

MD - Chesterton - GAR Hall - 206 S Queen St

CHARLES SUMNER POST #25, G.A.R. Chestertown, MD

A Rare Civil War Veterans Post to Celebrate Re-opening Saturday, June 21, 2014

May 22, 2014

By Editor

Charles Sumner Post #25, Grand Army of the Republic
CHESTERTOWN, Md.
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The Charles Sumner Post #25, Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) established in Chestertown, Maryland in 1882, will reopen as an educational center, museum and performance space on Saturday, June 21, 2014.

The daylong celebration featuring music, food, games, re-enactors and a speech will be held from 10 am – 7 pm. It will all take place at the Charles Sumner Post #25 located at 206 South Queen Street, Chestertown, Maryland.

The newly restored building is one of only two such posts to remain standing in the United States today. The building was erected by U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) Veterans that returned or settled in Kent County at the end of the Civil War. The building was erected in 1909 and for well over half a century served as a community center for Kent County's African American residents; hosting lectures and social events, and attracting an array of nationally acclaimed entertainers including Ella Fitzgerald and The Sweet Hearts of Rhythm, while providing area residents with a site for developing actions for the betterment of race relations in Kent County, Maryland.

The local Decoration Day Ceremony was an example of the G.A.R. motto, "Fraternity, Loyalty, Charity" demonstrating a determined steadfastness of the nation's founding principles. The founders' display of respect for all was accomplished with such grace that the G.A.R. ceremony became the local standard for Memorial Day ceremonies.

Founded by USCT Veterans and members of the Women's Relief Corp this site has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2003, and is expected to resume its function as a vital Kent County historic site and a center for inclusive and unifying community activities.

The June 21, 2014 event will feature food from local vendors including samples of "Soul Food". Music will range from the Pam Ortiz Band, to the 100 Voice Choir. Historical re-enactors will be featured including visits from Fredrick Douglass and the Soldiers of B Company, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

A special tribute to the elders of the community will be held, and noted historian Dr. Clara Small of Salisbury State University will deliver the keynote address. National, state and local elected officials and dignitaries are expected to be present for the 4:00 pm ribbon cutting.

One G.A.R. board member was quoted as saying, "This reopening is a strong demonstration of the area's commitment to a diverse, forward looking community grounded in a mutual history of self determination."

He is one of the 20,000 African Americans who fought for the Union in the Civil War, William Carney served with the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry as a Sergeant. He took part in the July 18, 1863, assault on Fort Wagner in Charleston, South Carolina (as depicted in the movie Glory.) He received the Medal of Honor for saving the American flag and planting it on the parapet despite being wounded several times.

Charles Sumner Post #25 is located at 206 South Queen Street, Chestertown, Maryland, 21620



Photo: Steven G. Atkinson

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