



Women's History Walking Tour

1. Heritage Frederick Museum of Frederick County History and Frederick County Archives and Research Center *24 East Church Street*

This building was constructed in 1824 for **Dr. John Baltzell** (1774-1854) as a residence for his wife **Ruth Ridgely** and their 10 children, 6 of which lived to maturity. John owned eight slaves, including **Hester Diggs**. Hester was born into slavery. She was listed with her children in John's inventory at his death in 1854. She

washed and laundered the family's clothing, and had other tasks such as ironing. She and the other slaves may have lived in the basement, where the Library is now located. After John's death in 1854, Ruth (who came from a slave owning family in Baltimore) sold some of the slaves but freed others including Hester and her children. According to the 1860 census Hester and her children were living in Frederick with John Diggs, a free black man. She and her children adopted his last name. In 1869 Hester married a man named **Abram Bennett**, but retained the name Diggs. They moved to Auburn, New York was a hub for free blacks in 1870 which is where **Harriet Tubman** settled. The **William R. Diggs Pool** in Mullinex Park was named for a Black member of the household staff of the Baker family in the 20th century.

In 1854 Ruth, now a widow, sold this building to **Col. Alexander Baird Hanson** (1790-1868) for his residence. Col. Hanson was a community leader and helped found the **Frederick Female Seminary** in addition to other roles. **John Loats** acquired the house in 1870, and he established in his will of 1879 that it be converted into the **Loats Female Orphan Asylum of Frederick City**.



Loats Female Orphan Asylum welcomed its first girls in the spring of 1882 and remained in operation until 1958.

The home welcomed its first girls in the spring of 1882 and remained in operation until 1958. Daily life for the girls consisted of chores, school, and church, with little time to play. They attended public schools and were under the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (across the street). They did their part during World War II, rolling bandages for the Red Cross and helping with ration books at the **North Market Street School**.

In 1959 the Historical Society of Frederick County (dba Heritage Frederick) purchased the building to use as the headquarters of its Museum of Frederick County History and Frederick County Archives and Research Center.

2. Trail Mansion

106 East Church Street

Italianate architecture, built in 1854 for **Charles Edward Trail** a community leader. In 1863, during the Civil War, he was elected to the **Maryland House of Delegates**, and then elected to the **State Senate**. He also served as an **Alderman** for the City. He served as president of the **Frederick Female Seminary**, among many other businesses. The environment of downtown Frederick still retains elements of Charles Trail's life work. The Trail Mansion remains largely intact and is currently used as a Funeral Home.



Florence and **Bertha Trail**, daughters of Charles E. Trail, were very active in the local suffrage movement from the founding of the local branch of the **Just Government League** until the 19th amendment was ratified in 1920. Florence served as president of the branch for many years. The sisters hosted many suffrage meetings at their home. One example was on Sept. 3, 1913, when **Elizabeth King Ellicott**, prominent Maryland suffragist and president of **Equal Suffrage League of Baltimore**, spoke to a well-attended meeting in the sisters' parlor to kick off her campaign through the "mountain section of the state." On May 2, 1914, the sisters hosted a meeting on the lawn of their home as part of a nationwide demonstration in support of the **Brislow-Mondell Resolution** where Baltimore suffragist **Miss Emma Harris Jamison** made a spirited address. They then hosted Philadelphia suffragist **Miss Anna T. Harding** on March 13, 1915.

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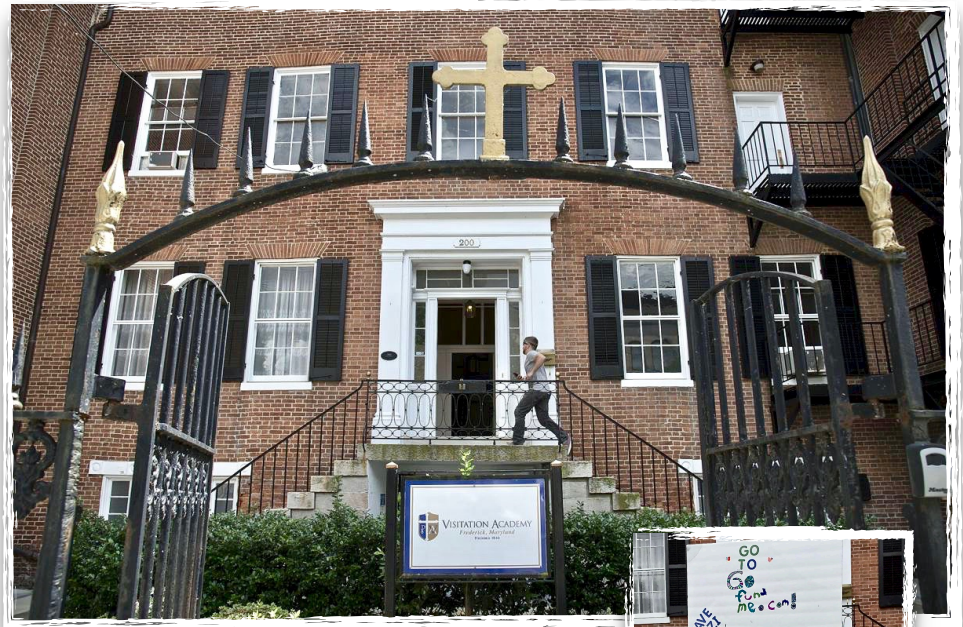
3. Frederick Academy of Visitation

200 East Church Street – Church Street & Chapel Alley

The Frederick Academy of Visitation was established in 1825 as a private Roman Catholic school for girls. The new school replaced an earlier one that had offered the traditional courses of reading, writing and needlework. Local parents desired a more challenging instruction for their daughters, and they got what they wanted: over the years, classes included language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, geography, art, music, dance, public speaking, Spanish, computer/technology education and life skills.

Early on, boarders came from all over the U.S. Instruction continued during the Civil War, even when the classrooms were converted into a hospital for Union soldiers, and General George McClellan used a portion of the school for his headquarters.

The **Visitation Monastery**, which was also located on the site, closed after 2005, following an act delivered from the Vatican. Boarders could no longer stay at the Visitation Academy because there were no Sisters to care for them on the site after school hours. The school closed in 2016. In 2019 the City of Frederick's Historic Commission approved a plan to convert the site into condominiums and a boutique hotel, which is now in construction.



Children hold up signs of support for Visitation Academy after a meeting for school officials to explain why the school was closing and for parents to ask questions.



Frederick News Post, 6/23/16, photo Lindsay Powers.

4. Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ *15 West Church Street*

Barbara Fritchie (1766-1862) was a member of this church. She is known widely for a poem written by **John Greenleaf Whittier**, published in *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in 1863. When roles of working-class women were largely restricted to duties such as sewing, cooking and cleaning, she was far ahead of her time. Born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, she was the daughter of Catherine Zealor and John Nicholas Hauer, immigrants from Dildendorff, Nassau, Germany. As a child, she moved with her family to Frederick. Very little is known about her



early life, but she must have attracted local attention when she remained single until age 40, then married a man 14 years her junior. Fritchie was well-read and owned many books. Her choice of reading material reveals that she was an independent thinker, interested in female leaders throughout history. Her choice of reading material reveals that she was an independent thinker, interested in female leaders throughout history. looks and feels like America. It's freedom, it's democracy, it's casualness, it's good health."

Even with her unusual way of life, Fritchie easily could have died in anonymity, were it not for the poem, **Barbara Fritchie**, written by the nationally popular poet John Greenleaf Whittier. Whittier's poem tells the story of her strident response to Confederate soldiers who trooped by her house in 1862 (the year she died at age 96). According to the poem, the Civil War soldiers ripped an American flag off her house. As the flag fell, she grabbed it the poem relates, "Shoot if you must this old gray head, but spare your country's flag, she said."

Many question the validity of this story, but the idea of an old woman facing the enemy resonated with men and women of all ages, North and South. Before the age of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, the story went "viral," resulting in her name becoming a household word and Frederick, a tourist destination. The poem inspired an operetta, a play and three silent films. In 1938, six local businesses bore her name: Barbara Fritchie Cottages, Barbara Fritchie Hotel, Barbara Fritchie House and Museum Souvenir Shop and Barbara Fritchie Tea Room. In the 1960s, the Barbara Fritchie Chocolate Shop became the Barbara Fritchie Candy Stick Restaurant, featuring homemade soups, cakes, pies and most especially apple dumplings until it's recent closure. Other businesses sold Barbara Fritchie Chocolates, and Barbara Fritchie Full-Fashioned Stockings.

In 1943, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on his way to see **President Franklin D. Roosevelt**, stopped in Frederick and recited Whittier's poem. The Fritchie house was destroyed by a flood in 1869, but was reconstructed in the 1920s and opened to the public in 1927. The home became an instant tourist attraction and was pictured on post cards, souvenir plates and ashtrays. Fritchie's reconstructed house was transformed from a museum into an AirBnB in her name. (154 W. Patrick Street)

Claire McCardell (1905-1958) was another member of this church. While you might not know her name, it's likely that the women on this tour are wearing clothes based on her designs. Today, designers such as **Michael Kors, Anna Sui, Isaac Mizrahi, Donna Karan** and **Calvin Klein** are still influenced by her.

McCardell studied at **Hood College**, and then enrolled in what is now the **Parson's School of Design** in NY. In 1927 she studied French couture in Paris. She quickly ascertained that women's fashion needs and wants were being ignored. In her day, most designers were men, and they advocated corsets, petticoats, padded shoulders and profiles that distorted women's figures. She emphasized comfort as well as style. Imagine a female in this world of men, ignoring their trends! McCardell introduced leotards, hoods and ballet slippers for everyday wear and "separates" for ease of travel. She experimented with new fabrics, such as rayon, to accent a woman's natural form. She believed that a woman should be able to dress herself without having to be a contortionist.

McCardell's revolutionary aesthetic took the world by storm. **Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró** and other internationally known artists created fabric patterns for her. In 1955 her face and her designs graced the cover of **Time Magazine**. She described her style as "American - what looks and feels like America. It's freedom, it's democracy, it's casualness, it's good health."



Colorized Image, Postcard, Circa 1960 Artist N. C. Wyeth's depiction of Fritchie (1922)

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Time Magazine, 1955

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5. City Hall

101 North Court Street

On June 4, 1919, the **19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution** was passed and sent to the states for ratification. On Dec. 16, 1919, the county courthouse, in the building that now serves as City Hall, served as a site of a woman's suffrage rally.

U. S. Sen. Kenneth McKellar

Tennessee, a strong advocate for women's voting rights, was the featured speaker, along with Miss **Maud Younger**, a prominent suffragist from California and leader in the **National Women's Party**.

A resolution was adopted calling for the county's legislators to vote for ratification of the amendment. On Feb. 20, 1920, Maryland voted against ratification. In May 1920, **Florence Trail** announced what was likely the last meeting of the **Frederick Just Government League**, held at the Frederick Armory, since 35 states had ratified the amendment. By August, the required 36 states ratified the amendment, giving women the right to vote. Maryland did not ratify the amendment until 1941.



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6. Record Street Home

115 Record Street

In early 1892 a handful of Fredericktowne ladies decided there was a need to provide for: "Persons of respectable parentage and good character, who, in advanced age, by reason of the death of their natural protectors, by loss of fortune, by physical infirmity, or other inability to care for themselves are unprovided with the means of obtaining the comfort and security so necessary for the repose of mind and body which should ever attend the declining years of life." Thus, the "Record Street Home for the Aged" began at 115 Record Street in a house donated to the enterprise by **Mrs. Ann Ross** and **Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Ross**. In October of 1892, the Home was opened to its first two residents.



To this day the major force in determining the Home's character has always been and continues to be the 26 women who serve as the Board of Managers. The women who began the Home were a zealous lot, and "the ladies' board," as it was called, passed down this commitment to the present Board. Chartered in 1892, unusual even in its time, it is unique today; but, it continues to function as a continuing care community for ladies in Downtown Frederick since its inception over 125 years ago. A quick peek in the garden gives you some insight into the gentle, caring nature of this home that runs from Record Street to Bentz overlooking Baker Park. (Baker Park story..)

7. Kemp Hall

2 & 4 East Church Street

This building was built in 1860 by the **Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ** with a parsonage and large meeting halls. It has had many functions over the years. It is now the home to Candy Kitchen and Wastler's Barber Shop, with upper floors holding 18 new apartments. For many years it served as a meeting space including Civil War it housed the MD's delegation which met in Frederick to vote on seceding from the Union. In the early 20th century, it was also used as a rooming house and as a **Conservatory of Music** for the **Women's College of Frederick**.



Frederick News Post, 7/1/17, staff photo Dan Gross

In the summer of 1910, **Miss M. L. Manning**, field secretary of the **Just Government League of Maryland**, came to Frederick and went from house to house interviewing men and women and recording their impressions. Manning was internationally known for her work for women's suffrage in her native Australia. Miss Manning concluded her Frederick tour with a lecture on Australia, including progressive suffrage legislation, in Kemp Hall on Sept. 16, 1910.

On May 23, 1913, Kemp Hall held another open women's suffrage meeting. **Alice Carpenter**, who lived in New England and was a major advocate for woman suffrage, was a key speaker at that meeting. The meeting made the front page of *The Frederick News*.

8. Winchester Hall/Frederick Female Seminary/Hood College

12 East Church Street

This impressive Greek Revival building on East Church Street, Winchester Hall known today as the seat of Frederick County government since the 1930s, originally served as the **Frederick Female Seminary**. In the early 19th century, there was an increased interest in women's education, which resulted in the establishment of private secondary schools called seminaries that provided new but limited opportunities for women.



Hiram Winchester was a former New England school teacher who came to Frederick in 1839 and chartered the Frederick Female Seminary as a preparatory school for girls in 1840. Construction ran from 1843 to 1845. Initially, instruction included subjects such as spelling, penmanship, languages, music, algebra, astronomy and needlework.

Winchester also provided for the education of one orphan from each city and county in the state each year. Soon more space was needed, and construction began on the identical West Hall. It opened in 1857. During the Civil War attempts were made to keep the school open, even as Union troops began to occupy the building. The seminary was temporarily closed in 1862, when it was taken over as a Civil War hospital. Although the building was returned to Winchester Hall in 1862, it was reportedly in poor condition and did not reopen until 1865.

After the Civil War, there were increased opportunities for women's education spurred by social activism, declining male enrollment (Civil War casualties), increased employment opportunities, and the Industrial Revolution. In the South, women's colleges established after the Civil War often had a religious affiliation. In 1893, the **Potomac Synod of the Reformed Church** leased the East and West halls from the financially struggling seminary. The rented space was used to house the women's department of **Mercersburg College**, forming the **Woman's College of Frederick**.

Margaret Hood (1833-1913) is best known as the namesake and early benefactor of Hood College. In 1847, at age 14, she enrolled as a boarding student at the Frederick Female Seminary, and graduated in 1849. She returned home and helped her parents manage the family



Hood's philanthropy also benefited Heritage Frederick (then known as the Historical Society of Frederick County, established in 1892); the Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ, Frederick Memorial Hospital, and what is now the Record Street Home.

Her path as a philanthropist and promoter of education for women can be traced back to her alma mater, the Frederick Female Seminary.

farm. Shortly after they died in 1873, she married **James Mifflin Hood**, a widower with grown children, and the owner of Hane and Hood, a successful company that built and serviced carriages and wagons. The couple had no children, and he died in 1894.

Her path as a philanthropist and promoter of education for women can be traced back to her alma mater, the Frederick Female Seminary. During the Civil War, the school operated as a hospital for wounded soldiers. The change in occupation was dramatic, and in 1862, the seminary closed. Three years later it reopened, and in 1893, after nearly 30 years, it could no longer afford to operate. Simultaneously, the Potomac Synod of the Reformed Church of Christ (now the ERUCC) was relocating the woman's component of Mercersburg College, from Pennsylvania, to

Frederick. The Synod hired **Joseph Henry Apple**, a 23-year old math teacher from Central High School in Pittsburgh, to advise them. Professor Apple helped form the new college, and agreed to serve as its president. The site of the new college was the seminary building, today known as Winchester Hall. The college leased the building and equipment from the Frederick Female Seminary, which became a preparatory department of the school, a function that continued until 1920.

Dr. Apple wanted to locate the college on the outskirts of town. His proposal peaked Margaret Hood's interest. She donated \$20,000 to support an endowment fund later named in her husband's memory. Over the years, she continued to fund the college. In 1912, in recognition of her generosity, the Synod authorized changing the school's name to Hood College. Hood died the following year. In her will, she bequeathed an additional \$30,000 to the College. This endowment was the impetus for construction of the Shriner and Alumnae Halls.

Hood's philanthropy also benefited: Heritage Frederick (then known as the Historical Society of Frederick County, established in 1892); the ERUCC, Frederick Memorial Hospital, and what is now the Record Street Home. Other beneficiaries of her generosity included Mercersburg Academy and Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania.

Margaret Hood committed her life to improving the world around her, and her primary focus was the education of women. Her financial support has made a lasting difference and inspired others to do the same.

Other comments:

After the Civil War, opportunities for women's education improved for many reasons:

- 1) Increased social activism.
- 2) Mothers who were educated at the female seminaries wanted their daughters to have even better education than they did
- 3) Educational centers faced declining male enrollment due to Civil War casualties
- 4) Increased employment opportunities for women
 - The Industrial Revolution resulted in new jobs
 - New technologies such as the typewriter
- 5) More women were becoming nurses with formal educations.

Margaret's alma mater, the Frederick Female Seminary School, did not benefit from this increased interest and was struggling. Attempts were made to keep the school open, even when Union troops occupied the building. The occupation damaged the building, and tarnished the reputation of the school.

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24 East Church Street, Frederick, MD 21701

CALL 301-663-1188 x 107

Heritage Frederick - The Historical Society of Frederick County

Due to COVID-19, we cannot offer in-person visits and programs, but we are continuing to serve you in new virtual ways.