

**Report to the Governor and the General Assembly  
FY20 Annual Report on the African American Heritage  
Preservation Program**

**THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE  
MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture is: to interpret, document, preserve, and promote Maryland's African American heritage; to provide technical assistance to institutions and groups with similar objectives; and to educate Maryland's citizens and visitors about the significance of the African American experience in Maryland and the nation.

The Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture is housed within the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
MISSION STATEMENT**

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the legacy of Maryland's past. Through research, conservation and education, the Maryland Historical Trust assists the people of Maryland in understanding their historical and cultural heritage.

MHT is a division of the Maryland Department of Planning.

## **Program Overview**

The Maryland General Assembly created the African American Heritage Preservation Program (AAHPP) during the 2010 session and reauthorized it, with modifications, as a permanent program during the 2015 session. The AAHPP encourages the identification and preservation of buildings, sites, and communities of historical and cultural importance to the African American experience in Maryland. The program is administered as a partnership of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (Commission), a unit of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), a division of the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning).

Nonprofit organizations, government entities, business entities, and individuals may apply for AAHPP grants. Nonprofit organizations are not required to provide a match for grant funds, but are encouraged to contribute to their project's success. All other grantees must provide a 1:1 match. Eligible activities include acquisition, construction, and pre-development associated with a construction project. Assisted properties must involve buildings, sites, or communities of historical or cultural importance to the African American experience in Maryland.

This report is submitted in accordance with the requirements of State Finance and Procurement Article § 5A-330(i), SB 601/Chapter 371, 2015.

## **Activity of the African American Heritage Preservation Program in FY20**

### ***FY20 Grant Cycle***

In March 2019, MHT provided instructions, AAHPP guidelines, and applications on the program webpage. MHT staff held grant workshops across the state in April and May 2019. Applicants submitted 43 eligible project proposals by the July 1, 2019 deadline, requesting more than \$3.5 million for projects in 11 counties and Baltimore City.

The Commission recommended 12 projects for funding, which were approved by the MHT Board of Trustees and the Secretary of Planning and announced in October 2019.

### ***FY20 Grant Awards***

**Asbury M.E. Church**, 18 South Higgins Street, Easton, Talbot County

**Sponsor:** Historic Easton, Incorporated

**Grant:** \$100,000 (Grantee Contribution: \$4,000)

This grant will fund repairs to the exterior walls of the Asbury Methodist Episcopal (also known as Asbury United Methodist Church), a stately brick church entered through an impressive bell tower with a large tracery window. Dedicated by Frederick Douglass in 1878, the church building served as a temporary high school for Black students in the 1930s, and is now a community center for a historically African American enclave known as The Hill.

**Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church**, 623 Pine Street, Cambridge, Dorchester County

**Sponsor:** Eastern Shore Network for Change, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

The grant project will complete roof, masonry, and window repairs on the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation was established ca. 1847 with the purchase of property along Pine Street. The existing 1903 building was the third to house the congregation and is the oldest African American church structure still standing in Cambridge.

**Robert W. Johnson Community Center - Swimming Pool**, 109 W North Avenue, Hagerstown, Washington County

**Sponsor:** Robert W. Johnson Community Center, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000 (Grantee Contribution: \$25,000)

The Robert W. Johnson Community Center is an important community space within Hagerstown's Jonathan Street Neighborhood. In 1959, the North Street Swimming Pool was constructed, and was the only pool in Hagerstown where African Americans could swim. The grant will fund repairs to the pool so that it can be put back into public use.

**Ellsworth Cemetery**, 810 Leidy Road, Westminster, Carroll County

**Sponsor:** Community Foundation of Carroll County, Incorporated

**Grant:** \$65,000

Grant funds will be used for the conservation of grave markers and to permanently denote the cemetery's unmarked burials. Six African American Union Army veterans established the Ellsworth Cemetery in 1876 to provide a burial place for the African American residents of Westminster.

**Emmanuel Episcopal Church – Tunnels**, 16 Washington Street, Cumberland, Allegany County

**Sponsor:** Emmanuel Parish of the Protestant Episcopal Church

**Grant:** \$100,000 (Grantee Contribution: \$47,000)

Emmanuel Episcopal Church was built atop the remains of Fort Cumberland's subterranean tunnels, which eventually came to be used as shelter by African Americans escaping slavery. The grant project will involve protection and improvement of the tunnels through ventilation, accessibility, and lighting improvements as well as stabilization of the hillside and its historic retaining wall.

**Fairmount Heights World War II Monument**, 701 59th Avenue, Fairmount Heights, Prince George's County

**Sponsor:** Town of Fairmount Heights Maryland

**Grant:** \$12,250 (Grantee Contribution: \$12,250)

Grant funds will be used to make accessibility and drainage improvements to the Fairmount Heights World War II Monument. The monument was built in 1946 to honor local citizens who served in the armed forces during World War II and serves as a gathering space for holiday celebrations.

**Fruitland Community Center**, 300 Morris Street, Fruitland, Wicomico County

**Sponsor:** Fruitland Community Center, Inc.

**Grant:** \$44,000

The grant project will involve window, roof, and interior wall repairs to the Fruitland Community Center, originally known as the Morris Street Colored School. Members of the local community built the school in 1912, and it was attended by African American children from throughout Wicomico County. The community center is still used for educational purposes, with summer and after school programs for children as well as an archive space.

**Liberty Grace Church of God - Bowling Alley**, 3400 Copley Road, Baltimore City

**Sponsor:** Liberty Grace Church of God, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

Liberty Grace Church of God (formerly First United Church of Jesus Christ) was built ca. 1925. In the church's basement is an early 20th century duckpin bowling alley, which will be restored to use with grant funds. The bowling alley will also be used to tell the story of the neighborhood's history and the relationship between the Civil Rights Movement and the neighborhood's African American, Jewish, and white residents.

**Warren Historic Site - Church and School**, 22625 Whites Ferry Road, Dickerson, Montgomery County

**Sponsor:** Warren Historic Site Committee, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000 (Grantee Contribution: \$23,675)

The Warren Historic Site is believed to be the last in Maryland to retain all three of the traditional buildings that comprised the nucleus for most post-Emancipation African American communities: the church, school, and lodge hall. The complex includes the 1886 Martinsburg Negro School, the 1903 Warren United Methodist Church, and the Loving and Charity Hall. Grant funds will be used for roof and foundation repairs for the church and school.

**McConchie One-Room School**, 8440 Fairground Road, La Plata, Charles County

**Sponsor:** Charles County Fair, Inc.

**Grant:** \$99,000 (Grantee Contribution: \$6,000)

The grant project will involve window repair, painting, and installation of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) at the McConchie School. The school was constructed ca. 1912 to serve African American children in central Charles County. When the county's Board of Education closed the school in 1952, it was remodeled into a residence, but was abandoned by 1980. The Charles County Fair purchased and relocated the building to the fairgrounds in 1990, and today it serves as a museum.

**Sotterley Plantation - Slave Cabin and Paths**, 44300 Sotterley Lane, Hollywood, St. Mary's County

**Sponsor:** Historic Sotterley Inc.

**Grant:** \$78,000

Sotterley Plantation dates to 1703, and is the only Tidewater plantation in Maryland that is open to the public. Sotterley has more than 20 original buildings spanning its 300-year evolution. The slave cabin dates to the 1830s, and is located at the base of the hill below the main house. This grant will fund floor repairs in the cabin and accessibility improvements in the path that leads to the cabin.

**Zion United Methodist Church**, 219 Old Denton Road, Federalsburg, Caroline County

**Sponsor:** The Zion United Methodist Church of Federalsburg, Maryland

**Grant:** \$100,000

The grant project will include accessibility and HVAC upgrades to the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded by an African American congregation in 1848, and was rebuilt several times. The current church building was constructed in 1931, and is located within the Federalsburg West National Register Historic District.

## ***FY21 Grant Cycle***

Applications, instructions, and program guidelines for FY21 funding were made available in April 2020. In response to COVID-19, grant workshops were held as a series of four online webinars in early May 2020.

Online applications were accepted through July 1, 2020. Once applications are received, MHT conducts a threshold review of the project proposals and forwards eligible applications to the Commission for review and ranking. The MHT Board of Trustees and the Secretary of Planning consider the recommendations for approval.

## ***Project Accomplishments & Updates***

### **Bazzel Church**, Cambridge, Dorchester County

**Sponsor:** The Friends of Stanley Institute, Inc.

Bazzel Church is a vernacular Gothic Revival-style church dating to the late 19th or early 20th century. Located in Bucktown, the church stands on the site of an earlier 1876 chapel where Harriet Tubman's family members reportedly worshipped. The church was in a state of significant deterioration when it was awarded the first-ever emergency grant under the African American Heritage Preservation Program. Emergency funds were used for urgent stabilization of the foundation, walls, and roof of the church. The property owner is raising additional funds to continue the rehabilitation of the building so that it can be used as a heritage education center.

### **McComas Institute**, Joppa, Harford County

**Sponsor:** Hosanna Community House, Incorporated

The McComas Institute was constructed in 1867 as one of three area schools built for the Freedmen's Bureau after the Civil War and is the only one still standing. The school is considered the most important landmark in the history of Black education in Harford County. The project sponsor, Hosanna Community House, uses the school for educational purposes. The grant project was recently completed, and included extensive repairs to the siding, doors, windows, and shutters, as well as painting of the entire building.

### **Mutual Memorial Cemetery**, Sandy Spring, Montgomery County

**Sponsor:** Mutual Memorial Cemetery Foundation of Sandy Spring, Inc.

The 19th century African American community of Sandy Spring, formed primarily by people freed by the Quakers prior to Emancipation, also attracted formerly enslaved individuals from other parts of the state. Beginning in 1869, the community began purchasing land parcel-by-parcel to establish the Cedar Mount Cemetery, now known as the Mutual Memorial Cemetery. Many of the cemetery's markers were handmade of unique materials, requiring professional repair and conservation. The first phase of the grant project produced a full cemetery conservation plan, including a map of all grave markers and identification of likely unmarked burials. The second phase resulted in the conservation of all grave markers requiring repair or resetting. The final phase, now underway, will help the Foundation fabricate and install permanent interpretive signage.