



BANNEKER STAR

www.thefriendsofbanneker.org

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THE FRIENDS OF BENJAMIN BANNEKER HISTORICAL PARK & MUSEUM, INC.

Baltimore County
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A BENJAMIN BANNEKER MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON

by David Titman

The good work of the Washington Interdependence Council (WIC) was highlighted at a gala dinner held recently at Loew's L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. WIC, a non-profit civil agency, was celebrating its seventh year of progress working towards the commemoration of colonial American hero, Benjamin Banneker. Besides myself and my son, Nate Titman, other Board Members attending were Bill Lambert, our chairman, and Gwen Marable.

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, who authored the Bill empowering WIC to establish the monument, strongly supports the efforts of Peggy Seats, the executive director of WIC, who has worked tirelessly for many years to make the memorial a reality. Other supporters of the memorial project include Maryland Congressman Elijah Cummings, Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes, Washington Mayor Anthony Williams and the fourteen Congressmen who co-sponsored the Bill with Norton.

WIC was authorized by Congress in 1998 to erect a monument to Banneker. The monument site, along L'Enfant Plaza promenade in southwest DC, was chosen because of its association with Charles Pierre L'Enfant, the Frenchman retained by President George Washington to design the plans for the new Federal City. Banneker, as assistant to Major

Andrew Ellicott, was instrumental in surveying and designing the layout of the streets and malls.

The role of Banneker is particularly significant considering persons of African-American descent at that time were generally valued only as slaves. Although Banneker's creativity was first recognized in 1753, when he was 22, by his building a wooden clock that struck every hour on the hour, Banneker, who was classified as a free man, was later to distinguish himself as a mathematician, scientist, astronomer, farmer, Abolitionist, and publisher of almanacs.

Because DC's memorials are funded entirely by private donations, WIC has set a very ambitious goal of raising Twenty Million Dollars so that the Banneker Memorial can be completed by 2006, the bicentennial of Banneker's death. The memorial will include a fourteen foot statue of Banneker, a visitor's center, a 30-40 foot clock tower and historic exhibits in a landscaped cultural environment centrally located on the L'Enfant Plaza.

Ultimately the plan for development of L'Enfant Plaza envisions lush landscaping, benches, trees, outdoor cafes, street level retail shops, an open vista to the Smithsonian Castle (facilitated by the recommended removal of the obstructive section of the Department of Energy building), astronomical art, and other amenities. The L'Enfant Plaza corridor will serve as a connecting cultural gateway running from the Mall to the newly renovated waterfront which is named for Benjamin Banneker.

Since WIC is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, those of you interested in making a donation to the memorial fund are encouraged to send your tax deductible contribution to the Washington Interdependence Council, 2020 Pennsylvania Ave, NW #225, Washington, DC 20006. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact Peggy Seats at 202-387-3380. ✨

Awesome Camp Ben... What a Wonderful Summer

by Maxine Taylor

The organization of Camp Ben this summer was set up to utilize the immediate community resources such as the National Denistry Museum, mall movies and the Kings Point Bowling Lanes. All of these activities and more, supported our objectives concerning emphasis on leadership, self-motivation and mental health. The camp continues to make progress with a variety of support systems that implement and promote goals to foster social and educational skills.

On campus activities were developed to give the campers hands-on experience and utilize thinking skills with an emphasis on creativity and decision making. For example, the construction of a small aquarium gave campers the opportunity to observe and compare a living system within a basic ecosystem. This project was a take home assignment for campers to monitor, along with a seedling project conducted by one of our storytellers. In addition we offered key chain and jewelry making, expression writing, and a spelling bee which provided each camper an awareness experience of what can be accomplished on their own.

Accolades go out to camp aides, who served as an important support system to assist the campers with horseback riding and water strategy games to cool off on extremely hot days. Giving the inexperienced campers instructions to bowl properly to gain pin fall was a high point for the camp aides. The campers took advantage of the menu at Kings Point and ate lots of cheese fries with refreshing drinks. Our aides received recognition for their efforts with a certificate containing usable service credit hours. The camp ended with a Bon Appetite Cookout. ✨

Lett Settlement Reunion... Zanesville, OH

by Sharon Stenhouse



Direct descendants of Jemima Banneker Lett. Gwen Marable (front row, 4th from the right).

Descendants and collateral descendants of Jemima Banneker Lett—Banneker's sister—gathered in Zanesville, Ohio on July 18 to July 20, for a family reunion. This event was especially significant because Ohio celebrated its 200th birthday this year. The Letts are one of the first, and the largest African-American families to settle in Ohio. Jemima married Samuel Delaney Lett of English and Native American lineage, and of their eight children, seven migrated with their families and settled in Meigs Township. The Lett Settlement was a self-sustaining community of mixed race families, with the Letts, Calimans and Guys forming ties with each other through marriages and common family backgrounds while living in Maryland and Virginia.

These families were pioneers in Ohio, in the areas of civil rights, education and voting. The Lett Settlement descendants reflect a rich heritage and history. Ohio became like a hub for the Underground Railroad where there were jobs and opportunities for freed slaves.

Lett family history can be traced back to 1683 and the arrival of ancestor Molly Welsh, an English dairy maid and the grandmother of Benjamin Banneker, America's First African-American Man of Science. After serving seven years as an indentured servant for being falsely accused of the crime of theft, Molly Welsh was freed and eventually purchased her own small farm in Maryland. While she prospered, she knew that she would need help on the farm, and began to save money. Although Molly was opposed to slavery, she purchased two slaves and after a period of time freed both. She

eventually married one of them—who was named Bannaka—an African Prince from the Wolof Kingdom of Walo, located in Senegal. Molly took her husband’s surname which eventually became Banneker.

The couple had four daughters, the eldest of whom was named Mary. Mary married a former slave, who had converted to Christianity and changed his name to Robert and took his wife’s last name. They had five children; a son and three daughters... Benjamin, Jemima, Minta and Molly.

Benjamin is noted in United States history as an astronomer, whose accomplishments included building a wooden striking clock after studying the workings of a pocket watch, assisting in the boundary survey of Washington, D.C., and publishing numerous almanacs for Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The major events at the reunion took place at the Muskingum County Fairgrounds. Members of the Board of Directors of The Friends of Benjamin Banneker Historical Park & Museum, Inc. journeyed to Zanesville with an extensive exhibit to share information and acknowledge the history, legacy and preservation of Banneker’s life and times. Other exhibitors included a Black American Western exhibit, the Underground Railroad, Paynes Crossing which was provided by the U.S. Forest Service, the Colored Troops and related Civil War History, the Cumberland Families Photographic Display, U.S. Civil War Naval Pictorial and Artifacts, Sons and Daughters of Slavery, and researched genealogical information.

The event opened with a prayer of thankfulness and guidance, a citation was presented by Zanesville Mayor, Jack Fenton, and recognition given to Ruth Caliman Brown who at 101 years of age is the oldest living descendant. Individual family histories were presented to include... Storytelling, “Life of Molly Bannaky”, by Ms. Virginia Keeping, and “Virginia and Carolina Plantation Life” by Ms. Alexandra Lett. On Sunday morning, the Letts and related family members traveled to Lydiesburg cemetery to pay homage to the ancestors buried there.

Robert Lett, the coordinator of the reunion said he has never met a person in his great extended family that was shy to talk about family history. Gwen Marable, the 5th generation great granddaughter of Jemima Banneker Lett is a member of The Friends’ board. ✱



NORTH STAR

BOOKS & CURIOSITIES
MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

OPEN... TUESDAY, THURSDAY
AND SATURDAY
11:00 A.M. ~ 2:00 P.M.

PROCEEDS BENEFIT CULTURAL
ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS AT THE
BANNEKER HISTORICAL PARK & MUSEUM

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Join The Friends of Benjamin Banneker Historical Park & Museum, Inc.

Membership Includes:

- 10% Discount on Gift Shop Items
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Discounts for Member and Special Events

Annual Membership Donation:

Individual -----	\$ 25.00
Family -----	\$ 40.00
Sr. Citizens (62 and older)-----	\$ 15.00
Full-Time Student -----	\$ 15.00
Patron -----	\$ 75.00
Donor -----	\$150.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Yes, I would like to volunteer at the BBHP&M.

Call Me () _____ - _____

The Almanac

November – Banneker 272nd Birthday Celebration,
Saturday, November 8, 2003



**Before Brown v. Topeka:
The Maryland Connection
50 Years since the Death of Jim
Crow... Saturday, November 22,
2003**

**December – Kwanzaa
Celebration,** Featuring the
Unity United Methodist Church
Youth African Dance Troupe,
Saturday, December 27, 2003

January – Membership campaign; MLK Day

February – Black History Month

March – Annual Membership Function / Activity /
Women's History Month

April – Environmental Focus / Volunteer Month /
Earth Day / Administrative Professionals Day

Board of Directors

William Lambert Chair
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Ray Clark, (*Gift Shop*)
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Mildred Franklin (*All God's Children*)
Robert L. Garner, (*Environment*)
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Rosita (Bunnie) Hill
John J. Holt, (*Volunteers and Docents*)
Lenwood Johnson, (*Historian*)
Gwen Marable (*Collateral Descendent of Banneker*)
Mid-Atlantic Turtle and Tortoise Society, Inc. (MATTs)
Sharon M. Stenhouse, (*Programs / Development*)
Maxine A. Taylor, (*Awesome Camp Ben*)
David Titman, Esq. (*Membership*)
Cole Wiggins
Quentin Wyatt

The Friends of Benjamin Banneker Historical Park & Museum, Inc.
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Catonsville (Oella), Maryland 21228

You care, So be aware.



A Lifetime of Involvement