

# **Report to the Governor and the General Assembly 2022 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 (Commission) 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 Commission 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, MHT assists the people of Maryland in understanding their historical and cultural heritage. MHT is a division of the Maryland Department of Planning (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 Commission and MHT.

Nonprofit organizations, government entities, business entities, and individuals may apply for AAHPP grants. Nonprofit organizations are not required to provide matching funds but are encouraged to contribute to their project's success. All other grantees must provide a one-to-one 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 FY22

### FY22 Grant Cycle

In April 2021, MHT provided instructions, AAHPP guidelines, and applications on the program webpage. In response to COVID-19, MHT staff held virtual grant workshops in April 2021, with general overview webinars offered on April 1 and 7, and a proposal writing 101 webinar offered on April 14. Applicants submitted 39 eligible project proposals by the July 1, 2021 deadline, requesting more than \$3.3 million for projects in 13 counties and Baltimore City.

The Commission recommended 13 projects for funding, which were approved by the MHT Board of Trustees and the Secretary of Planning and announced in November 2021.

### FY22 Grant Awards

**Banneker-Douglass Museum (formerly Mt. Moriah AME Church),** 84 Franklin St, Annapolis

**Sponsor:** Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

Built in 1874 by a free Black congregation whose roots go back to 1799, Mt. Moriah AME Church is one of Maryland's earliest African American churches. Over its history, Mt. Moriah served as a house of worship, an educational facility, and a meeting place for social and cultural events. It is currently the home of the Banneker-Douglass Museum, a state-owned museum of African American history and culture. The grant project includes interior flooring repairs.

**Sphinx Club,** 2101-2111 Pennsylvania Ave, Baltimore City

**Sponsor:** Druid Heights Community Development Corporation

**Grant:** \$100,000

Opened in 1946 by Charlie Tilghman in an era of segregated public venues, the Sphinx Club was one of the nation's first minority-owned membership night clubs. The Sphinx Club became the center of social life along Pennsylvania Avenue, where African Americans could enjoy some of America's most famous musicians and entertainers, and it remained in operation until the 1990s. Grant funds will assist the Druid Heights Community Development Corporation in developing plans for stabilization, creating a conceptual design, and continuing stabilization efforts. Once complete, the Sphinx Club will be used as commercial space for artists and community education purposes.

**Sanaa Center,** 1925-1945 Pennsylvania Ave, Baltimore City

**Sponsor:** The Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts and Entertainment District, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

Located in the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District, the Sanaa Center will expand the adjacent Harris-Marcus Center, originally built in 1936, to include co-working and arts incubator spaces, as well as outdoor site improvements. The Sanaa Center will also help provide the creative community with resources and programming with workshops, residencies, masterclasses, coaching, and networking, enabling artists to realize their economic potential. The Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts and Entertainment District, Inc., will use grant funds for acquisition and pre-development of this project, which is intended to support Black artists, entertainers, and entrepreneurs.

**Bethel AME Church (Bethel Center)**, 413 G St, Mountain Lake Park, Garrett County

**Sponsor:** Engage Mountain Maryland, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

Built on a lot in Oakland purchased by trustees in 1895, Bethel AME Church served as a house of worship for a small Black community that lived in Garrett County. The property was foreclosed on in the 1930s and a local farmer purchased the structure, disassembled it in large pieces, and reassembled it on a nearby farm for use as a carriage house and blacksmith shop. The sale of the church coincided with an exodus of African Americans from Garrett County caused by racial terror and economic conditions. Grant funds will help Engage Mountain Maryland, Inc., relocate the small, gable-roofed, frame building to the town of Mountain Lake Park for use as a community gathering space.

**Havre de Grace Colored School Museum and Cultural Center**, 555 Alliance St, Havre de Grace, Harford County

**Sponsor:** Havre de Grace Colored School Museum and Cultural Center, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

In 1910, Harford County Public Schools constructed the original, two-room Havre de Grace Colored School to educate primary-school-age Black children. In 1930, a four-room brick addition expanded the building to create the first public high school for African American students in Harford County, who would no longer have to travel to Baltimore City, Cecil County, or Pennsylvania to receive a high school education. The property currently serves as a museum and cultural center. Grant funds will help alleviate water infiltration issues and repair the foundation and water-damaged interior.

**Franklin Cemetery (Tanyard Cemetery)**, North Side of Deale Beach Rd, Deale, Anne Arundel County

**Sponsor:** Franklin United Methodist Church

**Grant:** \$18,000

Located in the small community of Deale, the Tanyard-Franklin Cemetery is associated with the Franklin United Methodist Church, an African American gathering place in southern Anne Arundel County. Local residents as well as congregants of Franklin United Methodist Church are interred in the cemetery, with the oldest grave marker dating to 1842. Additionally, the cemetery holds the remains of Revolutionary War soldiers, including an African American drummer named Primus Thompson who fought in a skirmish at nearby Tracey's Landing. The grant will assist in the conservation and protection of the cemetery.

**Scotland AME Zion Church**, 10902 Seven Locks Rd, Potomac, Montgomery County

**Sponsor:** Scotland AME Zion Church

**Grant:** \$100,000

After the Civil War, freed men and women established a settlement known as "Snakes Den" along Seven Locks Road. In 1924, community members constructed the Scotland AME Zion Church. Throughout the 1960s, discriminatory financing practices left many in the community vulnerable to development pressure and condemnation, and the church served as the hub for a successful community resistance. Grant funds will assist with exterior repairs and other rehabilitation work.

**Hollingsworth House at Historic Elk Landing**, 598-556 Landing Ln, Elkton, Cecil County

**Sponsor:** The Historic Elk Landing Foundation, Inc.

**Grant:** \$48,000

Zebulon Hollingsworth built the original portion of Hollingsworth House at Elk Landing, adjacent to a once-navigable port at the confluence of two creeks, sometime after he acquired the property in 1735. When a fire gutted the house in 1848, the subsequent remodeling in Greek Revival style added an east wing, new roof, and front porch, as well as a kitchen with possible slave quarters above it. Grant funds will help with the creation of a partial Historic Structures Report that will investigate the building campaigns that came after the fire and assist in rehabilitating the space above the kitchen. Once complete, the Historic Elk Landing Foundation will have a new opportunity to interpret the African American experience at the site.

**St. Paul Church**, 11204 Academy St, Denton, Caroline County

**Sponsor:** St. Paul Church Historical, Revitalization, and Maintenance, Inc.

**Grant:** \$100,000

The St. Paul Church is one of the earliest African American churches in Caroline County, with burials in the associated cemetery dating back to at least the 1840s. The church building was purchased from the white Concord United Methodist Church, and it serves as a historical landmark for African American citizens in the county. FY22 funding will focus on the church's exterior. The church building will no longer be used for religious purposes, but as a community center to host events, as meeting and office space, and to promote awareness of local African American culture in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Carroll Family Farm**, 8765 Special Pl, Nanjemoy, Charles County

**Sponsor:** Working Out Wonders Foundation, Inc.

**Grant:** \$56,000

The Carroll Family Farm and Cemetery includes a vernacular frame farmhouse that was largely constructed in the late-nineteenth century by Lelita (Lottie) Diggs. Formerly enslaved, Diggs later became the matriarch of the influential Carroll family who helped found Mt. Hope Baptist Church, the site of the oldest Baptist African American congregation in Charles County. Significantly, this property has remained in the ownership of the same family from the late 19th century to the present. This grant will be the first step to transform this vacant property into a heritage and cultural site.

**Mt. Nebo AME Church**, 17214 Queen Anne Rd, Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County

**Sponsor:** Friends of Historic Mt. Nebo Preservation Corporation

**Grant:** \$67,000

Constructed in 1925 to replace an earlier building from 1877, the Mt. Nebo AME Church is the only surviving AME church in Prince George's County from the 20th century. Due to this rare status, in 2012 it was nominated by Preservation Maryland to their Endangered Maryland list. The current project will augment and continue the work underway to rehabilitate the building for use as a community center.

**St. James AME Church**, 4139 Gravel Hill Rd, Havre de Grace, Harford County

**Sponsor:** The St. James A.M.E. Church of Gravel Hill Road, Inc.

**Grant:** \$55,000

One of the oldest African American churches in Harford County, St. James AME Church traces its roots to 1849. In 1864, members of the Gravel Hill community constructed the gable-front frame church building, which also served as a school and social hall. Extensive renovations and additions were completed in the 1970s and 1980s. Adjacent to the church is St. James AME Cemetery, where several Civil War veterans are buried. Grant funds will assist with exterior repairs and other rehabilitation work, as well as an assessment of the cemetery.

**Bellevue Passage Museum**, To be moved to: Lot 70, parcel ID 02-114488, E Poplar St, Royal Oak, Talbot County

**Sponsor:** Mid-Shore Community Foundation, Inc.

**Grant:** \$56,000

In 1874, Dr. Walter T. Allender constructed and donated this building to the Baltimore County School Commissioners for use as an African American school, initially known as Colored School 2, District 11. The Union of Brothers and Sisters of Ford's Asbury Lodge No. 1, an African American benevolent society, held monthly meetings on the second floor of the school building, and in 1922 Baltimore County Public Schools donated it to the lodge. The grant project will fund repairs and accessibility improvements that allow the building to be used by the public again. Note: In the spring of 2021, additional funds became available and were allocated to fully fund this grant project at the originally requested amount of \$100,000.

### **FY23 Grant Cycle**

Applications, instructions, and program guidelines for FY23 funding were made available on April 1, 2022. In response to COVID-19, grant workshops were held as a series of two in-person and three online workshops across April, May, and June 2022.

Online applications were accepted through July 1, 2022. Once applications are received, MHT staff conduct a threshold review of the project proposals and forward 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***

### **Bowling Alley at Liberty Grace Church of God, 3400 Copley Rd, Baltimore City**

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

Built in 1925, Ashburton's Liberty Grace Church of God (formerly First United Church of Jesus Christ) included an unusual three-lane bowling alley in its basement. Although the bowling alley had closed in 1960, Senior Pastor Dr. Terris A. King recognized the significance of the facility to the Ashburton community after reading Antero Pietila's first book, "Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City," which details the struggle of African Americans and Jewish immigrants as they migrated to Maryland and settled throughout Baltimore. According to Pietila, the West Baltimore neighborhood of Ashburton became the first neighborhood in the nation to openly embrace integration between African Americans, Jews, and non-Jewish whites. When the bowling alley closed in 1960, it was during a time that white and Jewish people had begun to leave the neighborhood. The Liberty Grace Church of God applied to the AAHPP for funding in FY20 to rehabilitate the bowling alley. Now open for church events and by appointment for small groups, the bowling alley also serves as a museum that highlights the unique history and relationship between the African American and Jewish communities of Ashburton.

### **Mt. Gilboa AME Church, 2312 Westchester Ave, Catonsville, Baltimore County**

**Sponsor:** The Havre de Grace Colored School Museum and Cultural Center, Incorporated

The Mt. Gilboa AME Church was constructed in 1859 on a worship site that has served the Black community since the 18th century. In 1836, the Ellicott family formally deeded the property to the Black community as "an African Meeting House and School House," as long as the property continued to function for religious and educational purposes. Built by free Blacks, the church houses the oldest active African American congregation in Baltimore County. The two-story building was designed as a worship center on the upper level and, on the lower level, as a one-room school and social center from the late 1800's to early 1900's. Free Black scientist, inventor, and mathematician Benjamin Banneker worshiped and attended school there. In FY18, AAHPP grant funds helped restore the windows and the portico. The building will continue to be used for religious purposes, as a space to educate and memorialize a rich African American legacy which includes Benjamin Banneker, and as a meeting place for community organizations.



