



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING
Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
MAY 17, 2021

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Grant Awarded to Local Historical Societies and County to Survey African-American Cultural Resources in Northern Frederick County

Virtual Public Forum Scheduled for May 24

FREDERICK, Md. – The Frederick County Division of Planning and Permitting, together with the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society Inc. and the African American Resources Cultural and Heritage (AARCH) Society of Frederick County recently received a \$50,000 grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. The grant will support a project entitled “Recovering Identity: Northern Frederick County Cultural Resource Survey,” which will identify and record existing structures associated with African Americans in northern Frederick County.

African Americans have long been left out of historical narratives and their contributions to the development and cultural heritage of the County, State and Nation often unrecognized. This grant-funded project is the beginning of a county-wide effort to identify and survey architectural resources and create an overall historic context statement associated with African Americans throughout Frederick County.

“It is fundamentally important that we understand our history and how we got to where we are today to inform our actions to make real progress for the future,” Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner said last month when she announced funding for AARCH in her proposed budget. She cited the importance of AARCH’s work “to tell the story of life for African Americans in Frederick County over the course of history.”

AARCH president David Key stated, “AARCH is pleased to join in this effort to discover more about the African American experiences in the northern part of the county. This is an opportunity to better educate ourselves and to provide a more in-depth narrative to the many untold stories of the past.”

The grant will fund a comprehensive architectural survey of previously undocumented buildings and landscapes associated with African Americans in the area north of Lewistown, east of the Washington County border, west of the Monocacy River, and south of the Pennsylvania border. This region has never been studied for African American resources.

Outside of Catoctin Furnace, in which at least 271 enslaved and freed African Americans lived and worked between 1776 and the 1840s, little is known about the African American presence in the north county. The goal of the project is to recover information about African Americans who lived and worked in the northern

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sectors of Frederick County and to identify building types that have ties to the African American community.

Subsequent years will find this methodology, combining public and private research and planning expertise, replicated by the Division of Planning and Permitted, AARCH, and potentially other historical societies to complete comprehensive survey work and historic context statements regarding African Americans throughout Frederick County.

The project will begin with a public forum on Monday, May 24 at 7 pm, sponsored by Frederick County on their public meetings platform (virtual) to engage the community. To watch the meeting live, go to www.frederickcountymd.gov/1225/FCG-TV or watch on Channels 19 or 1085. To listen to the meeting and participate by leaving a recorded message or providing live comments, members of the public should call 855-925-2801 and enter meeting code 8980. This will be an opportunity to share stories and provide histories of African Americans in the north county.

Catoctin Furnace Historical Society President Chris Gardiner stated, “CFHS is thrilled to be a partner in recovering the rich but overlooked history of African Americans in northern Frederick County. This is the first step in righting the centuries long wrong.”

The project meets the goals of Livable Frederick to document Frederick County’s heritage and will assist the County with planning and preservation efforts. It is hoped that this project will also stimulate discussions among the community and provide additional discoveries regarding the African American experience in this part of the county. Subsequent forums will focus on African American communities in Lewistown, Emmitsburg, Catoctin Furnace, Creagerstown, and other heretofore unidentified communities of African Americans in the north county.

About Catoctin Furnace Historical Society

Since 1973, the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society Inc. has studied, commemorated, and preserved the unique and rich history of this late 18th through 19th-century industrial village through the preservation of architecture, art and artistry, cultural traditions, cultural landscape, lifeways, and foodways of the diverse workers. A commitment to researching and interpreting the dark heritage of the enslaved at Catoctin is a primary focus, as is knowledge transfer as reparative action. Further, improvement of the lives of village residents through economic and social benefits emanating from the historic site and through visitation to events is a goal of the society. This, in turn, will make the historic village an attractive place to live, work, and care about. Finally, it is our intent that annual events such as Traditional Village Christmas and The Maryland Iron Festival will enrich the lives of those that visit and participate. The Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.'s mission is to stimulate jobs, tax revenue, and visitor spending while enriching lives and reminding all of the workers who built this nation.

About AARCH

AARCH is committed to preserving and sharing the rich history and culture of African Americans in Frederick County and continues to work toward opening the Heritage Center to enhance those efforts. AARCH’s members work to identify, collect, and exhibit artifacts that tell the unique story of African Americans from our area, and travel throughout the region to share first-person and historical accounts. AARCH’s work facilitates an understanding of how the past shapes and enriches the present and the future of all citizens.

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