

Mapping Slavery in Washington, D.C.: The *Pearl* Incident

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Introduction

For my digital history project, I decided to create a digital resource to map the *Pearl* incident, which was one of the largest attempted escape of enslaved people in the United States. The *Pearl* incident took place on April 15, 1848. Seventy-seven enslaved individuals attempted to escape D.C. on the *Pearl* schooner. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful. After being caught by and returned to D.C., the fugitives were returned to their owners or resold into the slave trade. Since the history of the *Pearl* incident is not widely available online, I wanted to create a map that represented the experiences of the *Pearl* fugitives before, during, and after the attempted escape.

Methods

After trying a couple of different digital mapping tools and resources such as Google MyMaps and WordPress, I decided to use ArcGIS maps and StoryMaps to combine the narratives of the *Pearl* incident with maps that demonstrated the *Pearl* fugitives' challenging and uncertain journeys after returning to D.C.

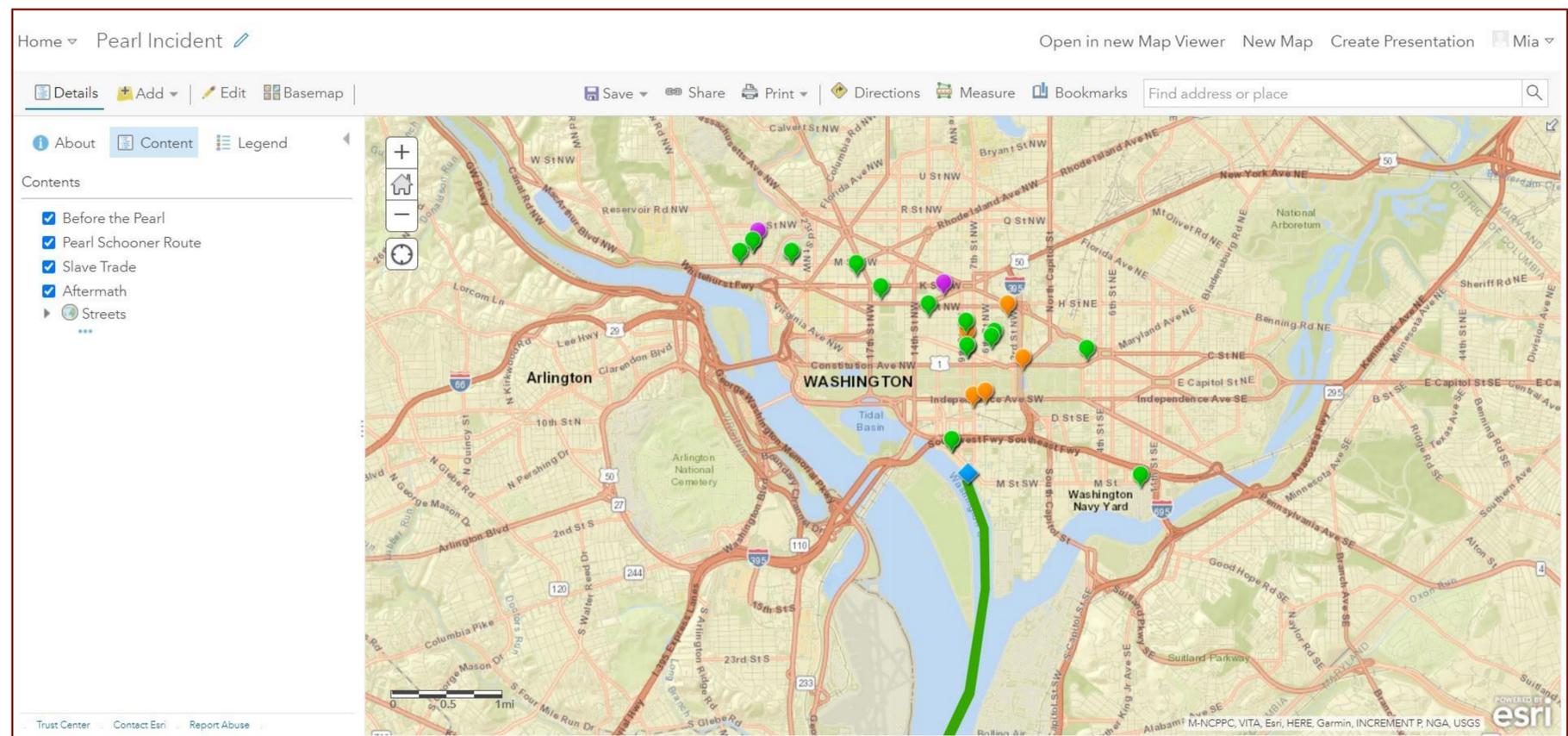
The process of compiling locations as well as creating pins for designated locations and events took some trial and error. I found that creating map layers designated to specific portions of the fugitives' individual narratives provided the best organization of the information on the maps. Learning how to use StoryMaps to develop a narrative about the *Pearl* incident and slave trade also took some time to figure out. Since StoryMaps can manipulate information in a variety of different layouts, it was challenging to determine the best way to visually and textually present my research.

Results

After familiarizing myself with ArcGIS and StoryMaps, I decided to use the StoryMap's narrative functions to share general history about the *Pearl* incident while using pins to share specific information and individual narratives. Although I am not entirely happy with the organization of the information, especially in the "Aftermath" section, I learned a lot about StoryMaps's ability to share a variety of information in different mediums.

Conclusions

Overall, ArcGIS and StoryMaps helped me create a digital resource that allows me to share the history of the *Pearl* incident in a unique and engaging way. I have also learned a lot about the time and process required to create a digital resource. I am also happy that through this project, I have found another way to share the story of the *Pearl* incident and the history of slavery in Washington, D.C.



This is a screenshot of the ArcGIS map that I created to use on the StoryMap. On the left under "Contents," you can see names of the different layers that I created. Each pin color represents a different layer and subject related to the *Pearl* incident. By making use of the map layers function, I found that I was able to more easily control the dissemination of information on the StoryMap.