African American Heritage Preservation Program
2023 Annual Report

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Report to the Governor and the General Assembly

2023 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 (the 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.

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. Matching funds are no longer required for this grant. Eligible activities include acquisition, rehabilitation, restoration, new construction, and pre-development associated with a construction project.

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 FY 2023

FY 2023 Grant Cycle

In April 2022, MHT provided grant guidelines and application materials on the program webpage and at in-person workshops. MHT and Commission staff held two in-person grant workshops in April 2022 in Crownsville and Hagerstown. Three virtual Question and Answer sessions were held in May and June 2022. A recorded General Overview webinar was made available on MHT's YouTube Channel. Applicants submitted 48 eligible applications by the July 1, 2022, deadline, requesting more than $4.2 million for projects in 15 counties and the City of Baltimore.

The Commission recommended 11 projects for funding, which were approved by the MHT Board of Trustees and the Secretary of Planning and announced in February 2022.

FY 2023 Grant Awards

Mount Auburn Cemetery, Etting St., Baltimore City

Sponsor: Mount Auburn Cemetery Company

Grant: $100,000

Established in 1872 as the "City of the Dead for Colored People," Mount Auburn Cemetery stands as one of Baltimore's few African American-owned cemeteries and reflects burial customs from the late 19th century onward. Mount Auburn Cemetery Company will use grant funding to restore decorative fences, enhance security features, and resurface internal roads.

Hoppy Adams House, Old Solomons Island Rd., Annapolis, Anne Arundel County

Sponsor: Charles W. "Hoppy" Adams Jr. Foundation, Inc.

Grant: $100,000

Noted WANN Annapolis radio broadcaster Charles "Hoppy" Adams Jr. united Black and white listeners through soul and R&B music. His 1964 home, now dilapidated after his 2005 passing, will be restored by the Charles W. "Hoppy" Adams Jr. Foundation, Inc., converting it into a museum and event space, celebrating Adams's life and R&B's unifying impact amid division.

Mount Calvary United Methodist Church, Jones Station Rd., Arnold, Anne Arundel County

Sponsor: Mount Calvary United Methodist Church, Inc.

Grant: $86,000

Mount Calvary United Methodist Church began gathering on this site between 1832 and 1842, making it the oldest African American congregation in Arnold. Grant funds will support the replacement of the 40-year-old roof and repair the deteriorating handicap ramp that is currently causing moisture intrusion for the church, as well as add a second ramp.

Eastport Elementary School, 3rd St., Annapolis, Anne Arundel County

Sponsor: Seafarers Yacht Club, Inc.

Grant: $100,000

Built in 1918 for African American students, Eastport Elementary School closed when Anne Arundel County integrated post-Brown v. Board. It was acquired in 1967 by Seafarers Yacht Club, an organization that counters racial barriers faced by Black boaters. Exterior repairs and security enhancements funded by this grant will preserve the building's historic significance as a symbol of resilience.

Old Wallville School, Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick, Calvert County

Sponsor: Friends of the Old Wallville School, Inc.

Grant: $27,000

The Old Wallville School is a 19th-century one-room wooden schoolhouse where teachers educated Black students from 1880-1934. Friends of the Old Wallville School, Inc. restored the building to its 1930s appearance to serve as a popular heritage tourism attraction. This grant will allow them to replace signage and make exterior repairs.

Parren J Mitchell House and Cultural Center, Lafayette Square, Baltimore City

Sponsor: Upton Planning Committee, Inc.

Grant: $100,000

Built in 1880, this rowhouse housed Congressman Parren Mitchell in his later years. Restoration by Upton Planning Committee, Inc., will revive it as the Parren Mitchell Center, hosting events and retreats. Grant funds will restore masonry and windows, in addition to enhancing accessibility to reinvigorate its political and social role for the community and region.

Boyds Negro School, White Ground Rd., Boyds, Montgomery County

Sponsor: Boyds Clarksburg Historical Society, Inc.

Grant: $50,000

Built in 1895, Boyds Negro School is Montgomery County's only remaining one-room schoolhouse for African American children that is regularly open to the public. Boyds Clarksburg Historical Society, Inc., will focus on engineering and site work to protect the building and grounds from flooding. It will also add a handicap ramp to make the building ADA accessible.

Richard Potter House, N. 4th St., Denton, Caroline County

Sponsor: Fiber Arts Center of the Eastern Shore, Inc.

Grant: $50,000

In 1866, Richard Potter penned “The Narrative of the Experience, Adventures and Escape of Richard Potter,” detailing his kidnapping from Greensboro, Maryland, enslavement in Delaware, and liberation and return to Caroline County. The Richard Potter House (c. 1810) is part of the Network to Freedom, and the Fiber Arts Center of the Eastern Shore will restore the first floor interior to its 1855 appearance. It will function as a museum and classroom, preserving Potter's legacy.

Mt. Zion Memorial Church, Polks Rd., Princess Anne, Somerset County

Sponsor: Somerset County Historical Trust, Inc.

Grant: $86,000

Mt. Zion Memorial Church, a rare late-19th-century African American church in Somerset County, retains architectural significance and represents the lasting impact of Methodism on the African American community in Somerset County. Its intact interior, highlighted by an early-20th-century beadboard ceiling, faces damage from a leaking roof. The grant will allow Somerset County Historical Trust, Inc., to address the severe water damage.

New Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, Germantown Rd., Berlin, Worcester County

Sponsor: New Bethel United Methodist Church, Inc.

Grant: $67,000

Founded in 1855, New Bethel is the oldest African American Methodist congregation in Worcester County. Known as the godfather of gospel music, Rev. Charles Albert Tindley was a member of the church in boyhood and attended when he visited from Philadelphia as an adult. The grant project will fund roof replacement and carpentry repairs.

Ridgley Methodist Church and Cemetery, Central Ave., Landover, Prince George’s County

Sponsor: Mildred Ridgley Gray Charitable Trust, Inc.

Grant: $50,000

Ridgley Methodist Episcopal Church (c.1921) boasts original features, including pointed-framed stained-glass windows. Relocated by the Maryland Department of Transportation-State Highway Administration (MDOT-SHA) in 1990, the church cemetery (c.1892) features hand-carved gravestones. Mildred Ridgley Gray Charitable Trust, Inc., will use the grant funds to preserve this historic site through exterior church repairs and cemetery conservation.

St. James African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church, Jefferson Ave., Towson, Baltimore County

Sponsor: Saint James African Union Methodist Protestant Church, Inc.

Grant: $30,000

Constructed in 1881 on the first land with documented African American owners in Towson, St. James African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church expanded in 1906. By making structural repairs and replacing the roof and the chimney, this project sustains the historic two-story wood-frame structure's legacy.

Buffalo Soldier Living History Site, South Upper Ferry Rd., Eden, Wicomico County

Sponsor: Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc.

Grant: $74,000

The "Buffalo Soldier House," belonging to Thomas Polk, Sr., of the 9th Cavalry Regiment, was constructed in the 1920s and rebuilt in 1962-63 after fire damage. Pre-development plans to assess structural integrity and renovations will help the Preservation Trust of Wicomico, Inc. honor Polk's legacy by transforming the home into a visitors' center and exhibit space called the Buffalo Soldier Living History Site.

Adams Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery, Bayard Rd., Lothian, Anne Arundel County

Sponsor: Adams U.M. Church

Grant: $80,000

The Adams Methodist Episcopal Church site contains two church buildings: the original 1883 church, a simple weatherboard-sided late-Victorian structure; and a more modern brick church, completed in 1968. Work by the Adams U.M. Church for this project will focus on the brick church and on the graveyard.

FY 2024 Grant Cycle

In April 2023, MHT provided grant guidelines and application materials on the program webpage and at the in-person workshop. MHT and Commission staff held one in-person grant workshop in April 2023 at Crownsville, one virtual General Overview webinar in April 2023, and two virtual Question and Answer sessions in May and June, 2023. A recorded General Overview webinar was made available on MHT's YouTube Channel. Applicants submitted 107 eligible applications by the July 17, 2023, deadline, requesting more than $20 million for projects in 21 counties and Baltimore City.

For the FY 2024 grant round the program funding was increased to $5 million, with an increase in the amount of individual grant awards from $100,000 to $250,000. Online applications were accepted through July 17, 2023. MHT staff conducted a threshold review of the applications and forwarded eligible applications to the Commission for review and ranking. The MHT Board of Trustees and the Secretary of Planning will consider the recommendations for approval.

Project Accomplishments & Updates

Williams Schoolhouse, Fort Frederick State Park (Washington County)

Sponsor: Department of Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service

The Williams Schoolhouse is one of the last remaining African American schoolhouses in Washington County. Purchased in 1857 by African American farmer Nathan Williams, Fort Frederick was developed into a productive farm where members of his family established a school for African American children in the 1870s. Washington County eventually purchased the land from the family, and in 1899 the county constructed School #11, now known as Williams Schoolhouse. The county sold the schoolhouse in 1914, at which point the new owners converted it into a private residence. In partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the FY19 $100,000 grant award sponsored the selective demolition, site work, and exterior rehabilitation that returned the schoolhouse to its 1899-1914 appearance. This work included repairing the historic wood windows, and installing a period-appropriate wood door and board and batten siding. Future plans include interior rehabilitation. When finished, the schoolhouse will be available to the public to tour and learn about its history.