



Not to be neglected is the original museum building. Acoustically, the hall is said to be the best in the area, the perfect venue for musical acts like the gospel singers who performed for First Night Annapolis. Although its first stained glass windows were lost, they were replaced with copies based on the original plans and photographs. The colors created on the walls when the sun illuminates the multicolored glass give a holy and sanctified aura to the worship space that once was home to the A.M.E. church.

The old section of the museum is now being used to showcase African American art. "There is more art on display than ever before," says Perry. Musical acts can use the wonderful acoustics for special performances, while wall space can be used to exhibit the work of prominent artists.

The museum opened quietly last December in time for the new year, but the grand opening will be celebrated February 27 in honor of Black History Month. Black History Month is a great time to acquaint yourself with the newly expanded museum, which is open year-round, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon to 4 p.m. Saturday. It is located at 84 Franklin Street in Annapolis. Admission is free. For more information: call (410) 216-6180, e-mail [banneker@dhcd.state.md.us](mailto:banneker@dhcd.state.md.us), or check out [www.bdmuseum.com](http://www.bdmuseum.com).

—Conal Darcy

## Discover Our State Art Collection Right Here in Annapolis

When asked where to find a large and rare art collection in the area, aficionados will likely direct you to the National Gallery of Art in Washington or the Baltimore Museum of Art. Fine galleries though these may be, they are not easily visited in a day. So where can savvy Annapolitans go to soak up some artistic culture and commune with their national heritage? We need look no further than our own hometown.

The Annapolis Complex Collection, part of the State Art Collection, is not found in any one gallery or room, but is dispersed throughout the many government buildings in the city. These paintings, the result of a two-and-a-half-century-long

commitment to preserving Maryland's history through the painted image, are on permanent display, free to view by the general public. What hangs on the walls of the most important buildings in town is a testament to Maryland's support for the arts.

To celebrate General Cornwallis's surrender to George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781, and thus the end of the Revolutionary War, the Maryland House of Delegates commissioned Charles W. Peale, Marylander and prolific artist, to paint a full portrait of our future first president "in grateful remembrance of that most Illustrious Character." When it was completed, three years later, in 1784, Peale presented





*Washington, Lafayette, and Tilghman at Yorktown* to the Maryland government. This painting now hangs in the very room where Washington resigned his commission in the Continental Army.

With this painting began a long tradition of state-commissioned works documenting the state's history. "That's what intrigues me about the whole Maryland legislature at this time," explains Elaine Bachmann, curator of the Maryland Commission on Artistic Property. "They saw the importance of preserving the record. They realized that what they were doing was such an important act and it was the beginning of what they hoped to be a very long and successful government."

And successful it was. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the state commissioned a multitude of works to chronicle Maryland's history. "Part of the historical record is also images," says Ms. Bachmann. "Going back to the 18th century, the recording of these images is a very important document of the people... who shaped Maryland's history." Though

the collection contains mostly portraits of famous Marylanders and government officials, significant events in Maryland's history are also included. For example, *The Burning of the Peggy Stewart*, painted in 1896 by Annapolitan Francis Mayer, depicts Annapolis' own 1774 version of the Boston Tea Party (in the larger-than-life romantic style).

The paintings mentioned here hang in the State House, whose style does justice to the rare works it houses. The epitome of a living museum, it is the oldest State house in continuous legislative use: the cornerstone for its construction was laid in 1772. But being a functional building can make maintaining the artwork held there more difficult than it would be in a traditional museum gallery. That is why the state of Maryland created the Maryland Commission on Artistic Property in 1969. Later made a part of the Maryland State Archives, the commission was formed not just to care for the collection, but to document its pieces and ensure their importance is appreciated. Prior to the establishment of the commission, there was no formal account of the art pieces, furniture, and other objects of historical significance.

The tradition of building and preserving this collection has continued to this day, thanks to the commission's dedication to this marvelous collection. Included are images of nearly every governor since the state's inception, Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence, and many other important figures from Maryland's history, most painted from real-life sittings. It is a rare honor to be included in this collection, one that even the well-traveled art aficionado can appreciate.

—Conal Darcy

For those who wish to experience the Annapolis Complex Collection firsthand, the works can be found in the hallways and meeting rooms of the Annapolis government buildings listed below.

**Maryland State House**

100 State Circle

**Government House**

(official residence of the governor)

State Circle

**Maryland State Archives**

350 Rowe Boulevard

**Senate Office Complex**

(Miller and James Buildings)

110 College Avenue

**Legislative Services Building**

90 State Circle

**Treasury Building**

80 Calvert Street

**Court of Appeals Building**

361 Rowe Boulevard

**District Court Building**

251 Rowe Boulevard

All buildings require photo identification to enter and are open during regular business hours except for the State House, which is also open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends, and the Government House, which can only be accessed through prearranged tours available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Please call (410) 974-3531 to arrange a visit.

Regular tours are offered at the State House every day at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. For school tours, please contact Legislative Services at (410) 946-5423 ext 5400.

All paintings on display are also available on line at the Maryland State Archive's Web site: [www.mdsa.net](http://www.mdsa.net) under "State Art Collections."

Unfortunately, no art-specific tours are available, but Ms. Bachmann is currently gauging interest in such a plan. She asks anyone interested to contact her by e-mail, [elaineb@mdsa.net](mailto:elaineb@mdsa.net), or by telephone, (410) 260-6445.