

## **Cedar Haven (PG 87B-039)**

Established in 1927 as a waterfront community, Cedar Haven was designed as a summer refuge for African-Americans. The community was located on a three-hundred acre parcel, about an hour outside of Washington, D.C. and along the Patuxent River in southern Prince George's County. The founders of Cedar Haven hoped it would rival the adjacent resort town of Eagle Harbor, established just a year earlier. Although the resort never took off the way Eagle Harbor did, it was an important place for African-Americans in Prince George's County. Cedar Haven, like Eagle Harbor, was built on lands that were once a part of the Trueman's Point Landing (87B-028), a historic river port along the Patuxent. In 1817, Trueman's Point was acquired by Weem's Steamboat Company and served as a steamboat port into the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The steamboat company went bankrupt not long after Cedar Haven and Eagle Harbor were established, leaving the wharf open for use by the new resorts for African-Americans.

Early advertisements for the community spoke of an "exclusive" community of hills, beaches, woodlands, and meadows with fishing and crabbing, sports, hotels, dinners and dancing. The promotional literature claimed that a "60 foot boulevard sweeps across the stately crescent shaped beach, lined stately cedars from end to end."<sup>2</sup> All the streets and avenues were fifty foot wide and every lot fronted on a street, avenue, or boulevard. Advertisers claimed that Cedar Haven was a safe place for children, where they could escape the dangers of city streets and learn the names of the country's greatest African-American leaders from the street names. They could swim at the natural beaches or enjoy the playground. Visitors could enjoy the summer activities by the water and stay for the fall foliage. For summer visitors, there was a bathhouse on Crispus Atticus Boulevard equipped with 80 locker dressing rooms, separated for men and women, as well as trained attendants. A lounging porch faced the water. Members of the community often gathered at the waters' edge to watch ships go up and down the Patuxent River. Those without houses could stay at the Cedar Haven Hotel, a large bungalow with a full length porch

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Trueman's Point (Landing) 87B-028.

<sup>2</sup> "The Cedar Haven Documents." University of Maryland Archives and Manuscripts Collection.

resting on stone piers, which was equipped with gas, electricity, a garage, and a dance hall; the hotel was well known for its chicken dinners.

Early construction in Cedar Haven comprised of small bungalows and cottages with porches and large setbacks. Many trees were cleared to make room for new houses, but trees were also planted along the roads to provide shade. Sears, Roebuck, and Company kit homes, such as the Magnolia, the Bellhaven, and the Whitehall, were used as models for new homes in the community. Residents were encouraged to order homes from Sears or model homes after their patterns.<sup>3</sup> Some of the most notable houses in the neighborhood included “Sojourn,” “White Cedars,” and “Bellana.” The first house, “Sojourn,” was built in 1927 by Mr. And Mrs. William H. Thompson and was a small, front gable house clad in wood shingles with an enclosed front porch. It was later improved with a large addition, fireplace, and paved driveway.<sup>4</sup> “White Cedars,” owned by Mrs. Z. Ella M. Gunnell and Mrs. Mary Hawley, was a ten room, 2 apartment bungalow, with a screened porch surrounding the entire dwelling. The “Bellana,” named after owner Anna E. Bell still stands and is a front-gable house on a raised pier foundation with an open flat-roofed porch. The “Bellana” was built in the style of the Sear, Roebuck, and Company “Magnolia” model, although it is unknown if the home was actually purchased as a kit from Sears.<sup>5</sup> These early houses served as models for houses that were later built throughout Cedar Haven.

The streets in Cedar Haven were laid out in a grid pattern, with the north/south thoroughfare, Banneker Boulevard anchoring a number of smaller streets. Richard Allen Street is the main road running east and west, though it is quite narrow and without curbs or lighting. Most of the other streets are small, and many do not run far off the main road. Although many maps show the streets laid out in a grid pattern, most of the streets were never fully extended or paved. Some streets, like Coleridge-Taylor, have only one house

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<sup>3</sup> “The Cedar Haven Documents.” University of Maryland Archives and Manuscripts Collection.

<sup>4</sup> “The Cedar Haven Documents.” University of Maryland Archives and Manuscripts Collection. No specific addresses given for these properties.

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on them. The roads are narrow, with no curbs, street lights, or sidewalks, and are heavily shaded by rows of trees and dense woods to the west. Many of the lots are undeveloped and dense foliage has grown over them. All the streets in Cedar Haven were named after significant figures in African-American history, such as the poet Paul Dunbar, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Richard Allen, and Blanche K. Bruce, the first African-American to preside over the senate. Other important figures after which streets were named include John Cook, Henry Garnett, John Langston, Charles Young, Phyllis Wheatley, Crispus Atticus, Benjamin Banneker, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington, Alexander Crummel, Daniel Payne, and Mary McLeod Bethune. Although Cedar Haven never achieved the success Eagle Harbor did as a resort community, its history, landscape, and architecture make it a significant African-American site in Prince George's County.

There are no historic resources in Cedar Haven. Historic resource 87B-028 Trueman's Point (Landing) is located to the southeast of the community, at the end of Trueman Point Road in Eagle Harbor.

### **Works Cited**

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form for Trueman's Point (Landing) 87B-028.

Pearl, Susan. *African-American Heritage Survey*, 1996. Upper Marlboro:M-NCPPC, 1996.

"The Cedar Haven Documents." University of Maryland Archives and Manuscripts Collection.

### **Windshield Survey**

A windshield survey of Cedar Haven was conducted in July of 2008, which counted only 34 houses within the historic resort community. Cedar Haven remains a small, rural community with only a handful of houses fronting its narrow streets. The streets have no curbs or lighting and in some locations have street signs where no paved road exists. The

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houses, which are mostly one and one-and-a-half story, gabled cottages and bungalows, are often on raised foundations, porches and large yards. Many of the houses have been modified over the years with additions and replacement materials. Many houses in the area resemble or are Sears Roebuck kit homes, as builders in the 1920s were encouraged to use models such as the Bellhaven or Whitehall to model their small, inexpensive bungalows after.<sup>6</sup> Most of the houses have small sheds, garages or other out buildings on the lot as well.

### **Historic District Evaluation**

Cedar Haven is representative of several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including Black History and Social History. Cedar Haven meets the following qualifications for designation as a historic district in Prince George's County.

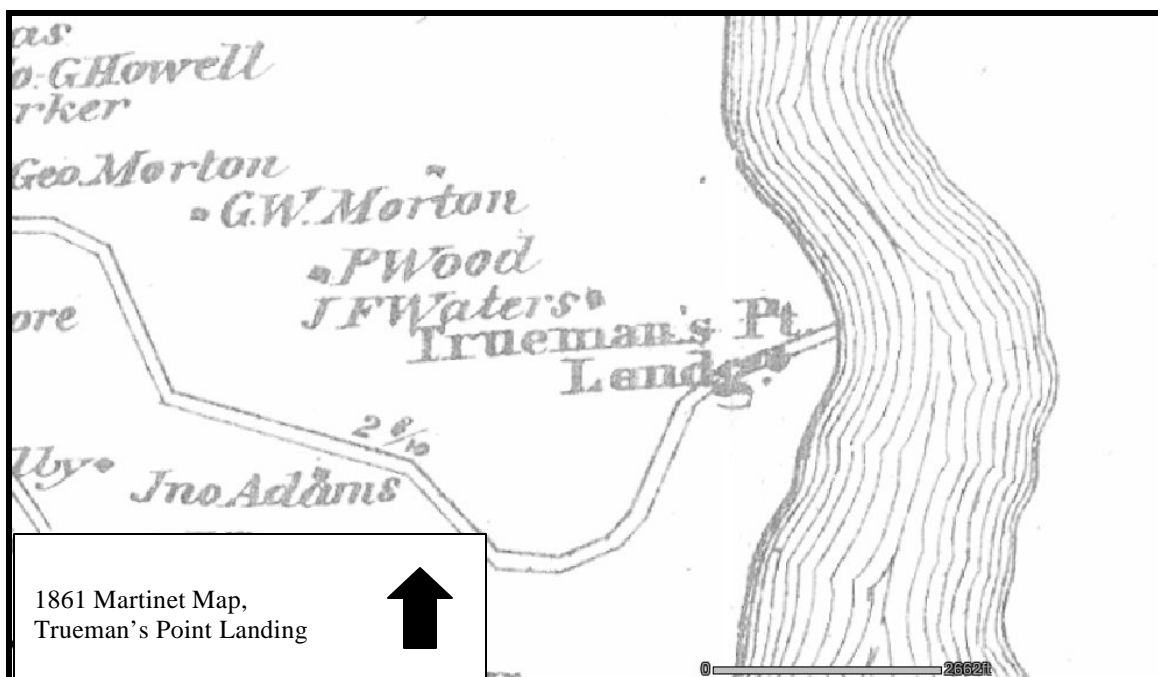
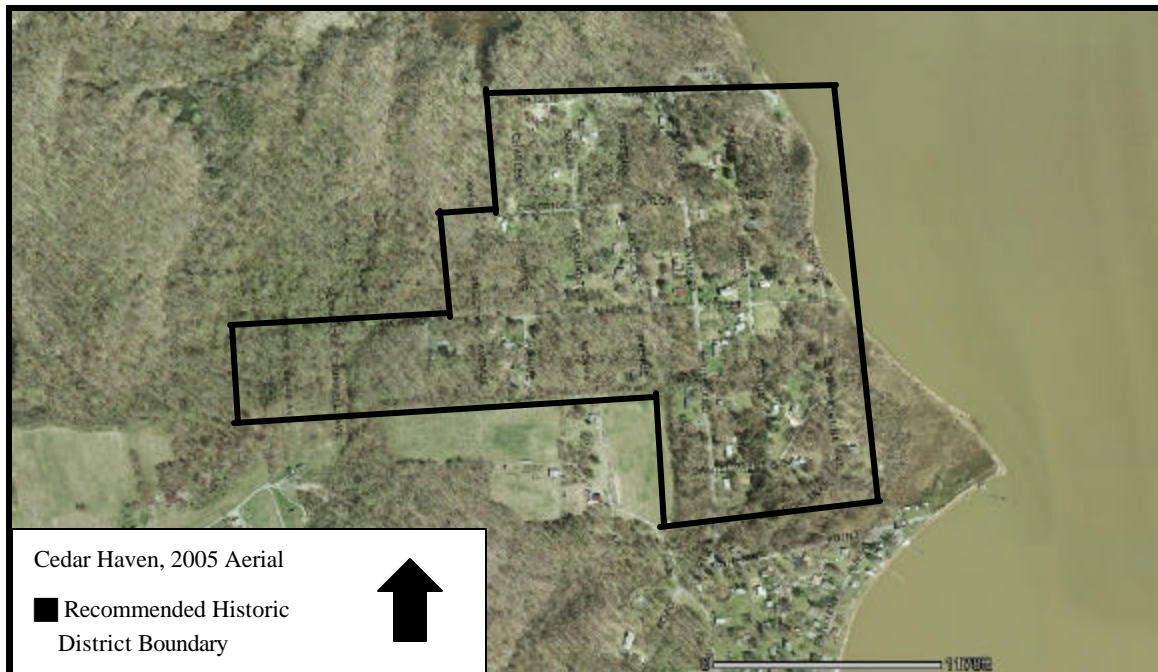
(1)(A)(i) and (iv) Cedar Haven is an important example of an African-American community developed during segregation which still survives today. The community was designed specifically as a retreat for African-Americans and played homage to their history through the street names.

(2)(A)(iv) The community of Cedar Haven represents an important place of recreation for middle class African-Americans in the early to mid twentieth century.

The history of Cedar Haven, like that of Eagle Harbor, is a significant representation of an African-American resort community, which was moderately successful in an era of segregation and social change.

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<sup>6</sup> "The Cedar Haven Documents." University of Maryland Archives and Manuscripts Collection.



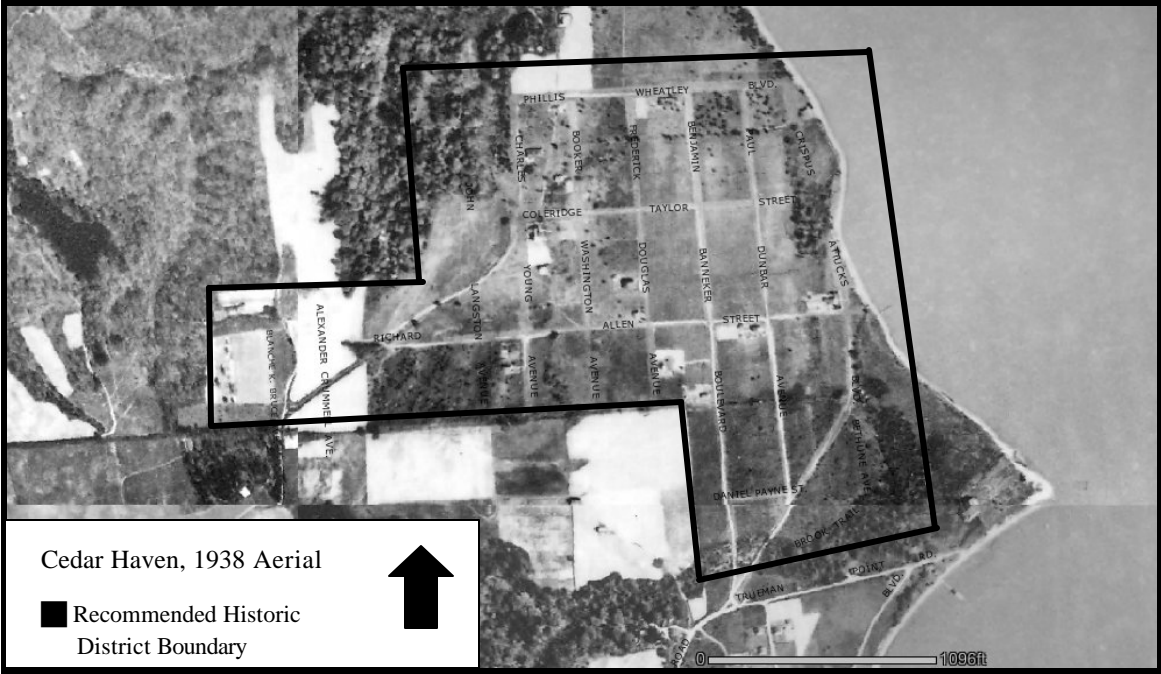




Photo 1. Cedar Haven, House, 22801 Booker T. Washington Avenue  
Bungalow with fully enclosed porch.



Photo 2. Cedar Haven, House, 22903 Frederick Douglas Avenue  
Bungalow with screened porch.



Photo 3. Cedar Haven, House, 22907 Banneker Boulevard  
Vernacular cottage with Colonial Revival features.



Photo 4. Cedar Haven, House, 22907 Richard Allen Street  
Minimal Traditional house with two entries.



Photo 5. Cedar Haven, Streetscape, Banneker Boulevard, South



Photo 6. Cedar Haven, Streetscape, Coleridge-Taylor Street, West



Photo 7. Cedar Haven, Landscape, Park and Beach, North

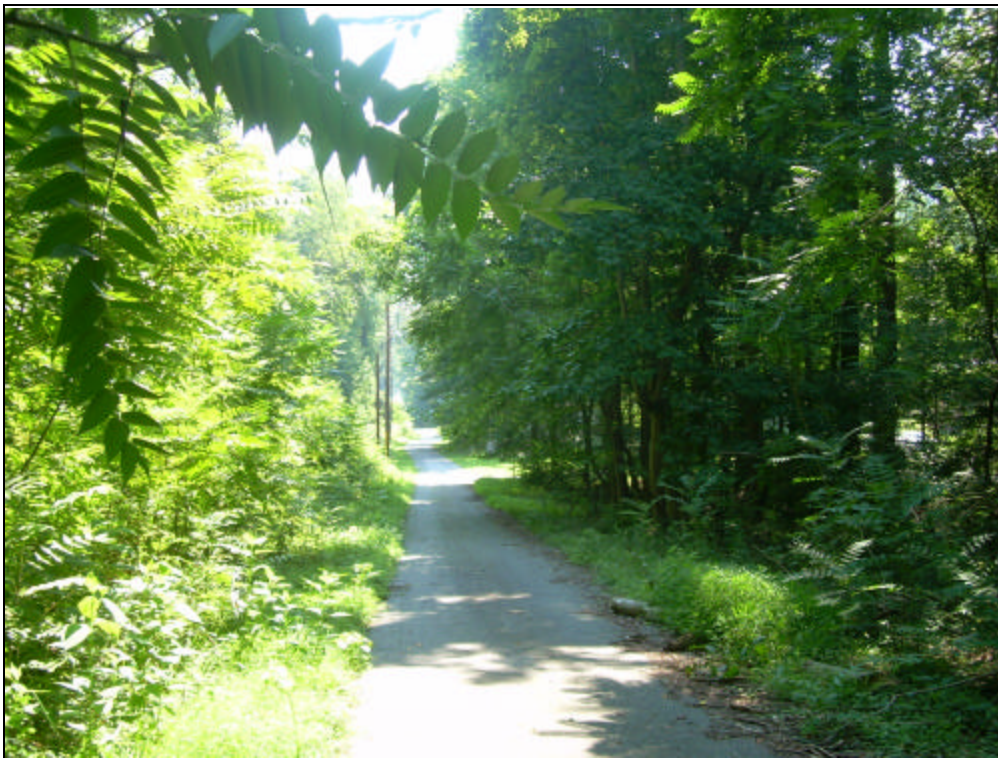


Photo 8. Cedar Haven, Streetscape, Richard Allen Street, East