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### Take a self-guided journey through local African-American history

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African-American history in Frederick County runs almost as deep as that of European settlers, but until recently it's a history that has largely been ignored.

The Frederick Historic Sites Consortium has just published "African-American Heritage Sites in the City of Frederick and Frederick County, Md.," a brochure with a list of 20 sites that commemorate the contributions of blacks in the past two centuries.

Many of the sites in Frederick can be seen on a half-day walking tour, according to Elizabeth Shatto, coordinator of the Historic Sites Consortium, part of the Tourism Council of Frederick County. The remaining sites, scattered around Frederick County, could be visited in a half-day's drive, she said.

The walking tour includes the first library for black men, a one-time dance hall and all-around entertainment venue known as the Pythian Castle, the first hospital for African Americans, churches, cemeteries and a slave quarters.

The driving tour also includes several villages that materialized during Reconstruction, and the churches in those communities. Most of the county sites are located south of Frederick.

"We are getting more and more requests at the Tourism Center for multicultural tourism offerings," Ms. Shatto said.

"I think it's long overdue," said Joy Onley, a member of the African American Research Cultural Heritage, or AARCH, Committee. The committee began meeting in May 2000 to plan the brochure. Historian and writer Marie Anne Erickson, of Braddock Heights, compiled the brochure from information gathered by committee members.

"As long as I've been with the consortium there's been a desire to do more with African-American resources," Ms. Shatto said. "Maryland is one of the top destinations for African-American tourism. There's a rich history in the state. It was the home of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass."

The Frederick tour includes five stops on West All Saints Street, and one around the corner on Ice Street. All Saints Street was the commercial hub of African-American life in the early 20th century, Ms. Shatto said. "Walk down All Saints Street and there you can get the flavor of what it was like when Frederick was segregated," she said. "It was busy, it was bustling."

Frederick, like many other communities south of the Mason-Dixon line, segregated many of its public facilities before the 1950s, including schools, churches, stores and hospitals. Much of Frederick's black community was clustered in the area of All Saints, Ice and South streets.

One of the tour stops is the residence and office of Dr. Ulysses G. Bourne, Frederick's first black doctor, at 30 W. All Saints St. He practiced medicine in Frederick from 1903 to 1953. He was also the founder of the Maryland Negro Medical Society.

Also on the tour is the site of the building that once stood at 113 Ice St., which served as the Free Colored Men's Library until 1932. It started as the Young Men's Colored Reading Club of Frederick City in 1913.

The Pythian Castle, with elements of Italianate and Greek Revival building styles, is at 111-113 W. All Saints St. Banquets, dances, movies and live music all took place in the building. In the 1920s and '30s it was the site of meetings for many social and service organizations, including the Elks Club and the Masons.

Elements of Frederick's slaveholding past are evident in the slave quarters behind the historic Ross House and the Mathias House. The slave quarters, at 114 W. Second St., are located behind the Council Street mansions, and were built in 1817. The red brick buildings with lateral gabled roofs would have provided cramped housing for up to 20 house slaves.

Asbury United Methodist Church and the Quinn African Methodist Episcopalian Church were used as hospitals after the Battle of Antietam during the Civil War.

Other sites in Frederick County include churches and schools in villages where black Frederick Countians clustered. Bartonsville is the home of the St. James AME Church and the Jackson United Methodist Chapel, two African-American churches. It was also the home of the Bartonsville Cornet Band.

The musical heritage in Bartonsville runs deep. The community spawned musical progeny Lester Bowie. The legendary jazz trumpeter, who spent most of his adult life in Chicago, learned his art from many of his older relatives who played for the Bartonsville Cornet Band. Bowie, who died in 1999, is a member of the Down Beat Hall of Fame.

Another famous African-American who had an early start in Frederick was the turn-of-the-20th century expatriate artist Henry O'Tanner, whose father, Benjamin Tucker Campbell was the principal at the 19th-century freemen's school.

Catoctin Furnace and the Brunswick Railroad Museum both detail a segment of black history that is little known. Black slaves worked at the iron furnace, which was built in 1775. A museum at the Thurmont site details the contributions slaves made to the furnace. African Americans also worked on the railroad and the C&O Canal, and those contributions are outlined at the Brunswick Railroad Museum.

"To know the history here and to have it outlined in a brochure in organized form is something we have been working on for a long time," said Alfernia Dailey, an AARCH committee member. "It should be very meaningful to everyone."

"It seems like there has been nothing offered for black people coming into Frederick, while many other places often have (African-American) tours," Ms. Onley said. She is the author of "Memories," a memoir about growing up in segregated Frederick during the 1950s. Ms. Onley was one of the first black students at the formerly all-white Frederick High School in the early 1960s.

At a press conference touting the tour on Monday, the day Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday was celebrated, a collection of memorabilia accompanied literature on the tour. Along with photos, there was a booklet of by-laws for the African American Building and Improvement.

There was also a 1934 petition signed by a dozen African-American voters asking city leaders to consider lights for Lincoln High School, Frederick's high school for blacks, jobs for black men, a pool at Mullinix Park and better pavement in streets and alleys in the African-American neighborhoods. Signers included Dr. U.G. Bourne, William Fletcher, William Diggs, Samuel Stroud, James Dorsey and Robert Henderson.

There was also a three-ring notebook containing a history of Lincoln High School from 1920 to 1962, and a collection of badges from the various lodges that met regularly at the Pythian Castle. One of those organizations was the Emancipation Association.

"This is one half of a dream I've had for 20 years," said William O. Lee, a former Frederick alderman and the chairman of the AARCH museum feasibility study task force. "The other half is a museum of African-American history in Frederick." The committee, as the name states, is investigating that possibility.

"This is a culmination of meetings about how we can do what we like to do, which is share stories," said John Fieseler, director of the Tourism Council of Frederick County.

"Frederick is a really nice place to come," Ms. Onley said. "By having an (African-American) tour, we're saying we do have something to offer everyone."



Photo by Bill Green

Local historian William O. Lee Jr. and Alfernia Dailey, a historic preservation planner, are both members of the committee that developed the African-American Heritage Sites tour. They are shown in front of the residence and offices of Frederick's first black doctor, Ulysses G. Bourne, at the corner of Ice and West All Saints streets. Dr. Bourne practiced medicine in the building from 1903 until 1953.

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