

EPITAPH

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**WELCOME TO THE
FRIENDS OF THE AFRICAN
UNION CHURCH CEMETERY
DELAWARE CITY, DE**



Dear Members and Supporters,

First, I would like to thank you, the "Friends" in "FAUCC" who support the cemetery maintenance and educational programs we strive to offer. Your memberships and donations are more important than ever. Grants for non-profits are a big part of our funds that keep the cemetery in tip top shape, safe and secure, and for educational programs. We hope these grants will continue to be available. Showing community support is a big part of qualifying for these grants.

The volunteer board members have made a hard-working board all year long giving of their expertise and time. We have added five new advisory board members this year so far.

We would like to thank Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Co-Convenor, for the Juneteenth Committee. Due to health reasons, she has decided to resign from this role. Her leadership along with Marilyn Whittington is exceptional leading to our 3rd annual event. With them working as a team, the Juneteenth celebration has expanded into a large, wonderful event. With Mary Bricker-Jenkins stepping aside from this role, we will be in search of someone with leadership skills to fulfill this vacancy.

Our sponsors and volunteers make our missions happen. We are in the process of planning new, exciting presentations and events for the coming year of 2026, also the 200th Anniversary of Delaware City. This will include education and to be more visible to our surrounding communities. We always strive to be effective with those who are willing to serve.

Again, thank you for all your support. We hope you had a blessed holiday and spent it with family and friends. Our wish is that you will visit us in the coming year at our events and bimonthly meetings in Delaware City.

Warm Regards, Rev. Marilyn Turner, President



FRIENDS OF THE
AFRICAN UNION
CHURCH CEMETERY

Meetings Held at the Delaware City Community Center
5th & Bayard Streets @ 6:00 p.m.

2026: March 19 ♦ May 21 ♦ July 16 ♦ September 17 ♦ November 19

2027: January 21

Open to the public
PLEASE JOIN US

Check out our website: www.africanunioncemetery.org

By Rev. Marilyn Cale Turner

In 1835, five trustees of the African Union Church, Perry Reynolds, Noah Chambers, Williams Jones, Shadrach Boyer, and Solomon Dean, purchased a half-acre lot for \$80, located north what is now the Branch Canal, to establish a church and burial ground. The church and cemetery served the residents of Polktown, one of Delaware's earliest free Black settlements.

The land was part of a larger tract owned by the Newbold family, founders of Delaware City. The African Union Church became the cultural center of the community, serving as a place of worship, gathering, and civic life.

Following a Convention of Churches held in January 1865, a congregational meeting was held on September 22, 1868, at which time the African Union Church was renamed the Union American Church. An election of trustees was also held, with Joshua Seney, George Young, Joseph Boyer, George Shorter, and Henry Parker elected to office. By 1876, the congregation relocated services to a small church on the grounds of Fort DuPont, where worship continued until 1931.

Over time, the cemetery became separated from the life of the church and fell into neglect. In 1990, the burial ground was rediscovered when local children found a marker labeled "USCT" in the marsh. Among the identified burials are five members of the United States Colored Troops who served in the Union Army during the Civil War: Joseph B. Byard (Company D, 30th Infantry), William H. Crawford (Company C, 26th Infantry), Alexander Draper (Company C, 6th Infantry), James H. Elbert (Company C, 8th Infantry), and Lewis Taylor (Company I, 6th Infantry).

Other identified burials include Harriet Serena Byard, Rebecca Webb, Perry Reynolds, and Sarah Neal. While several graves are marked with headstones, many remain unmarked, and others have been lost due to erosion. The total number of graves, marked and unmarked, is estimated to be approximately forty-nine.

On February 21, 1931, the cornerstone was laid for the present Mt. Salem church building at 305 Fourth Street, Delaware City. At a public congregational meeting held on October 26, 1931, the church formally adopted the name Mount Salem Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, in accordance with the Articles of Religion, Doctrine, Discipline, Laws, and Usages of the Union Methodist Episcopal Church. Trustees elected at that time included William Sadler, William H. Brown, Richard Neal, William Neal, Maxwell Shorter, Andrew Young, and William L. Miller.

In 1996, the Friends of the African Union Church Cemetery (FAUCC) was formed to restore, protect, and interpret the cemetery. FAUCC partners with Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church and the City of Delaware City to preserve this important but long forgotten site. The organization was founded through the efforts of community members committed to safeguarding this historic place. Rev. Marilyn Cale Turner currently serves as President of FAUCC.

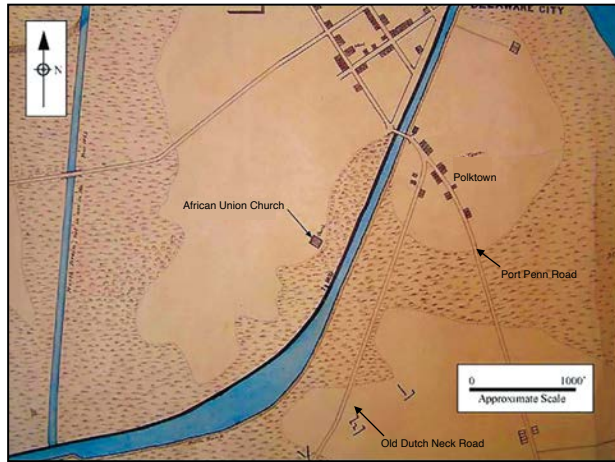


Figure 1: 1863 Canal Company Map showing African Union Church and Polktown. See references on page 3.



Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church met its 190th anniversary in 2025.

In May 2019, Bishop Charles L. Amos assigned Elder Harriet Williams as Pastor and Elder Marilyn Cale Turner as Quarterly Conference Assignee. Trustees at that time were Vance Price, Brian Miller, and Linda Price. The current Trustee is Linda Price. The Steward Board was headed by the Pastor and included Elizabeth Boyer (Pastor Steward), Karen Brady (Recording Steward), and Janice Portlock. Current Stewards are Elizabeth Boyer (Pastor Steward), Janice Portlock, Arlene Knotts, and Rhonda Patrick (Recording Steward). The Missionary is Barbara Jones.

FAUCC HISTORY COMMITTEE

By Mary Bricker-Jenkins

Update on William Watson USCT

The FAUCC History Committee has continued its work on documenting the life, death, and burial place of William Watson, USCT (see *Epitaph*, Issue 12, 2025). Adding to the many documents collected by Craig O'Donnell, we have his pension records! These were retrieved in Washington, D.C. by our team member, Rosalyn Green, who is also the president of the Delaware chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. Team members are currently transcribing the records from facsimiles of the original documents. In addition, team members Linda Price and Rev. Marilyn Turner will be visiting with and interviewing Watson family members who have recently returned to live in Polktown.



Beginning in 2026, the Juneteenth History Team will continue work as the FAUCC History Committee.

Andre Swygert Agrees to Chair the FAUCC History Committee

Many of us know Andre Swygert as the capable Master of Ceremonies at the 2024 and 2025 Juneteenth Solemn Commemorative Service programs at the African Union Church Cemetery. Several of us attended Andre's presentation on the Tuskegee Airmen last year and learned of his interest and expertise in documenting military history, and particularly the roles of Black service members. He has published *Flight Training At The United States Naval Academy*, Arcadia Press, 2023 and is currently preparing for publication in 2026 a new book, *Army Aviation In Korea 1950-1953, Above It All: Air Ferries Over The English Channel*. Stepping aside to another, probably related, interest, Andre is an automotive enthusiast with numerous articles on CarShowSafari.com (<https://carshowsafari.com/>). With expertise, interest, and enthusiasm, Andre agreed to assume the role of team chairperson from the retiring Mary Bricker-Jenkins, who will remain on the team to help with research and administration.

MT. SALEM U.A.M.E. CHURCH HISTORY ~ CONT'D

From 2020 to the present, Elder Marilyn Cale Turner has served as Pastor of Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church, by appointment of Bishop Charles L. Amos.

Previous Pastors, listed from most recent to oldest:

Rev. Harriet Williams	Rev. Alphonso Cottman	Rev. C. L. Henderson
Rev. Sondra Hunter	Rev. Clarence Randolph	Rev. Charles Bayard
Rev. Elwood V. Fewes	Rev. Ross Nicholas	Rev. George Murphy
Rev. James S Matthews Jr.	Rev. Monty W. Fraizer	Rev. G. B. Saunders
Rev. Anthony Brown	Rev. Alfred Moody	Rev. Frank Henderson
Rev. Thomas B Henry	Rev. Samuel Burnett	Rev. J. J. Roy
Rev. Ruth Mears	Rev. Purnell E Moody	Rev. R. C. Williams
Rev. Ruth C Evans	Rev. Milton Jackson	Rev. Clarence E Simpkins

"We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord." Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church continues to trust in God's Word and to serve faithfully in the community where it has been planted. *Looking to Jesus as the author and finisher of its faith (Hebrews 12:2)*, Mt. Salem remains a beacon of light, committed to serving with whole hearts and answering the call to discipleship. There is still much work to be done, and the church presses forward in faithfulness, *working while it is still day, when night cometh, no man can work. (John 9:4)*.

- Rev. Marilyn Cale Turner

References:

Figure 1: 1863 Canal Company Map, Source: URS Report: Phase I Investigation of the African Union Church Cemetery Delaware City Branch Canal Project, May 2009.

The African Union Church's construction and demolition dates are unknown. Center for Historic Architecture and Design, *Connecting the Free Black Community of Polktown and the African Union Church Cemetery*, University of Delaware, August 2015, Pg. 26, says the purchase of the lot in 1835 by trustees of the African Union Church "strongly suggests that the African Union Church existed in Delaware City by this time, at least as a congregation".

184th Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church Anniversary Program, October 20, 2019

Reed, Thomas J., *Title Report Prepared for Friends of Polktown Cemetery, Inc.* June 16, 2000

POLKTOWN HISTORICAL MARKER UPDATE

By Jeanne Corman

Kee an eye out for an announcement later this year regarding a ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of a State of Delaware marker recognizing and honoring the historical and cultural significance of Polktown, one of the earliest free African American communities in Delaware.

FAUCC formed an ad hoc committee in May 2023 to submit an application to the Delaware Public Archives Historical Markers Program. After reviewing existing research and gathering input from Delaware City and Polktown stakeholders, the committee drafted the proposed marker text and submitted the application in July 2023.

Due to staff member changes and procedural adjustments, a backlog developed in

the Archives application review process. FAUCC received formal approval of the marker in July 2024, and the Archives shared their approved draft text with FAUCC in September 2025. FAUCC then submitted minor revisions to the text in November 2025, and the application is currently back in the Archives' queue awaiting final approval.

Once final approval is received, funding secured from local legislators, and the marker location finalized, the Archives will submit the order to the forge for fabrication. Production can take 4 to 6 months. When a shipping date is confirmed, the Archives and FAUCC will coordinate the details of the installation and unveiling event.



TIME TO SKETCH THE BRANCHES OF YOUR FAMILY TREE

By Marilyn Whittington

FAUCC would like to encourage a new pastime that will introduce you to deep knowledge about your ancestral heritage. There are many resources available online at the library and in public records kept by states to search your family history. If you know the birth names of one or two generations in your family—a parent, grandparents, perhaps a favorite aunt or uncle, you can begin an investigation into who you are as far back as the late 1700's.

FAUCC partnered with Loree Elton, Director of Delaware City Library, Rosalyn Greene, President of the Delaware Chapter of Afro-American History and Genealogical Society and Archivist Leah Greer, Delaware Public Archives in 2025 for a Juneteenth seminar to learn about the information held by the state of Delaware and national organizations, that can make your detective work very fruitful. This seminar was so popular, the **Delaware City Library is offering a similar program with hands-on trainings in February, in honor of Black History Month, on the 14th and 21st, 2026.** Register at: <https://delawarelibraries.libcal.com/event/16140926>

Before deciding to mail in swabs of your saliva, start at the Delaware Public Archives or Bureau of Vital Statistics. Before you start, put on your glasses so you can see the original documents - many are written in cursive penmanship!

Resources to get your started:

Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society, Inc. Delaware Chapter:

<https://www.deaahgs.com/resources.html>

Delaware Genealogical Society:

<https://delgensoc.org/research-guide/>

What you may discover can take you on the most meaningful scavenger hunt of your life. Once you know names and dates, it's possible to cross reference with newspaper articles, such as marriage announcements and obituaries.

**Delaware City's Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church
190th Year Anniversary Celebration**

March 14, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

**Delaware City Fire Hall
815 Fifth Street, Delaware City, Delaware**

*Join the Church Congregation to celebrate
the Church's 190th Anniversary.*

*Bishop Charles L. Amos, Presiding Prelate of the 1st & 4th
Episcopal Districts of the U.A.M.E. Church will be attending
and church leaders will honor contributions of special individuals.
Enjoy a hot meal and slide show presentation highlighting historic events.*



Church
ANNIVERSARY

Tickets \$40. Deadline February 28.

*Tickets available from any church member including
Linda Price (302) 276-4682, Liz Boyer (302) 312-6072
and Rev. Marilyn Turner (302) 765-8211.*

**The Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church is the proud owner of the
African Union Church Cemetery in Delaware City.**

CONQUER THE CANAL & EXPANDING OUR PARTNERSHIP ~ MAY 30, 2026

By Mary Bricker-Jenkins

**Expanding Our Partnership with the
Jackson Lodge No. 19**

For decades the members of the Jackson Lodge have invested time and skill in maintaining our African Union Church Cemetery, and they have made numerous monetary donations as well. This year we are taking the opportunity to give back a little by staffing a water station on **May 30th**, during their annual Conquer the Canal Race Series: www.runthecanal.com. The water station will be at the cemetery, which is on the route. We're told that many runners have asked about the cemetery; this year we'll be there all day to provide water and, after the race, information.

Those interested participating in the race can contact Race Director Patrick Atkinson, atkinson821@gmail.com. Those willing to help at the water station can contact Linda Butler, Chair, FAUCC Property Management Committee, at lbutlerphotos@gmail.com. Even an hour or two will help us thank the Jackson Lodge members.

Historical note: Delaware City's Jackson Lodge was chartered in 1857, 22 years after the African Union Church Cemetery was established in 1835.



African Union Church Cemetery Plaza is always open to visit with a shaded lawn, benches and bike rack with repair station. The secure cemetery gate is open for visitors by appointment by contacting info@africanunioncemetery.org. Location information is on our website.

2026 DELAWARE CITY-POLKTOWN JUNETEENTH OBSERVANCE-RAIN OR SHINE

Delaware City and Polktown occupy a special place in our nation's history. This year, 2026, marks another occasion that Friends of the African Union Church Cemetery will be observing Juneteenth, June 19. On this day friends, neighbors, visitors and special guests will gather under a tent for a memorial service to honor five soldiers of the United States Colored Troops who are buried at the Church Cemetery. Please join us by taking a walk from 1840 Michael N. Castle Trail head to the cemetery plaza. Parking is available at the Delaware City Community Center.

Leading up to Juneteenth, educational and cultural activities for all ages will take place throughout the community at the Delaware City Library, on the lawn of Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church and at Delaware City's Battery Park on Clinton Street. Plan to participate. Learn about the restored cemetery and a deed that dates

back to 1835; learn how to research a family history and hear about the passage of Harriet Tubman around the Chesapeake marshlands.



To conclude the commemoration of Juneteenth 2026 and the soldiers the community honors, attend an ecumenical worship service with the Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. congregation, followed by their community barbecue. The occasion is free and open to all, 305 Fourth Street, Delaware City.

For event updates visit the Delaware City - Polktown Juneteenth Observance website <https://juneteenth-delcity.org/>

Contact Planners at info@africanunioncemetery.org if you would like to participate in the planning and volunteering for these Juneteenth events.

FAUCC Board of Directors

President: Rev. Marilyn Turner	Dr. Mary Bricker-Jenkins	Mt. Salem U.A.M.E. Church:	City of Delaware City:
Vice President: Marilyn Whittington	Linda Butler	Rhonda Patrick – Ex-Officio	Paul Johnson, Mayor – Ex-Officio
Secretary: Tracy Beck	Robert Seidle	Rev. Marilyn Turner – Ex-Officio	Britney Loveland, City Manager – Ex-Officio
Treasurer: Loree Elton			

There is also an Advisory Board that assists the Board of Directors. Contact FAUCC if you are interested in serving on the Advisory Board.

Become a member or volunteer today It's through our partnership with history enthusiasts like you that we are able to continue "Making History Matter". Membership support helps the Friends care for the cemetery, and provides our education programs with the resources to serve more school students and other interested organizations. Volunteers are vital to the Friends group. If you are interested in volunteering your time, please contact us. Thank you for your support. Check our website at www.africanunioncemetery.org ~ Claire Wyngaard Membership Chair



Friends of the African Union Church Cemetery Membership Application
 Submit this form with your check made payable to: Friends of the AUC Cemetery
 Mail to: Friends of the AUC Cemetery, PO Box 4200, Delaware City, DE 19706

Date: _____ Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone #: _____ E-Mail: _____

E-mail for Friends Group ONLY. We will not share your e-mail address.

Membership Categories: **Memberships are valid for 1 year** I am interested in volunteering ____
 ____ Individual (one person only) - \$10 ____ Family (family members at a single address) - \$20
 ____ Supporting - \$30 ____ Patron - \$50 ____ Sponsor - \$100 ____ Anchor - \$200
 ____ Benefactor - \$500 I would like to make a one-time donation of \$ _____ Juneteenth Program Donation \$ _____

Please contact us at the above address or send us an e-mail: info@africanunioncemetery.org

