaningful African American historic sites in this area. Two of these sites related to the life of Jennie Dean are known to be within the proposed PW Digital Gateway. They are the only known remnants of Marble Hill, the plantation where she and her family were enslaved: The Marble Hill Slave cemetery and the nearby Cushing family cemetery at Marble Hill.

Jennie Dean's life is well documented by biographies and oral history. While I touch upon moments of her life in Prince William County and how they relate to the proposed PW Digital Gateway, I urge the reader to refer to the list of resources that illustrate the full scope of her incredible accomplishments as a formally enslaved, African American woman in a post- Civil War world.



Mount Calvary Baptist Church, photos taken by David Cuff, 2022, Historic Prince William



Jane Serepta "Jennie Dean" was born into slavery on the Marble Hill plantation, the farm owned by the Cushing and Newman families. Her birthplace said to be only 300 yards from where she is buried at Mount Calvary Baptist Church. As an enslaved child, Jennie lived with her parents, Charles and Anna, and siblings in a small log cabin on the plantation. Charles served in a high position as a household slave and was able to learn how to read and write. He shared this knowledge with Jennie. She would utilize her informal education to her greatest advantage by establishing churches in the area and later, the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth.

Marble Hill

Christopher Cushing and Eleanor Newman Cushing lived at Marble Hill and were enslavers of the Dean family. The boundaries of the farm are not currently known. Don Wilson of RELIC confirmed that Christopher Cushing bought 250 acres from the Newman family in the area south of Catharpin Run in 1830. Research on Ancestry.com indicates that Christopher Cushing was born in Massachusetts but was married in Prince William County.

Two of the Cushing sons served in the Confederate army and were killed in action, buried in the Cushing family cemetery on the property. The location of this cemetery is unknown but thought to have been located at the end of the present-day Marble Hill Lane. The original home burned down in 1898.

Below are the documented burials for the Cushing Family Cemetery, provided by Don Wilson at RELIC.

CUSHING: Family cem., now unmarked, at Marble Hill Farm, ¼ mi. south of Sudley Rd. (Rte. 234) on private lane 0.1 mi. west of intersection with Aldie Rd. (Rte. 677). Burials include:

Christopher C. Cushing, Jan. 27, 1800 – Sept. 11, 1863.

Eleanor Newman Cushing

Charles Leavitt Cushing, 1832-Apr 7, 1865. (Killed at Appomattox)

Thomas Newman Cushing, 1838-Apr 14, 1863. (Killed near Warrenton)

William Cushing, 1839-1849.

Of the three sons of Christopher and Eleanor Cushing buried here, two died in battle as Confederate soldiers. Also probably interred at Marble Hill is Sarah Catherine Newman Cushing (died c. 1885), wife of Crawford Cushing, oldest child of Christopher Cushing. According to family tradition, Eleanor Cushing died at Rock Hall Farm on opposite side of Catharpin Run and her casket was floated across stream for burial.

Christopher Cushing died, possibly of a broken heart, soon after his son Thomas was killed. His estate was left to Crawford Cushing, the oldest child. He and his wife, Sarah, lived at Marble Hill. Their son, Robert Brown Cushing, would later become Prince William County's oldest surviving Confederate veteran. Robert served in the confederate army at 16 and lived to be 99 years old. He is buried at the Sudley Springs Methodist Church Cemetery.



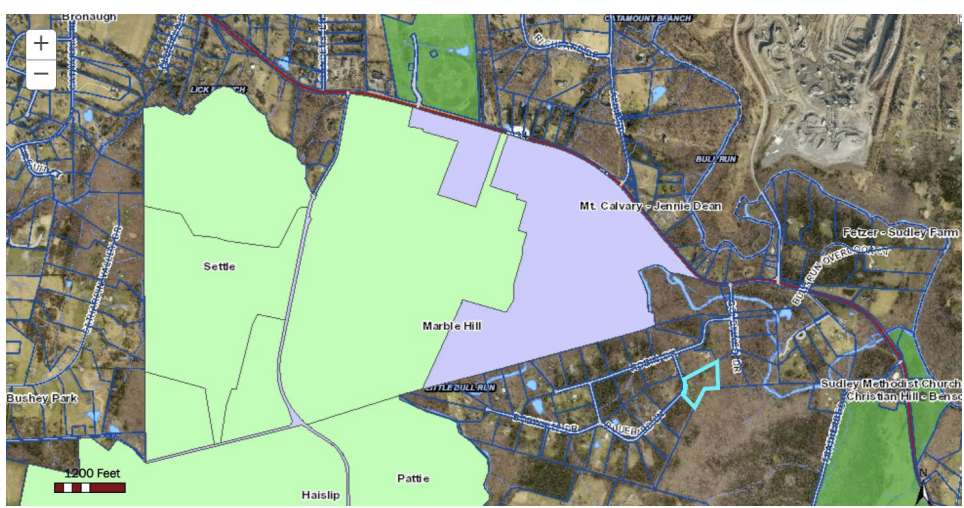
Robert Brown Cushing (1846-1945)

The location of the Marble Hill Slave Cemetery is known and listed on the PWC County mapper. Research and field work can be completed to determine the size of the cemetery and preserve what is left. While we do not know who is buried there, below is a slave census from 1860 that may list some of the enslaved who found their resting place there:

in the County of *Prince William* Stat
 16th day of *June*, 1860. *New Maryland* Ass't Marsh

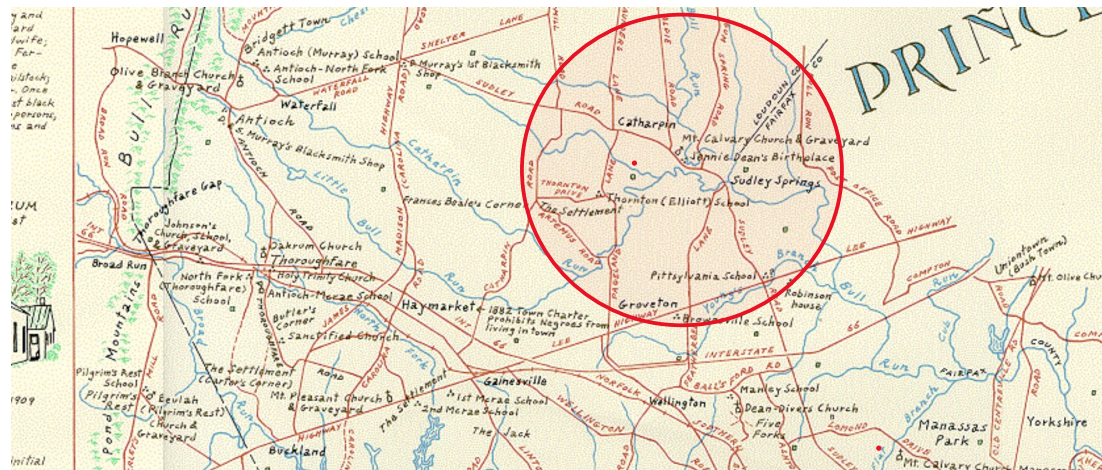
Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.	MyFamily.com NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.			Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.
				Ag.	Sex.	Color.				
8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		<i>Robert C. Meier</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		<i>Christopher C. Cushing</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
	<i>1</i>	"	<i>1</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>Mo</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>B</i>				
		"	<i>1</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Mo</i>				

1860 Federal Census Slave Schedule for Christopher Cushing.



Marble Hill Slave Cemetery location is known and within the proposed PW Digital Gateway.

MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE SETTLEMENT



African American Heritage Map of Prince William County- the circle illustrates the proximity of the Settlement off Thornton Dr and the Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

The Mount Calvary Baptist Church is located on the site of an earlier church (once a log cabin) established by Jennie Dean in 1880. The church was built with funding from the settlement community at the urging of Jennie. Jennie's father, Charles, helped build the original church.



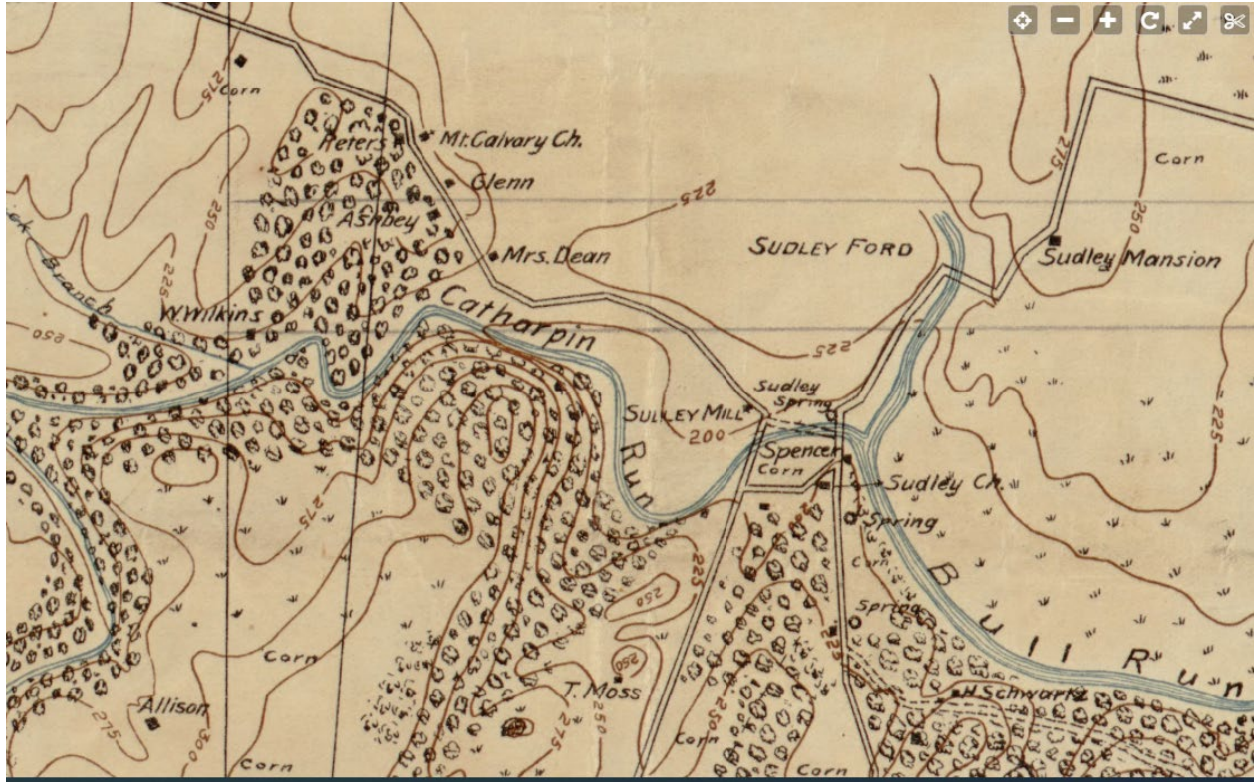
Jennie Dean's gravesite, photo taken by David Cuff, 2022, Historic Prince William

Mount Calvary most likely served as an anchor of a post-Civil war freedman settlement. Neighboring towns did not welcome the influx of freed slaves, so they were pushed out into rural areas. Other freedman settlements nearby are off Thornton Drive and Thoroughfare. When we consider the odd shapes of these poorly divided properties, they could indicate breaking off land from neighboring Marble Hill farm to sell to new settlement members/formally enslaved people. Deed research needs to be completed of this area to confirm this.

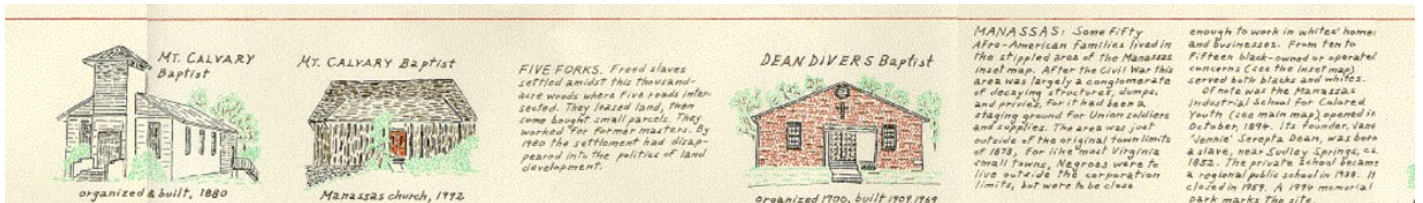


Settlement area parcel shape comparison. Thornton Drive was the site of another Settlement. Children from this settlement attended to the Thornton School which was located near the intersection of Pageland Lane and Thornton Drive. Notice the oddly shaped parcels- this is likely evidence of the freed slave settlement. People began by renting land and then buying it. Typically, the land was less than 10 acres.

Many of the formally enslaved became tenant farmers, often working the land of one's previous master. Charles Dean, Jennie's father, was determined to buy his own land and worked hard to do it. He purchased a plot of land in 1880 south of where the Mount Calvary Baptist Church is located. His goal was to pay off the property by the time he died but he was unable to do so. Later, Jennie would pay off the cabin so her family could continue living there. The cabin was recorded as still standing in the 1940s.



From Don Wilson of RELIC: a snippet of the 1904 map of the Army Maneuver Grounds in Prince William County. Near the top middle it shows the locations of "Mt. Calvary Ch." and "Mrs. Dean" (the home of Jennie's mother, where Jennie lived after her father's death in the 1880s).



Illustrations from the African American Heritage Map of Prince William County. Jennie Dean founded the Mount Calvary Church by hosting prayer meetings in her families cabin. Jennie is credited for founding African American churches in the area including Five Forks and Dean Diver.



Jennie Dean Memorial at the site of the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, Manassas Museum System.

A CALL FOR PRESERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

In 2020, The Manassas Museum System installed a bronze sculpture of Jennie Dean on the archeological site of the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth. Jennie Dean's accomplishments and bravery changed the lives of so many people, offering them hope in a challenging new America. Freed slaves were often uneducated and lacked skills for finding employment. Jennie Dean acknowledged these challenges and made it her mission to improve the situation in her hometown. She spent years traveling, fundraising, and planning a school that would offer post-secondary education solely for African Americans boys and girls. When the Manassas Industrial School opened in 1894, notable figures such as Frederick Douglas and Clara Barton were in attendance.

Jennie Dean's devotion to her community is truly a unique story to tell. As Prince William County officials consider the impacts the PW Digital Gateway will have on the Sudley Springs/Mount Cavalry area, it is the authors hope that cemetery preservation and African American Settlements and sites will be considered seriously. By providing vast rural landscapes, we preserve stories that are not written in books but in the ground. Prince William County's historic viewsheds provide opportunities for interpretation that offer sacred spaces for those looking for the paths of the enslaved and freedmen.

Rezoning the rural areas around Mount Calvary with Tech/Flex will not only affect the historic viewshed but will diminish the impact of this important area and the stories it still can tell. The areas of the historic Marble Hill area, Thornton Settlement, and the rural area surrounding Mount Cavalry Church and Cemetery deserve to be honored and preserved by our county.

RESOURCES

Brown, George, *George Brown's History of Prince William County*, published by Prince William Historical Commission, 2006.

Hanson, Joseph Mills, *Bull Run Remembers...The History, Traditions, and Landmarks of the Manassas (Bull Run) Campaigns Before Washington 1861-1862*, published by the Prince William Historical Commission, 1991.

Lewis, Dr. Stephen Johnsons, *Undaunted Faith: The Jennie Dean Story*, published by the Manassas Museum System, 1994.

Mills, Charles, *Echoes of Manassas*, published by Friends of the Manassas Museum System, Manassas, Virginia, 1988.

Susi, Geraldine Lee, *For My People: The Jennie Dean Story*, by Geraldine Lee Susi, published by the Manassas Museum System, 2002.

Scheel, Eugene, *Crossroads and Corners: A Tour of Villages, Towns and Post Offices of Prince William County, Past and Present*, published by Historic Prince William, 1996.

Prince William: A Past to Preserve, published by the Prince William County Historical Commission, Prince William County, 1998.

Prince William: The Story of Its People and Its Places, published by the Bethlehem Club, Manassas, VA, 1988.

Websites:

[afamheritage.PDF \(pwcva.gov\)](#) – Eugene Scheel's African American Heritage Map, Prince William County

[Jennie Dean memorial statue dedicated in Manassas \(potomaclocal.com\)](#)

[Historic Prince William - Prince William County's Historical Society](#)

[Welcome to Manassas, Virginia \(manassasva.gov\)](#) – Jennie Dean Memorial

[Manassas Industrial School & Jennie Dean Memorial - City of Manassas Tourism \(visitmanassas.org\)](#)

Disclosure: there are recorded contradictions concerning where Jennie Dean was born. Most books I read said she was born at Sudley Springs or Marble Hill, however her death certificate states she was born in Loudoun County.