Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park & Visitor Center

Welcome Guide 2019

"I had reasoned this out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other, for no man should take me alive."
~ Harriet Tubman

WELCOME

Welcome to Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center in scenic and historic Church Creek. The center is managed through a partnership between the Maryland and National Park Services. It features a permanent exhibit that focuses on Tubman's life, including her formative years in Maryland, and the Underground Railroad resistance movement from a regional perspective.

This guide contains everything you need to enjoy your visit. We hope you have a meaningful Tubman experience!

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Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center
4068 Golden Hill Road
Church Creek, Maryland
410-221-2290
dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands

Join our online community for park and visitor center events and updates:

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Guide Editor
Ranger Crenshaw

Did you know Harriet Tubman was born in Peter's Neck, south of Madison in Dorchester County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland?

MESSAGES FROM THE VISITOR CENTER MANAGER

Message from the Maryland State Park Manager

Visitor Center Staff & the Bust of Tubman

Greetings on behalf of the Maryland Park Service and welcome to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. The Visitor Center, which includes state-of-the-art green elements such as bio-retention ponds, rain barrels and vegetative roofs, is the premier feature of the park. While visiting, we hope you come to better appreciate the places and factors that helped shape Tubman into the successful conductor, nurse, spy, scout and strategist that she became. Tubman's values of faith, family, community and freedom were the driving forces that motivated her to risk her life to return time and again. Appreciate that Tubman is a true Maryland treasure and American icon who is still relevant today. She transcends race, gender, age, religion and nationality, and symbolizes hope for a better future. Her legacy speaks to the fact that regardless of circumstances, you can make choices that positively impact your family, community and in Tubman's case, nation. Lastly, please do not let your Tubman experience end here. Let the landscapes evoke her memory and connect with the places where she lived, toiled, worshiped and loved.

Ranger Dana Paterra
Maryland Park Service, Park Manager

GET INVOLVED!

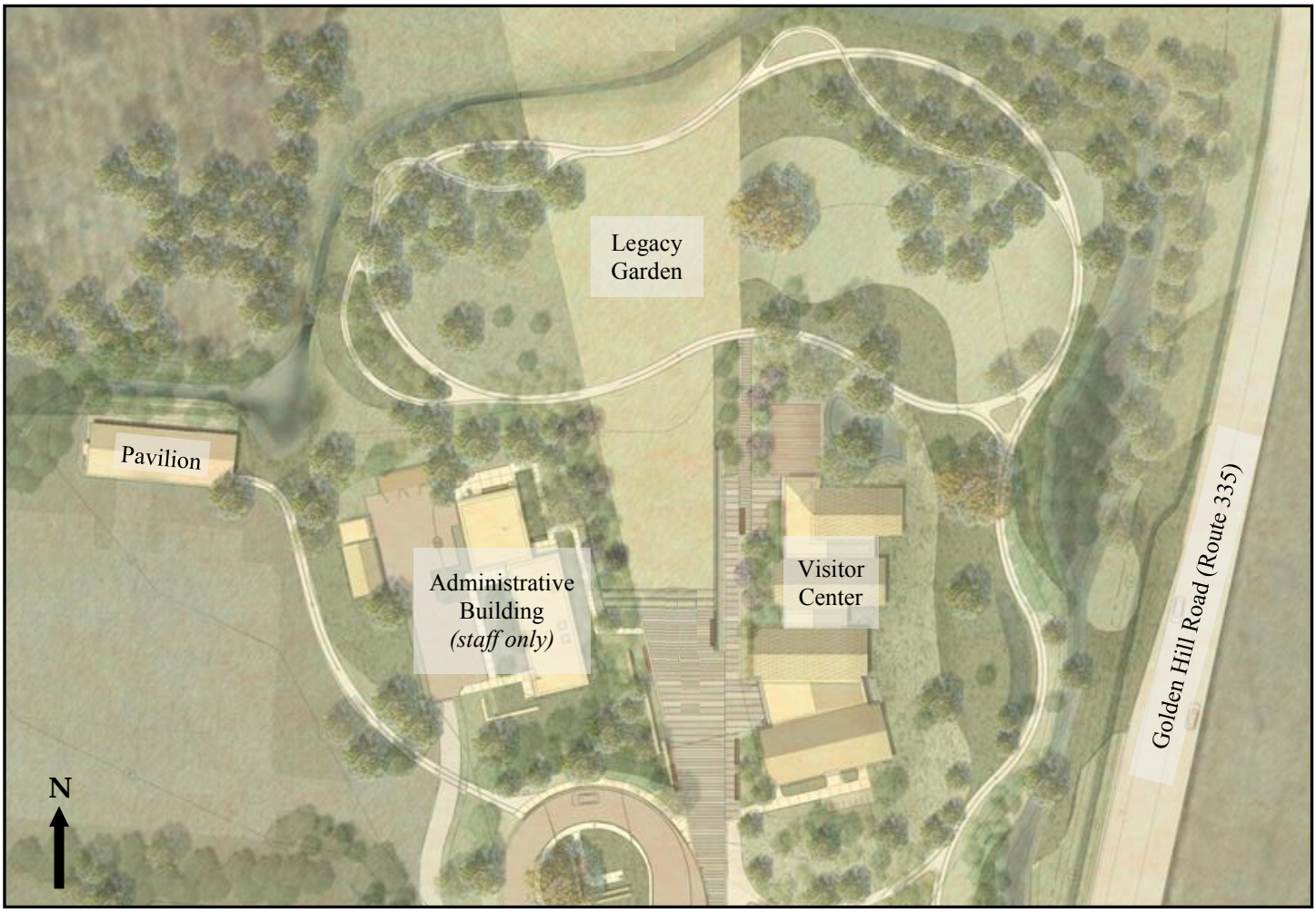
Friends of the Park

Do you want to give back to the park? Have you ever thought of volunteering your time and talents in a place that is both beautiful and educational? Consider volunteering or becoming a member of the Friends of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center.

Volunteers contribute to the missions of the Maryland and National Park Services and the communities we serve, by welcoming visitors to the park, assisting with special events and much more.

"Friends" groups are found at many parks, raising awareness and appreciation for these special places while helping to provide education and interpretive resources to enhance the visitor experience. The Friends of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center is the official non-profit partner of the visitor center. The organization has local and regional membership and includes people who have been inspired by Tubman and her selfless acts of courage. Together, the group works to preserve her memory for future generations. You too can volunteer or become a Friend, ask for more information at the visitor services desk.

PARK MAP AND DIRECTIONS



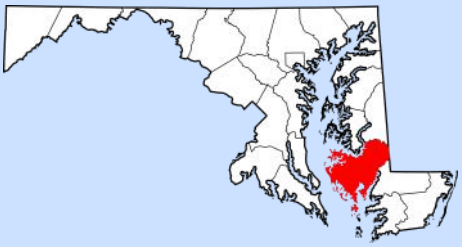
Hours of Operation

The Visitor Center is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Christmas Day. There is no entry fee. Arrival before 4 p.m. is recommended.

Driving Directions

From Annapolis and points north: Take US-301 North/US-50 East toward Cambridge. Turn right on Woods Road. Turn right on Route 16 (Church Creek Road). Turn left onto Route 335 (Golden Hill Road) drive for 4.5 miles and the visitor center will be on your right.

From Ocean City and points south: Take US-50 West toward Cambridge. Turn left on Route 16 (Church Creek Road). Turn left onto Route 335 (Golden Hill Road) drive approximately 4.5 miles and the visitor center will be on your right.



4068 Golden Hill Road
Church Creek, Maryland 21622

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

ABOUT THE STATE PARK

The 17-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park is home to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center, administrative offices, a recreational pavilion and a legacy garden. This location was chosen because the view is preserved by the surrounding Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Very few structures remain from her time in the Choptank river region, so the landscape is a large part of the experience. Tubman may have traveled through the area going between Madison and Bucktown. Additional information is available at **dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands**

THE DESIGN CONCEPT

Picnic Pavilion

The View North, was developed from a concept that expresses the importance of moving northward to escape the circumstance of slavery. Most notably, the design solution splits the building program into two structures that frame the view of the legacy garden as the visitors approach.

SPECIAL FEATURES

View from the Legacy Garden

- Two sculptures are planned. The first is a statue of Tubman set between the administration building and visitor center. The second is of a group of figures headed north, towards the woods on their escape journey.
- The legacy garden is an open quiet space bounded by a network of paths that provide opportunities for more interpretation and reflection.
- A 2,600 square foot open air picnic pavilion with stone fireplace and serving area is located along the western boundary of the park.
- Landscaping materials are plants native to the Eastern Shore, showcasing native trees with seasonal interest (spring blooms and strong fall colors).
- Lawn areas are a combination of mowed and un-mowed grass to recall the farm fields common to this area.
- The design maximizes the incorporation of permeable roads and paths.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

BUILDING FEATURES

- The exhibit building is the primary destination for visitors. It houses the permanent exhibition and main interpretive experiences, restrooms, museum store, information desk and research library. The layout of the exhibit building is a series of four pitched roof volumes connected by a linear spine. The linear spine represents the northbound journey of the Underground Railroad. The volumes could be interpreted as stations.
- The permanent exhibits comprise the northern half of the building with additional space available for temporary or rotating exhibits.
- The administrative building houses park staff and volunteers. It is designed for private access. The storage garage is reserved for park staff.

EXHIBIT FEATURES

- Visitors will begin their exhibit experience with an orientation film.
- The permanent exhibition focuses on Tubman and the Underground Railroad resistance movement from the Maryland perspective.
- Visitors are encouraged to wander the site, where paths meander through a landscape reminiscent of Tubman's world.

THE BUST OF HARRIET TUBMAN

The visitor center is also home to a bronze bust of Harriet Tubman. This life-size rendition was carefully sculpted by Brendan O'Neill, Sr. of Talbot County. O'Neill graciously donated his time, talent and materials to meticulously create the bust. He also designed the pedestal on which it is displayed, which consists of a combination of wood from the 460 year old Wye Oak, the honorary state tree of Maryland and the largest white oak tree in the United States, and a cedar tree, which represents Tubman's time in the forests and fields of Dorchester County. O'Neill conferred with partners, stakeholders and family members, and consulted with Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, the park's historical consultant.

Mr. O'Neill and the bust of Tubman

"We appreciate all the time and effort that went into fabricating this exceptional likeness," said Maryland State Park Manager Dana Paterra. "Mr. O'Neill's piece shows a youthful, strong and resilient Tubman that will greet our visitors as they begin their journey at the visitor center."

BIOGRAPHY

Harriet Tubman is best remembered as one of America's most famous conductors of the Underground Railroad. Born into slavery in early 1822 in Dorchester County, Tubman gained international acclaim during her lifetime as an Underground Railroad agent, abolitionist, Civil War spy and nurse, suffragist and humanitarian. Suffering under the lash and disabled by a near fatal head injury while enslaved, Tubman rose above horrific childhood adversity to emerge with a will of steel. Owing her success to unique survival techniques honed in the forests, fields and marshes of Maryland's Eastern Shore, Tubman transcended victimization to achieve personal and physical freedom from her oppressors. Refusing to be bound by the chains of slavery or by the low expectations limiting the lives of women and African Americans, Tubman battled amazing odds to pursue lifelong dreams of freedom, equality, justice and self-determination.

Tubman in her 40s

Named Araminta, or "Minty," by her parents Ben and Rit Ross, Tubman was the fifth of nine children. Daily survival remained her biggest challenge; frequent separations forced upon her family, in service to their white enslavers, were compounded by the sale of three sisters to distant plantations in the Deep South. Taken from her mother and hired out to cruel masters at the age of six, she was often physically and mentally abused and neglected. She was nearly killed at the Bucktown Village Store by a blow to her head from an iron weight thrown by an angry overseer. She suffered debilitating seizures from the injury for the rest of her life. Such injustices and mistreatment tested Tubman's profound faith. "Slavery," she said, "is the next thing to hell."

Inside the Bucktown Village Store

Married to John Tubman, a free black man, in 1844, Minty then changed her name to Harriet. Faced with certain sale away from her loved ones to settle her dead master's debts in 1849, Tubman determined to seize her liberation instead. Late that fall, she fled enslavement by tapping into a regional Underground Railroad network that was already functioning well in Caroline and Dorchester counties. Traveling by night, using the North Star and instructions from black and white helpers, she found her way through Delaware to freedom in Philadelphia.

Freedom was bittersweet. "I was free," Tubman later recalled, "but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters and friends were there. But I was free, and they should be free." In Philadelphia, she easily found work in domestic service, enabling her to save money and plan for her family's escape.

BIOGRAPHY

Tubman ensconced herself in the anti-slavery networks centered in Philadelphia, New York City and Boston, where she found respect and the financial and personal support she needed to pursue her private war against slavery on the Eastern Shore. In spite of the grave consequences to her own life—including certain death if captured—Tubman successfully ferried approximately 70 people, among them family members, to freedom by 1860. She could not accompany all who sought to escape, but through detailed instructions she enabled another 70 or more to find their way north independently. While only a few freedom seekers returned to rescue family members from bondage, Tubman's numerous journeys back into dangerous slave territory were unequaled and earned her the biblical nickname "Moses."

Tubman used disguises and various ruses to affect some of her escapes, and she relied on a trustworthy system of safe houses, from Dorchester and Caroline counties to Canada, where black and white sympathizers risked their lives to help hide freedom seekers.

Tubman's commitment to destroying the slave system eventually led her to collaborate with John Brown, the anti-slavery activist whose failed raid on Harpers Ferry, West Virginia in 1859 helped spark the Civil War. Sent to South Carolina during the war by the governor of Massachusetts, Tubman alternated between roles as nurse, scout, cook and spy in service to the Union. Under the command of Col. James Montgomery, she was an integral part of the Combahee River expedition with 150 black Union soldiers of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment. The troops came ashore and succeeded in destroying several estates owned by leading secessionists and freeing approximately 750 people. Later she settled with her family and friends in Auburn, New York, where Secretary of State William H. Seward sold her a small farm. In 1869, after the death of her first husband, Tubman married Civil War veteran Nelson Davis, and they adopted a baby girl named Gertie. Three biographies about her were published, reaping international acclaim for her accomplishments.

Tubman's passion for equality drove her to challenge women's and African American's inferior political, economic and social roles through suffrage and civil rights activism during the remainder of her life. Her humanitarian work triumphed with the opening of the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, located on her land in Auburn, which provided nursing and respite care for aging African Americans. She died there on March 10, 1913.

Harriet Tubman's life was rooted in a thirst for freedom, a deep spiritual faith, and life-long humanitarian passion for family and community. Rising from the most oppressive of beginnings, Tubman's unyielding and courageous resolve to secure liberty and equality for all has immortalized her among America's most famous historical figures.

Written by Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, the park's historical consultant. Learn more at **harriettubmanbiography.com**

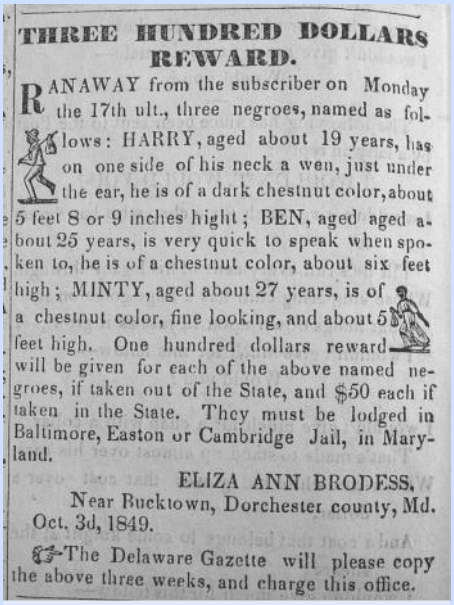
MYTHS VS. FACTS

Myth: Harriet Tubman rescued 300 people in 19 trips.
Fact: According to Tubman's own words and extensive documentation on her rescue missions, we know that she rescued about 70 people—family and friends—during approximately 13 trips to Maryland. During public and private meetings in 1858 and 1859, Tubman repeatedly told people that she had rescued 50 to 60 people in eight or nine trips. This was before her very last mission, in December 1860, when she brought away seven people. Sarah Bradford exaggerated the numbers in her 1868 biography. She never said that Tubman gave her those numbers, but rather estimated the figure. In addition to rescuing family and friends, Tubman also gave instruction to another 70 or so freedom seekers from the Eastern Shore who found their way on their own.

Harriet Tubman circa 1911

Myth: Tubman was born around 1820 in Bucktown, on the farm of Edward Brodess.
Fact: According to oral traditions and the most recent research, Tubman was born in early 1822 on the plantation of Anthony Thompson—Brodess's stepfather—located south of Madison in an area called Peter's Neck in Dorchester County. Tubman was later brought to Bucktown with her mother and siblings to live on Brodess's small farm.

Myth: Tubman had a $40,000 "dead or alive" bounty on her head.
Fact: The only reward for Tubman's capture was in the October 3, 1849 advertisement for the return of "Minty" and her brothers "Ben" and "Harry," in which their mistress, Eliza Brodess, offered $100 for each of them if caught outside of Maryland. Slaveholders on the Eastern Shore had no idea it was Harriet Tubman (or, Minty Ross, as they knew her) who was helping and inspiring people to run away. The $40,000 bounty figure was made up by Sallie Holley, a former anti-slavery activist in New York, who wrote a letter to a newspaper in 1867 arguing for support for Tubman in her pursuit of back pay and pension from the Union Army. To put this in perspective, the United States government offered $50,000 for the capture of John Wilkes Booth, who murdered President Lincoln in 1865. $40,000 is equivalent to several million today.


THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD.

RANAWAY from the subscriber on Monday the 17th ult., three negroes, named as follows: HARRY, aged about 19 years, has on one side of his neck a wen, just under the ear, he is of a dark chestnut color, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches hight; BEN, aged aged about 25 years, is very quick to speak when spoken to, he is of a chestnut color, about six feet high; MINTY, aged about 27 years, is of a chestnut color, fine looking, and about 5 feet high. One hundred dollars reward will be given for each of the above named negroes, if taken out of the State, and $50 each if taken in the State. They must be lodged in Baltimore, Easton or Cambridge Jail, in Maryland.

ELIZA ANN BRODESS,
Near Bucktown, Dorchester county, Md.
Oct. 3d, 1849.

☞The Delaware Gazette will please copy the above three weeks, and charge this office.

Courtesy of the Bucktown Village Foundation, Cambridge, Maryland

Myth: Tubman rescued people from all over the south using the Underground Railroad.
Fact: Tubman returned only to Maryland to bring away loved ones—family and friends she could not live without and whom she could trust. It was too dangerous for her to go places where she did not know people or the landscape.

MYTHS VS. FACTS

Jacob Jackson Home Site

Myth: Jacob Jackson operated an Underground Railroad safe house at his home in Madison.
Fact: Jacob Jackson, a free black farmer and veterinarian, was Harriet Tubman's confidante. Tubman had a coded letter written for her in Philadelphia and sent to Jackson in December 1854, instructing him to tell her brothers that she was coming to rescue them and that they needed to be ready to "step aboard" the "Ol' Ship of Zion." There is no documentation that he actually sheltered runaways in his home. On the Underground Railroad, Jackson would be referred to as an agent.

Myth: Tubman helped build Stewart's Canal.
Fact: Tubman did not help build the canal, which was built between 1810 and 1830 when she was still a child. "She probably used it though to transport timber and agricultural products when she worked in the area as a young adult." We do not know if her father helped build the canal, but he certainly would have used it for transporting timber.

Myth: Tubman used the quilt code to follow the Underground Railroad.
Fact: Tubman never used the quilt code because the code itself is a myth. She used various methods and paths to escape slavery and rescue others. She relied on trustworthy people who hid her, told her which way to go, and told her who else she could trust. She used disguises. She walked, rode horses and wagons. She sailed on boats and rode on trains. She used certain songs to indicate danger or safety. She used letters, written for her by someone else, to trusted individuals like Jacob Jackson, and she used direct communication. She bribed people. She followed rivers that snaked northward. She used the stars and other natural phenomenon to lead her north. She also trusted her instincts and faith in God to guide and comfort her during difficult times and unfamiliar territories.

The Bucktown Village Store

Myth: Tubman carried a rifle on her rescue missions.
Fact: Tubman carried a small pistol with her on her rescue missions, mostly for protection from slave catchers, but also to encourage weak-hearted runaways from turning back and risking the safety of the rest of the group. She carried a sharp-shooters rifle during the Civil War.

MYTHS VS. FACTS

Myth: Tubman sang *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, *Wade in the Water* and *Follow the Drinking Gourd* as signals on the Underground Railroad.
Fact: According to Sarah Bradford's biography—*Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*—she sang two songs while operating her rescues missions, *Go Down Moses* and *Bound for the Promised Land*. Tubman said she changed the tempo of the songs to indicate whether it was safe to come out or not.

Follow the Drinking Gourd was first written and performed by the Weavers, a white folk group, in 1947, nearly 100 years after Tubman's days on the Underground Railroad. *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* was written and composed after the Civil War by a Cherokee Indian living in Oklahoma and therefore would have been unknown to Tubman.

Written by Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, the park's historical consultant. Learn more at **harriettubmanbiography.com**

Tubman during the Civil War

Visitor Center Staff, Project Partners, and Guests after a Program

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE TUBMAN EXPERIENCE

Interpretive Programs

We are pleased to offer interpretive programs by request and events throughout the year. All of our programs share the message of appreciation of our natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources as a service to our community. So that we may better serve you, we ask that you complete a Program Request Form. Email **htursp.dnr@maryland.gov** to get started.

Guests after a ranger-led tour

Tours

The visitor center's exhibit hall is a self-guided experience, however, rangers are available beforehand for an introduction to the park and grounds, as well as afterward for group discussions. With advance notice, groups may request ranger-led tours or interpretive programs. Offer valid only when services are available. Visit our website and scroll down to the bottom to request tour options: **dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands**

Pavilion Rental Information

The picnic pavilion is available for family reunions, special gatherings and a variety of other events. It features a stone fireplace, food preparation area, picnic tables, bathrooms and sweeping views of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. At 2,600 square feet, this open air facility is perfect for gatherings of 75 people or less. The pavilion can be reserved and rented for a fee. A special park use permit is required. Online reservations can be made at **parkreservations.maryland.gov**.

Larry Hogan, Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

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