

350th Anniversary — Diversity

Baltimore County has long recognized the diversity of its population as a cornerstone of its inherent strength. The commemoration of the county's 350th anniversary offers many opportunities to celebrate its diversity and highlight the manner in which it has evolved.

Banneker's Life Elevated African-American Status

The life of Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) opens windows to a wonderful story of an African-American trailblazer who is credited with establishing significant progress in elevating the status of blacks in the United States.

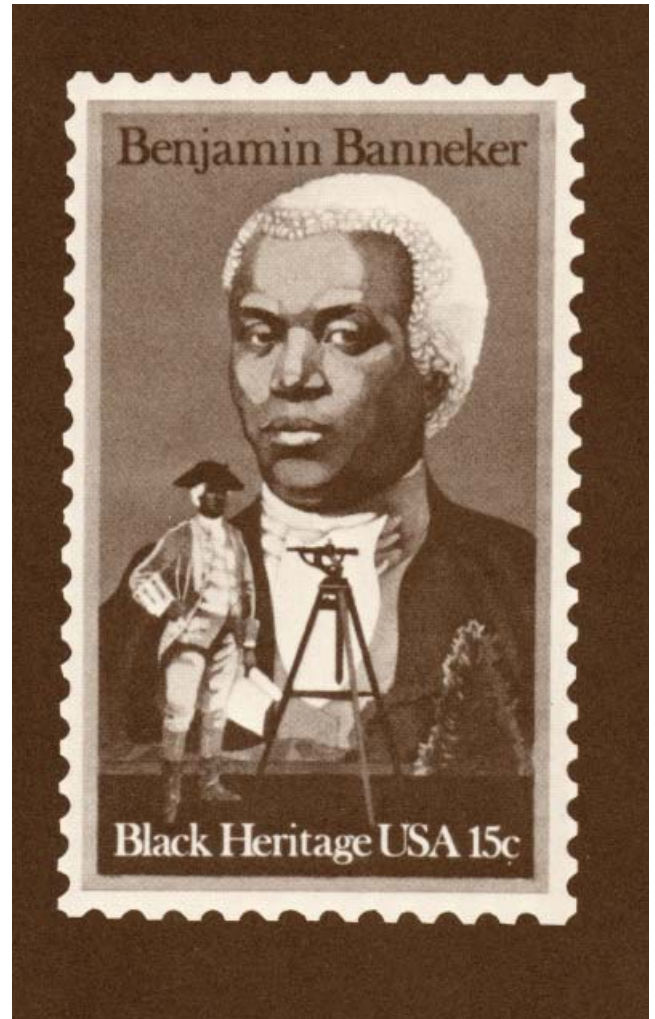
Banneker lived his adult life in southwest Baltimore County on land that is now marked by the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum.

Banneker's skills and talents were recognized by the upper echelons of the U.S. government in the 1790's. President George Washington in 1791 appointed Banneker to assist the team that surveyed the land and initiated the layout of the District of Columbia. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson had recommended Banneker for the job, in which he served with Major Andrew Ellicott.

The *World Book* encyclopedia describes Banneker as an astronomer, farmer, mathematician and surveyor who was "probably the best-known [African-American] in early U.S. history."

Beginning in 1791, Banneker made all of the astronomical and tide calculations and weather predictions for an annual almanac that was published for six years. Banneker sent a copy of his almanac to Jefferson and wrote a lengthy letter (<http://etext.virginia.edu/readex/24073.html>) in which he advocated for the abolition of slavery and better treatment of blacks. Jefferson was impressed with Banneker and his work. He later sent the almanac to the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris as evidence of the abilities of blacks.

Banneker's enduring friendship and collaboration with members of the Ellicott family represents an early, enlightened chapter in the evolution of race relations.



links

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p84.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/52074/Benjamin-Banneker>

<http://etext.virginia.edu/readex/24073.html>

<http://www.progress.org/banneker/bb.html>

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/jb_date.cgi?day=09&month=11

<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/special/banneker-benjamin.html>