Breaking News: DNA Results from the Slaves of Catoctin Furnace

AARCH’s second annual African American Family History Fair took place on Feb. 10, 2018 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) Stake Center. Exhibits at the Fair featured artifacts, historical documents, and displays of 19 families, churches and social organizations from the community. Attendance at this year’s event topped that of last year and generated a real buzz of excitement as presenters told their stories and answered questions. The staff of the Family History Center was busy all morning helping individuals search for information about their ancestors.

A highlight of the Fair was the keynote address, “Lives Wrought in the Furnace: Archeological Investigations of the Labor Force at Catoctin Furnace,” given by Elizabeth Comer, Secretary of the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society. Listeners learned that the Catoctin Furnace slave graveyard, discovered when Route 15 was widened in 1977, is the resting place of an estimated one hundred slaves, who labored at the furnace and on its associated farms. Ms. Comer surprised and excited listeners when she revealed preliminary results from a DNA study of the remains of 12 of the 35 individuals whose remains were exhumed prior to construction. The ongoing scientific analysis is a collaborative effort of the Smithsonian Institution and the laboratories of Harvard University. To date, no descendants of the Catoctin Furnace slaves have been identified. It is hoped that these DNA results, when combined with data from a proposed DNA study of present-day county residents, will begin to answer questions about what happened to the enslaved peoples of Catoctin Furnace. AARCH, in collaboration with the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, will be seeking grant funds to support this new DNA study.

Mark your calendars. AARCH has already reserved the LDS Stake Center for the third annual AARCH History Fair to be held on February 9, 2019! - Rick Smith
Greetings everyone,

February was an extremely full month for us with numerous displays, presentations and the annual History Fair.

AARCH has been very busy developing strategies to maximize our efforts to engage the community in celebrating and recognizing the importance of African American history. Throughout this process, we have developed a great number of lasting friendships and partnerships that have created a path for open and honest conversations about our history.

We intend to expand our efforts speak with additional businesses, churches, and organizations and invite them to join our overall initiatives. If you know of anyone who would like us to speak with them, please feel free to contact us.

Presently, we are talking with the Hood College history department who have expressed an interest in helping us to sort and categorize our collection. This is very exciting for us and will allow us to work on additional areas.

I know you'll find the articles in this newsletter very interesting, and I would like to thank those who work diligently to put it together. I would also like to thank our partners and supporters for their continued efforts.

Thanks again,
David Key

On February 24th, Gerald Palm and John Kippen gave a presentation at Trinity United Methodist Church for the annual Black History Month Program. Their topic was The History of African American Sports and Athletes In Frederick County. They used excellent visual exhibits and slides to tell the story of Frederick blacks in organized sports, beginning from 1927. Gerald’s knowledge of local history, and his personal experiences and enthusiasm, sparked a lot of interest and questions from program attendees, many of whom were unfamiliar with this rich history. We plan to further develop this topic further for future presentations. - John Kippen

Note: AARCH will display the visuals developed for this presentation at the annual "Museums at the Mall" sponsored by the Frederick Historic Sites Consortium on March 24, 2018. Stop by and visit!

Debbie Thompson Brown is the ONLY Frederick native to compete for the US in the Olympic Games. She ran in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo at age 17! (Debbie currently serves on the AARCH Board of Directors)
In the last issue of the AARCH CONNECTION, we encouraged our readers to consider making a bequest to AARCH. What is a legacy gift or bequest? Simply explained, it is a planned donation to an organization, given through a will or other designation. A planned gift can be established in someone’s honor: a relative, dear friend or someone who holds a special place in the donor’s heart. A bequest is a decision made during the personal financial planning process, as one considers charitable wishes and values. A legacy gift provides much-needed support for non-profits such as AARCH, and allows donors to make gifts larger than what they would be able to make while living. No gift is too small; it depends entirely on personal circumstances and financial goals.

As recently as a month ago, AARCH received a significant collection from one of its largest and best-known donors. Shortly after his death, items from Walter (Petey) Sewell’s barber shop were delivered by Sewell’s son, Walter, Jr. Destined for AARCH’s planned heritage center, the collection includes his barber chair, a child’s red booster seat; a two-level newspaper stand that once held issues of the now-defunct County Globe newspaper; and numerous news articles, photos, certificates, etc., that covered the walls of Sewell’s shop. This significant donation is likely to be one of the first focal exhibits in our heritage center. It is an excellent example of a lasting gift to AARCH: before he died Sewell entrusted his son with his wishes, ensuring his request would be respected and followed.

Anytime is a good time to take stock of finances and the historical items you treasure, to make sure your gifts reside in a place where they will be appreciated after you are no longer able to enjoy them. The next AARCH CONNECTION will provide examples of other types of bequests; future issues will outline simple steps to make a legacy bequest happen. - Beverly Ford

**TRIBUTE TO PETEY SEWELL**

“Petey” Gilmore Sewell, Sr. was born June 4, 1932, in Frederick County, MD and died on January 2, 2018. He owned and operated Petey’s Barber Shop on West All Saints Street, a staple in the African American Community for over 40 years. Several articles have been written about him, his cars and the extensive Frederick County black memorabilia he collected and displayed in his barbershop. A member and “Friend” of AARCH, we will miss Petey and the stories of the past he loved to tell, especially of life on West All Saints Street during segregation.

AARCH thanks the Sewell Family for donating Petey’s chair and collection to AARCH in honor of him and his passion for preserving history. His collection will soon be available for future generations to see and enjoy.

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”

Marcus Garvey

Walter “Petey” Sewell poses in his barber chair at Sewell’s Barber Shop.

Photo courtesy of Frederick Magazine

Petey’s son, Walter Sewell, Jr., shares memories of his father as he sits in his barber chair.
AARCH acknowledges and honors our African American forefathers and mothers by locating, documenting, restoring, and preserving African American cemeteries in Frederick County. These burial sites vary—from those found at African American churches, to small graveyards on private farms, to a handful of graves dug behind a private home. Our work includes:

- Locating and documenting African American cemeteries throughout Frederick County.
- Working with service groups and individual volunteers to organize cemetery cleanups.
- Helping to provide regular maintenance of African American cemeteries in Frederick County.
- Seeking funding to support the routine maintenance of these cemeteries.

To get involved, contact Rick Smith at rhsmith@mcdaniel.edu
For Black History month, AARCH gave a presentation, "Held in Regard," at Hood College and at the Thurmont Library. "Held in Regard" consists of short stories about places, people, lifestyles, events and items we respect, appreciate and value in telling the African American history of Frederick county.

“Held in Regard” is an updated version of a presentation given in 2013, with new graphics, features, stories and photos. Some of the Frederick Countians highlighted include John Bruner, Dr. Ulysses Bourne Sr., Edward Mitchell Johnson, Lord Nickens, William O. Lee and Edith Addison Alford. Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church and Asbury United Methodist Church are highlighted for their community involvement over the years. The program ends with a little-known story about Frederick county history and an AARCH acquisition, both dating back to the early 1800’s.

“Held in Regard” is just one of many presentations AARCH offers the community that highlight aspects of Frederick County’s African American history are seldom told. Please contact AARCH at aarchsociety@gmail.com if your group is interested in an AARCH presentation.  ~ Mary Harris

DID YOU KNOW?

- Lincoln High School’s basketball team played in the basement of Asbury Church until 1938 when the school’s gym was built.

- Edith Addison Alford (10/21/1931 - 7/6/1998) - educator, vocalist and community activist - won a Marion Anderson Scholarship, cut two records, appeared on the Arthur Godfrey Show and was a Ted Mack finalist.

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

WE ARE LOOKING FOR

- Photos of Civil War, WWI & WWII Frederick’s African American soldiers in uniform
- Old photos of Frederick County’s African American churches & cemeteries
- Photos of Frederick’s African American sports teams/athletes before integration

SHARE HISTORY FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS!
If you have any photos you would like to share, please contact us at aarchsociety@gmail.com.
WE WILL RETURN YOUR PHOTOS!
Help preserve Frederick County’s African American History

Your AARCH Society membership will enable us to provide programs and other initiatives to fulfill our mission to identify, collect, preserve, exhibit, and disseminate the history and culture of African Americans in Frederick County to provide an understanding of how the past shapes and enriches the present and the future for all citizens.

AARCH SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name ____________________________________________

Address _________________________________________

______________________________________________

Home Phone _____________ Cell Phone _____________

E-Mail Address ________________________________

Please check circle that applies

○ ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP - $10
  Annual membership is active for the calendar year beginning January 1st.
  ___ New Member   ___ Renewal

○ LIFE MEMBERSHIP - $100
  Membership is active for life.

○ I WISH TO JOIN “FRIENDS OF AARCH”
  Friends of AARCH are individuals who are willing to be contacted to volunteer to help on an AARCH committee or AARCH sponsored event.
  Send completed application and payment to

AARCH Society
P.O. Box 3903 - Frederick, MD 21705

AARCH is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization; All gifts and contributions are 100% deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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