African American Heritage Sites
in the City of Frederick
and Frederick County, Maryland
Welcome to the City of Frederick and Frederick County! This guide provides glimpses of more than two centuries of African American heritage in our area, and presents a new opportunity to experience the past. Feel the heat of smelters at Catoctin Furnace, where expert African metalworkers helped build our nation by forging an array of ironworks, including cannonballs used to win American independence. Marvel at the skill, dedication and compassion of those slaves, free persons, and “contraband” that helped heal the thousands of Civil War wounded in Frederick after the conflicts at South Mountain, Monocacy, Antietam and Gettysburg. Imagine the daily bustle of segregated businesses on All Saints Street. Hear the strains of jazz tunes and harmonies of gospel hymns rising from churches and social halls all over the county, and be inspired by the faith and fortitude of our African American forebears.

City of Frederick

ALL SAINTS STREET NEIGHBORHOOD: PLACES WITH PLAQUES OR OTHER MARKERS

A thoroughfare at the edge of town in late 18th century Frederick, All Saints Street took on a different flavor over the next 100 years. By the early 1900s, its modest length had become a center of commerce and entertainment, for not only Frederick City’s “colored” population, but for those in the county as well. On Friday evenings and Saturdays, in particular, far into the night, the street assumed a vibrant and festive appearance. Those who could not easily be accommodated elsewhere found virtually all that they needed right here. Services from banking and medical care to grocery stores and beauty parlors operated out of people’s homes, and restaurants featuring home cooking fanned out onto the sidewalks. Many of the old buildings, such as the studio of noted portraitist/photographer William Grinage (22 W. All Saints Street), remain. Others—the first high school for colored students, for example—are gone; a monument, however, marks that site. Some structures have received new life through renovation efforts of another generation of owners.

1 Residence and office of Frederick’s first black doctor
   30 West All Saints Street.
   Ulysses G. Bourne was born in Calvert County, Maryland, March 17, 1863; he died in Frederick July 15, 1956. Founder of the Maryland Negro Medical Society and a co-founder in 1931 of the Frederick branch of the NAACP, he practiced medicine here from 1903 to 1953. Photograph courtesy of Diversions Publications.

2 Site of the Free Colored Men’s Library • 113 Ice Street.
   Opened in the home of Rev. Ignatius Snowden, the library loaned out books until 1932, when the property was sold. The facility was an outgrowth of the Young Men’s Colored Reading Club of Frederick City, Inc., founded in 1913 by Clifford Holland and several other men.

3 Asbury United Methodist Church
   101 West All Saints Street. (301) 663-9380
   Its predecessor was Old Hill Church, East All Saints Street, turned over to the black congregants in 1864. In 1868, an act by the General Assembly of Maryland incorporated the church, which officially became Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church of Frederick City, Maryland. In 1921, the present church was dedicated. It incorporates elements of the 19th century’s High Victorian Gothic (often called “the only proper style” for ecclesiastical architecture), and classic details of the Late Gothic Revival, an early 20th century vogue. Some of these features include the central massing of the bell tower with its pointed gothic doorway and ornate paired glass windows that provide a grand entrance to the interior. The historic Moller tubular-pneumatic organ is original to the structure.

4 Pythian Castle,
   111-113 West All Saints Street.
   Originally Nazarite Hall, in 1891, the building became known in 1921 as the Pythian Castle. An urban residential form, this two-story three-bay brick row house structure features Greek Revival detailing at the door transoms. It also prominently displays an Italianate-style bracketed overhanging cornice across the front and simplified Italianate window hoods. Entertainment of all kinds—banquets, dances, movies, live music—took place here. At one time a sewing factory, it also provided the location in 1937 for the first black kindergarten, eventually named for community leader Esther Grinage. After standing vacant for 30 years, the property was purchased in 1999 by artists who have preserved the exterior and rehabilitated much of the interior of the structure.
5 Former First Missionary Baptist Church and Parsonage
141 West All Saints Street (301) 662-3110

A mix of architectural styles and details is combined in this eclectic house of worship that has stood since 1773. For years the property of a white congregation, it was given in 1863 to the “colored” people of the community. While the two-story three-bay-wide structure with its prominent cross-gabled hipped roof is typically considered Gothic Revival style, the architectural trim at the main entrance and the wide overhanging roof with its extended cornice returns is more typical of the Greek Revival style. The large single-paned windows were used in late Victorian architecture. The excellent example of imitation stone (a bronze plaque indicates “The Original Hand-Sculpted Formstone”) covers original 14-inch-thick limestone walls and probably dates to a mid-20th century renovation. The semi-attached parsonage is a simple mid-19th century domestic row house. NOTE: The congregation recently relocated to 899 Swallowtail Drive, Frederick.

6 The Mountain City Elks Lodge
173 West All Saints Street.

From 1919 to 1928 the building was a 15-bed hospital for blacks. Established by Dr. Ulysses Bourne and Dr. Charles S. Brooks, the facility admitted patients denied care at the Frederick City Hospital until the opening of the Baker wing in 1928. Although remodeled in the mid-20th century with its imitation stone front exterior and large single-paned windows, this brick structure is unified across the front with a classic example of an Italianate-style bracketed cornice and frieze. The placement of the double sidewall chimneys (seen in the alley) indicates an earlier history as a prominent Federal or Greek Revival style residence.

OTHER SITES IN FREDERICK CITY

7 Slave Quarters
114 West 2nd Street.

The location is behind what are now known as the Ross and Mathias mansions, fronting on Courthouse Square. Built in 1817, the rooms may have provided lodging for up to 20 house servants at a time. These utilitarian vernacular brick quarters with their lateral gabled roofs are typical of urban back-lot structures for their time period.

8 St. John’s Cemetery
Bordered by East 3rd and East 4th streets and East Street.

Over 200 African American burials are documented here. The earliest, in 1825, was that of Mary Ann, described as an “African Negro,” about 80 years of age. Enoch Louis Lowe, 29th governor of Maryland, as well as U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney and his mother are buried here. Veterans from all wars since the French and Indian War are here interred, including an African American who served in the War of 1812. Both Confederate and Union soldiers, some Negro, rest in this graveyard. Pictured is the headstone for the grave of George Washington, who served in the U.S. Colored Infantry.

9 Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church
106 East 3rd Street. (301) 663-1550

This congregation, originally called Bethel, dates back to the late 1700s. In 1819, the brick building at the present site was acquired. In 1835, the church was named after highly respected Bishop William Paul Quinn. In July 1864, the church cared for wounded from the Battle of Monocacy. It is said to be the location of Frederick’s first school for black children, shortly after the Civil War. Presumably, this was the A.M.E. conference school where Benjamin Tucker Tanner was principal in 1867 and 1868. Twenty years later, Tanner, a well-known clergyman, scholar, and social activist, was named Bishop. His fame may be surpassed by that of his celebrated son, expatriate artist Henry O. Tanner, who was a young boy when his father served in Frederick. The present church is a compact, textbook example of the “church style” of Gothic Revival architecture. It features a massive asymmetrical corner bell tower with its large central recessed pointed brick arch and the great pointed arch glass windows on the front.

10 Laboring Sons Cemetery
Chapel Alley and 5th Street.

Established in 1851 by the Beneficial Society of the Laboring Sons of Frederick City, this burial ground had been largely neglected when the city acquired it and in 1950 placed a park on the site. Among those buried here are six Civil War veterans who served in colored regiments. Protests, beginning in 1999, focusing on the playground use of this land have been responsible for the ongoing change from park to memorial.
11 National Museum of Civil War Medicine  
48 East Patrick Street. (301) 695-1864

Immersion exhibits include medical evacuation, field dressing station and field hospital as well as other displays illustrating the important role of medical intervention in the Civil War. The rise of black doctors and nurses to the challenge is examined, and camp life for black soldiers—and their fitness for battle—shown. It is thought that among the matrons who nursed in Frederick were some who were black. Exhibit panels identify local black churches that served as hospitals during the conflict. A few artifacts and documents related to the African American experience are in the museum’s collection, including the frock coat of Dr. Louis D. Radzinsky, assistant surgeon assigned the 54th Massachusetts volunteers (pictured). The museum is open every day except for certain holidays. Admission charge.

12 The Historical Society of Frederick County  
24 East Church Street. (301) 663-1188

On long-term loan from the Kiwanis Club, the William Grinage portrait of Francis Scott Key, “Star Spangled Banner” author, can be viewed here. Kiwanis members commissioned the painter, whose studio was on West All Saints Street, to render Key’s likeness; he completed the work shortly before his death on February 25, 1925. The museum collections include a recently acquired 1830 gravestone by Boss Hammond, a slave able to earn money as a stone carver to manumit his own children. From the Society’s archives comes this photo of George Ambush with his lunch wagon, a popular for decades among the workers and customers of local businesses (Courtesy of the Historical Society of Frederick County, Inc.). Open daily, all year. No admission charge to enter only to see portrait.

Frederick County

COMMUNITIES AND CHURCHES

During the latter part of the 19th century, a number of villages founded by Negroes, including some who had been slaves, began to dot the countryside. A few have vanished, leaving behind perhaps only an overgrown burial ground or a row of house foundations—or no trace at all. In most of these little settlements, the residents endeavored to build a church and school as quickly as possible. The proliferation of such churches in Frederick County, particularly of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) and Methodist Episcopal (M.E., now United Methodist) denominations, followed on the heels of a national religious revival and coincided with the dynamic growth of black churches between 1865 and 1900. Protestant Christianity was clearly the central institution of community life in each of the Negro enclaves that one may still visit in Frederick County, including Bartonsville, Centerville, Greenfield, Pleasant View and Sunnyside.

Many churches found in the country, and mentioned below, are called vernacular. This means they were not built from formal architectural plans, but were built according to traditional means and methods by local builders skilled in design. Most of the country churches are simple rectangular buildings, usually one or one and a half stories with a gabled roof. This is the most basic form, although sometimes there will be a rear addition or side ell wing. Some of these buildings are raised up on stone or brick foundations with a front stair depending on the specifics of the property. Some of the foundations include a marble cornerstone from a previous church or date from the original construction of the building. The exteriors of these buildings are usually covered with painted-wood horizontal lapped siding and are decorated with a minimum of trim. Sometimes just the placement of doors and windows is the builder’s attempt to include some indication of a more formal style. One example is the placement of the main door. The main door being located in the middle of the gable end or front of the building reflects the simple “carpenter Gothic” or “Gothic Revival” geometry of the building. The main door is also on axis with the central interior aisle with seating on either side. The side walls of the building are punctuated with a series of windows that provide light, air, and sometimes decorative motifs to the interior. The length of the building usually determines the number of windows used on each side. The roofs may have been wood shingle to begin with, but are now most often either sheet metal or fiberglass shingles. Exterior trim is usually focused on the main facade of the church with a simple cornice or well placed cross. Several local churches have character-defining architectural features, something that makes them unique among their peers or stand out from the crowd. A few to look for are mentioned in the entries that follow.

13 Bartonsville. Three miles southeast of Frederick, on Bartonsville Road, it was founded by a former slave with the last name Barton; he was the first permanent resident of that part of New Market district. Among Bartonsville’s most famous residents was the late Lester Bowie - trumpeter, jazz legend, and 93rd inductee in the Down Beat Hall of Fame. Bowie found inspiration in the example of many of his older relatives who, around 1915, played and toured with the
Bartonsville Cornet Band. The historic churches in this community include St. James A.M.E. and Jackson United Methodist Chapel. Photograph courtesy of Diversions Publications.

14 Centerville. On Ijamsville Road near Route 80, the place may also be referred to as Centersville, or even Ebenezer, after the United Methodist church located there. The Addison family, heirs of John Howard, gave land on which to build a house of worship. While modernized, the church building is derived from classic Gothic Revival church styles and retains its original six-over-six-windows and stone foundation.

15 Greenfield. Originally Greenfield Mills, the community is on the west bank of the Monocacy River, one and three fourths miles northeast of Licksville and east of Routes 80 and 85. Historic St. Paul A.M.E. church in Della, on the east bank, continues to serve this community.

16 Pleasant View. On Pleasant View Road, not far from Doubs and Adamstown, it was founded by Patrick and Henrietta Ambush. The village, including the United Methodist church that bears its name, was said to have a “pleasant view” all around. The church features a very good example of a “carpenter Gothic” style corner-entry bell tower with a pyramidal (hipped) roof with a finial at the top. The front of the building also features a single tripartite Gothic arched window with a Gothic-style eyebrow crown molding.

17 Sunnyside. Also called Mountville, it is on Mountville Road, near Jefferson. Weedon family members have in the past made up a large part of the population, here on the sunny side of the mountain. While numerous historically black churches in Frederick County had affiliated schools, Sunnyside United Methodist is one of the few where the schoolhouse remains in use by the church. In the design of the church, a small bell tower and Gothic-style pointed windows add interest and speak to a more formal interpretation of the “carpenter Gothic” style.

18 Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, on the south side of Old Liberty Road, near Mt. Pleasant. Of particular interest are some tombs in Malagasy style (from north Madagascar), characterized by a ridge of natural stone arranged in a lateral fashion and protruding vertically from the earth at a slight angle. The oldest of these may be the burial places of free Malagasy immigrants who first came to Frederick County in 1820. The building is a simple four-bay structure with a gable roof. Its unique feature is the apse end, which is truncated at the corners to form a semi-circular enclosure. The double four-panel wood doors (sometimes called a “Bible” or “book” pattern) may be original to the construction date of the building. Adjacent Silver Hill United Methodist Church, 10170 Old Liberty Road, is a traditional country church form. Its horizontal wood siding, metal standing seam roof and simple two-over-two double-hung windows are common elements in church vernacular. Deed references show that Wayman was built about 1868 and Silver Hill, about 1875, although the 1858 Bond map indicates a Methodist Episcopal church in the vicinity of the two present churches.

OTHER SELECTED BLACK HISTORY SITES

19 Brunswick Railroad Museum and C&O Canal Visitor Center
40 W. Potomac Street, Brunswick. (301) 834-7100
Parts of the exhibit areas are devoted to the contributions of African Americans to the history of both railroad and canal. Open April to January. Admission charge at the museum. Admission to the Visitor Center is free.

20 Catoctin Furnace
Rt. 15, three miles south of Thurmont. (301) 271-7574
This site, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been partially restored. Thomas Johnson, Maryland's first elected governor, and his brothers built this furnace in 1775. West African slaves with the best iron making skills were sought to work in America's iron furnaces, and State archaeological excavations of the slave cemetery and subsequent testing of remains indicated that the workers buried therein carried only African genetic markers. An exhibit on the ironworks may be seen at the Visitor Center at nearby Cunningham Falls State Park. The Visitor Center is open April to October. Admission is free.

The sites included in this brochure represent highlights of a broader African American heritage, selected to provide the user with an enjoy-
able, self-guided journey through this aspect of our community’s history. The brochure does not purport to be a comprehensive catalogue of local African American heritage or cultural resources. Not all of the sites listed are open to the general public, but all are accessible for exterior views. Information on public access can be provided from those sites where a telephone number is listed. We are not responsible for changes that may occur. For information about tour operators offering African American heritage itineraries, contact the Frederick Visitor Center at 19 E. Church Street, Frederick, MD 21701, (301) 228-2888 or (800) 999-3613; www.visitfrederick.org.

A variety of terms, including “colored,” “Negro,” “black” and “African American,” are used throughout the text. In some cases, the choice of term was determined by that which is already employed on markers or in exhibition labels at the sites. Otherwise, the text uses the prevailing term for the period of history highlighted at each location.

Acknowledgements
This self-guided tour brochure was produced by a committee of the “African American Resources - Cultural and Heritage” project, more commonly known as AARCH. AARCH is a program of the Frederick Historic Sites Consortium, which operates under the auspices of the Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc. Participating on the committee were Rose Chaney, Alfernia Dailey, Janet Davis, Marie Anne Erickson, William O. Lee Jr., Joy Onley, Elizabeth Scott Shatto, Shirley Snowden, Thomas A. Vitanza and Tiffany Wilms.

The brochure text was authored by Marie Anne Erickson, with architectural descriptions provided by Rebecca L. Stevens, AIA, Chief Historical Architect with the National Park Service National Capital Region, and Thomas A. Vitanza, AIA, a Senior Historical Architect with the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center.

All photography by Thomas A. Vitanza, except where noted otherwise.

Funding for this brochure was provided by the Community Foundation of Frederick County, Inc., the Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc., and the Plamondon Companies in conjunction with the Freedom Summer Celebration.

An Invitation
If you would like to share your experience or knowledge of African American history in the City of Frederick or Frederick County, or if you would like to participate in AARCH, please contact: The AARCH Project, Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc., 19 E. Church Street, Frederick, MD 21701, (301) 228-2888 or (800) 999-3613; www.visitfrederick.org.

The Community Foundation of Frederick County | The Tourism Council of Frederick County
The Plamondon Companies | The Historic Sites Consortium

© Tourism Council of Frederick County, Inc., 2001

The cover illustration is a montage depicting the Bartonville Cornet Band (Courtesy Diversions Publications) and Pleasant View United Methodist Church.