delphia, as agents of the Government, placing in the hands of Mr. Bacon sufficient funds out of monies appropriated by Congress under the act of 1819. The *Elizabeth* took out eighty-six emigrants from the United States, who in consideration of their passage and other aid, were to prepare suitable accommodations for such Africans as might be rescued from the slave-ships by American cruisers. In this way, strange as it seems, it was to the slave-trade, which it was to aid in extirpating, that the American Colonization Society became indebted, through the wise course of President Monroe, for its first feeble foothold on the continent of Africa.

The undertaking had, notwithstanding the aid derived from the United States, a most unfortunate beginning. Mills had died on his way back to America, and Bacon, dying in Africa, was among the first martyrs to the cause buried there under its palms. Of four agents sent out in 1821, two died on the coast, and two returned sick to the United States. Sherbro Island was found to be unhealthy and was abandoned; and the survivors of the *Elizabeth's* emigrants returned disheartened to Sierra Leone.

In November, 1820, the President dispatched the armed schooner, *Alligator*, Captain R. F. Stockton, of New Jersey, on a voyage of exploration to the coast. Here, in the following year, 1821, he fell in with Dr. Eli Ayres, an agent of the Society, and taking him on board, proceeded southerly, and after passing Sherbro Island, selected, in conjunction with Dr. Ayres, a suitable territory 250 miles from Sierra Leone, including Cape Mesurado. This was a bold promontory on the east side of a river of the same name. To this new site Dr. Ayres now removed the remnant of the *Elizabeth's* emigrants, landing them on an island separated from the main land by a narrow creek that extended from near the mouth of the Mesurado river to the St. Paul's. Very soon after the arrival of the emigrants, the native chiefs opened their eyes to the probability of their interference with the slave trade which had long prevailed in the neighborhood, and, regardless of the treaty, determined to destroy the settlement if they could. The temporary dwellings, that had been slightly and hastily put up, were consumed by fire. On the heel of this came African fever: and so untoward were circumstances, that Dr. Ayres, almost in despair, returned with some of the colonists to Sierra Leone. Wiltberger, another of the Society's agents, remained however; battled with the natives, and abandoning the island, crossed the Mesurado river to the adjacent cape; cleared away the forest to make room for new huts in a healthier location; completed and occupied them, and in this way, in June 1822, laid the corner-stone of the Republic of Liberia on the spot where its capital now stands. Dr. Ayers and Wiltberger then returned home, and the settlement was left in charge of Elijah Johnson, an emigrant, who had refused

to follow Dr. Ayres to the British colony. "No," he said; "I have been two years searching for a home, and I have found it, and I shall stay here:" and when he was afterwards surrounded by hostile and threatening bodies of natives, and was offered the protection of a guard of marines from a passing British vessel of war if he would cede a few feet of ground on which to plant a flagstaff for a British flag, he refused the proffered aid, saying, "We want no flagstaff put up here that will cost more to get it down than it will cost to whip the natives." Johnson was another man of the Paul Cuffee stamp, whose name cannot be omitted from a notice of Liberia, however brief. Slender was the hold which colonization and religion had upon this portion of the Dark Continent; and save for the construction that Mr. Monroe had given to the law of 1819, even this hold might never have been obtained, or have been indefinitely delayed.

The first arrival at Cape Mesurado after the departure of Wiltberger was a vessel from Baltimore with fifty-one emigrants, a part of whom were recaptured Africans, in August, 1822. It was in charge of Jehudi Ashmun, Priest, Soldier and Statesman. He had intended to return to the United States by the same vessel; but Africa needed him more than America, and he remained. Ashmun's mission was one of peace, and he exhausted every effort in striving to preserve it; but in vain. Boatswain, a powerful native chief from the interior, and a friend of the colonists from the beginning, had left the coast, where his presence had restrained their enemies, and hostilities commenced at once. All supplies of provisions were cut off, and theft and depredation were the order of the day. The native chiefs, the very ones who had sold the land, would listen to no terms of accommodation. With Ashmun it was now battle or famine unto death, with the greatest doubts as to the result. Then, the Christian minister became a military leader. He planned fortifications; he mounted cannon; he distributed ammunition; he posted picket guards; and, above all, he inspired his twenty-seven Americans and thirteen African youths with his own intrepid spirit. On the 24th of August twelve of his men were stricken down by fever, at a time when it was necessary to have twenty sentinels on guard, day and night. At the end of three weeks of constant watchfulness, Ashmun himself was prostrated by disease. His wife, too, who had accompanied him from America, was dangerously ill. On the 10th of September, only two of the late arrivals were fit for duty. And yet, there could be no relaxation of vigilance, the alternative of which was death. After a night of fever and delirium, morning would find the agent superintending the stockades, or clearing away the forest in front of his few pieces of artillery. In this way, sometimes better, sometimes worse in health, Ashmun lived until the 11th of November, when eight hundred natives made a concentrated attack on his most outlying stock-

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XV. Pamphlets (not in original collection)
15. Liberia: Its Origin, Rise, Progress and Results, by J.H.B.Latrobe, January 20, 1880, in Washington, D.C.
Washington, 1880