

DORCHESTER COUNTY

HEART OF THE CHESAPEAKE



HERITAGE TRAILS



Cambridge

Queen City of the Eastern Shore

Explore the history and heritage of
Cambridge and the Neck District





Welcome.

The Heart of the Chesapeake

While it shares an overall common history and culture with the rest of Maryland's Eastern Shore, Dorchester possesses a sense of place and character all its own, as noted by such writers as James Michener, H.L. Mencken and Dorchester native son John Barth. To experience true "Shorenness," nothing surpasses Dorchester County.

Dorchester County is fortunate to have a distinctively rich culture with numerous places where you can explore and absorb the heritage that helps make us the Heart of Chesapeake Country. In this Heritage Trails brochure, we've put together some highlights in the Cambridge area and its western neighbor known as the Neck District. Spend the day exploring or choose one spot that catches your interest. Use the map on page 22 to help you navigate.



Race Street in downtown Cambridge in 1934.

COURTESY HUBERT H. WRIGHT IV

★ Dorchester Visitor Center

2 Rose Hill Place, 410.228.1000, TourDorchester.org

Start your exploration at the Visitor Center.

With its sail soaring 100 feet in the air, the Dorchester County Visitor Center is easy to find. Come for information about the area. See exhibits on local life, agriculture, seafood, the Underground Railroad, natural resources, and more. The Visitor Center also has restrooms, a playground overlooking the river, and a boardwalk.



Open daily, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. at 2 Rose Hill Place in Cambridge, near the Malkus Bridge over the Choptank River. Also visit us at TourDorchester.org for hotel and restaurant listings, museums, events, and more.

CHOPTANK INDIAN RESERVATION

The Visitor Center is located in what was once the northwestern section of the largest and longest-lasting of several Indian reservations in the region. Evidence of the Native Americans who lived here survives to this day—from place names and trails to archaeological sites, individual artifacts, and living descendants.

Cambridge

This city on the Choptank River was built on shipbuilding, oystering, and canning.

Founded by English colonists in 1684, Cambridge is one of the oldest towns in Maryland. Native Americans were the first farmers and watermen here, taking advantage of the abundant natural resources. From Cambridge's earliest days, enslaved people provided much of the labor to power the economy.

By the Revolutionary War, the local economy had shifted from tobacco to grain, and Cambridge became an agricultural hub. Flour, lumber, and shipbuilding operations were constructed along Cambridge Creek.



After the Civil War, Cambridge's oyster industry took off. With more than a million bushels of oysters shucked each year, it was second only to Baltimore. The oyster business meant prosperity for Cambridge, which became known as the Queen City of the Eastern Shore. Soon

oysters—and all manner of produce—were being canned in Cambridge. The most well known cannery, the sprawling Phillips Packing Company, was an international success and employed thousands locally.

Cambridge slumped in the late 1950s after the Phillips Company departed. Two tall red chimneys bearing the company initials (shown at right) are still visible from Route 50.

Today, downtown Cambridge is undergoing a renaissance with a growing number of restaurants, galleries, and shops.



1 Dorchester Heritage Museums and Gardens

1003 Greenway Drive, 410.228.7953,
DorchesterHistory.org

Explore the local heritage of Native Americans, farming, hunting and trapping, and the county's people at this multi-building complex.

This campus is the home of the Dorchester County Historical Society (DCHS). Start your experience in the **NEILD MUSEUM**, where you can pick up a self-guided tour booklet. In the Neild Museum, a broad collection of artifacts—from beaten biscuit machines to an early McCormick reaper—helps tell the story of farming, which has long been a mainstay in the region.

The **ROBBINS HERITAGE CENTER** features a range of exhibits relating to life around the county. Explore the lives of Native Americans through artifacts such as projectile points, stone tools, beadwork, and pottery. Learn about the important roles the canning and timbering industries played in the economic development of the county and its people. See how hunting and trapping have been much more than a pastime since the earliest days of the county. And step inside the re-created workshop of master decoy carver Ron Rue.

Dating back to around 1790, the **GOLDSBOROUGH STABLE** features vehicles used through the early 1900s, including wagons, sleighs, and a sulky. Exhibits also explain saddlers, blacksmithing, and wheelwrights.



The **MEREDITH HOUSE**, a Georgian-style home from about 1760, includes furniture, portraits and textiles, coupled with DCHS documents, to provide a candid look into some Dorchester residents' lives, including the seven governors of Maryland who hailed from the county. The Meredith House is also the home of the Society's Research and Family History Department.

The **STRONGHOUSE**, a sturdy building where food was stored, may be the oldest building on the campus. The gardens on the site include a colonial-style **HERB GARDEN**, mature specimen trees, and a waterside garden. A waterfront walkway overlooking Shoal Creek completes the campus.

TEA TIME: Enjoy afternoon tea at the Meredith House. For groups. Call to reserve.

The complex also includes the **MUSEUM SHOP**, stocked with local artwork and books, antiques, gardening paraphernalia, and more.

GETTING THERE: From the Visitor Center, take Maryland Avenue across Route 50, left onto Abacco Lane, and an immediate right onto Greenway Drive. On-street and museum parking available.



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Researching your family's roots in Dorchester County? You'll find a genealogical research library and guidance at this museum complex.

2 Ruark Boatworks

Maryland Avenue & Hayward Street, 410.221.8844,
RichardsonMuseum.org

Watch boatbuilders at work restoring and building wooden boats—and keeping an important local tradition alive.



The Harold Ruark Boatworks keeps the tradition of wooden boatbuilding alive by restoring authentic Chesapeake Bay boats. At this workshop by the Cambridge Creek and the Choptank River, local volunteers bring boats back to life, and sometimes, build new ones from scratch. The public is invited to stop in, watch them at work, and learn more about the area's shipbuilding heritage. Call for hours.

Also ask about the Brannock Research and Education Center, featuring maritime photographs, tools, documents, and models from the Dorchester area.

Across Cambridge Creek you'll see the J. M. Clayton Seafood Company. Believed to be the world's oldest continuously working crab processing plant, Clayton's was founded in 1890 and is still run by the same family. Stop by for crabs and crabmeat; call 410.228.1661.

GETTING THERE: From the Dorchester Heritage Museums and Gardens, take Maryland Avenue across Route 50. Turn right on Hayward Street. Boatworks is immediately on left. Park in grassy lot.

3 Richardson Maritime Museum

401 High Street, 410.221.1871, RichardsonMuseum.org

Delve into Dorchester's long and colorful relationship with the water.

Dorchester's maritime heritage is preserved by the Richardson Maritime Museum. Models of skipjacks, bugeyes, pungys, log canoes, and merchant vessels—



boats associated with the region—are displayed in all their remarkable detail. The vessels created in Dorchester boatyards sometimes went on to affect the course of history. In the War of 1812, for instance, privateers built on Cambridge Creek were prized by both sides for their speed and maneuverability. The museum's displays also include hand tools used to build boats, watermen's fishing gear, and a special exhibit devoted to Jim Richardson, the museum's namesake and local boatbuilder. Call for hours.

GETTING THERE: From the Boatworks, turn right on Maryland Avenue, cross the Cambridge Creek bridge, and bear right onto Spring Street. Turn left on High Street to the museum at 401 High Street. Parking is behind the building, a former bank.

BOATBUILDING ON THE CREEK

Boatbuilders have worked along the Cambridge Creek shoreline for nearly 250 years. In the early 1900s, the waterfront was crowded with wooden workboats—skipjacks, schooners, and more. It was said that you could cross the creek by stepping from boat to boat.



COURTESY HUBERT H. WRIGHT IV

4 Dorchester Center for the Arts

321 High Street, 410.228.7782, DorchesterArts.org

Art Deco building houses creative pursuits.

The building dates back to the 1880s, when it was built to house the local post office and pharmacy. In the 1930s, the Nathan Furniture Store renovated the building in the Art Deco style. Today it's the home of the Dorchester Center for the Arts, with regularly changing art exhibits and art classes. There's also the Studioworks gift shop featuring the work of local artists.

GETTING THERE: Continue north on High Street less than a block. Park on street or behind the building.

5 Christ Church and Cemetery

601 Church Street, 410.228.3161, ChristChurchCambridge.org

A rose window and historic cemetery are stand-outs at this Gothic-style church.

Among the physical landmarks of Cambridge, none stands out quite like the Gothic-style Christ Episcopal Church on High Street across from the county court house. The first structure on the site was erected in 1693. The current structure, built in 1883, replaces one destroyed by fire.

The cemetery contains graves of many prominent Dorchester Countians, including Revolutionary War veterans and four Maryland governors. The church and the cemetery are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

GETTING THERE: Continue north on High Street toward the Choptank River. The church is located at High and Church Streets. Parking on street and in rear.



FAMOUS PEOPLE OF DORCHESTER



HARRIET TUBMAN, famed Underground Railroad "conductor," was born in Dorchester County and led enslaved people to freedom from here. See page 16.

ANNIE OAKLEY, legendary sharpshooter, lived in Cambridge with her husband from 1913–1915. Their home, now a private residence, is at 28 Bellevue Avenue, overlooking Hambrooks Bay.



JOHN BARTH, novelist and National Book Award winner, was born and raised in a house on Aurora Street (now a private residence). There's a marker in his honor near the Dorchester Library at 303 Gay Street.

BEA ARTHUR, Emmy Award-winning actress known for her roles in TV sitcoms *Maude* and *Golden Girls*, lived in Cambridge as a girl.



ANNA ELLA CARROLL, political pioneer, military strategist, and secret adviser to President Abraham Lincoln, lived in Dorchester County. Her grave is at Old Trinity Cemetery in Church Creek.

GLORIA RICHARDSON, civil rights leader who, in the 1960s, led a movement in Cambridge to fight for equal opportunity for African Americans in jobs, housing, and health.



COURTESY HERSCHEL JOHNSON



6 Long Wharf *High and Water Streets at the Choptank River*

The once bustling central hub of Cambridge's waterfront, Long Wharf is now home to the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*, a lighthouse, a marina—and generations of maritime history.

Long Wharf was an important part of the city's maritime activity in the 19th and 20th centuries. It was the central location for steamboats and sailboats carrying passengers and cargo to and from Cambridge. Beginning in the 1950s—about the time the first bridge spanning the Chesapeake Bay was opened to the public—the character and use of the waterfront began to evolve from commercial to recreational.



CHOPTANK RIVER LIGHTHOUSE: A replica of a historic lighthouse that once guided mariners along the Choptank River was built in 2012. The screwpile lighthouse, with its six-sided cottage, offers a mini-museum and visitor information. More information at ChoptankRiverLighthouse.org.

A GATHERING OF SCHOONERS

October finds schooners, ketches, tall ships, and other historic vessels gathering at Long Wharf for the Schooner Rendezvous with dockside tours, sails, and more. Details at CambridgeSchoonerRendezvous.com.



SKIPJACK NATHAN:

Berthed at Long Wharf, the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester* is an authentic oystering wooden boat. The *Nathan* is a replica of a skipjack, Maryland's official boat and the country's last commercial fishing vessel rigged for sailing. Funded by contributions and built by volunteers, the single-mast wooden boat commemorates the boatbuilding legacy of Dorchester, where more skipjacks were built than anywhere around the Bay. At the peak of oyster harvesting near the end of the 19th century, a fleet of nearly 2,000 skipjacks played a major role in harvesting 15 million bushels of oysters in a single year. Fewer than a dozen skipjacks are licensed for commercial dredging today.

The *Nathan* is a living museum offering public sails most weekends, May through October, on the Choptank River. Find out more at skipjack-nathan.org. The *Nathan* hosts the annual Choptank Heritage Skipjack Race in September, which draws skipjacks from around the Bay.

GETTING THERE: From Christ Church, continue north on High Street until you reach the river. Park in the lot.



FARMERS MARKET: Long Wharf is home to the Cambridge Farmers Market, 3-6 p.m. Thursdays, May–October.





CAMBRIDGE

7 Historic High Street

James Michener called this cobbled street one of the most beautiful streets in America.

The brick cobbles of majestic High Street link downtown Cambridge and Long Wharf on the Choptank River. The stately homes that line the street were owned by governors, statesmen, lawyers, and other notable figures.

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR:

Join the Historic High Street tour 11am every Saturday, April–October. Reserve or schedule a special tour at 410.901.1000.

When James Michener was doing research for his novel *Chesapeake*, he reportedly called High

Street one of the most beautiful streets in America and modeled his fictional city Patamoke after Cambridge.

DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE

High Street leads into the core of Cambridge's downtown. A century ago, people could find anything they needed here, from hardware to dress clothes. Today, buildings are being restored to their original glory, and a growing number of restaurants, shops, and galleries have opened. For more about downtown Cambridge, see CambridgeMainStreet.com.

8 Mom & Pop Stores

Simmons: 600 Race Street, 410.228.4313

Webster's: 810 Race Street, 410.228.1454

These old-time stores offer up charm, nostalgia—and plenty of necessities.

Throughout Cambridge and Dorchester County, general stores were the lifeblood of the community, providing everything from muskrat traps to canned soup—plus the chance to catch up on local news. A few of the old-time stores still exist.



A family-owned landmark in downtown Cambridge, **SIMMONS CENTER MARKET** is one of the oldest retail and grocery stores still in business on the Eastern Shore.

Opened in 1937 by Jimmy Simmons, the store was expanded in size several times and, in 1945, became the first self-service grocery store on the Delmarva Peninsula south of Wilmington. The top shelves are reserved for grocery store antiquities—brass cash registers, wood packing boxes, soft drink bottles—but the rest of Simmons has everything from fresh produce to old-fashioned candy.

Two blocks down Race Street is **E. G. WEBSTER & SON GROCERY STORE**. Opened for business in 1904, Webster's has been run by three generations of the family since 1939. The corner market still has the original counter, doors, and, although they are no longer used, gas light ceiling knobs that once provided lighting. The wood plank floor was installed in the 1950s. In season, Webster's sells freshly-caught and skinned muskrat and raccoon, still served on some Dorchester dinner tables.

GETTING THERE: From High Street, turn left on Poplar Street, which turns into Race Street.

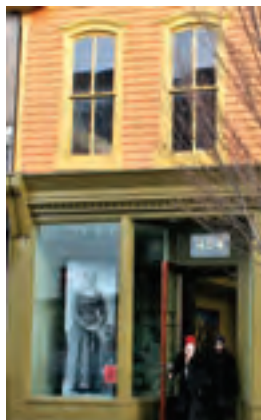


9 Harriet Tubman Museum

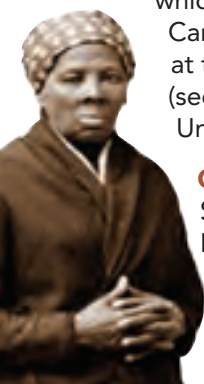
424 Race Street, 410.228.0401,
HarrietTubmanOrganization.org

Be inspired by the remarkable life of this Underground Railroad “conductor,” who was born in Dorchester County.

This small museum shares some remarkable stories of American hero Harriet Tubman. Born into slavery a few miles from here, Tubman fled north to freedom in 1849. She returned to the area an estimated 13 times to help about 70 friends and family escape using the secret network of people and sites known as the Underground Railroad. The museum also offers tours of the surrounding area by appointment. Groups are welcome.



Learn more by exploring the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway (HarrietTubmanByway.org), which extends through Dorchester and Caroline Counties. Pick up a map and guide at the Dorchester County Visitor Center (see page 2), where you can also see an Underground Railroad exhibit.



GETTING THERE: Head north on Race Street. Museum is past Muir Street. Park on the street, in the small lot across from the museum, or in the downtown parking lot behind the building.

ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

Learn about African-American life in the 1800s at Stanley Institute, one of the oldest Maryland schools to be organized and maintained by a black community. The restored one-room schoolhouse is on the National Register of Historic Places. Call 410.228.6657 for a tour. Route 16 and Bayly Road.

10 Historic Pine Street

African American neighborhood has played an important role in Cambridge history.

The Pine Street community, adjacent to the core of Cambridge's downtown, is among the oldest continuously occupied African American neighborhoods in Maryland, dating back to 1801. During the golden age of the community in the 1930s, scores of black-owned businesses lined the streets. The music scene was the most vibrant on the Eastern Shore, with the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, and James Brown performing (pictured here, dancers at the Elks).



GEORGE LEVARN COLLECTION,
 DORCHESTER COUNTY
 PUBLIC LIBRARY

The African American community played a critical role in the national civil rights movement of the 1960s, led by Cambridge native Gloria Richardson. Their struggle gained front-page attention in the national news media. In 1967, the story of Cambridge's civil rights movement took a tragic turn when a fire started on Pine Street after a speech by the controversial visiting activist H. Rap Brown. No one knows how the fire started, but it destroyed most of two blocks in the community.

GETTING THERE: From Tubman Museum, head south on Race Street. Make first right onto Muir Street. Take first left onto Pine Street.

HISTORIC CHURCHES

The Pine Street area's Bethel A.M.E. Church (pictured here) and Waugh Chapel United Methodist Church played important roles in the civil-rights movement. Before and after demonstrations, crowds filled the churches and spilled into the streets as movement leaders discussed plans to end discrimination.





Neck District

Welcome to a landscape of farms, forests, creeks, and waterways.

Dorchester's Neck District—where the county's northwestern-most section juts into the confluence of the Choptank River and the Chesapeake Bay—is named for the narrow peninsulas or "necks" of land separated by creeks. European settlers cleared many of the forests for farming. Later, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, residents turned to boatbuilding and harvesting fish, crabs, and oysters. With its open farm fields, tracts of loblolly pines, and hidden coves, the Neck District is noted for its beauty and seclusion. Just make sure you have a full tank of gas before you explore.

GETTING THERE: From Pine Street, turn right on Washington Street/Route 343 and proceed about five miles to the Neck District area.

LAND OF WINDMILLS

Because most of Dorchester is low lying and there is little fast-moving water, farmers turned to windmills to grind corn. These single-post wood contraptions, with their cloth-covered blades, were so common that an early observer wrote: "We look into Dorchester, on the flat lands there we see Windmills, such as the Dutch use." As mechanical power became available, windmills were abandoned.

NECK DISTRICT

11 Spocott Windmill and Colonial Village

1663 Hudson Road, 410.228.7670, SpocottWindmill.org

Wander through a small 19th century village with a windmill, cottage, schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, and country store museum.

The Spocott Windmill stands as a reminder of an era when wind did more than propel boats through the water. On property donated by the late U.S. Senator George L. Radcliffe, noted Dorchester boatbuilder James B. Richardson and his son-in-law designed and built the replica windmill using traditional shipbuilding tools. The board-and-batten structure, dedicated in 1972, is the centerpiece of a small roadside complex with a farm tenant house built in 1800, a one-room school built in 1870, blacksmith shop, and a country store museum. Feel free to take a self-guided tour, as there are no staff or docents on hand.

IN ACTION: Visit during one of Spocott's special events, and you could see the windmill in action, grinding corn. Check the calendar at SpocottWindmill.org.

The buildings are open for self-guided tours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except for the museum, which is open by appointment.

GETTING THERE: Continue on Route 343. Windmill is on the left, just past Richardson Road. Parking available.



12 Historic Churches

Beckwith: 1328 Hudson Road, Cambridge
St. John's: 1213 Hudson Road, Cambridge

Admire 19th century places of worship.

BECKWITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH sits near a site by Beckwith Creek where lively summer camp meetings were once held. The church also hosts the annual Strawberry and Apple Festivals.

One of the prettiest churches in the area is **ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL** of the Great Choptank Parish, originally erected in 1853. The steeple sits on the ground and is attached to one side of the main building, a design seen in other churches around the county. Among the graves in the cemetery are three War of 1812 veterans.



GETTING THERE: *Beckwith:* Take Route 343 west past Morris Neck Road. *St. John's:* Heading farther west on Route 343, the church is on the left.

SOFT SHELL CRABS

If you continue on Route 343 beyond Lewis Store, you'll come to a small seafood business where you can see, in season, the "peeler pens" where blue crabs shed their shells and become the Eastern Shore delicacy of soft shell crabs. To reach Soft & Salty Seafood (410.476.3069), turn left on Ragged Point Road; it's on the right, about 16 miles from the Visitor Center in Cambridge.



KATHY DIXON/VA FARM BUREAU

13 Lewis General Store

1042 Hudson Road, 410.228.3924

Old-time store dates back to 1875.

Locals and visitors alike stock up on drinks, sandwiches, T-shirts, hot home-cooked meals, quick snacks, and other provisions at the red-roofed Lewis General Store, established in Hudson in 1875. The business, one of the best known country stores on the Eastern Shore, retains a purposeful weathered look familiar to decades of loyal customers. Visitors are encouraged to forget the time and relax in the shade of the front porch or, in inclement weather, gather around the wood stove in the store's indoor Gossip Corner. The rear dining room is home to University Restaurant, open Thursday–Saturday. Reservations are requested.



GETTING THERE: Stay on Route 343 to Hudson deep in the Neck District. Store is on the right. The store is about 11 miles from the Dorchester Visitor Center.

14 UMCES Horn Point Lab

2020 Horns Point Road, Cambridge, www.umces.edu/hpl

Using science to help re-populate oysters.

Part of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES), Horn Point Lab provides a peek into environmental science research. The lab is located on the former hunting preserve of a DuPont family member. In the early 1800s, it was the estate of Charles Goldsborough, Maryland's 16th governor. On the grounds is an oyster hatchery, where scientists help restore oyster populations in the Chesapeake Bay. The lab offers public tours of the lab from Memorial Day to Labor Day. See www.umces.edu/hpl/tours.



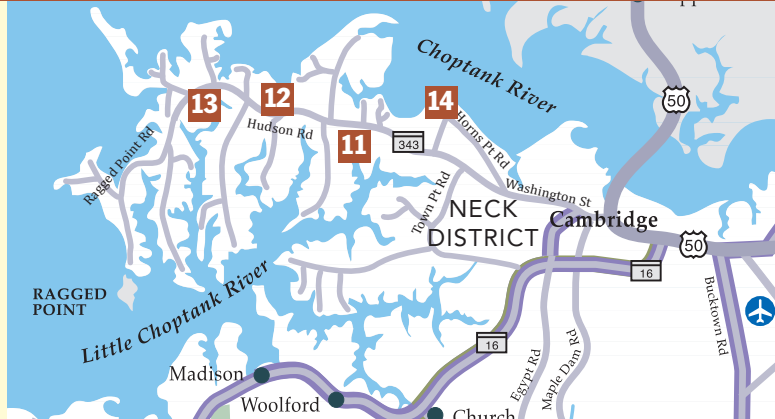
GETTING THERE: From Lewis General Store, head east on 343 back toward Cambridge. Turn left on Lover's Lane. Turn right on Horns Point Road. See entrance on left. Trail ends here; retrace your steps to Cambridge via Horns Point Road and Route 343.



HERITAGE TRAIL SITES

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NECK DISTRICT

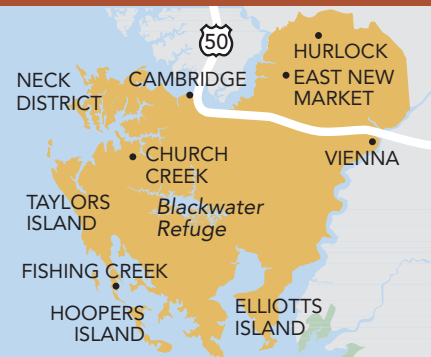




C. Allen Tyler
was a blacksmith
on Cedar Street
in Cambridge.

COURTESY: HUBERT H. WRIGHT IV

DORCHESTER COUNTY



MORE HERITAGE

TRAILS: Don't miss the other Heritage Trails brochures: "Waterfront Villages" and "Side Trips off Route 50." Pick them up at the Visitor Center in Cambridge.



Heart of the Chesapeake Country Heritage Area

2 Rose Hill Place
Cambridge, MD 21613
410.228.1000 or 800.522.TOUR
TourDorchester.org

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