

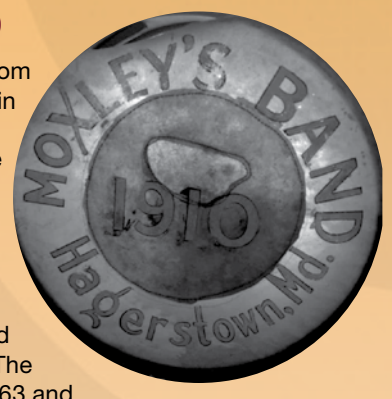
From the 1740s onward, the lives, sacrifices, and contributions of African Americans have helped to shape the history and character of Washington County, Maryland. In 1820, 14% of the county's population was enslaved. By 1860, there were more free African Americans than slaves in Washington County. Slavery was abolished in Maryland in November 1864.

Hagerstown and Washington County are rich in significant and fascinating Black history sites. Those described in this publication represent some of the highlights and stories that we hope will engage you and encourage you to further explore this important history.

Key Figures

MOXLEY'S BAND

More than 250 Black men from Washington County served in the U.S. military during the Civil War. Among them were the members of Moxley's Band, a group of free and enslaved musicians who performed together before the war. The three Moxley brothers—Robert, Perry, and Joseph—were the leaders. The band enlisted together in 1863 and formed the First Brigade Band, used for recruiting as well as military purposes. They served for a time in Virginia, before being sent to Texas at the end of the war. After mustering out, most of the band members returned to Hagerstown. The Moxleys were leaders in the Black community, and the band continued to perform at civic and social events well into the twentieth century. *Photo Contributed by Carolyn Brooks.*



MARGUERITE DOLEMAN

MARGUERITE DOLEMAN

Born in Philadelphia, Marguerite (Peggy) Kesh came to Hagerstown as a teenager in 1935, attended high school here, and married into the local Doleman family. Her lifelong passion for Black history grew into a vast collection of artifacts and documents, as well as a research program that was ahead of its time. She preserved Black family papers, Black memorabilia, photos, and the archives of Black organizations; she also collected oral histories, investigated the records of slavery, and pursued and recorded the African American past wherever she could find it. Not only do visitors to the Doleman Black Heritage Museum benefit from her life's work, but everyone who researches Black history in Washington County today follows in the footsteps of Marguerite Doleman.

WILLIE MAYS

As a rookie, baseball great Willie Mays played his first minor league game in Hagerstown in 1950, for the Trenton Giants, a New York Giants farm team. The crowd hurled racial abuse at him when he came to bat; he would later recall it as some of the worst treatment he ever received from a crowd. And because Hagerstown was segregated, he wasn't allowed to stay in the same hotel with his white teammates; instead he was welcomed at the Harmon Hotel on Jonathan Street. In 2004 Mays accepted an invitation to return to Hagerstown, where the city honored his achievements and finally apologized for how it treated him half a century earlier.



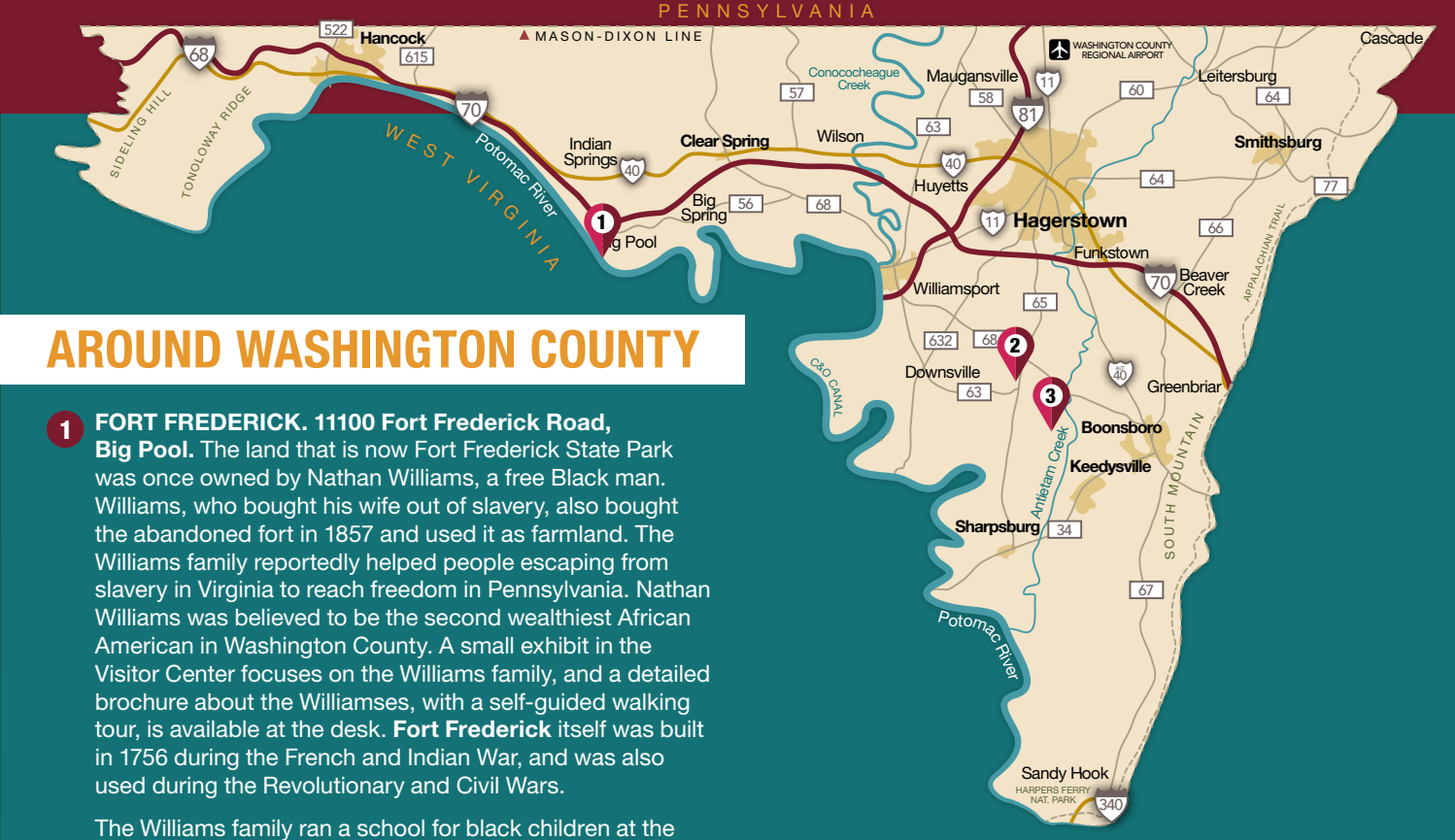
WILLIE MAYS



LIZZIE KING



MRS. ERWIN SAMONS



AROUND WASHINGTON COUNTY

1 FORT FREDERICK. 11100 Fort Frederick Road, Big Pool. The land that is now Fort Frederick State Park was once owned by Nathan Williams, a free Black man. Williams, who bought his wife out of slavery, also bought the abandoned fort in 1857 and used it as farmland. The Williams family reportedly helped people escaping from slavery in Virginia to reach freedom in Pennsylvania. Nathan Williams was believed to be the second wealthiest African American in Washington County. A small exhibit in the Visitor Center focuses on the Williams family, and a detailed brochure about the Williamses, with a self-guided walking tour, is available at the desk. **Fort Frederick** itself was built in 1756 during the French and Indian War, and was also used during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

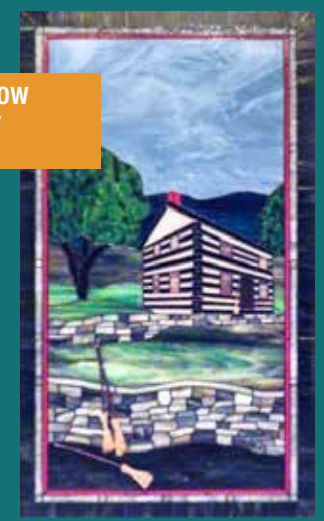
The Williams family ran a school for black children at the fort from the 1870s onward. In 1900, they turned the school over to the county, donating land where the county built a one-room schoolhouse, **Fort Frederick Colored School** (11347 Big Pool Road, Big Pool). This operated until 1914 and is still standing. It is being restored by the Department of Natural Resources and will become a museum focusing on the Williams family's history.

2 ROCKLAND ESTATE. 9030 Sharpsburg Pike, Fairplay. This early 19th-century slave-worked plantation is where the great abolitionist James W.C. Pennington grew up in slavery and then escaped at the age of 19, in 1827. Pennington then attended Yale University, became a Presbyterian minister, presided at Frederick Douglass's wedding, and welcomed the Amistad rebels to his church. He wrote an autobiography, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, that describes the horrors of enslaved life at Rockland. The farm is not usually open to the public, but can be seen from the road and is an event venue. <https://ninetythirtyevents.com/>

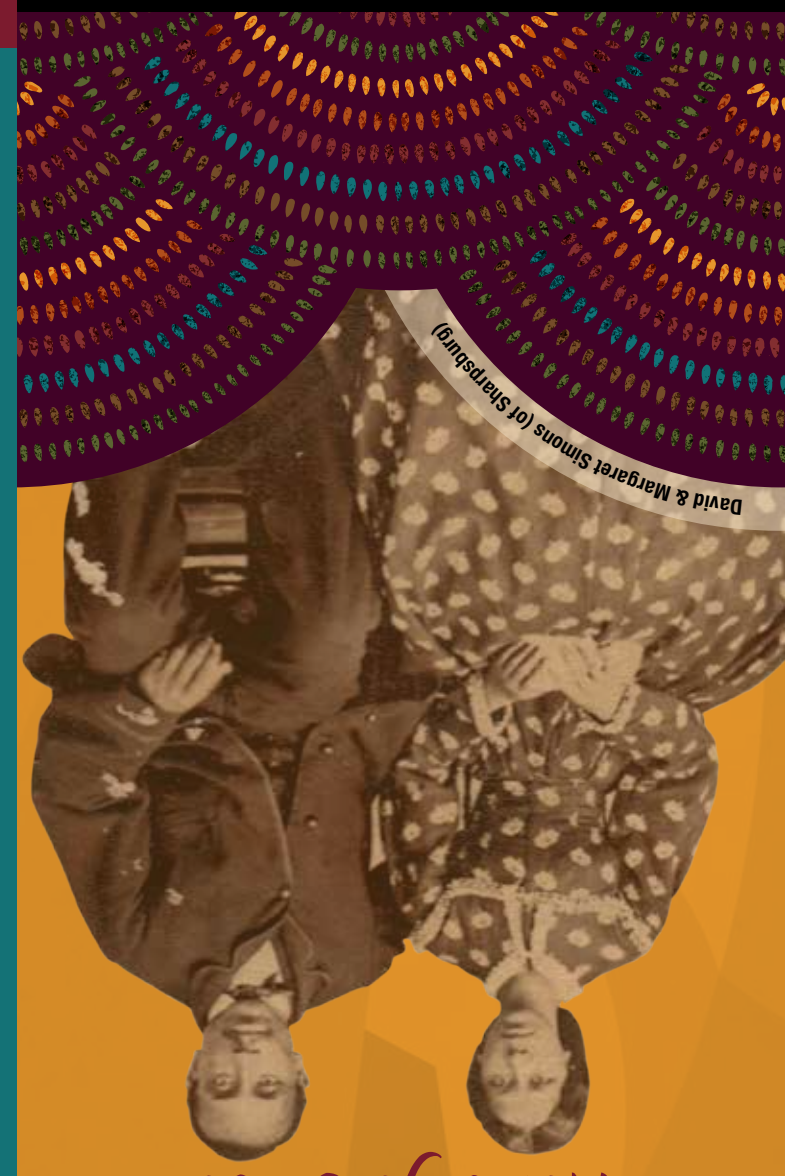


ROCKLAND ESTATE

2018 STAINED GLASS WINDOW
in memory of the Warfield family and other enslaved worshippers



3 ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, LAPPANS. 18313 Lappans Road, Boonsboro. Both enslaved and free African Americans attended this church along with the white enslavers who founded it in 1849. The original slave balcony can be visited inside, and a 2018 stained glass window commemorates the enslaved. The historic cemetery contains the graves of several former slaves, including ancestors of Hagerstown's Doleman family. A **historical marker** tells their story. The church grounds are open; the church can be toured by appointment. Contact administrator@stmarksclappans.org or 301-582-0417.



DAVID & MARGARET SIMONS (of Sharpsburg)

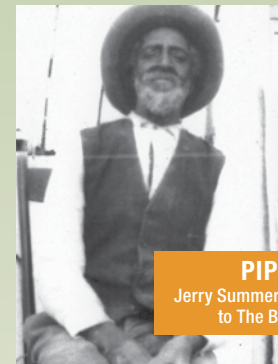
AMERICAN
HERITAGE GUIDE

AFRICAN
HAGERSTOWN & WASHINGTON COUNTY, MD

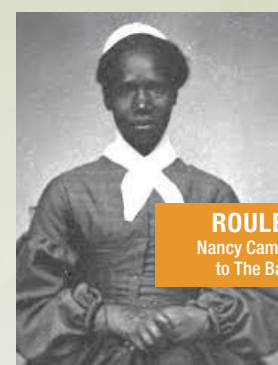
THE SHARPSBURG/ANTIETAM AREA

Slavery, Civil War & Emancipation Sites

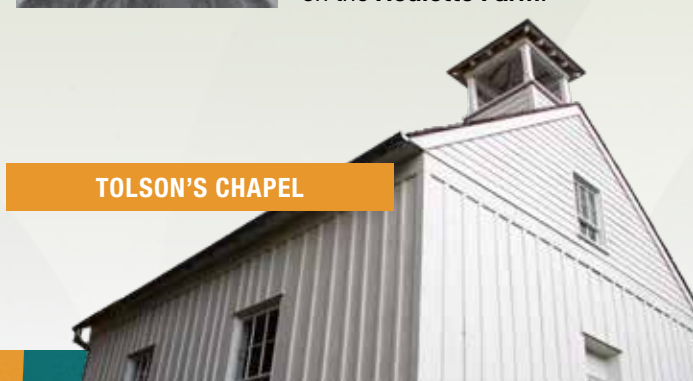
1 The Civil War's single bloodiest day took place on **Antietam National Battlefield**, and the Union victory in this 1862 battle enabled President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. It freed southern slaves but not enslaved Marylanders. More than 400 African Americans lived on and around the battlefield during the Civil War. Ask at the **Visitor Center** (5831 Dunker Church Road, Sharpsburg; 301-432-5124; www.nps.gov/anti) for a map of the battlefield. The Center, renovated in 2022, has exhibits on themes including Freedom.



PIPER FARM
Jerry Summers, enslaved eyewitness to The Battle of Antietam



ROULETTE FARM
Nancy Camel, free eyewitness to The Battle of Antietam



TOLSON'S CHAPEL

2 In the town of Sharpsburg itself, don't miss **Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg** (111 E. High Street). Built immediately after the Civil War by the Black community of Sharpsburg, this Methodist church also served briefly as a Freedman's Bureau school and then as a county school for Black children. Meticulously restored to its original appearance, it is now a National Historic Landmark. Formerly enslaved people and Black veterans are buried in the cemetery, which is always open. A **historical marker** outside summarizes the history. The chapel interior is open occasionally or can be toured by appointment. (See <https://tolsons-chapel.org/>, contact tolsons.chapel@gmail.com, or contact the Sharpsburg Museum of History.)

3 The Sharpsburg Museum of History, 106 E. Main Street, has nineteenth- and twentieth-century artifacts from local Black families, and it offers tours of Tolson's Chapel. The Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 9-4. Contact 301-800-6877 or loveshistory.1866@gmail.com.

4 Between Sharpsburg and the Potomac River lies **Ferry Hill Place Plantation** (16500 Shepherdstown Pike, Sharpsburg). Typical of western Maryland's larger slave-worked farms, Ferry Hill had an enslaved workforce of up to twenty people at times. Owner John Blackford kept daily records of farm activities, showing how closely he supervised the farmworkers, as well as the enslaved operators of his Potomac River ferry. Blackford beat the enslaved workers for minor and accidental misdeeds, yet they found ways to resist his constant demands, for example by drinking, traveling, and setting their own pace of work. Visitors here can walk the grounds and understand how the plantation master oversaw the workers from his house.



FERRY HILL PLACE PLANTATION

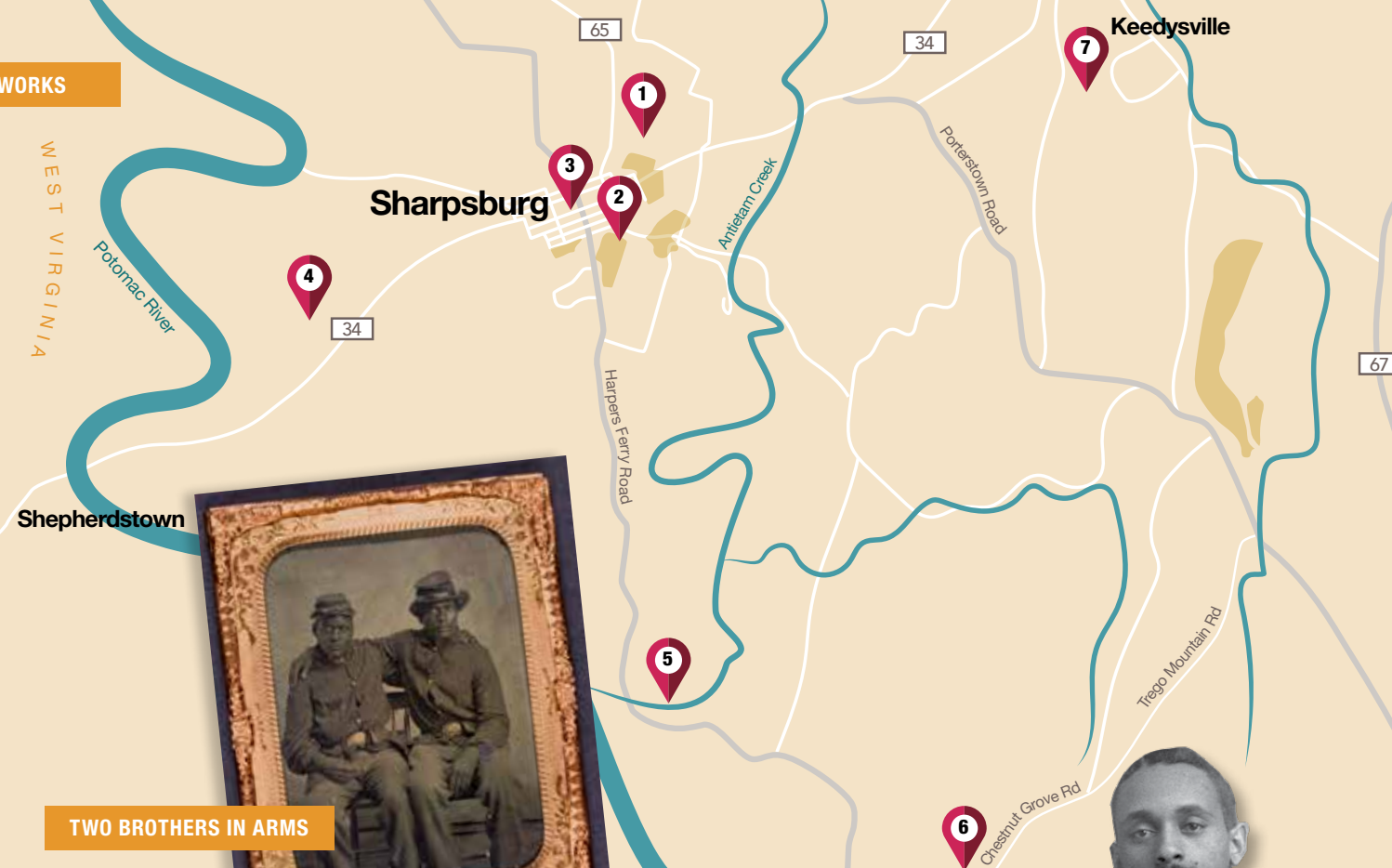
5 South of Sharpsburg lie the ruins of the **Antietam Iron Works** (3768 Harpers Ferry Road, Sharpsburg). Iron furnaces throughout western Maryland used large enslaved workforces as well as free white labor. The Antietam Works, founded in the 1760s, produced armaments for the Revolutionary War. Simmering tensions here erupted in 1835 when the white workers rioted against the Black men, who resisted with force. Decades later, when the furnace closed, the enslaved workers were sold, but some of their descendants still live locally. At this outdoor site on Antietam Creek you can view lime kilns, mill ruins, and the company store building.



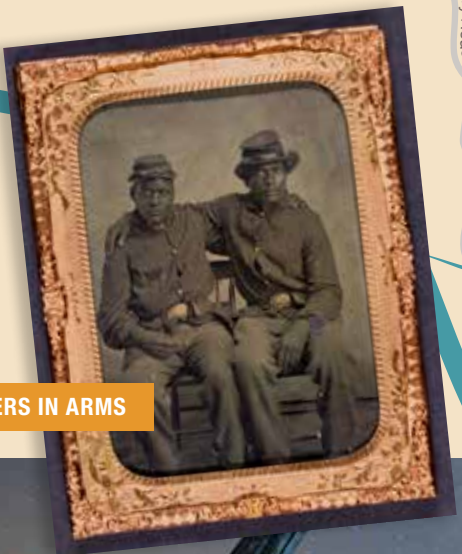
ANTIETAM IRON WORKS

6 Further east is the **John Brown Raid Headquarters**, also known as the **Kennedy Farm** (2406 Chestnut Grove Road, Sharpsburg). Abolitionist John Brown hid out and trained his followers here in 1859, before their raid on the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry, an attempt to end American slavery. The raid helped spark the Civil War. Because of its history, the farm was acquired in 1950 by the IBPOEW, or Black Elks, who owned it until 1966. The multi-purpose property featured a musical venue, where performers included Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Etta James, and Little Richard, drawing audience members from Hagerstown's Black community. Open by appointment, info@johnbrownraid.org, but can also be seen from the road. See www.johnbrown.org.

7 To the east of Sharpsburg you'll find **Red Hill Cemetery** (across from 5703 Red Hill Road, Keedysville). The stone foundation of a tiny African Methodist Episcopal church can be seen near the road. This and the cemetery are all that remain of an early 19th-century Black and mixed-race community that flourished on Red Hill. Several Black Civil War veterans are buried here; the cemetery is currently being restored.



TWO BROTHERS IN ARMS



JAMES SIMONS
Teacher at the school in Tolson's Chapel

Visit
HAGERSTOWN
& Washington County
Convention and Visitors Bureau



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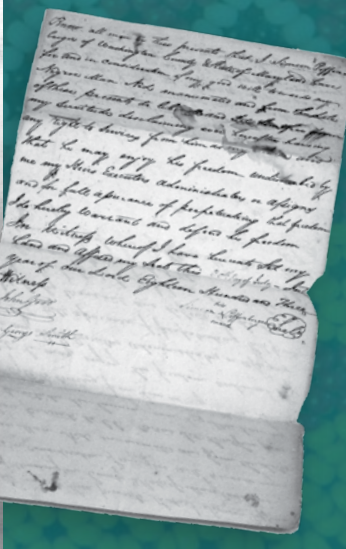
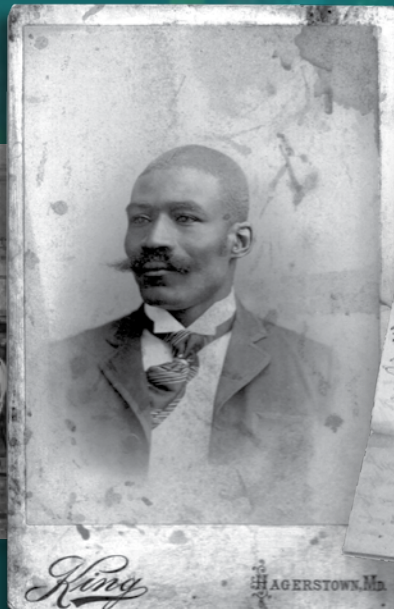
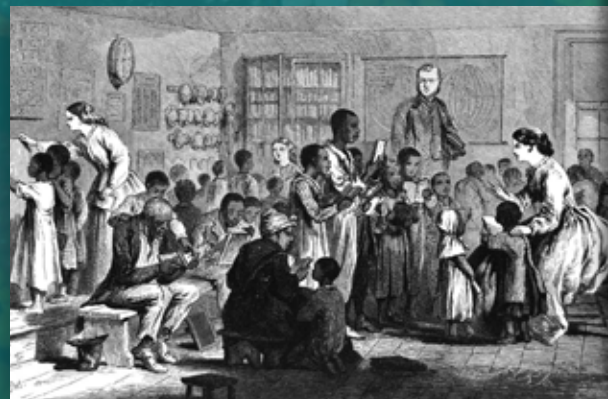
Special thanks to the Washington County Free Library, Washington County Historical Society, African-American Historical Association, Ron Lytle, and the Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau for their help in collecting information and pictures. Designed by Icon Graphics.

THE JONATHAN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

Black Leadership and Community

Jonathan Street is the living and historic core of Hagerstown's African American community. In the early 1800s, when the city's Black residents began to build institutions and businesses, they did it here. When enslaved people fled to freedom, Jonathan Street was a route north to Pennsylvania. Black homes, churches, schools, and organizations all clustered in the blocks around this street, especially in the post-Civil War years.

There is also a painful history here. The old county jail, where enslaved people were sold, sat on Jonathan Street. In the twentieth century the discriminatory practice of "redlining" confined African Americans in Hagerstown to this neighborhood. Yet Black leadership and community have always been found here, from the earliest times through the civil rights era to the present day. Some important buildings are gone and some remain; historical markers help tell the stories.



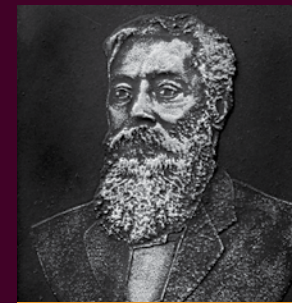
OTHER HAGERSTOWN SITES

11 DOLEMAN BLACK HERITAGE MUSEUM. 33 W. Washington Street, Room 210, Hagerstown. The Museum preserves and exhibits a unique collection of artifacts, photographs, and documents chronicling the rich African American history of Washington County. One of the most popular Black history sites in Washington County, the Doleman Museum tells both local and national stories. Exhibits here focus on local Black families, Black businesses and culture, and the Jonathan Street community. The Museum is currently in temporary space while the permanent building is being prepared. There are knowledgeable docents and a small gift shop. Open several days a week; call or check website for current hours. <https://www.dolemanblackheritagemuseum.org/>. 301-797-5019.

12 DOLEMAN BLACK HERITAGE MUSEUM: FUTURE SITE. 465 Pennsylvania Avenue, Hagerstown. Hagerstown's Black history museum acquired this former Coca-Cola bottling plant in 2019 and plans to build a permanent museum and research center on the site. The mural was painted in 2020.

13 WASHINGTON HOUSE HOTEL. Just west of the Doleman Museum lie two other noteworthy Black history sites. Abolitionist John Brown and his sons stayed at the **Washington House Hotel** in 1859, a few months before their famous raid on Harpers Ferry. The site is now University Plaza but is indicated by a **historical marker**. In 1880, Frederick Douglass visited Hagerstown and spoke on the steps of the **Washington County Courthouse** (95 West Washington Street, Hagerstown).

14 ROSE HILL CEMETERY. 600 South Potomac Street, Hagerstown. Created in 1865, Hagerstown's public cemetery has always included both Black and white burials. Among the prominent Black citizens buried here are voting activist and officeholder Jacob Wheaton; Medal of Honor recipient William O. Wilson; and farmer Thomas Barnum, reportedly the wealthiest Black man in the county when he died in 1895. Rose Hill also has a monument to the Lyon Post, the local Black branch of the Grand Army of the Republic, the national organization of Civil War veterans. The cemetery is open daily from dawn to dusk; office open weekdays by appointment. Call 301-739-3630 or contact info@rhcemetry.org. <https://rosehillcemeteryofmd.org/>.



JACOB WHEATON

15 GREENWOOD DISTRICT AND MURAL. Intersection of E. Baltimore and S. Potomac Sts., Hagerstown. This Black-led commercial and arts district, established in 2021, is named for the Black neighborhood destroyed by the 1921 Tulsa, OK, massacre. Here you'll find a striking mural of African American lawyer Buck Colbert Franklin, installed in 2021 by Maryland artist Eric Goulette. Franklin was an Oklahoman who survived the Tulsa massacre and fought for the legal rights of other survivors.



GREENWOOD DISTRICT MURAL

16 HALFWAY AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY. 11027 Clinton Ave., Hagerstown. Founded in 1897 by a Black fraternal society, this cemetery is the burial place of some 400 African American citizens of Hagerstown, including fourteen Civil War veterans and a World War I veteran. The cemetery was abandoned in the mid-20th century and is being restored by neighbors, descendants, and friends. Open daily, dawn to dusk. To arrange a tour, contact halfwaycemetery@gmail.com.

1 ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. 155 Jonathan Street, Hagerstown. The first Black church in Hagerstown and the oldest Black congregation in the county, Asbury was founded in 1818 under the supervision of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (now John Wesley United Methodist Church). It was the first church named for Bishop Francis Asbury.



ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2 OLD COUNTY JAIL. Northwest corner of Jonathan and W. Church Streets, Hagerstown. The nineteenth-century jail that stood on this site saw not only slave auctions but the imprisonment of freedom-seekers from Virginia. It also held local free people awaiting trial and enslaved people awaiting sale and transport. The building is gone, but **historical markers** tell the story.

3 HARMON HOTEL. Next to 222 Jonathan Street, Hagerstown. No longer standing, the Harmon Hotel was one of Black Hagerstown's finest locations. Black entrepreneurs Walter and Florence Harmon owned more than 40 buildings in the city, including a restaurant, a bowling alley, a pool hall, and a shoe shine parlor. The Harmon Hotel featured in the Negro Motorist Green Book, a national listing, first published in 1936, of places where Black travelers could safely stop in segregated America. A **historical marker** on the site tells the story.



THE HARMON HOTEL

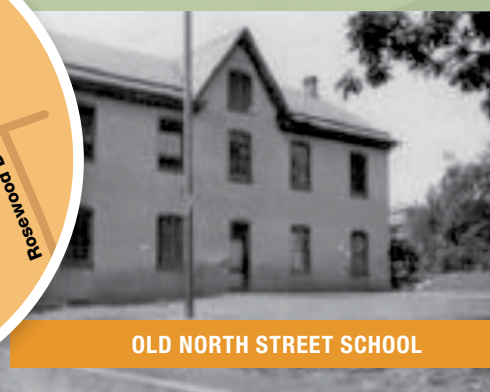
4 AMERICAN HALL. 132 West Bethel Street, Hagerstown. This modest house has great significance for Hagerstown's Black history. Built in 1883 by the local Black branch of Odd Fellows, a fraternal order that emphasized mutual assistance, this building quickly became an important community center. Among the Black organizations that met here were a school, a bicycle club, Civil War veterans, the local branch of Black Masons and their women's auxiliary, and other civic and social groups. Plans are underway to restore the building and return it to community use.



EBENEZER A.M.E. CHURCH, BUILT IN 1841

5 EBENEZER A.M.E. CHURCH. 26 West Bethel Street, Hagerstown. Founded in 1820, and first known as Bethel, this is one of the oldest A.M.E. congregations in the United States. Several early members are linked to Underground Railroad activity. The brick Civil War-era church building (formerly located on the southeast corner of the block) served as a smallpox hospital for Black citizens during the War; the elaborate building that replaced it was torn down in the 1990s because of structural concerns. Ebenezer's historic cemetery was covered by the Bethel Gardens housing development in the 1970s. The parsonage is on the site of a late nineteenth-century Black school. A **historical marker** tells the story of the Rev. Thomas Henry, a key figure for local Black history.

6 OLD NORTH STREET SCHOOL. 109 W. North Avenue, Hagerstown. Until 1888, African Americans in Washington County had no access to education beyond the eighth grade. That changed with the opening of the North Street School. When, for the first time, Black students from across the county could earn a high school diploma. The original building was replaced by the present one in the 1940s. Head Start began here in 1968. Later, the present building became the Black YMCA, and the Memorial Recreation Center, renamed in 2013 for Robert W. Johnson (1926-2009), a longtime teacher and coach at the North Street School.



OLD NORTH STREET SCHOOL

7 NEW NORTH STREET SCHOOL. 131 W. North Avenue, Hagerstown. In 1947, this school opened to replace the school at 109 North Ave. The new school also housed county education offices. The school was eventually closed and the building became the Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Center.

8 JONATHAN STREET CABIN. 417 Jonathan Street, Hagerstown. One of the oldest surviving buildings in Hagerstown, this log cabin was built in the 1830s, re-using timbers from trees that were felled in 1739-41. The property was owned for years by the city's founding Hager family. In 1882 it was purchased by its first Black owner, Annie Bentley, a real estate investor who owned several properties in the city. In 2018 the house was slated for demolition, but citizens and preservation groups rallied to save and restore it. It has since been the subject of a PBS documentary and is now an owner-occupied home again.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND FROM CABIN

9 MEDAL OF HONOR TRIANGLE. Intersection of Jonathan Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. This tiny park, with its **historical marker**, honors William O. Wilson (1869-1928), Hagerstown's only Medal of Honor recipient. Wilson was a "Buffalo Soldier," one of the African Americans who served in the U.S. Army's wars against Native peoples in western states. Wilson rose to be a corporal in the Ninth U.S. Cavalry; he was honored for his personal bravery in helping



WILLIAM O. WILSON

rescue a supply train that was under attack by Sioux warriors in 1890. (Contrary to some accounts, Wilson did not participate in the Wounded Knee massacre.) Wilson lived at 220 Jonathan Street in 1910, and at 341 Jonathan St. in 1920. His grave can be seen at Rose Hill Cemetery.

10 WHEATON PARK. 120 Charles Street, Hagerstown. This city park is named for Jacob Wheaton, born in 1835, who was hired by Hagerstown to nurse Black citizens in a smallpox outbreak during the Civil War. After the war, Wheaton was the first Black man to vote in Washington County, and possibly in Maryland. He was active in local and state politics, was the first African American to serve on a trial jury in the county, and was bailiff of the grand jury from 1899 until his death in 1924. **Historical markers** honor him at this park, at Memorial Park (583 S. Potomac Street, Hagerstown), and outside Rose Hill Cemetery, where he is buried.



WHEATON PARK

Photos of James Simons, David and Margaret Simons, and the unidentified man in the Jonathan Street image montage are courtesy of The Sharpshooter Museum of History. Photos of Mrs. Doleman and the girls on the swing set in Wheaton Park are courtesy of The Doleman Black Heritage Museum.



LOOKING FOR A GOOD MEAL?



Click here for a list of local Black-owned eateries



BIKE ROUTE



Click here for a guided route through Fairgrounds Park and Jonathan Street

With many thanks to:

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