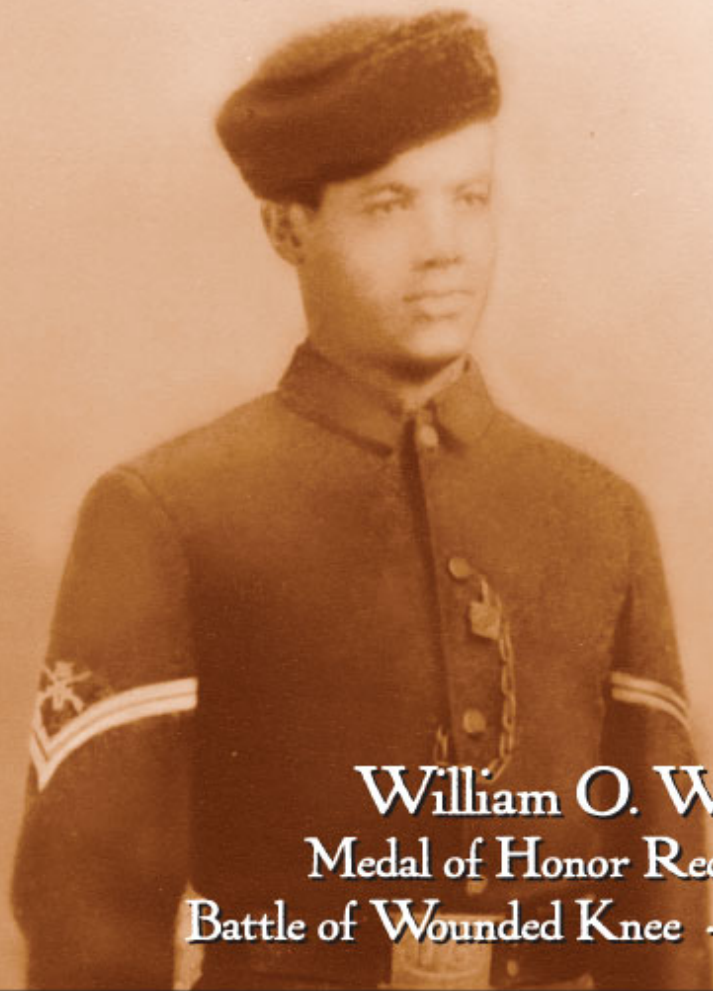


African American Heritage Guide

Washington County, Maryland



Pictured above are black workers, in 1885, at the C&O Canal's Cushwa Wharf in Williamsport.

There are many historic African American sites in Washington County, Maryland. From the earliest days of the 18th Century, the lives, the sacrifices, and the contributions of African Americans have left an unmistakable impression on Washington County. In 1820, 14% of the population was enslaved; Maryland's average however was 26%. By 1860, there were more free African Americans than slaves in Washington County. By 1864, slavery was abolished in Maryland.

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1. Antietam Furnace, Sharpsburg -

Manufacturer of bar iron products. The furnace was built in 1768 and produced goods for the Revolutionary War. The furnace was a large slave owner during its tenure and also employed many free blacks. The furnace closed in 1858. It reopened after the Civil War but finally closed in 1886. 3 Miles South of Sharpsburg on the Harpers Ferry Road, 301-739-4200

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2. Antietam National Battlefield, Sharpsburg - www.nps.gov/anti

The site of America's bloodiest single day, with more than 23,000 casualties. The turning point needed for President Abraham Lincoln to rethink the opportunities for peace and issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which started the process for eventually freeing the slaves from the entire United States. No African American Union troops fought in the battle, but the effects on the lives of African Americans are significant. Approximately 12 miles south of Hagerstown on Route 65. 301-432-5124

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3. Asbury United Methodist Church, Hagerstown -

Founded under the supervision of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (now John Wesley United Methodist Church) in 1818, the Asbury congregation is the oldest African-American church in Hagerstown. The existing building was constructed in 1879 as a replacement for the fire damaged 1864 building. The second oldest African-American congregation in Hagerstown is Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded in 1840. The Ebenezer AME congregation was housed in a number of church buildings on W. Bethel Street, with their most recent church demolished in the late 1990's due to concerns over structural conditions. Two other community churches from the 1800's still stand, including Second Christian and Zion Baptist. 155 N. Jonathan St., Hagerstown, MD. 301-791-0495

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4. Chaney House, Funkstown - www.hudsonhousegalleries.com

Built in 1816, it was the home of Dr. Elias Chaney. In 1859, six men and eight women were included as property in Chaney's will. The house is currently The Hudson House Antiques Shop. 1 South High Street, Funkstown, MD. 301-733-1632

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5. Doleman Black History Museum, Hagerstown -

Located at 540 Locust Street. This museum contains books, artifacts, and pictures of the rich African American History in Washington County. The museum is open by appointment only. 301-739-8185

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6. Ferry Hill Place, South of Sharpsburg -

According to the National Park Service, this was sometimes an underground railroad stop built about 1812 by John Blackford. This property included a ferry that crossed the Potomac into what was then Virginia. The ferry was operated by two enslaved men, who Blackford named "foremen of the ferry." These two men, Jupe and Ned, ran the ferry with little oversight. They kept the records, purchased supplies and even hired free blacks for seasonal labor. The ferry remained in operation until 1851. South of Sharpsburg on Rt. 34. Sat/Sun. 301-582-0813, open summer weekends, C&O Canal, 301-739-4200

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7. Fort Frederick, Big Pool - www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/western/fortfrederick.html

The land that is now Fort Frederick State Park was once owned by a free African American named Nathan Williams. Williams was considered the second wealthiest African-American in Washington County. He bought the property and used it as farmland. During the Civil War, Williams used the farmland to produce food which he supplied to both the Union and the Confederate Armies. He helped escaping slaves get through Maryland. Fort Frederick was built in 1756 during the French and Indian War. The fort was also used during the Revolutionary War and during the Civil War. 1 Mile off I-70, Exit 12 (Big Pool), 11100 Fort Frederick Road, Big Pool, MD. 301-842-2155

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8. Harmon Hotel, Hagerstown -

The most well known African-American entrepreneur in the early 1900's in Hagerstown was Walter Harmon. Prior to his death in his early 40's in 1915, he built the Harmon Hotel, a bowling alley and dance hall for Hagerstown's African-American community, and 37 houses in the Jonathan Street area of Hagerstown. The Harmon family operated the Harmon Hotel for many years into the 20th century. The hotel was important as the only place for visiting African-Americans to stay in Hagerstown during the segregation era. Willie Mays stayed at the hotel during his professional debut. Marker on Jonathan Street, Hagerstown, MD.

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9. Kennedy Farm, South of Sharpsburg - www.johnbrown.org

The planning ground for John Brown's Raid. The raid consisted of John Brown and 21 other men, in an attempt to provoke a slave uprising. The raid took over the U.S. Arsenal at Harper's Ferry and seized a sizable amount of ammunition. Some historians believe that the raid marked the beginning of the end of chattel slavery, and helped spark the Civil War. The site marked the actions of an extreme abolitionist and the five African Americans who took part in the raid. Samples Manor Rd., South of Sharpsburg, MD. South Lynn 301-652-2857 or 301-977-3599.

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10. Montpelier, Clear Spring -

Home of Richard and John Barnes. In 1800, they were the largest slaveholders in the county with 89 enslaved people. Richard Barnes's will of 1804 freed all of his enslaved people two years after his death. These included famous African Methodist Episcopal minister, Thomas Henry. 13448 Broadfording Road, Clear Spring, MD. Mr. & Mrs. Charles Downs, 301-842-2259

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11. North Street School, Hagerstown -

The 'old' North Street School, now Memorial Recreation Center, was built in 1888 with a 1924 addition. When it's replacement was built in 1947, the old school was converted to a YMCA for use by the African-American community. The 'new' North Street School, now the Martin Luther King Center, provided the first secondary education of African-Americans in Washington County. Located on North Street, West of Jonathan Street.

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12. Piper House, Sharpsburg -

During the Battle of Antietam, it was used as Longstreet's HQ, and also as a hospital. The home was built in 1836, and included slave quarters on the farm. On Antietam National Battlefield; viewed from Bloody Lane—private residence.

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13. Rockland, South of Hagerstown on Rt. 65 -

Country home of Frisby Tilghman, one of the largest slave holders in Washington County. This was the home of James W. C. Pennington (c.1807-1870), minister, abolitionist and author. He escaped from here on October 28, 1827 and made his way first to Littlestown, PA then to New York City. South of Hagerstown on Route 65.

[Click Here for Pennington's 1827 escape notice from area newspapers.](#)

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14. Slave Auction Blocks, Hagerstown and Sharpsburg -

Although the number of people enslaved in Washington County was less than the counties farther to the east, it was an active slave market. Slave catchers would hunt runaway slaves and sell them at auction in Hagerstown. The old jail on Jonathan Street housed escaped slaves. On the Sharpsburg Square and on the Terrace in Hagerstown, MD.

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15. Tolson's Chapel, Sharpsburg -

Founded in 1866, Tolson's Chapel was a Methodist Church built on land donated by the Craig family. John Tolson was the church's first minister. A Freedman's Bureau school operated in the church from 1868 to 1870. The cemetery has burials dating back to the 19th century. Two blocks south of Sharpsburg Square, on Harpers Ferry Road.

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16. Wheaton Park, Hagerstown -

This park named in honor of Jacob Wheaton, was opened in 1935 by the City of Hagerstown to serve the African American Community. The gazebo was the original band shell from the Hagerstown City Park. On Sumans Avenue off of North Avenue, Hagerstown, MD.

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17. William O. Wilson -

Served in the 9th Cavalry US Army. He received the Medal of Honor for his service at the Battle of Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890. He lived at 108 West North Street. Municipal Stadium, Memorial Boulevard, Hagerstown, MD.

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18. Willie Mays -

Baseball's great Willie Mays played his first professional game in Hagerstown in 1950. He was the first African American to play in Hagerstown's Municipal Stadium in a minor league game. He went on to have a Hall of Fame career playing with the New York and San Francisco Giants, and The New York Mets.



Elizabeth Hager Center
16 Public Square
Hagerstown, MD 21740



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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 pm2studios.