

Fort Frederick and the Williams in Brief

The colony of Maryland built Fort Frederick during the French and Indian War in 1756, to protect the frontier and serve as a staging area for attacks against the French. The fort was manned by two companies of Maryland Troops, whose main duty was guarding the countryside to discourage Indian raids.

During the American Revolution the fort was a prison camp for British troops. Thousands of British soldiers were held here. Many of the prisoners came from the battles of Saratoga and Yorktown.

During the Civil War a company of Union soldiers camped in the fort's ruined walls while guarding the C &O Canal. They fought a skirmish with Confederate soldiers on Christmas Day, 1861, near the Fort.

From 1790 until 1922 the fort area was farmed. In 1922 the fort was bought by the state.

From 1857 until 1911 the fort was owned by the Nathan Williams family. The Williams were free African Americans. The family had been held as slaves until Nathan's father, Samuel, purchased the family's freedom in 1826. By 1839 the family was living at Prather Neck near Fort Frederick. Nathan lived with his father until he was 28 to repay his debt to him. In 1847, Nathan purchased his wife, Ammy's freedom. They would have eight children. In 1857 Williams bought Fort Frederick and 215 acres for \$5,000. Joe Haines "staked" Williams purchase. The debt was repaid in seven years; mainly through the profits of selling produce and other good to Union and Confederate soldiers. Williams was also involved in education as he was a trustee and his wife deeded land for the "Fort Frederick School for Coloreds"

In the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began the restoration of Fort Frederick and creating a state park. They built all the buildings outside of the fort, and created a camping area. In 1976 the state of Maryland continued the fort's restoration by rebuilding the two enlisted man's barracks



Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

- Leave What You Find**
~Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Pack It In, Pack It Out**
~Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
~**Trash Free Parks:** Maryland State Parks are "Trash Free". Trash Free bags are available throughout the park. Please take your trash with you when you leave and remember to recycle.

Historical Programs

From Memorial Day to Labor Day French and Indian period attired historians staff the fort and interpret its history daily, and are on hand weekends April, May, September, and October.

Special events including garrisons, artillery demonstrations, military encampments and other programs are held throughout the year. See our special events brochure for dates and times.

School & Group Programs

Historical tours of Fort Frederick, as well as programs that explore the park's natural resources can be arranged for school classes and organized groups. For more information and to schedule a program with one of our Historical Interpreters or Rangers, call 301-842-2155.

To learn more about Fort Frederick State Park



<https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/western/fortfrederick.aspx>

Visitor Center
301-842-2155

Park Information

Public Restrooms are located at the rear of the CCC Museum and the Visitor Center.

General Park Hours:
~April to October 31 - 8 a.m. to Sunset
~November 1 to March 31 - 10 a.m. to Sunset
~Closed - Christmas Day

Facility Service Charge:
~Please pay at one of the honor boxes located in the picnic area or the store parking lot near the fort. You may also pay at the Visitor Center and Captain Wort's Store.

Pets:
~Pets are permitted in the park; EXCEPT FORT GROUNDS, AND ANY BUILDING except for service animals.

Donations: Donations may be made to:
The Friends of fort Frederick
11115 Fort Frederick Road
Big Pool, Maryland 21711

The facilities and Services of the Department of Natural Resources are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or physical or mental disability.

Wheelchair accessible facilities are available call park for current access information.

Larry Hogan , Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Ricco, Secretary

This document is available in alternative form upon request for a qualified individual with a disability.

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www.dnr.state.md.us



Nathan Williams
African American
Heritage



Walking Tour



Fort Frederick
State Park

TOUR STOPS

1. Visitor Center and Kiosk ~ At the Visitor center watch an orientation movie about the forts history, and view a Williams family related exhibit. The kiosk located in the parking lot features historical information on the fort and Williams family. The visitor center is located near the site of the Charles Williams farm. Charles was Nathan Williams son, and a school teacher.

2. First House site & Civil War Trails Markers ~ From about 1850 to 1909 the Williams family resided on this site, the restored foundation may belong to the kitchen of the house. According to period sources the house was considered a “mansion”. A period image of the house contradicts that sentiment as the house appears to have two stories, no porch, and no more than 6 rooms. The house was destroyed by fire in 1909. During the Civil War Union officers occupied the house for their quarters and Ammy Williams cooked for them.



3. Second House Site ~ On this site stood the second home built by the Williams family. It was built in 1909 and was raised by the Civilian



Conservation Corp in 1934. It was a two story frame house with wrap around porch, and had between four and eight rooms. It is possible the two houses are the same and just significantly remodeled, but until archeology is conducted it will only be a theory

4. Cannon Hole ~ According to Nathan Williams Union soldiers knocked a hole in the wall in 1861, to fire a cannon through at Confederates across the



Potomac River in Virginia. Historical documentation places Union artillery at the fort in 1861 and 1862. In the 1931 the Daughter of the American Revolution placed a Confederate Civil War cannon at the hole, it is currently displayed in the Visitor Center.

5. Fort Interior ~ Williams took advantage of the ruined walls of the fort and used the area inside for many purposes including; pig sty, orchard and vineyard.



6. Northwest Bastion / Bank Barn~ Around 1860 Nathan Williams dismantled the northwest bastion and built a bank barn here recycling a lot of the walls stone in its construction.



7. Fort Frederick School for “Colored's” ~ in 1876 Nathan Williams was named trustee of the Fort Frederick School for Coloreds. This school was the second school built in Washington County for the education of African American children. The school appears to have been in several buildings and locations, including Charles Williams house before the current building was built. The school consisted one class room. It was altered several times during its life span but returned to its 1899 footprint. This building was built about 1899 and used as a school periodically until 1909. Two of Nathan Williams children Charles and Betty were teachers at this school. It was sold by the county in 1914, and became a private residence.

8. Other Points of interest ~

Western Maryland Railroad ~ This railroad crossing is part of the former Western Maryland Railroad, and is an active spur line for CSX today. The Western Maryland Railroad began construction in 1852 but did not reach Big Pool until 1882. It offered passenger and freight service and was an economic

catalyst for local farmers.

C&O Canal ~ Construction began in 1828 and by 1852 was completed from Georgetown to Cumberland, MD. Some of the labor to build the canal were slaves, and tradition states it was part of the Underground Railroad. The canal opened up commerce, trade, and travel both east and west. This was accomplished by overcoming the mountains with a series of locks which raised and lowered canal boats. The Williams family would have been intimately familiar with the canal workers and using it as a source of trade.



Potomac River ~ The river was the original source of trade, and travel for early settlers. By the 1800's it was an obstacle to be overcome for north/south trade. A series of ferries were established along the river; the closest being at McCoy's Ferry and Cherry Run. During the Civil War the river would be the diving line between two nations, and the front line of that war. Nathan Williams a Virginian by birth, knew and traded with people who lived in Virginia and he did not let the war stop him. He would take goods and cross the river with his wagon and trade with soldiers and civilians in the Confederacy. Upon his return to Maryland and give information to Union soldiers stationed around Fort Frederick.

