

The Frederick News-Post

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Up from the Meadows

A History of Black Americans in Frederick County, Maryland

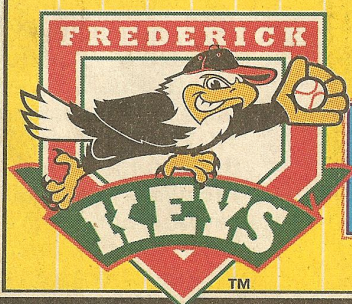
*A new,
two-part,
video
documentary*

Part I, covering the
1700s and 1800s will
debut Wednesday,
May 14 at 8:00 p.m.

Part II, covering the
1900s
will air Thursday,
May 15 at 8:00 p.m.



Photo courtesy of The Historical Society of Frederick County, MD



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ON THE COVER

Up from the Meadows

A History of Black Americans in Frederick County Maryland

By Shawn Lees

Chris Haugh, creator and producer of Cable 10's 1995 award-winning documentary "Frederick Town," opens his newest project with a video collage of tombstones belonging to black people who lived and died in Frederick County.

"What I saw in these grave markers were people who never had their stories told," said Haugh, Frederick Cablevision's production manager. "I thought it would be important to hear these stories."

For more than 18 months, Haugh has been trying to uncover these stories in hopes of creating a video documentary that ties together the history of a group of people who often had their stories overlooked and minimized.

As a result, Haugh has written and produced "Up From the Meadows: A history of Black Americans in Frederick County, Maryland," a five-hour, two-part video documentary that traces the achievements and struggles of local black Americans. The first 2 1/2-hour segment, airing on May 14, covers the 1700s and 1800s. The final 2 1/2-hour segment, airing May 15, examines the 20th century.

This has been a difficult project for the 30-year-old Frederick resident because many of the stories remain buried beneath the tombstones.

"We'll never know some of the awesome deeds these folks accomplished because for a long time, nobody thought the achievements of black Americans were worth recording," he said.

For Haugh, tracking down



Chris Haugh, producer
Photo by Ike Wilson

as many of these stories as he could was a rewarding challenge.

"The most interesting aspect of this project has been stumbling on information, knowing that I'm probably the first person to hear this in so many years," Haugh said.

With "Frederick Town," Haugh could read the many newspaper article and books that traced the city's history. He created a timeline of important facts and dates and then looked for local historians to comment on the prominent events.

The black history project, however, required a different approach. Haugh had to work almost backwards by first interviewing local experts and then trying to track down factual evidence to support their stories.

"You knew important things had happened to these people, but it wasn't readily recorded in the typical library and newspaper files like it is with white history," Haugh said. "With black history, there was a great emphasis on the oral tradition because for

many years, blacks were prohibited from reading and writing so they couldn't always write things down."

Haugh credits much of his research to three local historians: writer and historian Kathleen Snowden, former NAACP President Lord D. Nickens, and former Frederick City Alderman William O. Lee. Nine other county residents also comment on life in Frederick and past events.

These include: Dr. I. Blanche Bourne-Tyree, Frederick County's first female physician, Henry D. Brown, Jr., a former teacher

in the segregated colored school system, Marie Anne Erickson, a writer of numerous Frederick historical articles and profiles, and Arnold Delauter, a former employee who worked for Frederick Memorial Hospital for more than four decades.

Haugh said he's not sure what type of reaction his project will get from the community.

"It's going to be different than 'Frederick Town,' which was a very positive project and painted a pretty picture of Frederick City's history," he said.

"'Up from the Meadows' presents a real side of history that includes things that many people would like to forget, such as slavery, segregation and lynchings," Haugh said.

Some people may feel uncomfortable by these truths, Haugh said. "But an equal number of people may say, 'Finally, the facts are being told. Our ancestors didn't go through all that toil and

degradation in vain.'"

He points out that although he does cover some negative moments, most of the documentary focuses on the achievements of blacks like Decatur Dorsey, a former slave who is Frederick County's highest honored Civil War soldier.

"Whether it's white or black, it's all Frederick's history," Haugh said.

The project has taught



This photo was taken in New Market in the late 1800's
Courtesy of Frank and Shirley Shaw

Haugh a lot about human nature and dynamics. It also has humbled him.

"For me to really know and feel what they did, I can think, 'Gosh, these are horrible situations,' but the bottom line is I'm still white. As much research and as many stories as I hear, I can never truly understand."

"Up From the Meadows: A history of Black Americans in Frederick County, Maryland" will air in two parts on Cable Channel 10, the local origination channel of Frederick Cablevision. Part One debuts Wednesday, May 14 at 8:00 p.m. Part Two airs Thursday, May 15 at 8:00 p.m. Each part will be roughly 2 1/2-hours long. An encore showing will take place on Sunday, May 18 and Monday, May 19, starting at 8:00 p.m. both nights.