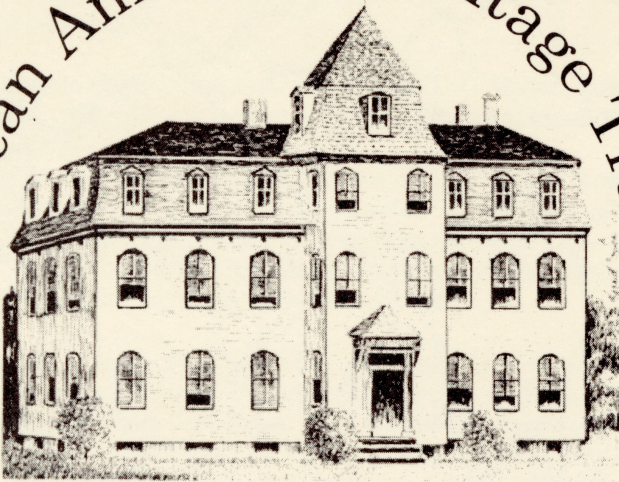


African American Heritage Trails

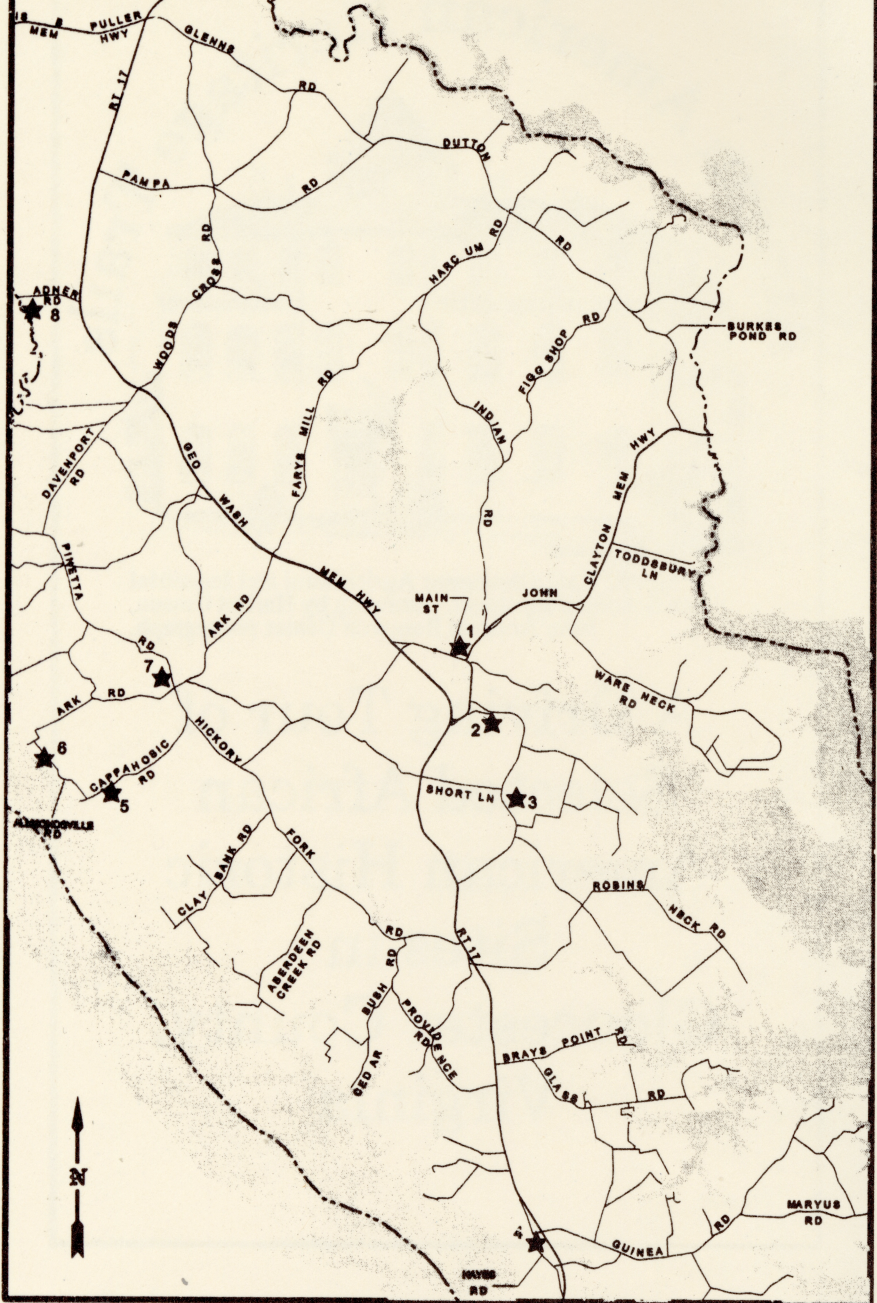


Richmond Hall, Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial High School, Cappahosic. Drawing by Harriet Cowen, from Amistad Research Center photograph.

A Driving Tour of  
Selected African  
American Historic  
Sites in  
Gloucester County,  
Virginia

# GLOUCESTER COUNTY

★ Location of African American Heritage Sites



Directions to site 1: From the Courtcircle travel .5 miles south on Main Street to 6739 Main Street.

Directions to Site 2: From site 1 head south on Main Street for .8 miles. Turn left onto T. C. Walker Road. Travel .6 miles. Site 2 is located on the right.

Directions to site 3: From site 2 continue on T. C. Walker Road for 1.7 miles. The school is located at 6099 T. C. Walker Road.

Directions to site 4: From site 3 continue on T. C. Walker Road for 1.9 miles to Route 17. Turn left onto Route 17. Travel 6.1 miles to Hook Road (there is a Hardees Restaurant on the corner). Turn right. Travel .1 miles on Hook Road; the lot to the right at the stop sign is the site of the former Hayes Post Office.

Directions to site 5: From site 4 turn right onto Hayes Road. Travel .6 miles to Route 17. Turn left onto Route 17 North. Travel 4.4 miles to Hickory Fork Road. Turn left onto Hickory Fork Road. Travel 6.4 miles to Cappahosic Road. Turn left onto Cappahosic road. Travel 1.9 miles to site of Cappahosic school, 3379 Cappahosic Road on the right.

Directions to site 6: From site 5 continue .4 miles on Cappahosic Road. Turn right onto Allmondsville Road. Travel .8 miles to the Moton Home. It is located on the left, 6498 Allmondsville Road. The site is now a private home.

Directions to site 7: From site 6 travel northwest .5 miles on Allmondsville Road . Turn right onto Ark Road; follow Ark Road for 2.3 miles to its intersection with Hickory Fork Road. Turn Left onto Hickory Fork Road. Travel .2 miles to Bethel Church, 2987 Hickory Fork Road.

Directions to site 8: From site 7 travel .2 miles back to Ark Road. Turn left at the intersection and travel 2.9 miles to Route 17. Turn left onto Route 17 (North). Travel 5.2 miles to Adner Road. Turn left onto Adner Road and travel 1 mile to the bridge where the Potomac separates Gloucester County from King & Queen County. The historic marker is located at this site.

## Selected Gloucester County African American Historic Sites

Soon after the settlement of Jamestown, Gloucester County was formed from York County in 1651. The African American presence then and throughout the last 350 years is being celebrated during the County's Anniversary in 2001 and beyond. This heritage has significantly influenced the County's development and culture and the overall African American culture. We hope that you enjoy and are enriched by the information on this tour.

Visit us on the web  
[www.gloucester350celebration.org](http://www.gloucester350celebration.org)



Mr. Thomas Calhoun  
Walker



### **Site 1 – Thomas C. Walker Home**

Born a slave in 1862, Thomas Calhoun Walker became one of the first black men to practice law in Gloucester County and some historical accounts suggest the first in Virginia.

His many achievements are summarized on a marker in front of his home which reads... "Here lived Thomas Calhoun Walker the first black to practice law in Gloucester County and a civil rights spokesman who vigorously advocated education and land ownership for blacks. Mr. Walker was elected for two terms to Gloucester's Board of Supervisors, serving from 1891 to 1895. President William McKinley appointed him the Commonwealth's first black collector of customs in 1893. He became the only black to hold statewide office in President Roosevelt's Works Project Administration when he was appointed Consultant and Advisor on Negro Affairs in 1934."

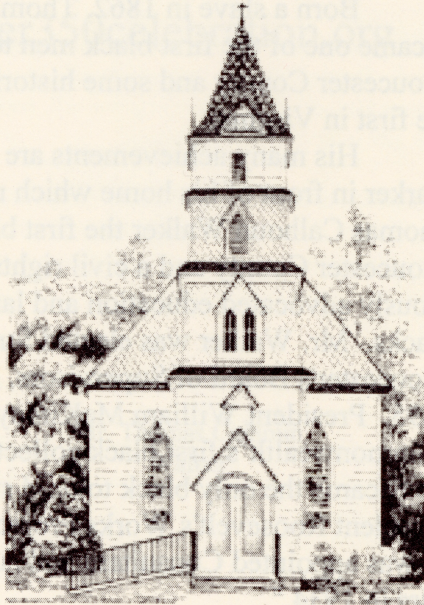
## Site 2 – Zion Poplars Baptist Church

Established in 1866, Zion Poplars Baptist Church is one of the oldest independent African American congregations in Gloucester County. The founding mothers and fathers first met for religious services under seven united poplar trees, four of which still stand on the church grounds.

The church building, which dates to 1894, is an excellent example of 19<sup>th</sup> century gothic revival style with vernacular detailing. The spectacular interior of the church exhibits the creative craftsmanship of Mr. Frank Braxton, a former slave. Mr. Braxton, early congregants, their descendants, and war veterans are buried in the old and new cemeteries.

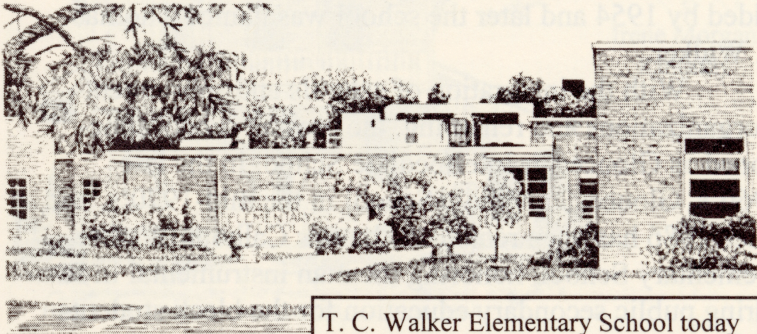
Like most independent black churches established during the Reconstruction era, Zion Poplars was a multi-functional institution, serving the spiritual, educational, and economic needs of its congregants and the larger community.

That spirit of mutual aid persists among its current congregants, many of whom are descendants of Zion Poplar's founders. Zion Poplars Baptist Church is listed on the Virginia and National Historic Landmarks Registers.



### **Site 3 – Thomas C. Walker Elementary School/Gloucestter Training School**

The present elementary school building stands on the site of the Gloucester Training School. The school was established in 1921 through the efforts of T. C. Walker and others as the first free public secondary school for black students in Gloucester County.



As in the rest of the South, public educational opportunities for blacks in Gloucester were limited in the early 1920's. While under the same administration as white schools, the separate black public schools received less funding, offered a shorter school year, and stopped at the seventh or even sixth grade level. In response to these conditions, lawyer Walker appealed to the school board, but was told that no money was available for secondary education of black students. Blacks were assumed to need only training in basic reading and writing. Mr. Walker led a fundraising effort for a secondary school, donating the down payment himself. Other funding sources included Julius Rosenwald of Chicago as well as other national and local donors. The school was known as one of the Rosenwald schools.

The two classroom Gloucester Training School (so named to reassure those in the white community who

opposed publicly supported higher education for black students) opened in 1921 with an eighth grade class, adding ninth grade the following year, and eventually expanding through the eleventh grade, with a campus of several buildings.

In the early 1950's a new brick building was constructed to serve the entire county's black student population in grades one through eleven. A twelfth grade was added by 1954 and later the school was named Thomas C. Walker.

With the integration of schools and subsequent reorganizations and renaming, the present school functioned as Gloucester Intermediate School in the late 1960's, Gloucester Middle School in the mid-1970's, and since 1986 has been renamed Thomas Calhoun Walker Elementary School, honoring the man instrumental in securing public secondary education for the black students of Gloucester.

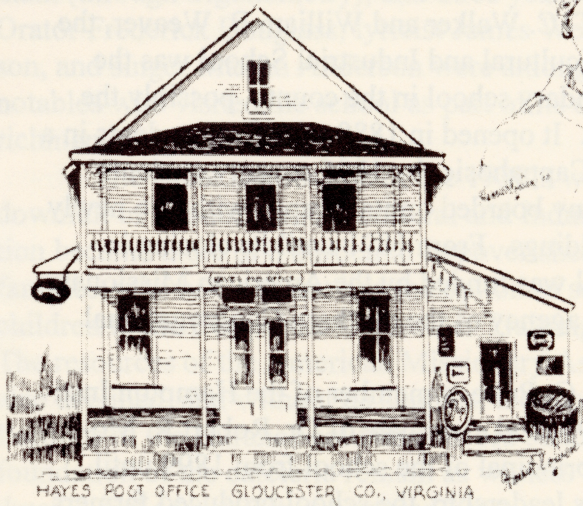
In 2001, the state department of Historic Resources approved a highway marker for the site.

#### **Site 4 – Irene Morgan and Hayes Store**

In July 1944 a young mother named Irene Morgan (later Kirkaldy) boarded the Greyhound bus at the Old Hayes Store Post Office. A short time after boarding, and with additional passengers joining them, the driver ordered Mrs. Morgan and another black passenger seated next to her to give up their seats so that whites might be seated. Mrs. Morgan refused. After warning that he would have her arrested, the driver called upon the sheriff in Saluda (Middlesex County). The sheriff boarded the bus with a warrant, but Mrs. Morgan threw the warrant out the window and kicked the sheriff. She was eventually arrested by a deputy and jailed.

Enlisting the help of the State Conference of the





Irene Morgan  
Kirkaldy

Old Hayes Post Office

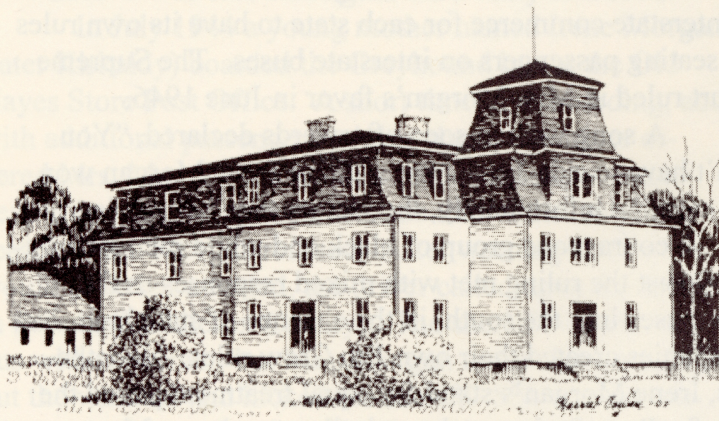
NAACP, Irene Morgan appealed her case through the local, state, and Supreme courts. Her lawyers, Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie, argued that it was a burden to interstate commerce for each state to have its own rules for seating passengers on interstate buses. The Supreme Court ruled in Mrs. Morgan's favor in June 1946.

A song written soon afterwards declared, "You don't have to ride Jim Crow... 'cause Irene Morgan won her case!" Unfortunately, the victory was not so clear-cut. A courageous group of black and white men attempting to test the ruling met with mixed responses as they rode buses into the south; in the absence of state laws, bus companies created their own Jim Crow rules. Nonetheless, Irene Morgan's stand for equal treatment paved the way for Rosa Parks to take a similar stand on a Montgomery, Alabama city bus eleven years later.

## Site 5 – Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School

Founded by local black residents under the leadership of lawyer T. C. Walker and William B. Weaver, the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School was the first black secondary school in the county, possibly the first in Virginia. It opened in 1888 with four students in a vacant store in Cappahosic; by 1896 seventy students studied, and many boarded on its campus with two newly constructed buildings. From 1891 until its closing in 1933, the school was funded by the American Missionary Association, an agency of the northern Congregational Church.

William G. Price, a member of the Hampton Institute class of 1890 (and classmate of Dr. Robert R. Moton), served as principal of the school from 1899 until 1933. Under his leadership, the school produced farmers trained in the latest agricultural techniques, teachers for black public schools, and many students who went on to college at Hampton and elsewhere. Its academic program, despite the school's name, expanded to offer four



Douglass Hall, dormitory and classroom building, named for Frederick Douglass, who spoke at the school's graduation in 1894.

years of English (including black writers), four years of Latin and German, two years of French, four years of math (through trigonometry), and three years of science. Orator Frederick Douglass, lyricist James Weldon Johnson, and singer Marian Anderson were among the many notables who visited the school as part of its cultural enrichment program.

The Great Depression of the 1930's was the downfall of Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial. Tuition became more of a burden to impoverished black families, who now at least had the option of sending their children to the free public Gloucester Training School. The resources of the American Missionary Association also declined, and without its support, the school closed. Portions of the entrance columns, an old bench, and the foundation of the cafeteria remain as witness to the dreams and opportunities nurtured here.

The historical marker for the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School is located on the private property of the late Neill A. McLean, Sr., former director of the AMA sponsored Brick Rural Life School in Bricks, N.C. The Gloucester A&I School was purchased by Mr. McLean from the AMA in 1946. Mr. McLean worked for the AMA from 1935 until 1954.

### **Site 6 – Robert R. Moton Home**

A stately mansion on the banks of the York River at Cappahosic, Holly Knoll (also known as the Manor House) was built in 1935 as the retirement home of Dr. Robert R. Moton. Dr. Moton, the second president of Tuskegee Institute and successor to Dr. Booker T. Washington, guided Tuskegee's progression from a normal school (teacher training school) into an accredited college and university. Although he had served more than 50

years at Tuskegee and Hampton Institute, Dr. Moton's retirement was far from quiet. His famous invitation "Come to Cappahosic" brought many friends and fellow citizens from near and far to discuss and resolve problems, particularly in the field of education.

After Dr. and Mrs. Moton's deaths in 1940, the Moton Conference Center was established to continue Dr. Moton's work in education. Dr. Frederick Patterson, Moton's son-in-law and successor at Tuskegee, expanded the site into a full conference center by adding residential space and training facilities. During the 1950's and 60's plans were made for the economic development of historically black colleges and universities. Continued from Dr. Moton's days the Center served as a "think tank" on



social justice and other issues. The United Negro College Fund was conceived here, and strategies were planned for desegregation of lunch counters. On a bench under the 400-year-old live oak, Dr. Martin Luther King is said to have drafted his "I Have A Dream" speech.

Manor House, a national and state historic landmark, is now the private residence of Debra and Ben Alexander. The Alexanders have renamed the Center *Legacy* to reflect their belief that they have been entrusted with a historical resource valuable to all Americans, especially African Americans.

## Site 7 – Bethel Baptist Church

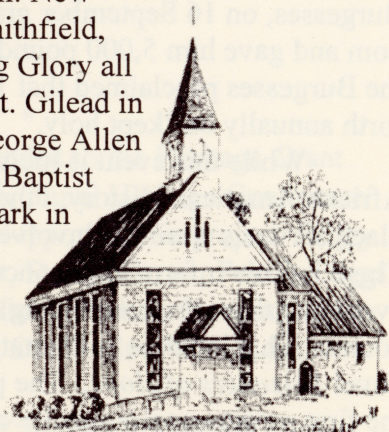
Once known as the Old Sassafras Stage Church, Bethel Baptist Church is the oldest independent African American congregation in Sassafras and one of the oldest in Gloucester County. Bethel dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Sassafras Stage and nearby Allmond's Wharf were at the peak of their activity as hubs of commerce and transportation.

Bethel was one of several black Baptist churches founded during the Reconstruction era. In 1867, Dr. L. Catlett Stubbs donated one acre of land to his formerly enslaved butler James F. Lemon. Mr. Lemon and other devout individuals used the land for their church, first meeting on crude benches under brush arbors, then constructing a small but well-built church with an altar railing, pulpit, and gallery.

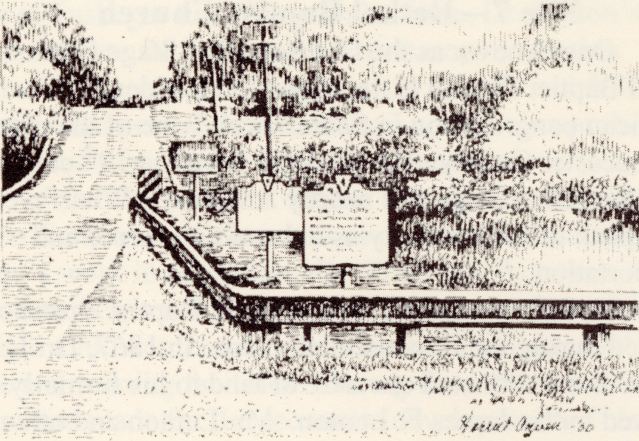
The present church sanctuary dates to 1889. The chairmen of the building committee were carpenter George Leigh and bricklayer/plasterer Thomas Calhoun Walker, Sr. (father of lawyer T.C. Walker, who is buried in the cemetery of Bethel Church).

Five daughter churches developed as offshoots from the Bethel congregation: New Mount Zion, Mt. Gilead, Smithfield, Shepherdsville, and Morning Glory all located in Gloucester and Mt. Gilead in Williamsburg. Governor George Allen officially recognized Bethel Baptist Church as an historic landmark in 1997.

In 2001, the state department of Historic Resources approved a highway maker for the site.



1998



### Site 8 – The Servants' Plot

During the summer of 1663, indentured servants (held for several years of service) in the Poropotank River and Purtan Bay region plotted an insurrection against their masters to occur on 13 September 1663. It was prevented when John Berkenhead, servant of Maj. John Smith of Gloucester County, informed the authorities of the planned uprising. As a reward for "his honest affection of the preservation of this Country" the Virginia House of Burgesses, on 16 September granted Berkenhead his freedom and gave him 5,000 pounds of tobacco. Additionally the Burgesses proclaimed that 13 September would hence forth annually be "kept holy."

While this event is included in several accounts of African American History, other accounts suggest that black servants were not involved in this conspiracy. There is little information concerning the details of this event and there are convincing arguments for both accounts. This incident is dramatized in Mary Johnston's novel *Prisoners of Hope*. The plot of 1663 may have been the first serious conspiracy involving black servants.

## CREDITS

### **About the artist...**

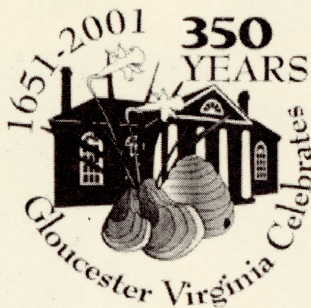
Special thanks to Harriet Cowen who graciously offered her services and donated all of the artwork for this brochure. Ms. Cowen, a resident of Bena, in Gloucester County, Virginia has masterfully captured the beauty of these selected African American sites in Gloucester County with her pen and ink drawings.



Drawings of the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School were made from photos provided by the Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans,

A special thank you is extended to the Heritage Grant Subcommittee of the Multicultural Heritage Committee and County Staff for their support of this project: Peggy Bowditch, Rachael Burnett, Denise Carter, Felecia Diggs, Donald Dowling, Hillary Hicks, Barbara Howard, Georgette Hurley, Carol Steele, Dr. Wesley Wilson, and Evelyn Wright.

Dr. Dorothy Cooke, Project Director



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