

Self-Guided Easton Tours Bike or Walk

BLACK HISTORY



Frederick Douglass Statue at Talbot County Courthouse

Tour Time: 1¼ hours • Cycling Time: 15 minutes
Safety Rating: 4 of 5

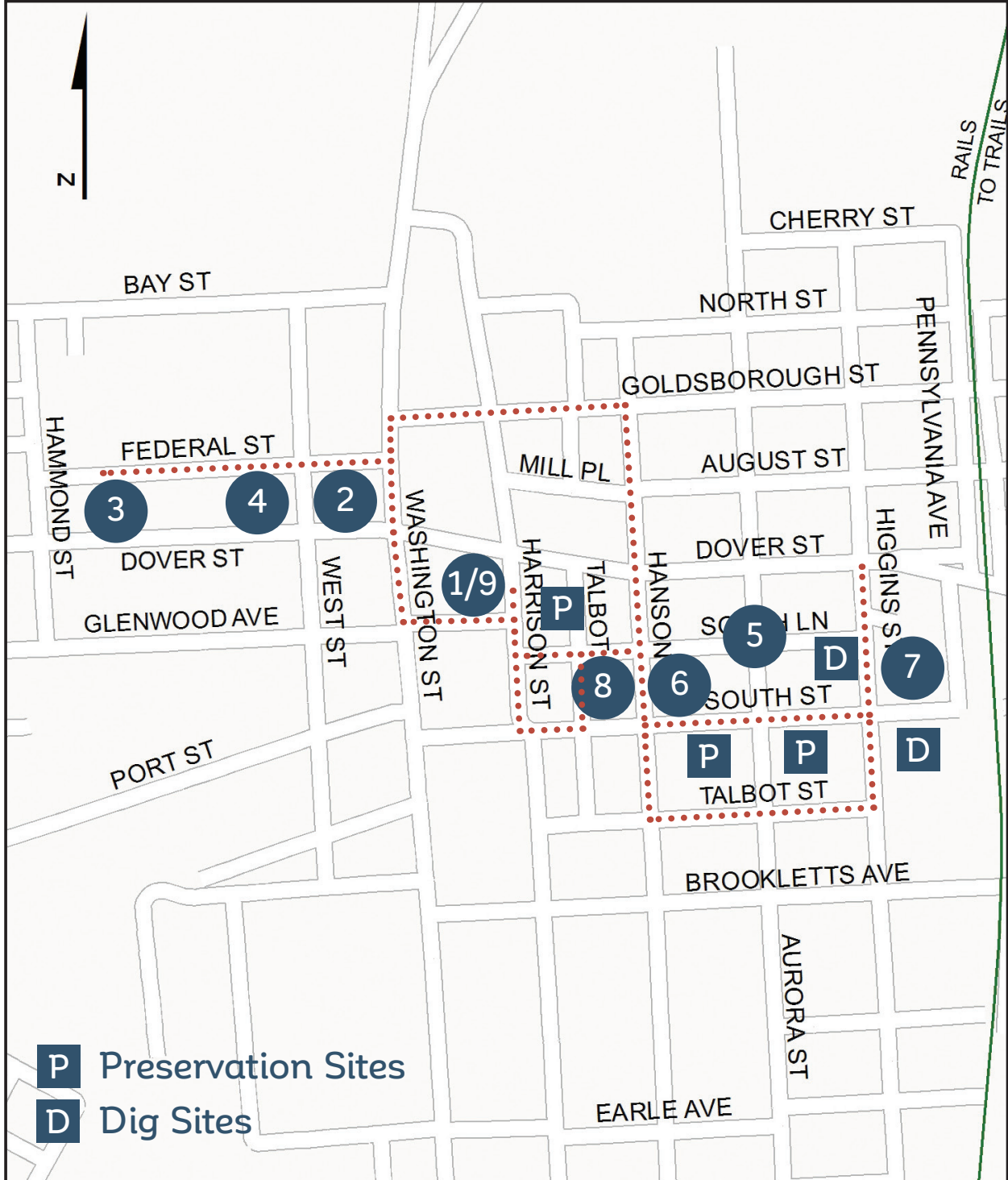
OTHER EASTON TOURS:

Historic Houses of Worship • Fun Facts and Ghost Stories
Historic Buildings • Historic Waterfront



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- 1 All tours begin at the Talbot County Visitor and Resource Center:** 11 S. Harrison St. Come in and learn about other sites, events, and activities in Talbot County.

Turn right on S. Harrison St. Turn right on Glenwood Ave. and right onto Washington St. Courthouse is on the left.

- 2 Talbot County Courthouse:** Statue of Frederick Douglass (dedicated in 2011) 11 N. Washington St. Born into slavery in Talbot County, Douglass was an internationally celebrated abolitionist. In 1878, Douglass spoke on the Courthouse Green, “This visit was interesting to me because 45 years before I had been dragged to Easton behind horses with my hands tied, put in jail and offered for sale.”

Turn left onto Federal St.

- 3 Sheriff’s House and Jail:** (c. 1881) Federal St. In 1836, Douglass planned an escape with his friends while working at William Freeland’s farm. Their plans were discovered and they were thrown in the Easton jail, which he described as more comfortable than he expected, but with heavy iron latticework covering the windows. He recalled the ugly feeling of being inspected by slave traders who would opportunistically arrive in hopes of picking up new ‘wares’ that masters had found too troublesome. The current jail was rebuilt in 1881 of granite in the Queen Anne style replacing the original (1710).

Turn around on Federal St. and go toward town center. Stewart Building is on left.

- 4 The Stewart Building:** Formerly known as The Brick Hotel (c. 1811) 5 Federal St. Douglass stayed here after the Civil War when he returned to speak and dedicate two churches. Formerly a hotel used by slave traders; Douglass was the first African American to stay here.

Turn left on N. Washington St., right on Goldsborough St. and right onto Hanson St. Follow Hanson St. to South St. Take a left onto South St. and use the map to find restoration and dig sites. Return to the corner of Hanson St. and South St. and turn left onto Hanson St.

- 5 The Hill:** Bordered by E. Dover, South, Harrison and Talbot Sts., The Hill is believed to be one of the oldest African-American neighborhoods in the United States. The Hill was home to both slaves and 400 persons who had either purchased their freedom or been freed by Quakers, Methodists or ship captains.

Between 1789 and 1805, nine African Americans owned property including Grace Brooks, who is believed to be the first woman landowner on the Eastern Shore. Born into slavery, Brooks emancipated herself, her children and her grandchildren by 1788 and purchased her home in 1792. The publishing of her obituary in 1810 indicated that Brooks, a midwife by profession, was well respected by both blacks and whites. Many of her descendants and descendants of other Hill residents reside at The Hill today.



The Hill was rediscovered by Professor Dale Green, a Morgan State University professor and a former resident of Easton.

Dig and Restoration sites:

- 323 South St.
- 208 & 308 South St. (restoration sites)
- Asbury AME Methodist Church
- Bethel AME Episcopal Church
- 18 Talbot Lane

Our tour continues to a pair of historically important African American churches dedicated by Douglass in 1878, 50 years after he fled Talbot County as a slave.

6 **Bethel A.M.E Church:**

110 S. Hanson St. (c. 1877) Believed to be the oldest A.M.E. congregation in Talbot County. The current structure is built in the Gothic revival style of the period and shows the solidarity of the black community in that era. Like other religious and ethnic minorities, this community was aided by local Quakers, who sold them their first church building. The years before the Civil War were particularly hard for the congregation, as laws



prohibited their meeting on Sunday and pastors were frequently threatened with being resold into slavery. Once they nearly lost their church, but a sympathetic Town Clerk granted the congregation a charter.

Turn left on Talbot St., then left on Thorogood Lane, right on South Lane to S. Higgins St. (Church is at corner of South Lane and S. Higgins St.).

7 **Asbury United Methodist Church:** 18 S. Higgins St. (c. 1876)

The congregation was formed in 1836 and served as the center of The Hill community. The Gothic/Victorian-style church, with its distinctive Bell Tower was rebuilt in 1876. The church is currently under restoration.

From S. Higgins St., turn right on South St., then right on Harrison St. Turn right on South Lane and then turn right onto Talbot Lane.

8 **Talbot County Women's Club:** 18 Talbot Lane This is one of the oldest buildings in Easton and is the site of an archaeological dig for The Hill.

Continue down Talbot Lane, take a right on South St. and a right onto S. Harrison St. Welcome and Resource Center is on left.

9 **Talbot County Visitor and Resource Center:** 11 S. Harrison St.

We return to the Welcome Center where you can learn more about Douglass and The Hill. Despite the shameful history of slavery on the Eastern Shore, Douglass never lost his love for Talbot County. He would make four trips to Talbot County over the next 40 years. Perhaps the natural beauty of its fertile soil, cleansing rivers, serene woodlands and the Chesapeake Bay provided some redemption. Douglass was proud to be an Eastern Shoreman. *"I am an Eastern Shoreman, with all that name implies. Eastern Shore corn and Eastern Shore pork gave me my muscle. I love Maryland and the Eastern Shore."* When he returned to his birthplace, a former slave plantation on the banks of the Tuckahoe River in Talbot County, he took some soil to carry back to his home in Washington D.C. *"some of the very soil on which I first trod."*