

Maryland Scenic Byways: Eastern Shore

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TRAIL

Before the Civil War, many enslaved African Americans fled to freedom in the North from Maryland as well as Southern states. The so-called Underground Railroad was not a true railroad but was the name given to the means by which these enslaved people fled from bondage. With great danger to all involved, those enslaved escaped to freedom via a secret network of roads, waterways, trails, and hiding places. They were helped along the way by anti-slavery activists – mainly free blacks, but also a few whites and Native Americans. This byway will bring to life the stories of the Underground Railroad and fugitive slaves, or “self-liberators” such as Dorchester County’s Harriet Tubman and Samuel Green who escaped north in the 1850s. From Dorchester County, you will follow a route north through Caroline County where many Maryland abolitionists supported the cause of freedom.

Length: 64 miles
Driving Time: 1-1/2 hours
Counties: Dorchester and Caroline



Harriet Tubman was the most famous “conductor,” or guide, on the Underground Railroad. Born an enslaved woman in Dorchester County about 1821, she fled to the North in 1849. She returned many times to lead others to freedom. Samuel Green was a free black farmer, Methodist minister, and local Underground Railroad conductor. He was imprisoned in 1857 when local authorities discovered that he had a copy of the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

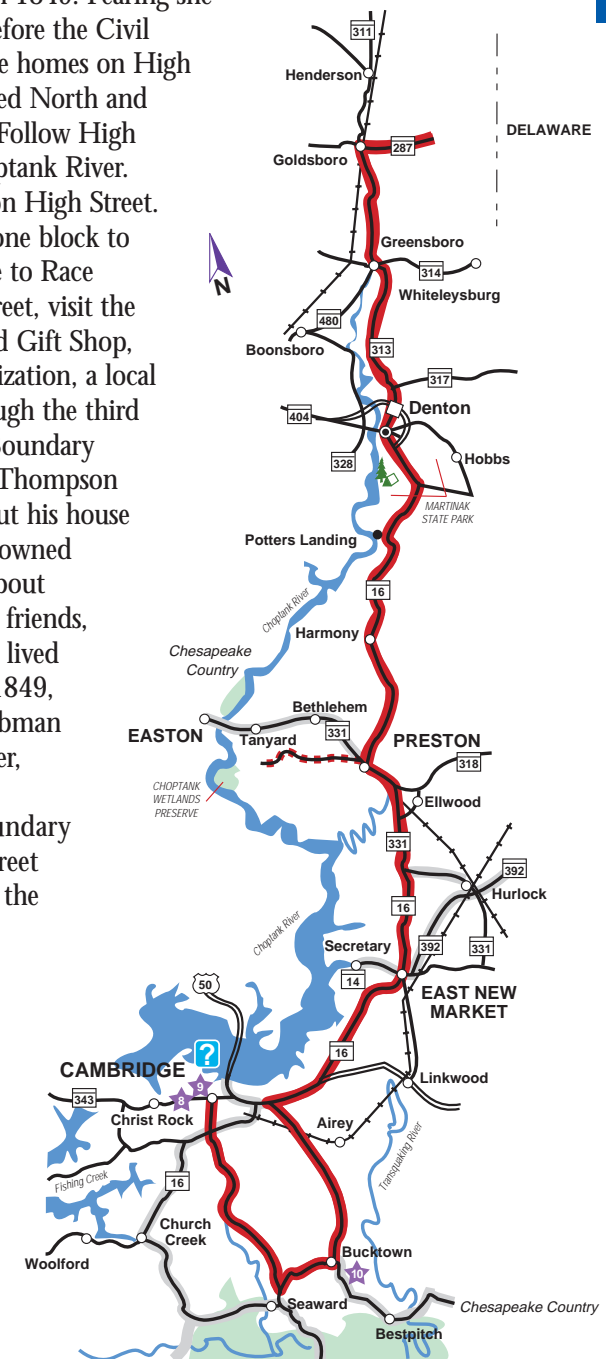
DORCHESTER COUNTY

You will start your journey in Cambridge with a visit to the **Harriet Tubman Memorial Garden** on the eastbound side of US 50. Turn south on Cedar Street, and follow it to its intersection with Pine Street where free African Americans lived as early as 1801. Near the corner of Cedar and Pine is **Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church**, built in 1870 on the site of an earlier church dating from 1847. Harriet Tubman is believed to have lived near Cambridge between 1847 and 1849 and may well have attended the first Bethel AME Church. Those who fled North were no doubt inspired by the story of Moses leading enslaved people from Egypt to the Promised Land, and Tubman was often referred to as Moses.

Turn right on Pine Street and follow it to where it dead-ends at High Street. Waugh United Methodist (WUM) Church is on your left. The existing church, built in 1901, is the third building here since 1826. Very near Waugh Church is the site of the home of Benjamin Jenifer, an educated and influential ex-slave, who visited Africa

in 1852 and wrote a report suggesting that free black people in Maryland might want to consider emigrating to Africa. Continue on High Street through the third traffic light at Spring Street to the **Dorchester County Courthouse**, built in 1853 after a fire destroyed an earlier one. The legal status of Tubman’s family was debated here beginning in 1849. Fearing she would be sold, Tubman ran away. Before the Civil War, some of the white owners of the homes on High Street owned enslaved people who fled North and told their stories to historians there. Follow High Street to the traffic circle at the Choptank River. Go around the circle, to head back on High Street. At Spring Street, turn left, follow it one block to Gay Street, and turn right. Continue to Race Street, and turn left. At 424 Race Street, visit the **Underground Railroad Museum and Gift Shop**, home of the Harriet Tubman Organization, a local non-profit advocacy group. Go through the third traffic light (Washington Street) to Boundary Avenue. In the 1840s, Dr. Anthony Thompson lived on a small farm on the right, but his house no longer exists. Thompson’s family owned Tubman’s father until he was freed about 1840. According to one of Tubman’s friends, “For the last two years of slavery, she lived with Dr. Thompson.” In the fall of 1849, on the night before she ran away, Tubman sang a “Good Bye” song to her master, Dr. Thompson, standing at his gate, which might have been here at Boundary Avenue. Continue south on Race Street through the stop light at MD 16, or the Cambridge Beltway.

Sidetrack: Turn right and go a 1/2 mile to historic **Stanley Institute**, named in honor of the Reverend Ezekiel Stanley. Between 1867 and 1962, the youth in the African-American community of **Christ Rock** attended this school, which is now listed in the *National Register of Historic Places*.



Where Race Street becomes Maple Dam Road, look to your left for an old house surrounded by large trees. This was the site of **Ashburn**, where Dr. Anthony Thompson lived between 1855 and 1857. The actual buildings of that era probably no longer exist. Neither Harriet Tubman nor her parents lived here, but this site may have been a rendezvous spot for fleeing enslaved people. Continue south about eight miles to Greenbrier Road.

Sidetrack: Continue south on Maple Dam Road, turn right on Key Wallace Drive, and go 1/2 mile to **Little Blackwater River Bridge**. A bridge has spanned this river since 1774. Nearby is the site of the childhood home of Harriet Tubman's mother, who was born in the 1780s. Tubman's father lived much of his life about eight miles to the west and her mother lived much of her life about three miles to the east. So Tubman herself must have traveled back and forth along here many times. Less than a 1/2 mile farther is the **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge**.

Turn left on Greenbrier Road. The building at the corner was once an African Methodist Episcopal church but is now being restored by the Native American Nause Waiwash tribe for their longhouse. Drive 1-1/2 miles on Greenbrier Road to the Harriet Tubman historical marker and beside it the lane leading to a house that is on or near the site where Tubman lived as a child. This house was built or moved here in the early 1900s. The prior 32 x 20-foot two-story house was built between 1820 and 1823 and was the home of Tubman's owner, Edward Brodess. Continue east on Greenbrier Road to the stop sign at **Bucktown**. Ahead of you is an old country store of unknown age, but it is known that a store has been on or near this corner since 1826. This could be the site of "the village store" where Tubman was struck in the head around 1835.

Sidetrack: Turn right, and go one mile to historic **Bazzel Methodist Church**, named in honor of Nathan Bazzel. Beginning about 1870, African Americans in the Bucktown area attended both a church and school at this location. According to local tradition, some members of Harriet Tubman's extended family attended church here. Her childhood home was less than a 1/2 mile away through the woods behind this church.

Turn left on Bucktown Road, and follow it to **Scott's Chapel**, another historic church, also known as **Bucktown United Methodist Church**, dating from 1812. Continue six miles, and turn right on US 50. You will soon pass land on the left that was owned in the 1850s by Francis Phelps (on Elks Lodge Road) and James Hall (on Whitehall Road). In 1857, seven enslaved people managed to escape from these two men, but shared the fate of all too many enslaved people when they were captured in Caroline County and returned to the Cambridge jail.

Turn left at the blinking light on MD 16, and continue for three miles, where you will come to a spot, unmarked by signs, between the two main branches of Indian Creek. During the 1850s, Samuel Green's family lived in this area. Green's enslaved son, a blacksmith, fled to Canada with the help of Harriet Tubman in August 1854.

Continue east on MD 16 to **East New Market**. At the stop sign, turn left onto MD 16, or Main Street, and follow it to the center of town where the oldest homes date back to the mid-1700s.

Sidetrack: Turn right at the blinking light onto Railroad Avenue, MD 14, and go through the next stop sign to **Mt. Zion United Methodist Church**, located near the old train station. This land was deeded to black trustees, among them Samuel Green, in 1843. No evidence has been found that this site was an Underground Railroad stop, but Green's involvement supports that belief.

Continue north on MD 16 through farm country to merge with Preston Road. Just east of here, in Caroline County, were the farms of two men who were threatened with lynching and forced to leave Maryland in 1858. Daniel Hubbard was a free black farmer and fisherman. Arthur Leverton was a white Quaker and farmer. Each was suspected of helping runaway enslaved people who were caught on New Year's Eve 1857.

CAROLINE COUNTY

Continue on MD 16/331 over Hunting Creek, site of **Linchester**, one of the oldest settlements in Caroline County. A gristmill, established here in 1681, became the center of the settlement. Notice the old mill on the bank of the millpond. Enter the town of Preston via Main Street.

Sidetrack: Continue on Main Street past **historic Bethesda United Methodist Church** and turn left on Sunset Boulevard, which becomes Marsh Creek Road. Go about a mile to **Mount Pleasant Cemetery**. In 1849, white Quaker trustees deeded this lot, which included an old Quaker meeting house, to black Methodist trustees. Local historians speculate that this could have been an Underground Railroad "station."

Follow MD 16 north to MD 313, passing through Jonestown, Grove, Harmony, Williston, and Bureau, named for the Freedmen's Bureau building built there after the Civil War. Continue north on MD 313 to **Denton**, and turn left on Gay Street, which takes you to the **Caroline County Courthouse**, (circa 1895), on a tree-lined public square overlooking the Choptank River. The first courthouse was built here in 1797. In the spring of 1857, Harriet Tubman's father, Benjamin Ross, was about to be arrested because he had helped fugitive slaves escape from Dorchester County. Tubman got wind of the pending arrest and secretly took her parents to the Wilmington, Delaware, home of Thomas Garrett who gave them money to go to Canada. Had they not fled from Caroline County, the Rosses would probably have stood trial in the original county courthouse. After visiting the public square, go north on 6th Street, MD 313, to Greensboro and on to Goldsboro. At Goldsboro go east on MD 287, which becomes Delaware Rt. 10, to Sandtown, Willow Grove, Star Hill, and Camden.

For more information on the **Harriet Tubman Trail**, contact the **Dorchester County Office of Tourism**, the **Harriet Tubman Organization**, or *Maryland Scenic Byways*.