

# DORCHESTER COUNTY Heritage Guide

Museums, Historic Sites, Churches & Cemeteries



DORCHESTER  
water moves us  
HEART OF CHESAPEAKE  
COUNTRY HERITAGE AREA



Spocott Windmill & Village

PHOTO BY JILL JASUTA

## Experience the history and heritage that are the Heart of the Chesapeake

From the boom days of boatbuilding to the art of decoy carving, from Native American culture to the Underground Railroad, from colonial religious traditions to the agricultural and maritime industries – we invite you to experience the rich heritage of Dorchester County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Our history in the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area is celebrated through places where stories of human struggle, ingenuity and triumph still resonate today.



Choptank River Lighthouse

PHOTO BY JILL JASUTA

Dorchester is one of the oldest colonial counties in Maryland, with roots that date back to the 1600s. Historic churches, houses, schools, graveyards and mills are scattered throughout the landscape. Native American artifacts and relics from local tribes are exhibited in the local museums. In fact, most of Dorchester County has been certified as the Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area.



Handsell Historic Site

Each of Maryland's 13 certified Heritage Areas is defined by its distinctive characteristics. In Dorchester County, we proudly celebrate nine unique themes that set us apart:

- Agricultural Life
- Arts, Artists and Entertainment
- Chesapeake Landscapes and Outdoor Adventures
- Dorchester Families and Traditions
- Dorchester History, Architecture and Artifacts
- The Environment
- Harriet Tubman and the Eastern Shore African-American History
- Maritime Villages, Trades and Life
- Native American Heritage

These themes – and more – are on display and demonstrated at the diverse museums and heritage sites listed in this guide.

Find out more about Dorchester County, including dining and lodging information, at [VisitDorchester.org](http://VisitDorchester.org).



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Disabled  
access



Restrooms



Open by  
Appointment  
Only



Gift  
Shop



Free  
Admission



Restaurant  
Within 1  
Mile

## MUSEUMS



## 1. HARRIET TUBMAN MUSEUM

Exhibits and a short film about Harriet Tubman's life, as well as a resource area.

424 Race St., Cambridge, MD 21613

410-228-0401 | 410-228-3106

[harriettubmanorganization.com](http://harriettubmanorganization.com)



Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman was born in Dorchester County around 1822. At this small museum in downtown Cambridge – just a few miles from where she grew up – learn of the strength, courage and determination of this remarkable woman. The Harriet Tubman Museum offers exhibits and a short film about Tubman's life, as well as a resource area. The museum building features a powerful and moving mural of Harriet Tubman (pictured above) that has attracted attention from around the country. The mural was commissioned by the Dorchester Center for the Arts and completed in May 2019 by artist Michael Rosato.





## 2. HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD STATE PARK AND VISITOR CENTER

Interactive exhibits and a documentary film commemorate Harriet Tubman's legacy.

4068 Golden Hill Rd., Church Creek, MD 21622 | 410-221-2290  
[dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/tubman.aspx](http://dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/tubman.aspx)



The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center is located amid the landscapes where Tubman lived and toiled. Multi-media exhibits feature stories about Harriet's childhood and young adulthood. The center immerses visitors in the secret networks of the Underground Railroad and Harriet's own daring rescue missions. Exhibits also showcase her actions during the Civil War and her later years as a suffragist, civil rights worker and humanitarian. Operated by the Maryland Park Service in partnership with the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, the park's 17 acres feature a meditation garden, nature trails and an outdoor pavilion.

## 3. HERITAGE MUSEUMS & GARDENS OF DORCHESTER

Historic buildings with interactive exhibits about history and life in Dorchester County.

1003 Greenway Drive  
 Cambridge, MD 21613  
 410-228-7953 | [dorchesterhistory.org](http://dorchesterhistory.org)



Dorchester Heritage Museums and Gardens is the home of the Dorchester County Historical Society. The campus focuses on farming life in the county and includes an 18th century strong house, a combination wheelwright/blacksmith shop and formal herbal gardens. The museum houses exhibits on Dorchester's canning industry, timbering, marine trades, hunting and trapping, War of 1812 and Native Americans.

Featured on the campus is the Meredith House (c.1760) with artifacts and exhibits supporting family life in Dorchester County through time. Genealogy and family history research assistance is available in the research library. Visitors can enjoy the waterfront walk over Shoal Creek and relax on the beautiful waterside porch.



## 4. NANTICOKE RIVER DISCOVERY CENTER

Showcasing Captain John Smith's exploration of the Nanticoke River.

113 Old Ocean Gateway

Vienna, MD 21869

410-376-3442 | [viennamd.org/vhf.html](http://viennamd.org/vhf.html)



The rich history of the Nanticoke River is on display in its namesake museum. Housed in the totally remodeled historic Nanticoke Inn, the Center focuses on Captain John Smith's initial encounter with the Native Nanticoke population. Vienna was one of his stops more than 400 years ago. The Center houses artifacts, as well as gifts from the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians. The building also is home to the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance. Open by appointment by contacting the number above.

## 5. RICHARDSON MARITIME MUSEUM

Models and artifacts honor Dorchester County's waterman and boat-building heritage.

401 High St.

Cambridge, MD 21613

410-221-1871 | [richardsonmuseum.org](http://richardsonmuseum.org)



Named after local boat builder James B. Richardson, the museum is dedicated to the craftsmen and culture of the traditional Eastern Shore wooden boat building industry. On display are exquisite models of the Chesapeake Bay's traditional wooden sailing vessels, such as skipjacks, bugeyes, pungies, log canoes and other merchant vessels. The Museum's collection includes original hand tools used to build the boats and watermen's artifacts that convey an understanding of how the boats were constructed and the history of their use. Replicas of a boat builder's workshop and oyster shucking shed also are tucked into the museum. Open on a limited basis, by appointment only.





## 6. RUARK BOATWORKS

Restoring and building vintage boats to continue an important Eastern Shore tradition.

Maryland Avenue & Hayward Street  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-221-1871 | [richardsonmuseum.org](http://richardsonmuseum.org)



A century-old barn was disassembled, translocated and repurposed to house the Ruark Boatworks operations at the Richardson Maritime Museum's waterfront site on Cambridge Creek. Visitors are welcome to watch and participate as volunteers work on restoring and building traditional wooden vessels. The Boatworks is one of the few remaining facilities to authentically build or repair wooden Bay boats, which are disappearing, along with the individuals who built and worked them. Part of the Museum's mission is preservation, both of the boats and the skills. Open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., or by appointment.



## 7. VIENNA HERITAGE MUSEUM

Dedicated to the rural life and industries located in and near Vienna.

303 Race St. | Vienna, MD 21869  
410-376-3442  
[viennamd.org/vhf.html](http://viennamd.org/vhf.html)



Vienna Heritage Museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the Vienna area and the rural life and industries located in and near Vienna. The building is the old Hurst and Brother Service Station and Confectionary Shop, which operated on that site from the 1920s until the 1970s.

The museum contains a large assortment of artifacts, antiques, photographs and historic memorabilia. A featured display showcases the Martinek Button Factory from Elliott Island, MD, and includes the last operational mother of pearl button factory machinery in the United States. Open by appointment by contacting the number above.



## 8. BAYLY HOUSE

Considered to be the oldest dwelling in Cambridge, dating to the 1700s.

(PRIVATE RESIDENCE)

207 High St. | Cambridge, MD 21613

[visitdorchester.org/bayly-house](http://visitdorchester.org/bayly-house)



The Bayly House, believed to be the oldest dwelling in Cambridge, dates from the 1740s. It is believed that the house was moved from Oxford, MD, and assembled in the 1750s on the site where the Dorchester County Courthouse currently is located. Shortly afterwards, it was moved across High Street to its present location to allow the Courthouse to be built. When it was moved, it was placed sideways on the lot, and a later owner built a new front entry and porch to make the side of the house into the new front. In the rear of the house are several outbuildings. Archaeologists have conducted two extensive excavations to look into whether one of the buildings could be a former slave cabin.



## 9. BECKY PHIPPS CANNON

Captured in 1814 from a tender of the British warship *Dauntless*.

Taylors Island Road (Route 16)

Taylors Island, MD 21669

(approx. 1.1 miles west of Smithville Road)

(Google Map: [87C5FP94+V3](https://www.google.com/maps/place/87C5FP94+V3))

[gracefound.net/becky-hipps-cannon.html](http://gracefound.net/becky-hipps-cannon.html)



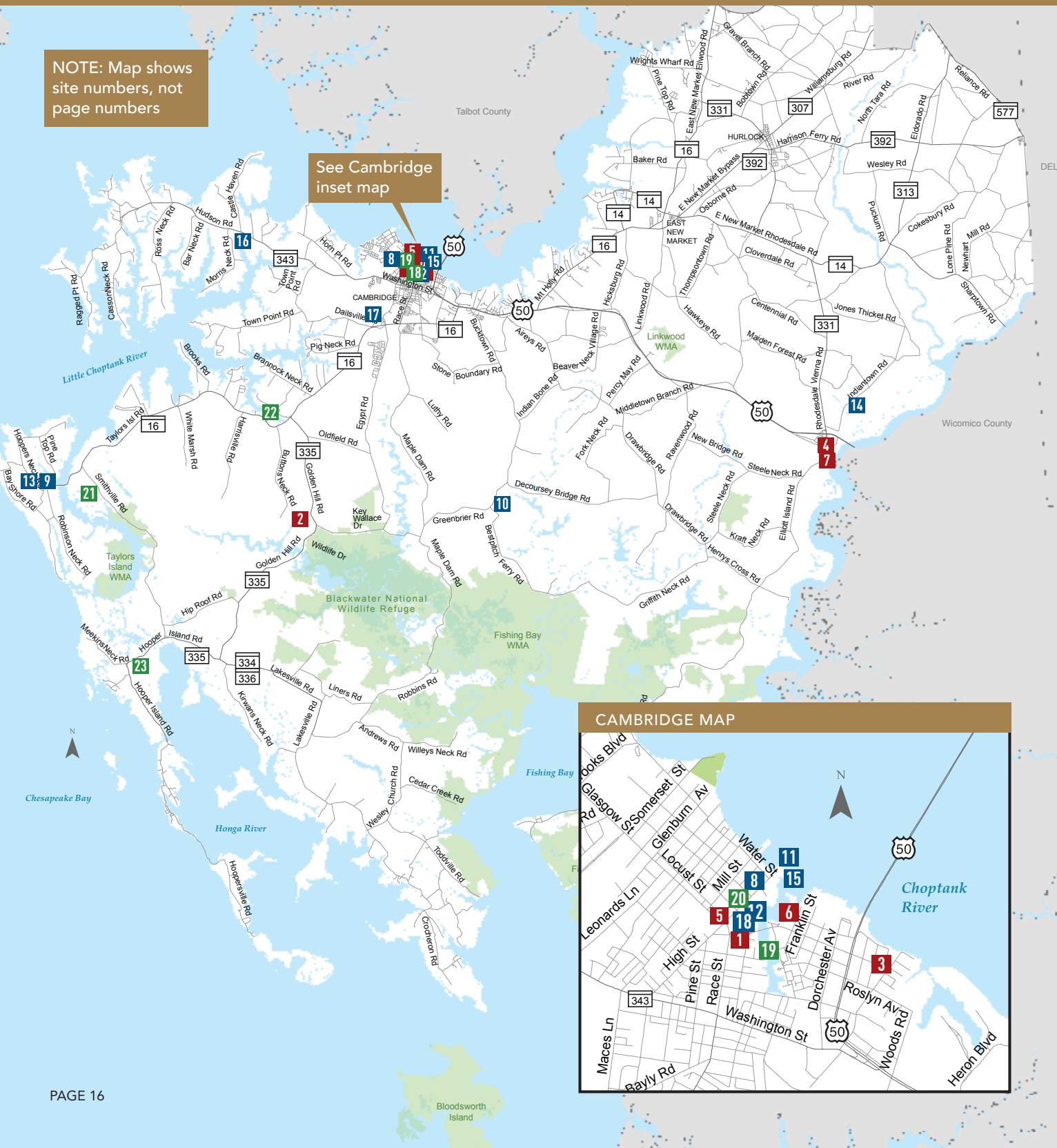
During the War of 1812, a skirmish between the local militia and the British took place off of James and Taylors Islands on a very cold February day. A huge ice mound developed which prevented the British from retreating. The British tender, its crew and munitions were captured. The "prize" of the capture, the cannon, was named the "Becky Phipps" by the local militia. It was so named after the Lieutenant of the British ship "Matthew Phibbs" and "Becky," a Black woman who served as the vessel's cook. In 1950, through the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution and a few local citizens, the remains of the cannon were collected and located to its present site.



# DORCHESTER COUNTY MAP

NOTE: Map shows  
site numbers, not  
page numbers

See Cambridge  
inset map



CAMBRIDGE MAP



## 10. BUCKTOWN GENERAL STORE

19th-century general store that has been preserved in its 1830s condition.

4303 Bucktown Rd. | Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-901-9255 | bucktownstore.com



As one of the most influential places of Harriet Tubman's young life, the Bucktown General Store still stands as a rare survivor from her era. At this location, Tubman received a blow to her head from a two-pound metal weight (similar to what's pictured here), which fractured her skull while she attempted to assist a fellow enslaved man. As a result of the injury, she experienced lifelong health problems and spiritual visions that changed her views and guided the rest of her life. The store operates as a museum featuring authentic African American artifacts related to slavery, various displays and gifts within a country store setting. It is open by appointment only.



## 11. CHOPTANK RIVER LIGHTHOUSE

Replica of a historic lighthouse that once guided mariners along the Choptank River.

Long Wharf Park, High and Water Streets  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-463-2653 | choptankriverlighthouse.org



The Choptank River Lighthouse is a replica of a six-sided screw-pile lighthouse that guided mariners along the Choptank River for generations. The replica was completed in fall 2012.

Located on the end of Pier A at Long Wharf Park, the Lighthouse offers visitors commanding views of historic Cambridge and the Choptank River. Inside is a small museum with exhibits celebrating the rich maritime heritage of Dorchester County and the Eastern Shore.

May–October: 9:30am–5:30pm daily  
November–April: By appointment; call 410-463-2653.

NOTE: For access to the elevator for disabled people, please call in advance: 410-463-2653 or 410-228-4031.



## 12. DORCHESTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Courthouse was site of slave auctions, daring escape coordinated by Harriet Tubman.

206 High St. | Cambridge, MD 21613



The current courthouse building dates to 1854, but there was an earlier Courthouse here that was destroyed by fire. This is the site of the first escape that Harriet Tubman engineered, rescuing her niece from the auction block in 1850. This is also where Samuel Green, a free black preacher from nearby East New Market, was tried and sentenced to 10 years in 1857 for owning a copy of the anti-slavery book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1970, the building was damaged by a bomb shortly before the trial of H. Rap Brown, who had been indicted on arson and inciting to riot charges in Cambridge in 1967.



## 13. GRACE FOUNDATION OF TAYLORS ISLAND

Preserved historical buildings of one of the first settlements in Dorchester County.

(Chapel of Ease, Old Schoolhouse, Grace Episcopal Church)  
4401 Hooper's Neck Rd.  
Taylors Island, MD 21669  
[gracefound.net](http://gracefound.net)



An 18th century school house and chapel and a 19th century church are located on the grounds of the Grace Foundation. The Old Schoolhouse, built in the 1780s, is believed to be the first schoolhouse in Dorchester County and was originally located at the north end of the island. The Chapel of Ease, the first church constructed on Taylors Island, was built between 1707 and 1720 and has been used as a school, blacksmith shop, voting place, community hall and farm storage over its lifetime. It was moved to its present site and restored in 1951. Grace Episcopal Church, constructed in 1873 as a replacement for the Chapel of East, is an example of the Victorian Gothic architecture popular at that time.





## 14. HANDSELL HISTORIC SITE

Historic site honors the history of the three cultures connected to that land.

4837 Indiantown Rd. | Vienna, MD 21869  
410-228-7458 | [restorehandsell.org](http://restorehandsell.org)

FREE

Handsell, which is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, honors the three cultures that made up its history: Native Americans, who lived in a sprawling Chicone Village at the site; European settlers, who built the house at Handsell around 1770; and African Americans, who worked as enslaved and free people at Handsell. In addition to the brick house and the replica longhouse now on the site, a wattle fenced garden is planted each summer with plants appropriate to a garden of the native people. Wayside signs and a Guide-by-Cell tour (call 410-858-4173 ) tell the story of the people who lived there.



## 15. SKIPJACK NATHAN OF DORCHESTER

Authentic Chesapeake Bay oyster dredge boat promotes maritime history and ecology.

Dock: Long Wharf at the end of High Street  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-7141 | [skipjack-nathan.org](http://skipjack-nathan.org)



For a quarter of a century, the Skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester* has preserved and promoted Dorchester County's unique historic and natural maritime resources, highlighting the heritage of wooden shipbuilding and dredging for oysters under sail and allowing its passengers to get to know the traditional life of the waterman. The last skipjack built to dredge for oysters, the *Nathan* can be viewed at its dock at Long Wharf. Public sails and charters – by reservation – introduce passengers to the oyster and its impact on Bay and Choptank river ecology and economy. See the schedule and reserve on the *Nathan's* website.



## 16. SPOCOTT WINDMILL & VILLAGE

Site features Maryland's only post-style windmill and buildings from the 1800s.

1663 Hudson Rd. | Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-7670 | [spocottwindmill.org](http://spocottwindmill.org)

FREE

Step back to the 1800s at Spocott Windmill and Village. The site features Maryland's only post-style windmill (notable for the way the entire structure can be rotated into the wind) and buildings from the 1800s including a one-room schoolhouse, country store, cottage, blacksmith's shop and doctor's office. This replica, built in 1972 by noted boat builder Jim Richardson (namesake of the Richardson Maritime Museum in Cambridge), contains the original grinding stones and interior steps. The mill is still operated from time to time, usually during an Earth Day celebration in April and then the same day as the Beckwith Apple Festival in mid-October. The grounds and most buildings are open free of charge 365 days a year from dawn to dusk.



## 17. STANLEY INSTITUTE

Historic African-American one-room schoolhouse for 100 years, now a museum.

Intersection of Route 16 West & Bayly Road  
Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-6657  
[visitdorchester.org/stanley-institute](http://visitdorchester.org/stanley-institute)



The Rock School, now called the Stanley Institute, is an early example of a post-Civil War African-American school built and run independently by the local Black community. It stands as a testament to the Black community's determination to educate their children in a segregated school system. This 19th century, one-room schoolhouse was moved to its present location in 1867 and was used until the 1960s. Named in honor of the Reverend Ezekiel Stanley, it is one of the oldest Maryland schools to be organized and maintained by a Black community. Open by appointment.



## 18. WALLACE OFFICE BUILDING

The first Regiment of the Eastern Shore Infantry was commanded here in the Civil War.

303 Gay St. | Cambridge, MD 21613  
[visitdorchester.org/wallace-office-building](http://visitdorchester.org/wallace-office-building)



This is the site where the first Regiment of the Eastern Shore Infantry was commanded by Colonel James Wallace during the Civil War. Almost all these members were from the Eastern Shore. Interpretive signs detail the history and include a picture of the original recruitment advertisement, which encouraged volunteers to enlist at the historic law office, and a photo of a soldier who walked through the doors of the law office and enlisted in the regiment. This site is undergoing restoration.



## 19. CAMBRIDGE CEMETERY

Graves and memorials of notable Dorchester County residents dating back to the Civil War.

Academy and Cemetery Avenues  
 Cambridge, MD 21613  
[visitdorchester.org/cambridge-cemetery](http://visitdorchester.org/cambridge-cemetery)



Governor Holiday Hicks, born in Vienna, is buried at this site. Governor Hicks prevented the Maryland General Assembly from passing legislation that would have sent Maryland into the Confederacy. The cemetery also includes the graves of George Lovic Pierce Radcliffe, who served as a U.S. Senator from Maryland from 1935-1947, and Col. James Wallace, commander of the first Regiment of the Eastern Shore Infantry during the Civil War.





## 20. CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH & CEMETERY

Site was one of the original 30 Anglican parishes in the Province of Maryland.

601 Church St. | Cambridge, MD 21613  
410-228-3161 | [christchurchcambridge.org](http://christchurchcambridge.org)



The Great Choptank Parish was one of 30 parishes of the Church of England established in 1692 in the colony of Maryland on behalf of King William and Queen Mary. Christ Church was located in Cambridge as the principal church of that parish. From as early as 1693 there was an Anglican Church on the lands surrounding the present Christ Episcopal Church. The present building, the third on the lands designated at the founding of the City of Cambridge for a church, was constructed 1883-1884. The old cemetery adjacent to Christ Church has been a burial ground ever since the Great Choptank Parish was created. Four governors of Maryland are buried in the old churchyard and a monument has been erected to commemorate a fifth.



## 21. NEW REVIVED UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Historic African-American Church established in 1876, still active today.

4350 Smithville Rd.  
Taylors Island, MD 21677  
410-228-2110  
[harriettubmanbyway.org/new-revived-united-methodist-church](http://harriettubmanbyway.org/new-revived-united-methodist-church)



The New Revived United Methodist Church, once known as Jefferson Methodist Episcopal Church, was established in 1876 on Taylors Island. The existing building replaces a church dating to the late 1800s. The church is a stop along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. New Revived is one of four traditionally Black churches in the area founded right after the Civil War and emancipation. One by one, the churches closed their doors following World War II as families moved away and the number of congregants declined. Today, people from each of these four congregations are part of the New Revived United Methodist Church congregation.



## 22. OLD TRINITY CHURCH & CEMETERY

Oldest Episcopal church in continuous use in the United States, dating to the 17th century.

1716 Taylors Island Rd.

Church Creek, MD 21622

410-228-2940 | [oldtrinity.net](http://oldtrinity.net)

FREE

This quiet, hallowed spot on Maryland's Eastern Shore has been a place of prayer and meditation for more than 300 years. The 17th-century church building is a tiny architectural gem perfectly restored to its colonial form. The graveyard holds the remains of many famous citizens, such as Anna Ella Carroll, the "silent member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet," and three revolutionary war heroes. The shoreline has been restored to its 17th century appearance in an environmentally sensitive manner. It remains an active Episcopal Church, probably the oldest in continuous use in its original form. Services are held at 11 a.m. on Sundays, and the grounds are open daily, dawn to dusk.



## 23. ST. MARY STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC CHURCH, TUBMAN CHAPEL & CEMETERY

Oldest Catholic Church and one of the earliest buildings in Dorchester.

917 Hoopers Island Rd.

Church Creek, MD 21622

[staroftheseagh.org](http://staroftheseagh.org)

FREE

St. Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church and its original Tubman Chapel are located in close proximity on either side of Hoopers Island Road. Built in 1767 by Richard Tubman II on his plantation, the chapel is the oldest Catholic Church and one of the earliest buildings in Dorchester County. Upon completion of the present church in 1872, the chapel was sold, used as a country school, and later as a barn. One of the stained glass windows in the church honors Mother Mary Borgia Tubman, born nearby in 1824. She joined the Visitation order of Catholic nuns and play a key role in the founding of Catholic schools and convents in Virginia and West Virginia.

# Audio Guides

Listen to stories and enrich your experience by downloading our free cell phone audio apps.

- The Heritage Area offers three audio guides covering the Chesapeake Mural Trail, Downtown Cambridge history and the history of the African American Pine Street community. The app features an interactive badge feature. When you earn all the badges by completing any one of the tours, you win a prize. Search for “**Visit Dorchester**” in the Google Play Store or Apple Store to download the app.
- The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway audio guide brings to life stories of slavery and escape, cruelty and compassion. Soundtracks include dramatizations, storytelling and commentary by experts, historians and local community members. Download it at [HarrietTubmanByway.org](http://HarrietTubmanByway.org).



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HEART OF THE CHESAPEAKE  
**DORCHESTER**  
water moves us

**Heart of Chesapeake  
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