Historic Churches

~ Mt. Calvary United Methodist Church ~

37345 New Market Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
301-884-7320

The first recording of Mt. Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church was in 1880. The current church was built in 1912. Camp meetings and tent revivals were held here. In 1968, the church became Mt. Calvary United Methodist Church when the new United Methodist Church was formed in America.

~ Zion United Methodist Church ~

21291 Three Notch Road, Lexington Park, MD 20653
301-863-5161

Zion grew from Zion's Fair Methodist Episcopal Chapel, originally located on Hermanville Road. The current church was constructed on this site in 1963 and was renovated and expanded in 2001. The church cemetery is located at the site of the former Zion Fair Chapel.

~ St. Peter Claver Church & McKenna Hall Museum ~

16922 St Peter Claver Church Road
St. Inigoes, MD 20684 • 301-872-5460

When the original 1918 church burned in 1934, Philip Frohman, architect of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., designed the new church. It is the only predominantly African-American Catholic parish in the county. St. Peter Claver School was founded in 1916. The school burned in 1928, was rebuilt, and remained open until 1965. The building, renamed McKenna Hall, serves as a museum. Tours by appointment.

~ Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church ~

37659 Ebenezer Way, Mechanicsville, MD 20659
301-884-8879

This, the only A.M.E. congregation in St. Mary's County, is thought to be the oldest A.M.E. church in Southern Maryland. The congregation appears to have existed in the 1860s. A deteriorating log chapel used as a church and school into the 1940s, still stands. The present church was constructed in 1961.

~ Bethesda United Methodist Church ~

19309 St. George's Church Road, Valley Lee, MD 20692
301-994-9416

Founded as Bethesda Methodist Episcopal Church about 1830 by a white congregation, it passed into African American use and is the oldest African-American Methodist church in southern St. Mary's County. The church was erected on the site in 1870 and was replaced in 1911.

~ Mt. Zion United Methodist Church ~

17472 Mt. Zion Church Road, St. Inigoes, MD 20684
301-872-4006

According to church lore, Mt. Zion had its beginning in the late 18th century when a slave named Issac Braxton became a Methodist and preached to his fellow slaves. In 1872, the church was constructed on an acre of donated land. It later burned and was replaced by the present church in 1908.

~ Galilee United Methodist Church Cemetery ~

Route 247 in Oakville, Mechanicsville, MD 20659

The church was founded by U.S. Colored Troops soldiers and built in the 1880s on land donated by a white member of Mt. Zion Church. After 1945, membership gradually declined and Galilee was closed and in 1983, the church was officially burned in a "service of triumph." U.S. Colored Troops soldiers are buried in the cemetery at the site.

~ St. Mark Union American Methodist Episcopal Church ~

45685 Happyland Road, Valley Lee, MD 20692
301-994-2090

In 1891, thirty members of Bethesda Church formed an independent church built on land across the road. Originally affiliated with the Baltimore Association of Independent Methodist Churches, later it united with the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church. A new church was built in 1968.

~ St. Luke United Methodist Church ~

12880 Point Lookout Road, Ridge, MD 20680
301-872-5142

Founded by U.S. Colored Troops veterans, church members met in their homes until 1886, when they purchased the old St. Mary's Chapel in Ridge. The original church burned in 1887 and a new church was built. First known as the Lowentown congregation, they became St. Luke Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1968, they became part of the United Methodist Church.

~ First Missionary Baptist Church ~

47359 Lincoln Avenue, Lexington Park, MD 20653
301-863-8388

In 1945, a growing home-based prayer band moved its worship services to the USO Building in Carver Heights. They then purchased an acre of land and in 1948, built the First Baptist Church of Carver Heights. In 1990, the church was given its current name. The congregation later moved to to a new church building on Pegg Road.

~ St. Luke Union American Methodist Episcopal Church ~

45000 St. Lukes Court, Piney Point, MD 20674
301-994-1711

St. Luke, the sister church of St. Mark Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, was founded in 1852. It evolved from a religious group organized in 1813 as the First Independent Church of Negroes, later the Union Church of Africans.

~ St. Jerome's Hall ~

17765 Three Notch Road, Dameron, MD 20628
301-872-4566

The Hall was built in 1885 by the local chapter of the Knights of St. Jerome, the oldest Catholic fraternal organization in the Archdiocese of Washington. In the late 1880s, the hall served as the first parochial school for black children in St. Mary's County. View from street. Tours by advance arrangement.

St. Mary's County
Department of Economic Development
Division of Tourism
23115 Leonard Hall Drive | P.O. Box 653
Leonardtown, MD 20650
1-800-327-9023

Facebook.com/SMCTourism @TravelSMC youtube.com/SMCTourism

Listings are based on information provided to the St. Mary's County Division of Tourism and reasonable efforts have been made to insure accuracy. Please call ahead to individual locations to confirm details when planning your visit.

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Cover photo: The United States Colored Troops Memorial Monument at John G. Lancaster Park by Conni Leigh James

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St. Mary's County, Maryland

African American

Historic Sites

Sites celebrating African American heritage and history, just south of the nation's capital!

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Historic Sites

~ St. Clements Island Museum ~

38370 Point Breeze Road, Colton's Point MD 20626
301-769-2222 • www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums

Mathias de Sousa, cited as the first individual of African descent to settle in Maryland, was part of the first group of colonists who landed at St. Clements Island in1634. The little that is known about de Sousa is included in the museum's exhibits, which relate the story of Maryland's founding. Hours vary by season. Call ahead before visiting. Water taxi to the island June through September.

~ Historic St. Mary's City ~

Route 5/Rosecroft Road, St. Mary's City, MD 20686
240-895-4990 • www.hsmcdigshistory.org

Mathias de Sousa, an indentured servant of African descent, was there at the founding of St. Mary's City. After serving his indenture, he became a merchant and participated in the Maryland Assembly. A plaque memorializing de Sousa and information on early Colonial African-American life may be found at this outdoor living history and archaeological museum on the site of the original colony.

~ Sotterley Plantation ~

44300 Sotterley Lane, Hollywood MD 20636
301-373-2280 • www.sotterley.org

Sotterley's 1830s slave cabin exemplifies typical slave housing in the Tidewater region. Visitors can learn about the lives of those who worked the land at Sotterley, both slave and free, by visiting the Land, Lives, and Labor exhibit, the Middle Passage marker, and Slave Cabin exhibit. Tours focusing on African-American life at Sotterley by advance arrangement. *National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* site.

~ Old Jail Museum and Visitor Center ~

Next to the Courthouse, Leonardtown MD 20650
301-475-2467 • www.stmaryshistory.org

The Old Jail was built in 1858 and was in use through the early 1940s. Runaway slaves were often held in public jails until their owners retrieved them or they were sold in compensation for the cost of care. Today the building houses exhibits of the St. Mary's County Historical Society and serves as a county visitor information center. Special tours and additional hours by advance arrangement. *National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* site.

~ Point Lookout State Park ~

11175 Point Lookout Road, Scotland MD 20687
301-872-5688 • http://dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/southern/pointlookout.aspx

During the Civil War Era, Point Lookout was first a hospital for Union soldiers and later a prison camp. The hospital staff helped with the escape of several Maryland slaves; United States Colored Troops served as guards at the prison camp. In a "contraband camp" nearby, runaway slaves took refuge under the protection of federal authorities. Today, this state park includes a Civil War museum. *National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* site.

~ United States Colored Troops Memorial ~

John G. Lancaster Park
21550 Willows Road, Lexington Park, MD 20653

The **United States Colored Troops Memorial Monument** honors the United States Colored Troops and all Union soldiers and sailors from St. Mary's County who fought during the Civil War. The "African American History Pathway" leads to the nearby **United States Colored Troops Memorial Interpretive Center** and is lined with signs that provide local history from 1865 through 1942. The center houses exhibits and is open for special events including the Annual Juneteenth Celebration.

~ Drayden African-American Schoolhouse ~

18287 Cherryfield Road, Drayden, MD 20630
301-769-2222 • www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums

One of the best preserved African-American schoolhouses in the country, this one-room schoolhouse still occupies its original site and has not been significantly altered. Built in 1890, it was in use until 1944. The structure marks the era of segregated schools in St. Mary's County. Interpretive panels offer self-guided tours. Group tours by advance arrangement.

~ Cardinal Gibbons Park and Monument ~

16922 St. Peter Claver Church Road, St. Inigoes, MD 20684
(301) 475-4200 ext. 1800
www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/facilities

Established in 1924 by Jesuit Father John LaFarge as a vocational institute under the auspices of the Baltimore Diocese, and operated by educators from the Tuskegee Institute, the coeducational school for African-American students operated until 1967. It was named for Archbishop James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore who donated money for purchase of the land. A monument marks the site where the institute once stood. Hours: dawn to dusk.

~ George Washington Carver School ~

Now the Carver Recreation Center
47382 Lincoln Avenue, Lexington Park, MD 20653

The George Washington Carver School, built in 1958, and its predecessor, Jarboesville School, built in 1925, served African-Americans students in southern St. Mary's County. Carver graduated its last high school class in 1966, when county schools were desegregated. It became an integrated elementary school and then a community center. Next to the school is the old United Service Organization Hall which served as the community's social center. View from the street only.

~ African-American Monument ~

21744 South Coral Drive, Lexington Park, MD 20653
www.ucaconline.org

The African-American Monument is located on the grounds of Freedom Park. It was dedicated on July 29, 2000 and recognizes African Americans and African-American organizations that have made significant contributions to St. Mary's County.

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

This celebration of African-American heritage, commemorating the full emancipation of slaves in the U.S., takes place every year on the Saturday closest to the date of June 19. The event features activities, demonstrations and performances, and an evening jazz concert. It is held at John G. Lancaster Park in Lexington Park. For more information visit www.ucaconline.org.

RESOURCES

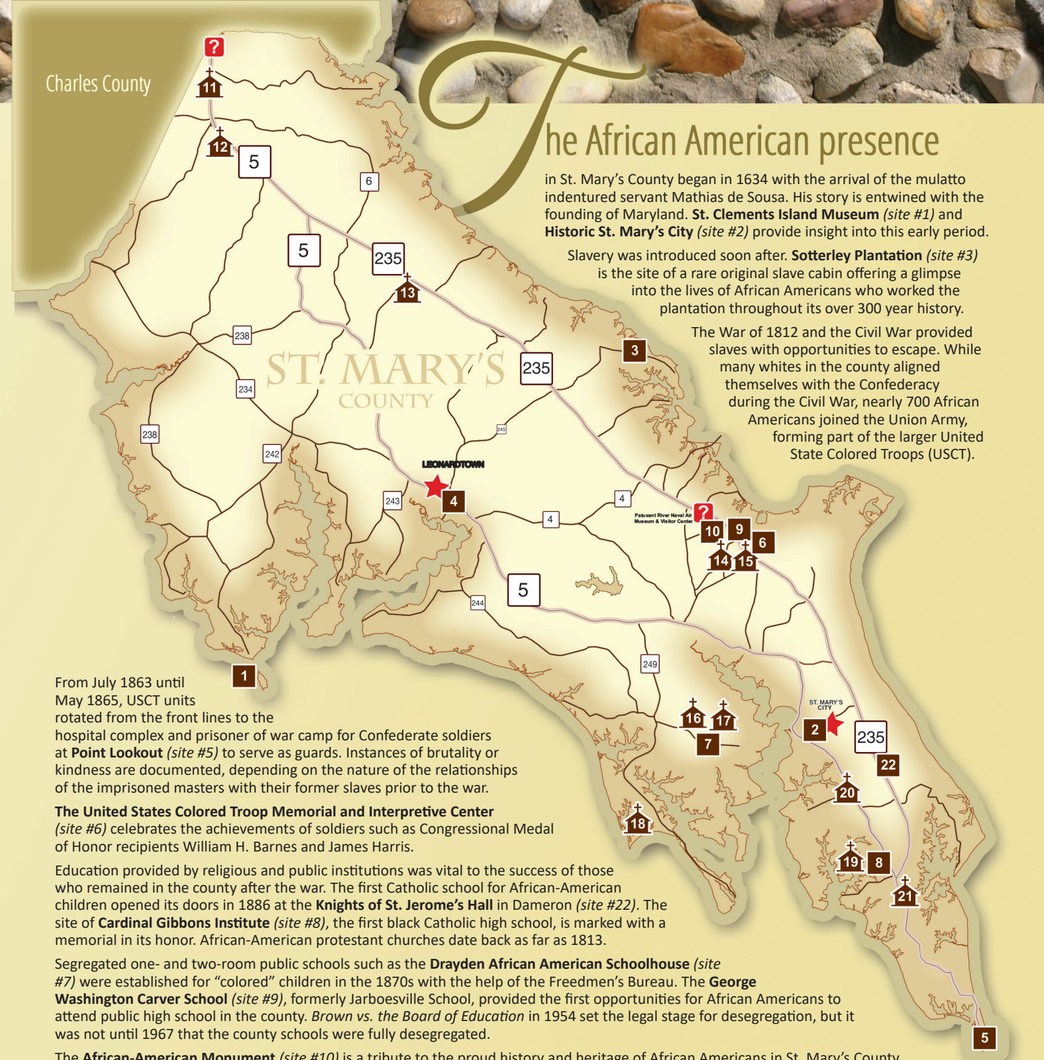
THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND STUDIES CENTER
College of Southern Maryland, La Plata Campus
301-934-7606 • www.csmd.edu/community
Archival repository and research center that seeks to collect, preserve, and provide access to materials that document the history and culture of Southern Maryland.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND
240-895-4264 • www.smcm.edu/library
The Maryland Collection, genealogical records and the SlackWater Journal which focuses on aspects of life in Southern Maryland.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
301-475-2467 • www.stmaryshistory.org
County, vital, census and military records, and other items pertaining to African Americans who lived in St. Mary's County.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY LIBRARIES
301-475-2846 • www.stmalib.org
A variety of materials, from local newspapers to books, which portrays the African-American experience in Southern Maryland. See the Maryland Collection at the Leonardtown and Lexington Park Libraries.

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
www.ucaconline.org
Website features oral histories, plus information on events and UCAC exhibits and publications.



The African American presence

in St. Mary's County began in 1634 with the arrival of the mulatto indentured servant Mathias de Sousa. His story is entwined with the founding of Maryland. **St. Clements Island Museum** *(site #1)* and **Historic St. Mary's City** *(site #2)* provide insight into this early period.

Slavery was introduced soon after. **Sotterley Plantation** *(site #3)* is the site of a rare original slave cabin offering a glimpse into the lives of African Americans who worked the plantation throughout its over 300 year history.

The War of 1812 and the Civil War provided slaves with opportunities to escape. While many whites in the county aligned themselves with the Confederacy during the Civil War, nearly 700 African Americans joined the Union Army, forming part of the larger United State Colored Troops (USCT).

From July 1863 until May 1865, USCT units rotated from the front lines to the hospital complex and prisoner of war camp for Confederate soldiers at **Point Lookout** *(site #5)* to serve as guards. Instances of brutality or kindness are documented, depending on the nature of the relationships of the imprisoned masters with their former slaves prior to the war.

The United States Colored Troop Memorial and Interpretive Center *(site #6)* celebrates the achievements of soldiers such as Congressional Medal of Honor recipients William H. Barnes and James Harris.

Education provided by religious and public institutions was vital to the success of those who remained in the county after the war. The first Catholic school for African-American children opened its doors in 1886 at the **Knights of St. Jerome's Hall** in Dameron *(site #22)*. The site of **Cardinal Gibbons Institute** *(site #8)*, the first black Catholic high school, is marked with a memorial in its honor. African-American protestant churches date back as far as 1813.

Segregated one- and two-room public schools such as the **Drayden African American Schoolhouse** *(site #7)* were established for "colored" children in the 1870s with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau. The **George Washington Carver School** *(site #9)*, formerly Jarboesville School, provided the first opportunities for African Americans to attend public high school in the county. *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in 1954 set the legal stage for desegregation, but it was not until 1967 that the county schools were fully desegregated.

The **African-American Monument** *(site #10)* is a tribute to the proud history and heritage of African Americans in St. Mary's County.