



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB  
6/6/02  
Item #1

May 31, 2002

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Jeff Zyontz, Chief  
Countywide Planning Division

**FROM:** Gwen Wright, Supervisor *[Signature]*  
Historic Preservation Section

**SUBJECT:** Briefing on development of Montgomery County Certified Heritage Area Management Plan

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## BACKGROUND

Work has been underway since 2000 to undertake a heritage tourism initiative in Montgomery County in conjunction with the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, a state-wide program established in 1996, and administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. The Maryland Heritage Areas Program is designed to promote the economic potential of Maryland's many historic, cultural and natural resources with activities such as interpretation and tourism that are compatible with community interests and capacity.

To participate fully in the state program, a community must complete two steps:

- 1) Demonstrate a significant concentration of heritage resources, potential for developing interpretative material and visitor services, and strong community support for heritage tourism promotion—and in doing so become a "Recognized Heritage Area." **Montgomery County achieved Recognized Heritage Area status in October 2000.**
- 2) Develop a ten-year Management Plan that identifies specific recommendations about projects, target investment zones, timing, partnerships, and responsibilities for creating a heritage area. Approval of the plan by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority results in designation as a "Certified Heritage Area."

Since last summer, work has been underway on the development of the required Management Plan. An advisory committee, comprised of community leaders, is working with a team of professional planners, designers and economists to guide the plan's

development. Historic Preservation Section staff at Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning is coordinating the project. Leading the planning team is Mary Means & Associates, Inc., a planning firm from Alexandria, Virginia recognized for its success in the heritage development field, and experienced in working with state and national heritage areas across the country.

## **WHY SHOULD MONTGOMERY COUNTY BECOME A CERTIFIED HERITAGE AREA?**

A wealth of heritage resources remains from Montgomery County's centuries of interesting history. These resources range from multi-generational working farms and architectural treasures, to ghostly remnants of the Underground Railroad interwoven through the long history of the Quaker community, to early models of national technological innovation such as the Washington Aqueduct and the C&O Canal. Yet it is sometimes challenging to recognize and enjoy the region's heritage in a place that has suburbanized so rapidly. The Heritage Area Management Plan will explore how to provide better visibility for, and a better understanding of, the area's distinctive historic assets, cultural programs, and natural beauty for the education and enjoyment of both residents and visitors.

The heritage area program also can enhance the County's competitiveness as a location for business and provide a stronger heritage tourism experience for visitors (the majority of whom come to the County to visit family and friends). In a 1997 survey of current County park users, 79% of the respondents said they would participate in guided tours at historic sites in the county, 86% would attend live demonstrations about local history, and 74% would attend lectures—clearly there is potential to expand access and activities associated with Montgomery County's heritage. Through the heritage areas program, it is hoped that Montgomery County's heritage resources can be better conserved, linked and explored, and presented to the public in ways that will increase awareness, appreciation and stewardship of our resources.

There are a number of tangible benefits of Heritage Area Certification, such as:

- Grants for up to 50% of the cost of project planning, design, interpretation, marketing and programming.
- Broad program support from State government including: the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Maryland Board of Higher Education, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of General Services (DGS).
- Within Target Investment Zones, grants for up to 50% of the cost and loans to local jurisdictions or other appropriate entities for property preservation, restoration, development and acquisition.
- Within Target Investment Zones, loans for economic development projects from the proceeds of revenue bonds sold by the Authority.
- Within Target Investment Zones, state income tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified heritage structures (including non-historic significant structures), and the authority to provide local property tax credits for such rehabilitation.

## **PROGRESS TO DATE AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

Staff and the consultants have been working intensively to gather baseline data, identify key heritage tourism themes, strategies, and opportunities, begin locating the boundaries of Target Investment Zones, and publicize the heritage tourism effort.

There have been four public meetings at various locations around Montgomery County to provide information and get input from citizens and property owners interested in the development of the Heritage Area Management Plan. The Advisory Committee has met five times to discuss the progress of the plan. Two newsletters regarding this project have been distributed (copies are attached.) Nine "Key Person Interviews" have been conducted with County leaders to get additional perspectives.

All of the information and input, which has been received, is now being synthesized and the framework for the Heritage Area Management Plan is taking shape. Detailed information about the current ideas for the Plan will be shared with the Planning Board during the June 6<sup>th</sup> briefing.

The Plan is scheduled to be in final draft form by the end of August. Hopefully, it will be reviewed by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority in October and Montgomery County will, at that time, be designated as a Certified Heritage Area.

## **PLANNING BOARD INPUT**

The June 6<sup>th</sup> briefing is intended to keep the Planning Board informed about the progress of this important project and to get input on the direction which the Heritage Management Plan is taking.

The Board has a key role in this effort: first, as the stewards of numerous historic properties located on Parkland throughout Montgomery County; secondly, as experts on the county's land use goals; and thirdly, as an agency with significant interest in economic development goals for the region.

No action is being requested at this time; however, the Plan will eventually need to be incorporated into the Montgomery County General Plan as an amendment (this is a requirement of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.) Thus, the Board's involvement at this early stage is essential.

# Heritage Update

## A Newsletter about the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan

VOLUME 2 • SPRING 2002

### May Community Workshops

Please meet with the Advisory Committee and their consultants to discuss preliminary ideas for implementing a heritage tourism program in Montgomery County. If you have questions about the meetings or need directions call (301) 563-3400.

#### TUESDAY

May 7, 2002

7:30 PM to 9:30 PM

Sandy Spring Museum  
17901 Bentley Road  
Sandy Spring, MD

#### THURSDAY

May 9, 2002

7:30 PM to 9:30 PM

Memorial United  
Methodist Church  
17821 Elgin Road  
Poolesville, MD

### Advisory Committee Explores Ideas for Heritage Area

For the past few months, the citizen's Advisory Committee and the consulting team have worked to evaluate the breadth and depth of Montgomery County's heritage resources. As a result they have identified key opportunities and challenges that will be important to consider when crafting the management plan. Among the opportunities that Montgomery County possesses with regard to heritage development are:

- **Vibrant heritage and compelling stories.**

Montgomery County has a complex and evocative history that is still evident today in the form of historic sites that dot the county, communities with strong cultural identities such as the Quaker community in Sandy Spring, and remnants of older landscapes, particularly the farm communities in the western part of the county. Three story themes have been identified to provide an organizing framework for highlighting the County's heritage. They are: Quaker & Underground Railroad History; Farming History; and, the history of Technological Innovation, which includes such early achievements as the construction of canals, railroads, and aqueducts to more recent history involving biotechnology.

- **Excellent market potential.**

Tourism already plays a role in strengthening the county economy, principally by providing lodging options within close proximity to Washington, DC. Heritage tourism could contribute to existing efforts by encouraging residents to spend closer to home, therefore stemming the leakage of dollars outside the county, and persuade current visitors to stay longer and spend more money.

- **Extensive recreation infrastructure.**

The network of existing and planned trails accessible by foot, bike or horseback, and the navigable waterways, provide a first-rate amenity for county residents and could serve as a link between historic sites and other heritage resources.

- **Splendid natural resources.**

The county's natural beauty enhances the setting of its historic resources, and makes the journey to the heritage sites a pleasurable one. With the largest park system in the United States and the 90,000 acre Agricultural Reserve, the county has retained many of the stream valleys, forests and fields that are an indispensable part of the county's heritage story.

continued on page 2 ➤



# Explore Montgomery County's Heritage

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Here's a sampling of upcoming countywide events where you can have fun learning more about our rich heritage.

### ANNUAL MARYLAND HOUSE & GARDEN PILGRIMAGE

Sunday, May 19th, 2002

Nine public and private historic sites will be open to the public and feature the western part of Montgomery County. Call (301) 983-1537 for information and reservations.

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORY DAYS

Saturday, June 29 and  
Sunday, June 30, 2002

25+ historic sites throughout Montgomery County will be open from noon – 4 PM for special tours, activities, exhibits and more.

For additional information contact the Montgomery County Historical Society at (301) 762-1492

## Questions or Comments?

For additional information contact Gwen Marcus Wright, Heritage Area Project Coordinator & Historic Preservation Supervisor, Montgomery County Department of Park & Planning at (301) 563-3400 or via e-mail at [gwen.wright@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:gwen.wright@mncppc-mc.org). You can also visit our web site at [WWW.MONTGOMERYHERITAGE.ORG](http://WWW.MONTGOMERYHERITAGE.ORG)

*continued from page 1*

- **Many potential partners.** Montgomery County is fortunate to have several public agencies and non-profit organizations that are active stewards of the County's history and heritage. The result is the potential to create a strong network of heritage advocates that could work collaboratively to significantly raise the profile and level of support for heritage conservation and education.

Tempering these opportunities are several challenges – the first of which is overcoming the perception that there is "no heritage" or that the region's heritage has been overcome by suburban development. Another factor is that more and more of the County's historic resources (particularly historic buildings) are coming under public ownership, a by-product of the County's highly successful efforts to purchase open space.

- With these issues and opportunities in mind, two community meetings were held in late January to explore how a heritage tourism program might be implemented in the county. Meeting participants felt strongly that there is a wealth of heritage resources, but that it is difficult for people to find out about them. Making connections among the stories and sites was seen as very important.
- Based on these discussions, preliminary ideas were developed that seek to reinforce and build on existing efforts, and fit well with the resources, culture and sensibilities of county residents.

The heritage area will seek to:

- 1) **Make Better Connections & Raise the Profile of Montgomery County's Heritage.**
- 2) **Foster Stewardship of Historic Buildings & Sites.**
- 3) **Make the County's History Come Alive.**
- 4) **Encourage Residents to Become Tourists, Entice Visitors to Stay Longer & Return More Often.**

Potential strategies for accomplishing these include creating a virtual visitor center—designing a web site where residents and visitors can learn more about the things to see and do to discover the County's authentic heritage. Grants for enhanced interpretive programming at museums and historic sites, and along trails, could provide families with a variety of fun learning experiences and build a greater awareness of their community's heritage. Packaging special events and promoting small-scale heritage enterprises such as restaurants, art galleries, shops and B&Bs would assist local businesses and entice visitors already coming to the area to stay longer and spend more money.

**These preliminary ideas and more will be discussed at community meetings on May 7th in Sandy Spring and on May 9th in Poolesville.**

## Exploring the Story Themes

In an earlier stage of the heritage area project, three interpretive themes were identified—1) Quakers & the Underground Railroad; 2) Farming; and, 3) Technological Innovation. The interpretive themes serve as an organizing framework for telling the stories of Montgomery County's heritage and are explored below.



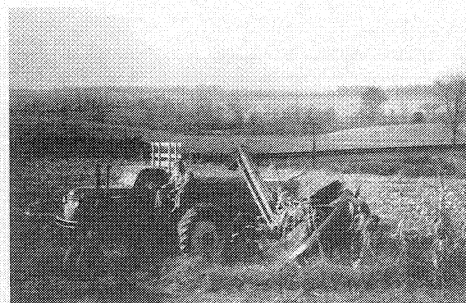
The abolitionist Quaker community of Sandy Spring was a haven for slaves making their escape along the Underground Railroad to the north.

*Photo courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society.*

### Quakers & the Underground Railroad.

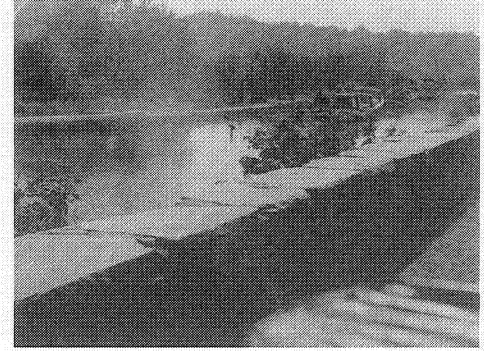
In the early 1700s Quakers settled in the region and established a tight-knit community in Sandy Spring that exists to this day. Members of this community became leaders in innovative agricultural practices, education, and financial institutions. One example is Sandy Spring National Bank, the oldest bank founded in Montgomery County. It was established by Quaker farmers in Sandy Spring and continues to this day. The Quakers were strong supporters of abolishing slavery. Not surprisingly, the Sandy Spring community became a safe haven for slaves escaping to the north along the clandestine Underground Railroad. Sandy Spring also was home to the first freed black community in the County. Some of their descendants still live in Sandy Spring. Today, people can learn more about the Underground Railroad and Quaker community in Montgomery County by visiting the Sandy Spring Museum and the Slave Museum in Sandy Spring, and Oakley Cabin in Brookeville.

**Farming.** Montgomery County has been a fertile landscape since the earliest days of its settlement by Native Americans. In the 1700s European settlers established tobacco plantations, bringing the first intensive farming practices to the county. These plantations relied upon slave labor and by 1790 approximately one-third of the county population were slaves. One of those slaves was Josiah Henson, whose memoirs are credited with inspiring Harriet Beecher Stowe to write her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Economic changes and soil depletion caused by tobacco prompted shifts in the county's agricultural economy. Grains, and wheat in particular, became the predominant crop and ancillary businesses such as mills were established. This changed again in the 1900s and dairy farming became the chief form of agriculture. Today, dairy farms still dot the landscape while newer enterprises such as turf farms, horse stables, and u-pick produce stands have developed to supplement or replace traditional farming practices.



Although turf farms and horse stables have replaced some of the traditional farming enterprises like wheat and tobacco, agriculture is still a predominant feature of western Montgomery County.

*Photo courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society.*



Technological innovations like the engineering advances required to construct the C&O Canal and its bridges, locks and aqueducts, have been and continue to be an important part of Montgomery County's heritage.

*Photo courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society.*

**Technological Innovation.** For centuries Montgomery County has been a crucible for technological innovation. Early engineering feats include the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal that served as a key means of transporting farm products, and the Washington Aqueduct, constructed alongside the C&O Canal to tap into the Potomac River watershed and foster the growth of Washington, DC. These endeavors were supported by stone quarries in the western part of the County. Quakers developed farming innovations that helped restore agricultural land depleted by tobacco. The construction of the B&O Railroad line was part of a larger American industrial expansion and heralded the burgeoning development of the county. As the federal presence grew in the Washington region in the 20th century, research institutions like the National Institutes of Health redefined much of modern medicine. Important discoveries, including the human genome project, continue today in the County's many biotechnology companies.



## Plan Schedule

### Summer/Fall 2001

#### ASSESSING RESOURCES, DEVELOPING A VISION & GOALS

**Key Questions:** What do we want to accomplish?

What stories do we want to tell about our heritage?

**Outreach Activities:** One-on-one interviews

### Winter 2002

#### DEVELOPING & TESTING IDEAS

**Key Question:** What strategies will help us to achieve our goals?

**Outreach Activities:** Community Workshops

### Spring 2002

#### DEVELOPING & TESTING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**Key Questions:** What projects and programs will help us to achieve our goals?

Who will oversee implementation?

**Outreach Activities:** Community Workshop & Focus Group Meetings

### Summer 2002

#### FINAL PLAN

**Key Question:** Are we ready to start?

**Outreach Activities:** Constituency Briefings, Public Presentation

Montgomery County  
Department of Park  
and Planning  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

## Get Involved

There are a number of ways  
to become involved in  
developing the plan.

#### You can:

- Join our mailing list and receive our newsletter with the latest information.
- Participate in community workshops.
- Tell us your thoughts and ideas by sending us an email.
- Call (301) 563 - 3400 for more information about other ways to participate.

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE