

Worcester County Historical Society



Spring General 2026 Meeting

May 8, 2026
Pocomoke Fire Hall
1410 Market St
Pocomoke City, MD
5 PM Social with Dinner at 6 PM
Members: \$35.00
Non-Members: \$40.00

Menu
Chicken and Dumplings
Mashed Potatoes
Turnip Greens
Sweet Potato Biscuit
Assorted Cakes
Tea, Coffee, and Water

Please make cash or check payments to
Worcester County Historical Society
PO Box 111, Snow Hill, MD 21863

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION APRIL 30th

Board of Directors

- Jefferson Moak - President
- Cara Downey - Vice President
- Erin Scott - Secretary
- Teron Lewis - Treasurer
- Jeff Bacon
- Allison Blakeman
- Tina Busko
- Roxie Dennis
- Alicia Gibson
- Kim Jones
- Barry Laws
- Karen Neville
- Bunk Mann
- Newt Weaver
- Dr. Doretha S. Whittington



President's Message

Time to celebrate America's 250th birthday this year. The Worcester County Historical Society plans to be involved with several special events during the year, leading with the Blessing of the Combines on 1 August which celebrates Worcester County's agricultural heritage.

A recap of 2025: At its Annual Meeting in the spring, the Society was treated to a talk by Patrick Henry, Worcester County's renowned artist. Not only did he discuss many of his paintings, but he gave historical insight to growing up as an African American in Worcester County. At the same meeting, the Society awarded the Bob and Kathy Fisher Award to Barbara Purnell for her work with the Germantown School Community Heritage Center. Approximately 100 people were in attendance.

The fall luncheon was not as well attended but those present got an update from Aaron Levinthal on the latest revelations from his archaeological work at Rackliffe House. Those at the luncheon also saw the awarding of the biannual grants for various historical projects at Worcester County museums. Grants were awarded to Calvin B. Taylor House, St. Martin's Church, Rackliffe House, Museum of Ocean City, Costen House, Delmarva Discovery Museum, Henry Hotel and Furnace Town.

The board has several significant additions during 2025-2026. Since the last annual meeting, the Board has welcomed the Rev. Dr. Doretha S. Whittington from Pocomoke and Tina Busko, from Rackliffe House and Julia A. Purnell Museum. In addition, Teron S. Lewis, who works for the Town of Snow Hill and is the deputy director at Purnell Museum, agreed to assume the long-vacant position of Treasurer for the Society. Teron will also be the next president of the Snow Hill Rotary Club later this year. A great thanks to Teron for undertaking this important task.

At the 2026 Spring meeting, the membership will vote upon a revised Constitution and Bylaws for the Society. The Committee composed of Cara Downey, Alicia Gibson, Teron Lewis and Jefferson Moak spent a large amount of time reviewing the current Constitution and Bylaws, which date to 2009. The Society attempted major revisions to these documents in 2016 but the effort was fruitless. The Board has experienced some confusion as to which set of bylaws were applicable to its work. This attempt will untangle that confusion. My thanks to the members of the Committee for their work.

Please support the Worcester County Historical Society in 2026 and send articles of historical interest that we can disseminate to our members.

Jefferson M. Moak
President, Worcester County Historical Society

Silent Auction

We are hosting a silent auction at the spring dinner and are asking local businesses to donate to support our fundraising efforts. In return, we will advertise your business's donation to our event.

Donations can be mailed to WCHS, PO Box 111, Snow Hill, MD 21863



Calvin B. Taylor House
Berlin, MD



Costen House Museum
Pocomoke City, MD



Rackliffe House
Berlin, MD



Furnace Town
Snow Hill, MD

2025 Mini-Grants Recipients



Henry Hotel
Ocean City, MD



Museum of Ocean City
Ocean City, MD



St. Martin's Church
Showell, MD



Delmarva Discovery Center
Pocomoke City, MD

The Worcester County Historical Society is proud to support local history through its annual mini-grant program. Our 2025 recipients represent a diverse range of projects dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and sharing the rich heritage of Worcester County. We congratulate each awardee and look forward to the lasting impact of their work in our community.

History of Berlin

Dr. Melissa Reid

Executive Director of the Taylor House Museum

The history of Berlin dates back to around 1683 when an inn was located at the crossroads of what is now the intersection of Main and Bay Street. This crossroad was originally the intersection of the post road going to Philadelphia and an East/West Road heading towards the Atlantic Ocean. The inn was originally named Burley Inn, over the years that name was shortened to Berlin, which became the name of the settlement that grew up around the crossroads.

One of the earliest houses still standing in Berlin dates from the late 1700s, a building boom took place in the early to mid 1800s with several houses being built along what is now Main Street, many of those houses remain single family homes in use today.

Major fires in 1895, 1901 and 1904 devastated downtown Berlin. After the 1895 fire the mayor and council passed an ordinance stated that all new buildings in the downtown area must be built of brick. The majority of buildings you see today in downtown Berlin were built between 1895 and 1905, with the entire downtown listed on the National Register of Historic Places. During the 19th and 20th centuries Berlin was a thriving business hub. There were stores and industries such as the Berlin Milling Company, and the Phillips Cannery that were connected to local agriculture. In the late 1800s the Harrison Nurseries were founded in Berlin; they grew and sold plants, fruit trees as well as peaches, and other fruits. At one point in the early 20th century Harrison Nurseries was the largest mail order fruit nursery in the world.

Many town businesses were connected to the Harrison Nurseries. For example, a basket factory was located in Berlin to manufacture the baskets used to harvest and store the fruit. Once the baskets were full, they were loaded onto train cars near the train station, then the cars moved down the track to the ice plant. This business created ice that was pumped into the waiting train cars to keep the fruit cold while it traveled by railway North to cities like Philadelphia. The basket factory and train station are long gone, but the ice plant is still in operation.

In the 1960's through the mid 1980s much of Main Street was run down and deserted. Several of the buildings had metal, Formstone or wood covering the original red brick. The Atlantic Hotel sat empty and derelict with modern brick extension covering the Victorian front. It was during the late 1970s and early 1980s that many local community members realized the importance of preserving and showcasing the historic nature of Berlin's buildings.

The decision was made to put the utility lines underground along most of the downtown business area. This helped make the buildings more visible and enhanced the historic look of Main Street. Building owners began to restore and renovate existing buildings, such as Renaissance Plaza, located on the corner of Pitts and Main. A major restoration of the Atlantic Hotel into a restaurant and historic inn created a beautiful focal point for Berlin's downtown area. Another restoration was done on the home that became the Taylor House Museum.

The Taylor House Museum was founded in 1981 by a group of citizens led by local attorney Edward Hammond, his family had owned a home in Berlin since 1830, the Hammond family still owns the home today. The house that is now the location of The Taylor House dates to the 1830s and was built by the Covington family. The house is one of many homes in Berlin built around that time that are still standing today and remain single family homes.

Isaac and Amelia Covington along with their five children moved into the house in the 1830s. When Isaac Covington died in 1845 an inventory of the entire contents of the house and outbuildings was completed. That inventory also listed two enslaved humans, a woman named Charlotte and a boy named Robert who were living in the house at that time. The Covington family lived in the house through the Civil War. The most famous resident of the house was Calvin B Taylor, he and his wife Mattie owned the home from the late 1890s until the 1930s.

Mr. Taylor was a beloved Berlin resident, a teacher, lawyer, Maryland state legislator and founder of the Calvin B Taylor Bank. The bank was opened in 1890 and is still in existence today as Taylor Bank with branches in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. The Taylors made extensive upgrades to the house, including joining the main block of the house with the separate kitchen building, adding double porches, pocket doors between the parlor and the dining room, and replacing clear glass with stained glass in the upstairs and downstairs hallway. Mattie lived in the house after Calvin died, then sold it.

At one point after the 1930s the house was divided into three apartments. The museum has in its collection a variety of letters written by renters to the house owner Helen Scott Brown, complaining of leaking roofs and asking for minor repairs. The house continued to decline until the late 1970s when the town proposed to purchase the house and land, demolish the house, cut down the variety of old heritage trees and place the town post office on the property. Several local community members led by local attorney Edward Hammond, convinced the town to find another location for the post office.

The Berlin Heritage Foundation was formed in 1981 to renovate the house, and create a museum dedicated to sharing the history of Berlin. Today the Taylor House Museum operates both as a historic house and as a museum of Berlin history. The museum hosts Sunday Concerts on the Lawn, the annual Peach Festival, Book Festival, and Children's Storytelling.

The museum is open for the Christmas holiday with candlelight tours, and children's gingerbread and wassail party. Any time of the year, the museum lawn is a lovely place to sit and rest, we are home to the Dr Mary Humphreys' Arboretum, one of only two designated arboretums on the Eastern Shore. The museum itself is open from April until October 31 st as well as some dates in December. The museum is well worth a visit, we strive to tell all the stories of Berlin, including stories of Berlin African American history.

Berlin has a rich African American history reaching back prior to the Civil War. Both free and enslaved African Americans lived in communities around Berlin such as Germantown, Sinepaucent, and Flower Street. Germantown is the location of the Germantown School Community Center, which is a former Rosenwald School. The school taught African American children from 1922 until the 1950s.

Briddelltown is a historically documented community founded after the Civil War by former free Blacks and previously enslaved families. Several families purchased acres of land, and several Briddell family descents still own some of the land today.

Berlin native Charles Albert Tindley was born in 1852 to an enslaved father and a free mother, his mother died when he was a small child, so he grew up working on farms around Berlin. He taught himself to read and write, moving to Philadelphia after the Civil War. He worked as a janitor in a church while going to night school to become a minister, eventually becoming a minister in the church he had worked as a janitor.

During his time as minister, the congregation grew to 3,000 members. Rev. Tindley was a famed orator and composer, writing such hymns as By and By, The Storm is Passing Over and I'll Overcome Someday. I'll Overcome Someday became the basis for the civil rights anthem We Shall Overcome. He frequently returned to Berlin giving back to the local community even helping to fund the building of St Paul United Methodist Church located on Flower Street. Rev. Tindley has recently been celebrated in Berlin with an expanded exhibit at the Taylor House Museum, a mural in downtown Berlin and Tindley Day at the Germantown School Museum.

The restoration of Berlin's downtown area was helped by income from filming of two Hollywood movies. Runaway Bride (1999) starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere was filmed mainly on Main Street and a few other local locations, and some scenes from Tuck Everlasting starring Sissy Spacek and Ben Kingsley (2002) were filmed on Main Street as well. The income generated from both the filming of the movies and tourist visiting Berlin to see filming locations helped the small business of Berlin flourish.



2026 Bob and Kathy Fisher Award: Nancy Howard



I nominate Nancy L. Howard for the Worcester County Historical Society's 2026 "Bob and Kathy Fisher Award". She has been a tireless volunteer worker for historical preservation and has left her mark on at least three important properties in Ocean City.

Nancy is the founder and president of the Henry Hotel Foundation, Inc., which is in the process of restoring the building known as Henry's Colored Hotel on S. Division Street and Baltimore Avenue. It is one of the few African American-owned and operated properties remaining from the segregation period of 70 years ago, and served as a boarding house for Black visitors to Ocean City, unable to stay in "white-only" hotels of the "Jim Crow" era.

Nancy Howard was instrumental in securing a \$250,000 grant from Maryland's African American Preservation Grant Fund to begin the foundation work and is currently seeking additional funds from the Maryland Dept of Housing and Community Development and private sources to restore the exterior.

The ultimate goal is to turn the restored Henry Hotel into a museum and learning center focused on African American History in Worcester County. Toward that end, she is conducting one-on-one interviews with members of the Black community who remember the boarding house or stayed there while it was in operation.

Nancy has also played a role in securing grants for structural improvements to the 1891 Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum. As president of the Ocean City Museum Society for 8 years, she initiated the Storm Warriors 5-kilometer race on the Boardwalk. Since the first race in 2014, this annual event has raised \$135,400 with funds earmarked for historical preservation through the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore.

Another project that Nancy Howard has played an important part in is the restoration of the Bank of Ocean City Building on Dorchester Street. Working with the Town of Ocean City and other volunteers, including John Fager, she helped secure a grant to begin the initial renovations. The Museum of Ocean City opened to the public on May 1, 2025.

I have known Nancy for over 25 years and have had the privilege of working with her on several projects. It is with pride that I nominate her for the 2026 Bob and Kathy Fisher Award.

Hunter "Bunk" Mann

Upcoming Museum Events

This year, we're celebrating America's 250th anniversary! Explore history close to home with a lineup of 250 special events hosted by local museums and historical sites. From exhibits to talks and family-friendly programs, there's something for everyone to enjoy as we honor our shared heritage and look toward the next 250 years. To learn about other local 250 events, visit www.beachesbayswaterways.org/lower-shore-250.html

AMERICA'S 250TH
Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Future
TAYLOR HOUSE MUSEUM
208 N. Main St., Berlin, MD
A Year of Celebration

APRIL 18 4 - 8PM MUSEUM COMES ALIVE! & PIG ROAST	JUNE 14 6:00 & 8PM CONCERT & MOVIE: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION	AUG 1 10 - 3PM PEACH FESTIVAL	SEPT 30 4 - 6:30PM TELLING THE STORIES OF BERLIN HISTORY PANEL	OCT 11 7PM MOVIE: NATIONAL TREASURE	OCT 17 11 - 3PM BOOK FESTIVAL
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www.taylorhousemuseum.org

AMERICA'S 250TH
Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Future
TAYLOR HOUSE MUSEUM
208 N. Main St., Berlin, MD
A Year of Celebration

EAST COAST OUTLAWS

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
A FILM BY KEN BURNS, SARAH BOTSTEIN & DAVID SCHMIDT

CONCERT 6:00 MOVIE 8:00
SUN, JUNE 14

www.taylorhousemuseum.org

Seeking Vendors & Performers!

5th Annual JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION!

Saturday, June 20th, 2026
12 PM - 4 PM

LOOKING FOR:
Vendors - Food Trucks - Dancers
Singers - Poets - Musicians & More!

Sturgis One Room School Museum
209 Willow Street, Pocomoke, MD
sturgismuseum5@gmail.com • 443-859-3044
www.sturgisschoolmuseum.com



On August 4, 2026, celebrate the 250th anniversary and Coast Guard Day with a special open house at the Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum and festival on the Boardwalk.

MUSEUMS OF WORCESTER COUNTY

Calvin B. Taylor House Museum

Costen House Museum

Delmarva Discovery Center

Furnace Town Historic Site

Girdletree Barnes Bank

Henry Hotel

Julia A. Purnell Museum

Museum of Ocean City

Ocean City Lifesaving Station Museum

Queponco Railway Station

Rackliffe House

St. Martin's Church Museum

Sturgis One Room School Museum

OTHER HISTORIC SITES

Germantown School Community Heritage Center

Marva Theatre Performing Arts Center

PLEASE VISIT THE MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES IN OUR COUNTY!



Worcester County Historical Society Membership

Thank you for choosing to be a member of the Worcester County Historical Society. Your membership will help support our efforts in Worcester County.

Name:

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Please Circle

Individual \$10.00/year

Family \$15.00/year

Business/Patron \$25/year OR \$100/5 years

Lifetime \$150 (one time)

Renewal _____

New Member _____

Please make your check payable to
the Worcester County Historical
Society (WCHS) and mail to:

Treasurer, WCHS, PO Box 111, Snow
Hill, MD 21863

MISSION STATEMENT

The Worcester County Historical Society is a 501-C3 non-profit organization dedicated to discovering, preserving, and disseminating the rich natural and cultural history of Worcester County and the State of Maryland.



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PO Box 111
Snow Hill, MD 21863