



Master Docent Series Workshops 2025

February 22, 2025

8:30am-4:00pm

Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

located at 15 W Church St. Frederick MD

Recommend Parking at Court Street or Church Street Parking Decks

Themes

US 250th * Lafayette Display

Storytelling * Reaching New Audiences * Dark Tourism

Registration includes lunch and lite breakfast

\$40 for Frederick County residents/docents

\$45 non-Frederick County residents/docents

Register at Visit Frederick link below

<https://www.visitfrederick.org/master-docent-series/>

Email mmannix@frederickcountymd.gov for more information



8:30am Registration, Continental Breakfast, Networking

9:00 am “US 250th: Frederick County Commission”

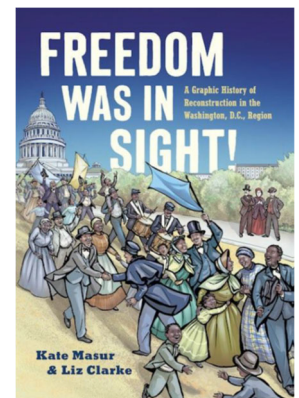
Shuan Butcher, co-chair of the Frederick County US 250th Commission

As we approach the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution, and its lasting impacts on our culture, the Commission will be coordinating efforts and activities on a local Frederick County level. Learn how you can be involved in this milestone anniversary.

9:30 am “Reaching New Audiences: Crossroads of War & Freedom, Website and a Graphic History of the Reconstruction Era”

Dean Herrin, Nation Capital Region Chief Historian, retired, National Park Service

Two recent public history projects are hoping to attract new audiences to the Civil War and Reconstruction Eras, especially to the experiences of local African Americans in these eras. The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area has relaunched the updated *Crossroads of War and Freedom* website (<https://crossroadsofwar.org>), created in 2012 by the Catoclin Center for Regional Studies. The website features new essays and other material, including new additions on local African American history. A new graphic history of the Reconstruction Era, *Freedom Was in Sight!*, was also published recently. The book details this important time in American History when over four million African Americans made the transition from enslavement to freedom, and the groundwork was laid for the expansion of civil rights in the country. The National Capital Region of the National Park Service commissioned this book, which covers the Washington, DC and surrounding region, including Frederick County. This illustrated presentation will discuss these two projects, and focus on some of the personal stories highlighted in them.



Dean Herrin, Ph.D., is the former Chief Historian of the National Capital Region, National Park Service, now retired. From 2000 to 2012, he was the co-coordinator of the Catoclin Center for Regional Studies, a collaborative project of the National Park Service and Frederick Community College.

10:30am *“A Story of Two Churches: Moving from the Past, Building a Better Future”*

Joan D. Thomas, Asbury United Methodist and Sarah H. Heald, All Saints Episcopal

"The Story of Two Churches" is a 2022 AARCH Society documentary. It explores the shared history of two of Frederick's oldest churches, an African American church, Asbury United Methodist, and a white church, All Saints' Episcopal. After looking at the period of enslavement and emancipation, the film looks at more recent history and how the two congregations have worked together in the last decade. The documentary ends with interviews of people who have taken part in community conversations, conveying a message of hope for race relations today. The presenters will give a brief introduction, show the 30-minute documentary, and then facilitate discussion and answer questions.

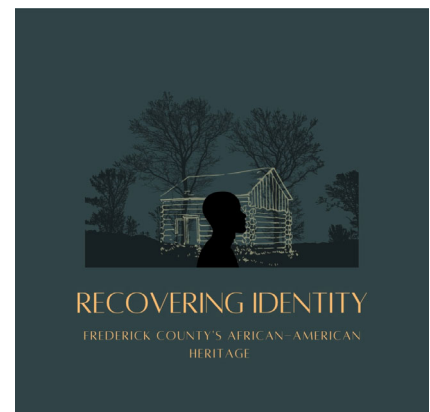
Joan D. Thomas is a Program Analyst currently employed with USAMMDA at Ft. Detrick. Joan joined AARCH in 2015 to deepen her knowledge of Frederick County's African American history and to support her mother who was a Living Treasure. She and her family are 5th generation Fredericktonians and have spent many years researching their family history. Joan is a member of Asbury United Methodist Church and was interviewed for this documentary. Joan has her B.S. in Human Services and is a member of the AARCH Research Committee.

Sarah H. Heald is a retired National Park Service historian, curator, and exhibits planner. She has a MA in American History and has been a member of AARCH Society since 2013. She has worked on a variety of AARCH Society projects and has been a member of the Education Committee since 2018. She is also a member of All Saints' Episcopal Church and was on the team that made this documentary in 2021-22.

11:30 am *“Recovering Identity: A Final Update”*

Elizabeth Comer, Catoclin Furnace Historical Society

12:00 pm LUNCH



12:30pm “Interpreting Things That Go Bump In The Night” Panel Discussion

Many people like a good ghost story but is it always appropriate to share them at an historic site. How do you interpret your site's paranormal history? Is it always in keeping with the site's educational mission? How do you train your docents to interpret truth from fiction? How do you document those bumps in the night? Who do you let do the documentation? How do you show respect to those who may be lingering at your site after their deaths? Are there best practices that should be followed when we broaden how we present the story of our site and its people to include the paranormal? We will hear from several members of our history community about what their sites do and what they think about doing this kind of work at history sites.

***Panelists:** Chris Haugh of Mount Olivet Cemetery, Elizabeth Comer of Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Kari Saavedra of Frederick County Parks & Recreation, David Price of National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Mary Atwell of Hood College Archives, Rhonda Russo of Bump in the Night Investigations and James R. Castle author of “Brunswick, MD: Ghosts, Myths & Legends”.*

1:30 pm “*Welcoming Visitors: The Art of Storytelling and Connection*” Heidi Schlag, Principal Culture-Link Communications LLC

Discover how storytelling can transform your museum tours into meaningful experiences that leave a lasting impact. This session will focus on making visitors feel welcome, tailoring interpretation to their interests, and balancing stories with facts to engage diverse audiences. Walk away with practical tools to connect with visitors and bring your museum’s history to life.

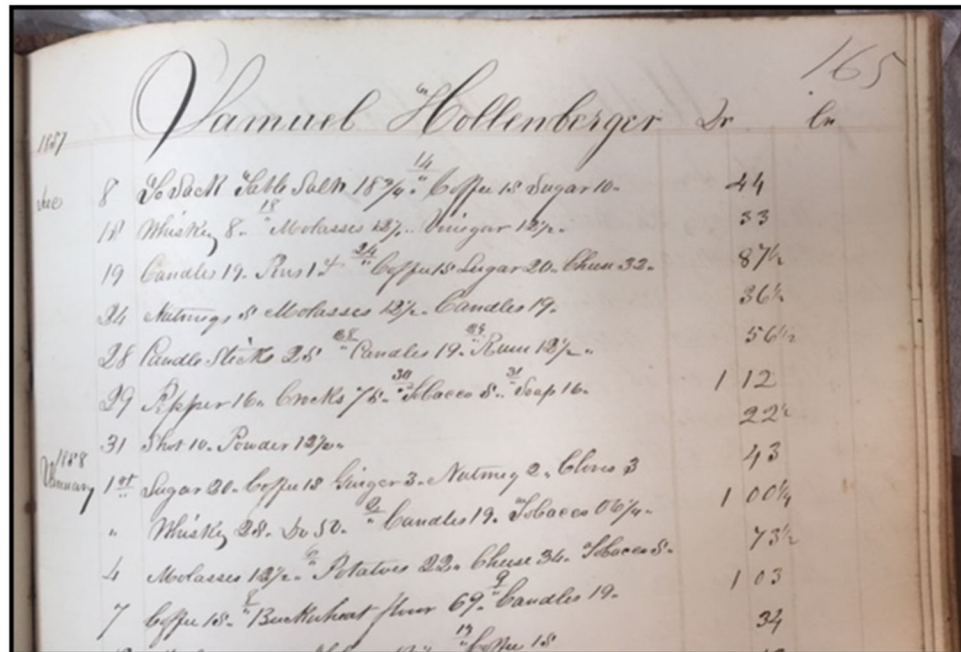
***Heidi Glatfelter Schlag** is a marketer, history lover, and traveler who founded Culture-Link Communications to help heritage and cultural organizations build their brands and expand their reach. A strategic thinker and storyteller, Heidi combines data-driven insights with creative narratives to engage audiences and drive support for history and heritage organizations. She has 25 years of marketing and communications experience with the C&O Canal Trust, the Greater Baltimore History Alliance, and the Heritage Museums of Havre de Grace. She holds a master’s degree in Communications Management from Towson University, is earning her Certificate in Interpretive Planning from the National Association of Interpretation, and serves on the board of the National Road Heritage Foundation in Boonsboro.*

2:30pm *“History Conversations: Shopping in an 1850s Canal Town:: A Material Culture Mystery Story”*

Blyth McManus, Museum Curator C&O Canal National Historical Park

In the museum collection of the C&O Canal National Historical Park is a shop ledger from a merchant in Williamsport, MD. Tracking purchases made between 1856-1858, the ledger provides tantalizing glimpses into the everyday lives of its customers. Materials like flour, spices, and produce don't usually survive long enough to become part of the archeological record, but these are often the details that help us connect to the human side of history. It is also a glimpse into women's history; although many (but not all) of the names are men, often the women did the actual shopping using their husbands' accounts. The owner of the ledger and the location of the shop are unknown. However, the ledger provides important historical context to the park and the local area, gives researchers a glimpse into everyday life, and potentially provides additional context to the area's archeological sites. New perspectives await in the pages of this mystery ledger.

Blyth McManus is the museum curator at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, which stretches 184.5 miles from Georgetown in Washington, DC to Cumberland, MD. She holds a Master of Arts in Art History from George Mason University, where she studied the interaction of art forms and public spaces, and a Graduate Certificate in Native American Studies from Montana State University. Sharing information about the park's collection items for the benefit of others is one of the guiding principles in her curatorial work.



3:30pm “VIFCO: Did Your Learn This In School?”

Tom Vitanza, Registered Architect in MD (AIA, NCARB)

Sets of slides have been recently found in the collection of Washington County Historical Society. These slides produced by VIFCO (the Video Industrial Film Corporation) were apparently produced as educational visual materials for television but also possibly for schools, fraternal and service organizations. VIFCO has been found in the 1952-53 Polk City Directory for Hagerstown. Research is currently being undertaken to determine if they also had operations in Frederick. Learn more about the origins of this slide collection as we view slides of a few local landmarks taken 1952-1961 using an old-fashioned slide projector!

Tom Vitanza is a Registered Architect in MD (AIA, NCARB, etc). He retired in 2022 after 42 years with the National Park Service most recently as the Senior Historical Architect for the Historic Preservation Training Center and Park Facility Management Division. Tom is currently the Montgomery County Area Rep for Maryland Historical Trust but keeps active in Frederick and Washington Counties where he moved in 1982. Tom is also active with Montgomery Preservation, Inc., The National Preservation Institute, and the Bucks County Community College (PA) Historic Preservation program as a Board Member as well as continuing in an Emeritus position with HPTC.



Special “Where in the Word is Miss Weagly” exhibit on display.

Miss Louise A. Weagly was a mathematics teacher and Supervisor of Mathematics for Frederick County (MD) Board of Education. She was a Baltimore native and Fredericktonian known for her passion for travel. Louise explored over 80 countries in her lifetime, capturing the beauty of urban and rural landscapes. Following her adventures she would often present slideshows to local organizations. In 2011, the FCPL Maryland Room received her remarkable collection of nearly 10,000 color slides taken from 1950 to 1982, showcasing her worldly adventures across every continent (except Antarctica!). We invite you take a journey through Miss Weagly's lens.