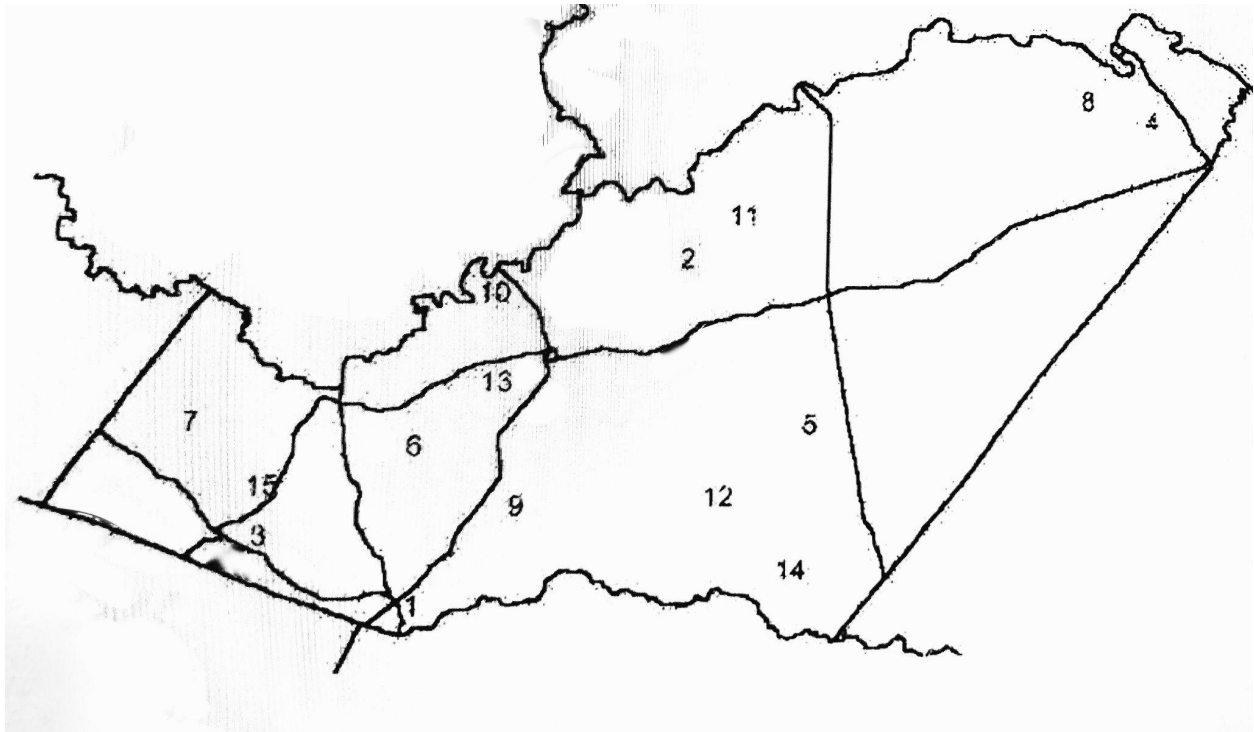


Freedmen's Communities

From an article in the *Orange County Historical Society Newsletter*:

"...Orange County was home to a number of communities founded by former slaves. Many of these are noted below (information adapted for an exhibit previously compiled for the James Madison Museum by Carolyn French and Carolyn Scott)..."¹



1. **“Browntown:** Founded by a Brown family, this community was located off Route 643 in Gordonsville. The original family consisted of Samuel, David, Ed, and Jenny Brown. It was a settlement of homes but no school or church. Residents had to walk into Gordonsville for school.
2. **“Clifton:** Located on Route 628 off Route 20, between Nasons and Rapidan, this community was established in 1866 when Philip Johnson and Philip Jones bought approximately 222 acres, **making Jones the first African-American landowner in the area.** Early settlers there were the Gaines, Campbell, McIntosh, Green, Taylor and Washington families (the McIntoshes and Campbells had been free before the Civil

¹Author unknown. “Some of Orange County’s Freedmen’s Communities.” *Orange County Historical Society Newsletter*, Volume 29, Number 4 (July/August 1999), 2-4.

War). Hopewell Church was established for the settlement, and at one time there was a one-room school-house. The community still exists.

3. **“Careytown:** Located near Barboursville off US 33 and Route 652, this community was established by the George Carey family and is still occupied by many members of the family.
4. **“Cattail:** Located in the area now Lake of the Woods, this settlement was home for the families of Broaddus, Homes, and Woods.
5. **“Freetown:** ...Freetown, located near Lahore, was founded by nine families of freed slaves. Some of the founders had been slaves of Claiborn R. Mason, Jr., the former owner of the land. This now-vanished farming community included a school (first established in the home of Chester Lewis, one of Freetown’s founders), a church and a community hall.
6. **“Jacksonstown:** Located on Route 655 between the Montpelier estate and Somerset, Jacksontown was assembled from former Newman land and other tracts acquired by Allen Jackson (ca. 1840-1895), a carpenter and Newman descendant. His family included his wife Delilah Tarry, and a number of half-brothers and sisters. Other families included those of Mary Smith, Richard and Agnes Stewart, and Abraham Johnson. Jacksontown once contained a school, community hall, general store and cemetery. Most of the family attended Blue Run Baptist Church. No members of the original families presently live there and none of the buildings mentioned above still remain standing, but the road has officially been named Jacksontown Road.
7. **“Lewis Town:** Founded after emancipation by Thomas and Eliza Grimes Lewis, who were married in 1820, this community was located off Route 644, north of Eheart and Albano. Some of the original families still live nearby. One old home, that of the Terrell family, still stands. Family names were Poindexter, Fields, Lindsay, Early, Grimes, Terrell, Hill, and Jackson. Their residents were farmers and some worked on the railroad. There were no schools in the area; pupils had to walk to School. No. 4. Churches of choice were Chestnut Grove, Blue Run, Bethany, and Shiloh.
8. **“Lewistown:** Located on Route 603 between Locust Grove and Indiantown, this community was settled by the Lewis and Henderson families. The Henderson family moved to Orange from Carolina County after emancipation, and first settled in the Shady Grove area before some members moved to the area which became Lewistown. The nearest school, at Long Branch, only held sessions for three months out of the year. Religious services were held in a private house and a brush arbor until Mt. Zion church was built. Other families in the community included those of Davis, Richardson, Morris, and Herlock. Descendants of the Hendersons and Lewises still live at Lewistown, although many family members migrated north seeking work.

9. **“Little Egypt:** Located on Routes 638 and 682 between Orange and Gordonsville, Little Egypt was originally settled by members of the Dade, Wilson, Terrell, Poindexter, Cave, Watson, Johnson and Owens families, who formed a closeknit community. At first prayer meetings were held in private homes; later, Little Zion, a mile away, became the church of choice for most. Pupils attended the Monroe Woods School, built on land donated by a black man of the same name. The closest store was at Madison Run.
10. **“Little Petersburg:** Located west of US 15 near Madison Mills, along Little Skyline Drive, Little Petersburg covers some 200 acres. According to tradition, the land was conveyed after emancipation to former slaves of the Clark and Kemper families, to whom one family, at least, was related. Some of the original black family names were Kemper, Ruffner, Davis, Humes, Dade, Fields, Gordon, and Washington. The community had a one-room schoolhouse and a church, Bethel, founded in 1898. Little Petersburg has been described as a closeknit community where the ‘old folks corrected’ everyone else’s children and respect for elders abounded.
11. **“Possum Hollow:** Located east of the Clifton community, Possum Hollow began in 1871 with the sale of 23 acres from J.B. Bell to Baylor Johnson. It eventually consisted of 150 acres including a cemetery. Families associated with the community included the Smith, Marshall, Wallace, Yarborough, Lambert, Chandler, Stearns, Henderson, McDaniel, Lewis, Long and Byrd families. Possum Hollow no longer exists as a settlement.
12. **“Shady Grove:** Located around Shady Grove Church on Route 677 near Daniel, this community started shortly after emancipation when former slaves migrated from Caroline and King and Queen counties to join other freedmen already in the area. It remains a thriving closeknit community of mostly-interrelated families. Religious services were first held in a brush arbor. A church was later built, along with a school, and meeting halls for several benevolent societies, and the Masons and Eastern Star. Family names associated with the community were Burruss, Crutchfield, Daniel, Ellis, Frye, Henderson, Jackson, Lewis, Long, Quarles, Richardson, White, and Willis.
13. **“Slabtown:** This community was located between Orange and Somerset off the east side of Route 20. At one time an entertainment hall was located there.
14. **“Thornhill:** Located on 612 below Monrovia, Thornhill was composed of parcels originally part of the Brockman plantation. The community was settled mostly by former slaves of the Brockmans, who assisted in the land acquisitions. There was an elementary school which held short sessions; to prolong the term, families sent their children on rotation through schools in other communities including Shady Grove, of which Thornhill became an integral part. Early families of Thornhill included Galloway, White, Wood, Jackson, Ellis, and Daniel.
15. **“Tibbstown:** This post-Civil War settlement, still an active community, is located north of Barboursville on the west side of Route 20. Early landowners and residents included Peter Tibbs, the Edmund Gordon family and the Blakey family. The community was

closeknit and worked together to effect improvements. Most residents were members of the Blue Run Baptist Church. Tibbstown had a community center which was used for recreation, education, and, at one time, a Sunday School. An Agricultural Association provided information on improved farming practices. Pupils attended Number 7 School.”²

² *Ibid.*