AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

# StoryWays

A Journey of Faith & Freedom on Maryland's Eastern Shore

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More than 300 years of African-American history lives here...

The history of the African-American experience on the lower eastern shore of Maryland, spanning close to three-and-a-half centuries, consists of a complex fabric of written fact and oral traditions tied to numerous sites scattered across the rural and urban landscapes of Somerset, Worcester, and Wicomico counties.

This brochure is designed as an effort to explore prominent themes within African-American history, and present in a brief, accessible way the meaning and contributions that many properties and people have in the overall history of the lower eastern shore.

## **1** Briddletown Interpretive Sign

Flower St. near Seahawk Rd., Berlin Vicinity During post-Civil War years, around 1866, some former slaves and free blacks purchased plots of land outside Berlin and established settlements on a county road between Trappe and Taylorsville. During the following decades, many blacks owned titles to land for the first time in their history and their community grew to about 160 people. Several families occupied the area. Between 1890 and 1910, the community was named Briddletown, likely inspired by senior Briddell family members of the community.

### 2 Calvin B. Taylor House Museum

#### 208 N. Main St., Berlin

Located in the heart of Berlin's Historic District, the Taylor House Museum houses much of the area's history. Collections include pieces from 1832 to today. Exhibits of note include the stories from the African-American communities in Berlin and Briddletown (see description above). An exhibit traces the history of Reverend Dr. Charles Albert Tindley, an American Methodist minister and gospel music composer born in Berlin. Another exhibit includes images and manumission papers for Isaiah Fassett, the next-to-last Civil War soldier in the state of Maryland when he died June 24, 1946.

### **3** Charles H. Chipman Cultural Center

#### 325 Broad St., Salisbury

Built in 1838, the Chipman Center is the oldest standing African-American church on Delmarva. It sits on the site of a former open meadow where slaves gathered for worship services conducted by Methodist circuit riders. In 1837, five local freedmen began holding services in a small building on the property of William Williams. Funds were raised to purchase the property and to build a meeting



house in 1838. The church was named the African Methodist Church and was called the "Hill Church." The building was expanded, incorporated in 1876, and renamed the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. It was later abandoned as a church but was purchased by educators, Professor Charles H. Chipman and his wife Jeanette Chipman. They donated the church for use as a cultural center to honor the history and accomplishments of black community members.

### **4** Civil Rights Protests Interpretive Sign

#### Crisfield

On Christmas Eve in 1961, 10 interracial members of the Civic Interest Group in Baltimore traveled to Crisfield, the home of Maryland Governor J. Millard Tawes, to protest racism. The group led a sit-in at the City Restaurant and were refused service. They were arrested for trespassing and jailed. Four were released on bail, but the other six refused to pay the bail bond. While jailed for five days, they fasted and sang. A second protest on December 29 included the original 10 – along with about 110 local residents. This time, they were served at local restaurants, and no one

was arrested. The protests were reported nationwide.



### 5 Edward H. Nabb Research Center

#### 1101 Camden Ave., Salisbury

The Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture was founded in 1982 as a history laboratory for students, by Dr. G. Ray Thompson and Sylvia Bradley of the Salisbury State College Department of History. In 1998, it was endowed by Edward H. Nabb, an attorney and philanthropist from Cambridge, Maryland. The research center is a repository for Delmarva family and cultural history, including microfilm, photographs, diaries, wills, inventories, land records, military records, artifacts, and birth and mortuary records from the colonial period to the present. It is also a valuable source of information for African-American history.

### 6 Germantown School and Community Heritage Center

#### 10223 Trappe Rd., Berlin

In January 1915, Isaac B. Henry and Mollie Henry purchased two acres of land for \$250. Seven years later they gave the property to the Worcester County Board of Education for \$10,



with the understanding that the property would become the site for "a colored school." In 1923, a two-room school was erected by the Rosenwald Foundation Rural School Building Program, with matching funds donated by the local community. The school provided education for children in grades one through seven, remaining in use until 1962. Years later, the Board of Education sold the building to the County Highway Association. Former students and community members regained the building in 2002 and revitalized it. It is now used as a museum and community heritage center.

# 7 Harriet Tubman Statue

#### 1101 Camden Ave., Salisbury

The statue of Harriet Ross Tubman (1822-1913), the iconic fugitive slave, abolitionist, nurse, spy, scout and leader of a Civil War military campaign that freed nearly 800 slaves, was unveiled on the Salisbury University (SU) campus in 2009. It was the first commemorative



three-dimensional likeness to honor Tubman on her native Eastern Shore. Created by Dr. James K. Hill of the SU Art Department and his students, the statue, located on the lawn of the Teacher Education and Technology Center, represents Harriet as the "Moses of Her People," as she fought to end slavery, for women's suffrage, and for education as a means to lead people to their highest potential.

## 8 Henry's Beach

#### MD 363 (Deal Island Road) north side, 0.2 mile west of Hodson White Rd.

Henry's Beach was the site of a popular day resort for African Americans and the general public. Originally from Dames Quarter, businesswoman Lorraine Henry and her husband George purchased the land for the site in 1952 and developed the only resort of its type in Maryland at that time. Families enjoyed ball games, bathing and swimming, fishing, crabbing, and home-style cooking. Henry's Beach was also a venue for premier black entertainers and musicians of that era. It closed in 1982.

# 9 Henry Hotel

#### 310 S Baltimore Ave., Ocean City

Henry Hotel, formerly known as Henry's Colored Hotel, is a prominent site in downtown Ocean City. Erected in 1895, it remains one of the oldest buildings in the city. In 1926, the building and lot were purchased by Charles and Louisa Henry and operated as a hotel by the family until 1951. It is also one of the last surviving hotels that served black visitors to the ocean resort during the early to mid-20th century, when access to the beach and hotels for blacks was severely restricted. It is reported that famous black entertainers – the caliber of Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Louis Armstrong – performed in the pier ballroom and stayed there. The Henry Hotel remains under African-American ownership.

# 10 Houston Cemetery

#### 598 Commerce St., Salisbury

On April 2, 1901, trustees of the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church (now the Charles H. Chipman Foundation Center), established the Houston Cemetery. Solomon T. "Saul" Houston,

Chairman of the trustees, realtor, and prominent community leader, purchased the land for the African-American cemetery and the final resting place for some local Civil War veterans. Many remains were removed and displaced for the building of Rt. 50. Upon the deaths of the founders, Professor Charles H. Chipman cared for the cemetery until his demise, and then the American Legion Post 145 cared for its upkeep.



# 11 Isaiah Fassett Civil War Marker

#### 229 Branch St., Berlin

Isaiah Fassett was born into slavery in 1844. When he was 19, his owner Sarah Bruff received \$300 from the U.S. Army to release him from bondage so he could enlist in Company, D, 9th United States Colored Troops. The regiment served in several battles in Virginia and was one of the first to occupy Richmond at the end of the war. He was promoted to Corporal and discharged from service in 1866. He returned to Berlin after the war. In 1938, he attended the 75th



Battle Reunion at Gettysburg. He was Maryland's next-to-last surviving Civil War soldier when he died on June 24, 1946. His house, which stood on this site, burned down by 2004.

# 12 Judy Johnson Memorial

#### 307 N. Washington St., Snow Hill

William Julius "Judy" Johnson (1899-1989), was an American professional third baseman and manager whose career in Negro League baseball spanned 17 seasons, from 1921 to 1937, Born in Snow Hill, he was slight of build and never developed as a power hitter, but he achieved his greatest success as a contact hitter and an intuitive defenseman. He played in over 3,000 professional games and was known as the best all-time third baseman of the Negro Leagues. After retirement, he served as an assistant coach for three professional baseball teams and was the first black man to serve as a coach for a major league baseball club. In 1975, he was elected into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

# 13 Lynching Memorial Marker

#### 101 N. Division St. #105, Salisbury

Located on the Wicomico County Courthouse lawn, this marker is dedicated to the remembrance of three black people lynched in Salisbury, Maryland between 1898 and 1931. The marker describes the lynching of Garfield King, Matthew Williams, and another whose name remains unknown. It is the first marker to acknowledge victims of racial terrorist lynchings on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

# 14 Mar-Va Theater

#### 103 Market St., Pocomoke City

Entertainment in the form of motion pictures was obtainable in local theaters in the principal towns,



although seating was segregated between the main auditorium and the balcony for white and black ticket holders. The Mar-Va Theater in Pocomoke City, built in 1927 and redecorated 10 years later, survives with a separate staircase, ticket booth, bathroom, and concession stand in the divided balcony where the black moviegoers sat.

### **15** Metropolitan United Methodist Church

30522 Dr. William Hytche Blvd., Princess Anne Ancestors of members of this church worshipped during slavery in the balcony of St. Andrews Episcopal Church. In 1841, they organized a separate congregation and worshipped at that site until 1860. By 1861, the members purchased land and built a school and a church, the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1884, the Delaware Conference of the Episcopal Church granted church trustees permission to find a new site for a larger church. For \$400, they bought land that was the site of a slave auction. On September 30, 1886, the cornerstone was laid and in 1888. Metropolitan was established in close proximity to University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES).

# 16 Mt. Zion Memorial Church

#### 29071 Polks Rd., Princess Anne

This edifice originated out of the Trinity United Methodist Worship Center. Built in 1887, Mt. Zion ceased to function as a church in 2002 and became a



community center for local residents. Since 2002, it has hosted family reunions, funerals, weddings and other events. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Maryland Register for Historic Sites.

# 17 Oaksville Ball Park

#### Perryhawkin Rd. at Sam Bowland Rd., Princess Anne

The Oaksville Eagles Baseball Team was created in 1910 on a sandy patch of land among the fields and houses. It became a community baseball club that toured neighboring towns and states, playing against other



Negro League teams in the era before segregation ended. They continued playing until 1978, and at one time the team had a history-making 48-game winning streak. After the integration of baseball, the Oaksville Eagles were the last of the black regional baseball teams in the Eastern Shore Baseball League. The Oaksville Ball Park in which they once played is one of the few surviving African-American sandlot baseball fields, which is maintained by the residents of Oaksville.

# 18 Outten's Colored Theater

#### Commerce and Willow Sts., Snow Hill

The theater was built in 1946 by Clemon W. Outten to provide entertainment to Snow Hill's black community, because the laws specified the separation of the races during the period of segregation. Outten created the theater out of a Quonset hut – a round roofed building with a metal frame and corrugated metal skin. The huts were widely used on American military bases and were designed for quick construction and portability. The façade or front of the theater has a concrete wall and gave the appearance of a commercial looking building.

# 19 Pemberton Hall

#### 5561 Plantation Ln., Salisbury

Pemberton Hall stands on the western periphery of Salisbury along the Wicomico River. Its surrounding fields, orchard, outbuildings, cellar and yard, as well as



the plantation wharf at Mulberry Landing on the Wicomico, comprised the working and living domains of 17 slaves during the ownership of merchant-planter Isaac Handy, who financed the construction of Pemberton Hall in 1741.

# 20 Poplar Hill Mansion

#### 117 Elizabeth St., Salisbury

During the last decade of the 18th century, Poplar Hill Mansion was erected by Colonel Levin Handy on the northeast side of Salisbury. The finely appointed two-story Federal style frame plantation house, centerpiece to a severalhundred-acre property, was started in 1795, but at the time of his death was incomplete. The next owner, Dr. John Huston and his family, finalized the finishing of the house. He owned 19 slaves who worked the plantation fields or accomplished domestic chores in and around the dwelling. Both the cellar and attic were spaces clearly used and probably occupied by John Huston's slaves.

### **21** Reverend Dr. Charles Albert Tindley Mural

#### 25 Commerce St., Berlin

One of Worcester County's most famous native sons, the Reverend Dr. Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933), was born near Berlin. Basically self-taught, he overcame slavery and poverty and entered the ministry in Philadelphia. As a minister



and community activist, he opened soup kitchens, provided shelter for the homeless, began a street ministry, clothed the needy, and led protests against racism. Tindley also became an influential writer of gospel music, penning the Civil Rights Movement anthem, "We Shall Overcome" and the song "Stand By Me." Five of his hymns appear in the revised Methodist hymnals used worldwide, and he is recognized as "The Godfather of Gospel Music." Reverend Tindley founded one of the largest African-American Methodist congregations in Philadelphia. A permanent exhibit honoring Reverend Tindley is housed at the Calvin B. Taylor House Museum in Berlin.

### 22 St. James Methodist Episcopal Church

#### Oriole and Champ Rds., Oriole

The church was built in 1885 by the descendants of former slaves, which made this edifice one of the oldest African-American structures in Somerset County. The members of the congregation wanted a place to worship and to conduct social events. The congregation became too small to maintain the facility, so it disbanded, closed its doors as a place of worship, and the building eventually fell into disrepair. The church was later restored through the efforts of interested citizens and the Oriole Historical Society. The cornerstone of the church reads, "St. James Methodist Episcopal Church," the name upon which it was founded.



# 23 Salisbury's African-American History Walking Tour

#### **Downtown Salisbury**

This self-quided tour (available online at theclio.com/tour/2090) traces the footsteps of the past while highlighting Salisbury's African-American history. In Salisbury, many older neighborhoods, such as Georgetown, Cub, California, and Jersey no longer exist or have been drastically changed by construction, segregation, or gentrification. Conversely, with the creation of the Church Street Mural and park, the preservation of the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church (now the Charles H. Chipman Cultural Center), the dedication of the Lynching Memorial historical marker, and other initiatives, exemplify the City of Salisbury's attempts to honor the legacy of its rich African-American history, culture, and community.

### **24** Samuel Robert "Smokey" Bowen Interpretive Sign

#### Samuel Bowen Blvd., Berlin Vicinity

Born Sept. 6, 1965, Sam grew up on Flower Street and the surrounding communities of Berlin, Maryland. Smokey, as he was fondly called, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1987 and the U.S. Army National Guard in 1999. His unit was dispatched to Iraq in support of the War on Terrorism/Operation Iragi Freedom. On June 16, 2004 at a military base north of Baghdad, a fellow Guardsman was wounded by shrapnel from an enemy rocket. Sam scooped him up and carried him to safety. This act of heroism earned Sam the Bronze Star. Less than a month later, a rocket-propelled grenade landed near his Humvee, and Sam was fatally wounded - the 1,000th soldier to die in that conflict. He was posthumously promoted to Private First Class (PFC) and awarded the Purple Heart, Distinguished Service of Ohio and Defender of Freedom medals. Samuel Bowen Boulevard was dedicated in his honor in 2013.



# 25 San Domingo School

#### 25940 Quinton Rd., Mardela Springs

The first school built on this site around 1875 was a single-story, one-room plain frame building that served the Sharptown District for over 40 years. The second school, the Sharptown Colored Elementary School, was built in 1919 to replace the first one, and was a two-story hip-roofed frame structure. It was financed by Wicomico County, local residents, and Julius Rosenwald, President of the Sears, Roebuck and Company. The Rosenwald Fund, which was administered through Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, oversaw the construction of new and improved schools for black children throughout the South. The school remained in use until 1961. It was renovated and, since 2014, has served as a community meeting place, daycare center, and entertainment venue; it is also home to a small masonic lodge. The school is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **26** Stephen H. Long Interpretive Sign

#### Moore and 6th Sts., Pocomoke City

Stephen H. Long (1865-1921) was born in Pocomoke, orphaned at an early age, and educated as a lawyer at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. He returned to Pocomoke, becoming teacher, principal and Supervisor of Colored Schools in Worcester County. On September 13, 1921, Long was killed for supporting the education of orphan boys who had



been forced to work on farms and not attend school. In his memory, the Stephen H. Long Guild was created to continue his legacy. Each year, the Guild raises funds to provide scholarships to educate local African-American youth and to encourage them to attend college or a trade school. 27 Sturgis One-Room School Museum

#### 209 Willow St., Pocomoke City



Dating around 1900, this single-story frame structure with its one-room plan is similar to schools erected during the 19th century. The school was built on land owned by William Sturgis, and

was originally located on Brantley Road, east of Pocomoke. The school operated until 1938, when the Stephen Long School opened in the town of Pocomoke. The school was converted to a residence and was later abandoned until the historic value of the school was realized. Moved to its current site in downtown Pocomoke City in 1998, the school was renovated and opened as the Sturgis One-Room Museum. It is one of the last remaining one-room school buildings erected to educate African-American children in Worcester County.



# 28 Teackle Mansion

#### 11736 Mansion St., Princess Anne

One of the most elaborate Federal-style dwellings built on the lower eastern shore, Teackle Mansion was erected in stages between 1802 and 1819. The two-story, five-part plan brick dwelling outdistances most other structures of its time for enclosed space and attention to high-end architectural finishes. Financed by Littleton Dennis and Elizabeth Upshur Teackle, the couple occupied this expansive house and town estate with their only child, Elizabeth Anne, and a score of black servants who worked in and around the house or at large agricultural holdings across the lower shore. Tax assessments record the ownership of 20 servants who are listed by name, age, and value, while personal letters and other documents shed light on the work they performed day to day. Two female servants, Nanny, aged 38, and probably her daughter, Sally, aged 10, were brought up from Accomack County, Virginia when the Teackles relocated to Princess Anne.

# **29** University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)

11868 College Backbone Rd., Princess Anne This historically black, land-grant institution was founded on September 13, 1886 as the Delaware Conference Academy by the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Centenary Biblical Institute of Baltimore. It opened as the Princess Anne Academy with Benjamin O. Bird as principal, with nine students and one professor in the Onley Building. By the end of the year, 28 additional students were enrolled. It operated as a private school until 1926. when it was purchased by the State of Maryland, and continued under different names until 1970, when it received its present name, as a part of the University of Maryland System. UMES has a rich history on the eastern shore and is known for its outstanding research, especially as it relates to STEM education and research.

