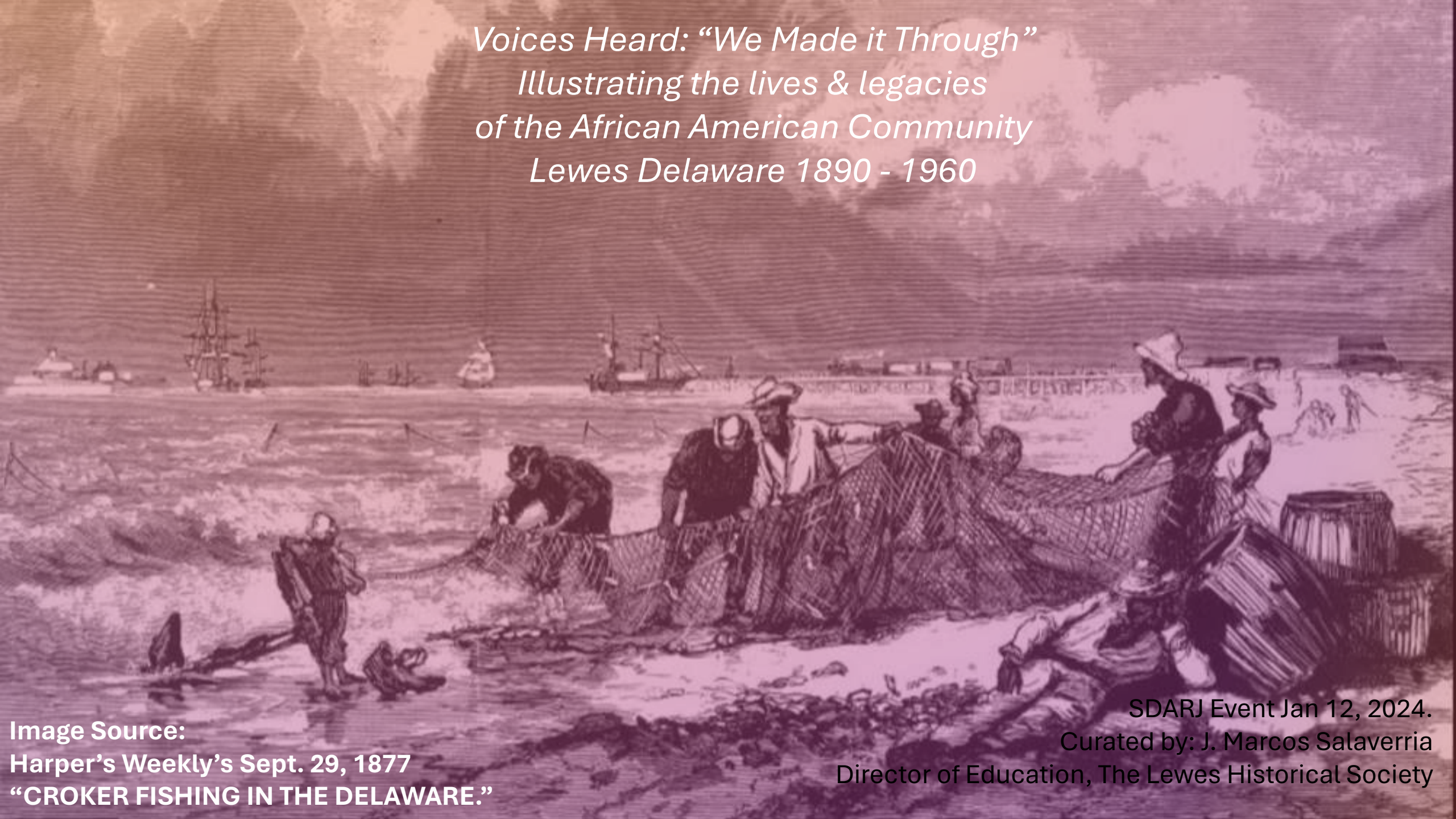


*Voices Heard: “We Made it Through”  
Illustrating the lives & legacies  
of the African American Community  
Lewes Delaware 1890 - 1960*

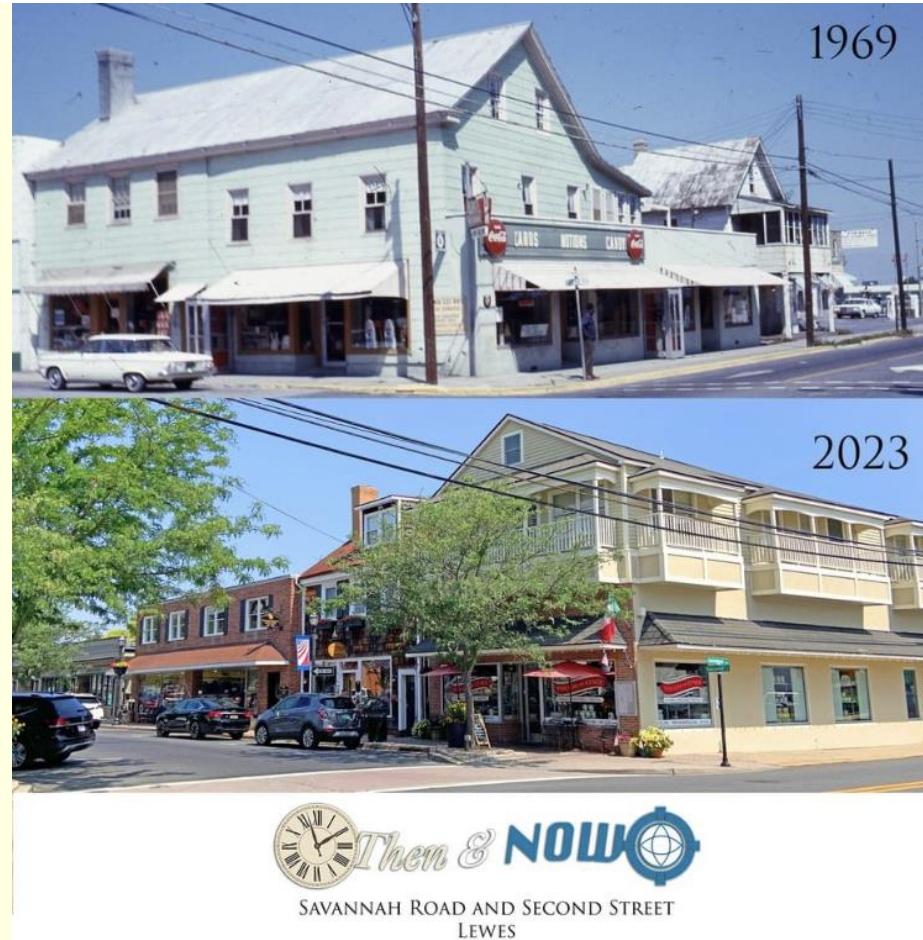


**Image Source:  
Harper's Weekly's Sept. 29, 1877  
“CROKER FISHING IN THE DELAWARE.”**

**SDARJ Event Jan 12, 2024.  
Curated by: J. Marcos Salaverria  
Director of Education, The Lewes Historical Society**

## Advice & Experience in Conducting An Oral History

- 1.) Where to Start?
- 2.) Remember, “Its, not about you!”
- 3.) Consider your Community Resources
- 4.) Listen & Learn
- 5.) There is always more than one story
- 6.) Be Brave!



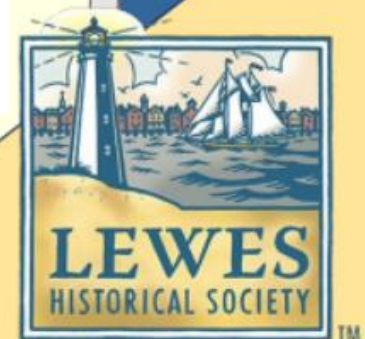
*Preservation*

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*Interpretation*

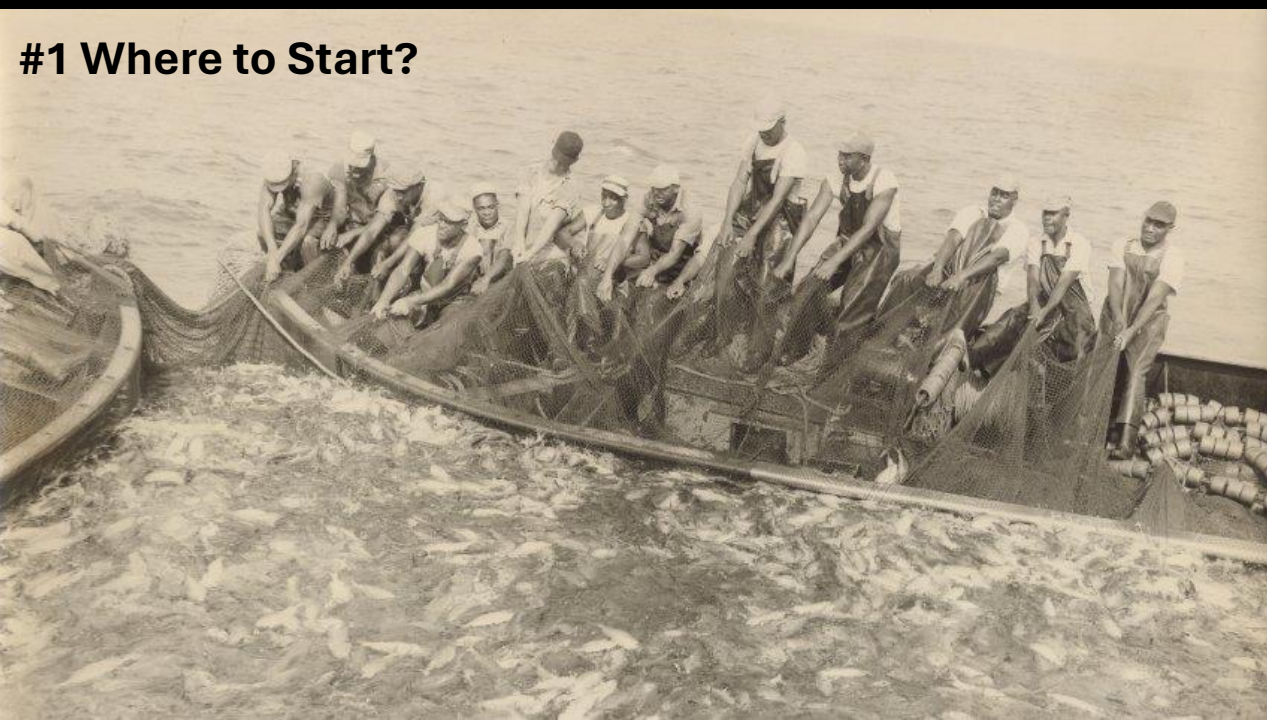
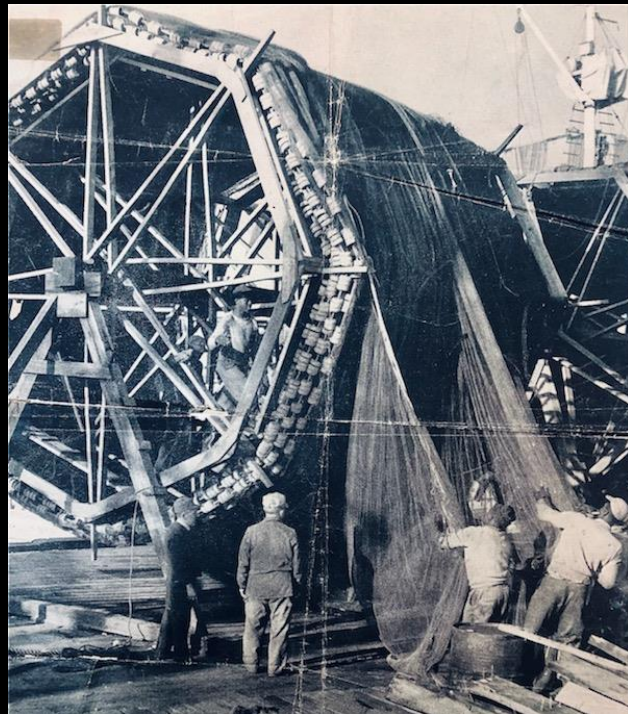
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*Cultural Enrichment*





Brown- Hicks Collection



### #1 Where to Start?

### The Menhaden Fishing Industry 1883-1966:

Fishing vessels were able to collect huge numbers of fish by encircling entire schools with large nets. Sized at over 1,200 feet long and 60 feet deep nets were dried completely to prevent mold and mildew from weakening the cotton (To turn the net reel, several fishermen would get inside and rotate the wheel by walking in synch and pushing down on the foot blocks.

“My mother was a domestic worker for the Rollins family. My dad was a fireman in the Seacoast Products factory operating the boilers that made the steam to process the fish that was turned into scrap and used to make beauty products.”

– Spencer Kennedy, Lewes resident

## Menhaden artifact reels in Lewes controversy

Commission denies historical society's request to keep net reel at campus on Shipcarpenter Street site



The Lewes Historic Preservation Architectural Review Commission denied an application from Lewes Historical Society to place a menhaden fishing net reel on its campus at the corner of Third and Shipcarpenter streets. The society had already moved the reel to its campus and was seeking approval after the fact. NICK ROTH PHOTOS

By Nick Roth • September 4, 2020

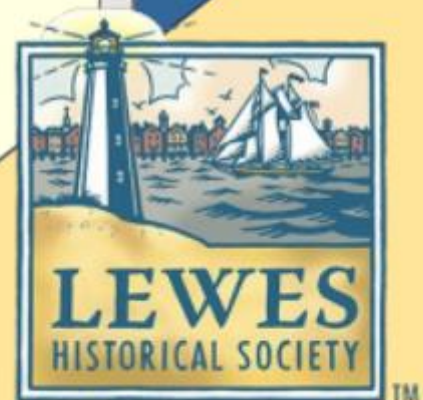
*Preservation*

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*Interpretation*

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*Cultural Enrichment*





## #2 IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU!

In 1800:

Local records reveals that the population of Lewes, just under 1,000 individuals at the time comprised of:

17% Enslaved

30% Free Blacks

53% White

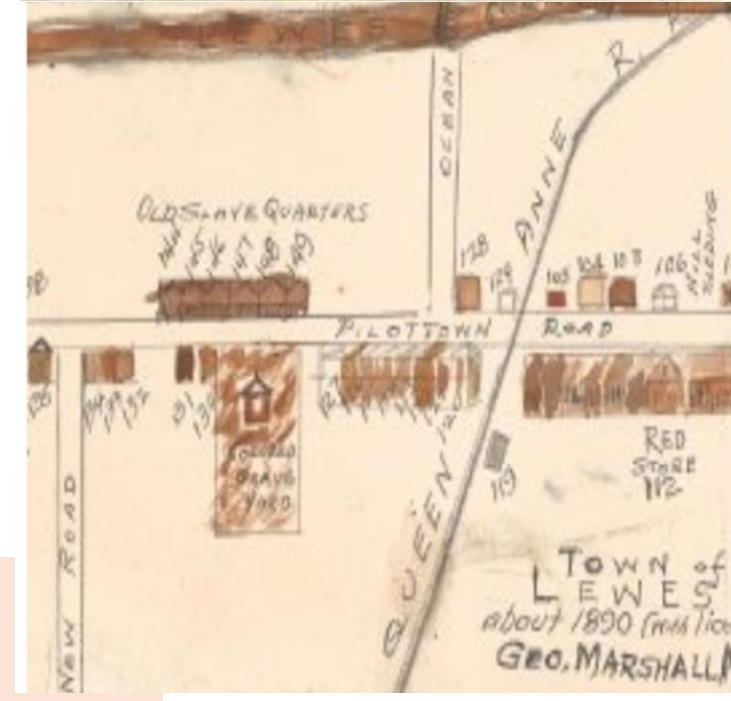
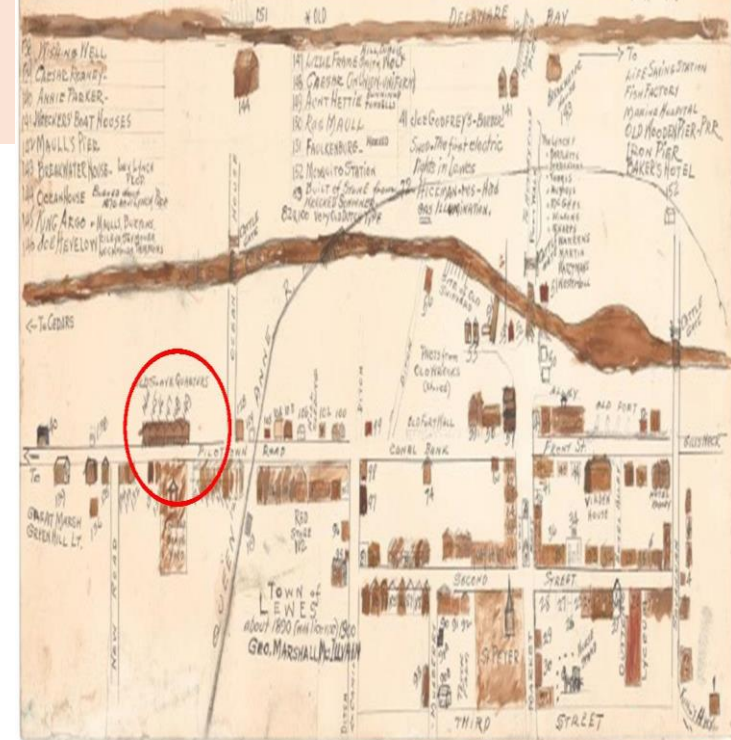
In 2024, with a population of over 3,500 less than 1% of Lewes's population contains people of color.

Less than 10 Black families remain in the area that can trace their heritage back to 1800.

Genealogical research has revealed some ancestors buried at the "Colored Graveyard" adjacent to the "Old Slave Quarters" on Pilottown Rd.

Many still remain unknown.

Map from the Collections of the Lewes Historical Society



### #3 Consider: Community Resources

1.) Local Churches

2.) Civic or Community Groups

3.) Identify your Allies

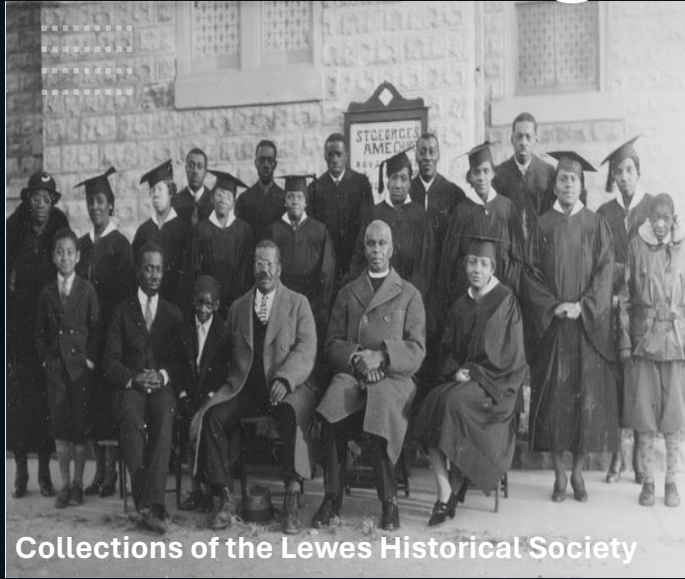
- **Consider your Space.**

Museums are purported to be “safe spaces” reinforce that tenant by making the time and space for your interviewees and ensure their comfort level and familiarity with our site when they are guests within your site. If there are members of the community you are researching willing to aid as “community liaisons” – their help can prove to be invaluable!

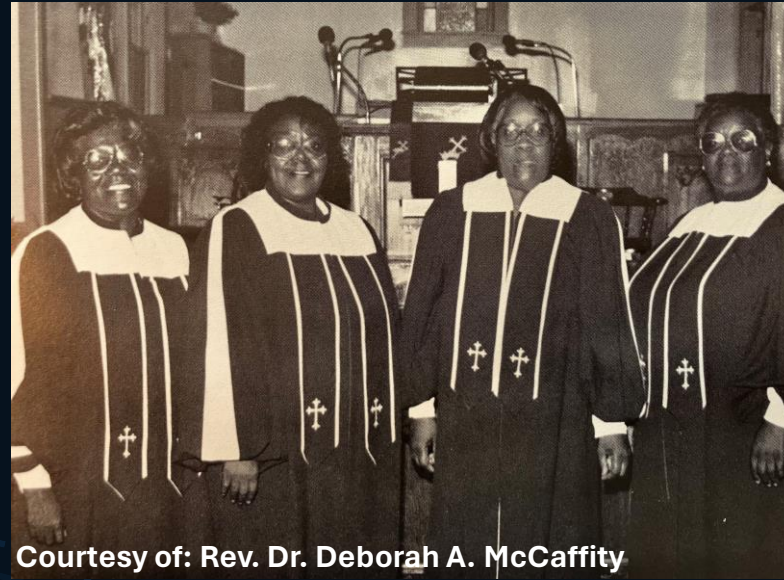


Lewes African American Heritage Commissioner Trina Brown-Hicks played a key role in the documentary. In addition to her intimate knowledge of the history of African Americans in Lewes, she also helped organize and conduct interviews along with the Lewes Historical Society.

# Saint George's A.M.E. - Est. 1816 - A Brief History



Collections of the Lewes Historical Society



Courtesy of: Rev. Dr. Deborah A. McCaffity



Courtesy of: Rev. Dr. Deborah A. McCaffity



- 1794- Richard Allen, founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), as the first independent Black denomination in the United States.

Allen was one of America's first black religious leaders to gain prominence for standing up against racial discrimination!

1816 - Allen founded Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, the first black church in the young United States.

1861- Peter Lewis, a Black shipbuilder in Lewes ensure the church's continuation with a donation of land near Lewes Creek.

1899- St George's was incorporated with a membership of 42 people.

1922- Isaac Burton as a gift expressed in the will of his aunt, Charlotte Burton donated land on which the church currently sits.

Saint Georges' Church continues to be a beacon in the community.

While the church has changed due to the gentrification of the community, it continues to hold regular worship services.

# Saint Paul's United Methodist- Est. 1882



The original exterior façade dates to 1882 with the cornerstone still in place.

- 2007, St. Paul's merged with John Wesley Church and Mount Pleasant Church located in Belltown to become one church, Faith United Methodist Church.
- 2011 the closed Saint Paul's Church building site in Lewes went up for sale. It was purchased in 2013.



Extensive restorations, were completed by the current residents, keeping as much original architecture as possible. Including the bellow.

The site is today a private residence.





## #4- Listen and Learn

Only by allowing your subjects to speak will you expand your exposure to a topic.





# Unknown Residents of the Past



***“People need to know what the African American community was like, what they contributed to this town.***

***Their contributions were many, many.”***

- Delema Lott, Lewes resident.

***“Lewes doesn’t have the same character that it used to. I don’t know anyone anymore and they don’t know me. They look at me like I don’t belong, but I’ve been here all my life.”***

- Mickeya Brown-Linzie, Lewes resident.



***“Lewes has become a place for the elite. I don’t know that there’s a lot of industry here. People who were able to call this home barely can afford to stay here anymore because the cost of housing has risen beyond their reach.”***

- Deborah Robinson, former Lewes resident.



# Faces of the Past 1880 - 1900

(Above) Mary P. Miller Wolfe

Born free: February 12, 1824 in Lewes

Lived: Along Pilottown Road

Occupation: domestic washer woman

Died: May 17, 1914 at the age of 87

Photo taken about: 1880

Location: Pilottown Road

(Below)- Mildred (Millie) Lockwood

Born: 1857

Lived: Shipcarpenter Street

Occupation: family cook

Died: 1947 at the age of 92

Photo taken about: 1891

Location: Shipcarpenter Street



Daisey Family Legacy Collection



Copy by permission of Parker-Selby

# #5- There is Always More Than One Story *The Case of Johnny Walker* *Beach* *Johnny Walker Beach*

*“To have a beach where no one could go on the entire beach, that had an invisible line, to Johnny Walker was unbelievable.*

*His objective was to give Black people a place to enjoy their self, to have entertainment, to be happy, and to enjoy the beach that belonged to everyone . . .*

*He was a hard pill to swallow, a very hard pill to swallow. His heart was as soft as cotton, but his demeanor was hard as rock because of his determination to be successful and for our race to have somewhere of enjoyment.”*

– Mattie Walker-Green  
(Niece of Johnny Walker)

Images from various



1954- Opening of Dairy Queen in Lewes

\*Note: The Segregated Lines



*Cape Gazette*, "Lewes Dairy Queen: New owners, same community spirit" by: Shannon Marvel April 27, 2015.

Image Courtesy of ED MIHM



## 1959 Parade

*“Black bands from Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania marched down Savannah Road onto Park Avenue and onto the playground that Otis Smith, the mayor, said was for the African-American children to use as a place to play.”*

*– Forrest “Butchie” Smith, former Lewes resident*

Image: Thomas Family Collection

## Shipcarpenter Square Disappeared Views

*“The church mothers would always pack food for us. You could pack your own but when you got there you had chicken, potato salad. You had hot dogs, hamburgers. You name it. Sandwiches, subs. Any child could participate in that.”*

-Trina Brown-Hicks  
The Lewes African American  
Heritage Commission *Secretary*,  
Oral Histories Interviewer



# Shipcarpenter Square- Then & Now



“It’s no longer the community that I recognize. Many of the families are gone. I guess I want to use the word *gentrification*. It’s just not the community that I grew up in.” -Reverend Janet Martin-Maul, Lewes resident.



## #6- Be Brave



(Top) A view of West Fourth Street in the 1950s. Note:  
The roof of the Happy Day club is just visible at rear right of the photograph.

(Bottom) A view of West Fourth Street in 2021



***“When we did integrate to know that you found yourself in a place where you truly were not wanted and that you were overlooked. But, despite that, we made it through . . . You stand on our shoulders because we stood on the shoulders of those that came before us.”***

***“I would say be proud of who you are, and you should want to make a difference.”***

***“How do you make a difference? By reading, by knowing, by getting the education, learning all that you can learn so that you can pass it on.”***

- Reverend Janet Maul-Martin,  
Lewes resident

# "Voices Heard"

To Learn More:  
Please Visit the Upcoming

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"Voices Heard"

2020 – 2024

Oral History Film Documentary & Photographic  
Exhibition

**Opening April 2024!**

**The Lewes History Museum**

**At 101 Adams Avenue, Lewes DE 19958**

**Margaret H. Rollings Community Center**

*"Teaching, and specifically teaching critical  
thinking about history, is a way to help people find  
their voices."*

**– Ilyasha Shabazz**

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## Voices Heard:

*This footage was collected in 2022, a full transcription, of thoughts, emotions, and opinions of the Lewes Community who lived through the changing racial and cultural history of the seaside town of Lewes.*

“Teaching, and specifically teaching critical thinking about history, is a way to help people find their voices.”

## Suggested Resources

### Digital Resources

#### “Re-framing History”

<https://aaslh.org/reframing-history/>

Tagline: “We need a more productive public conversation about history.”

### Print Resources (by most recent publication year)

Smith, Clint. 2021. *How the Word Is Passed : A Reckoning with the History of Slavery across America*. London: Dialogue Books.

Rose, Julia. 2016. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Barndt, Joseph R. 2007. *Understanding & Dismantling Racism*. Facets.

### Delmarva Region: Research

Williams, William H. 1999. *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Essah, Patience. 1996. *A House Divided : Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865*. Charlottesville: University Press Of Virginia.

Preservation

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Interpretation

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Cultural Enrichment

