



Jane Gates

HERITAGE
HOUSE

ABOUT US

The Jane Gates Heritage House (JGHH) located on Greene Street in Cumberland, Maryland is a non-profit museum and community center started by John and Sukh Gates to honor the spirit of John's third great grandmother, Jane Gates (c. 1819 – 1888). Jane lived most of her life enslaved, most likely in or near Cumberland. She obtained her freedom when slavery was abolished in Maryland in November 1864. Jane purchased the house and lot for \$1400 in 1871 in the current location of 515, 511, and 509 Greene Street.

Jane Gates is listed in the 1870 U.S. Census in the house at 515 Greene Street as a nurse and a laundress, age 51, living with two of her children and two grandchildren. The house at 515 is Jane's original house. The houses at 511 and 509 were built decades later by one of Jane's daughters and a granddaughter. Jane Gates is also the second great grandmother of Dr. Paul Gates and his brother Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a scholar of African American culture at Harvard University, and host of the PBS program, "Finding Your Roots." Jane's house is featured in his PBS documentary, "African American Lives II."



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Jane Gates House is to enhance the lives of all through faith, education, and history. Along with African American history, the President of the board of directors, Sukh Gates, is passionate about teaching elementary-aged children crucial life skills such as growing and preparing food and healthy living.

OUR GARDENS

The Learning Gardens at the Jane Gates Heritage House are the result of a collaboration between JGHH and the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener program. Built and cultivated over the course of 18 months in 2020 and 2021, the gardens feature fruits and vegetables common to 19th century household gardens and will be open to school groups, private tours and during Open House events.

*Volunteers building raised garden beds,
Summer, 2020*



A LIVING LEGACY

During construction of the JGHH Learning Gardens, a previously unidentified plant was found growing wild on the property. After some investigation, it was determined the plant was *Saponaria* or, as it would have been known to Jane Gates, Soapwort.

Parts of the Soapwort plant can be boiled and distilled into a pleasantly mild detergent that many Victorians used to launder their heavy linen clothing. As Jane Gates was listed as a "laundress" in the 1870 census, there is a very good chance she cultivated the plant to clean the laundry she took in. The Soapwort plant found growing wild on her property in 2020 is likely a living legacy to this remarkable woman.



*Saponaria, or Common Soapwort,
was found growing wild on the
property during the construction
of the Learning Gardens in 2020*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the Jane Gates Heritage House, follow our Facebook page at "Bring the Jane Gates Heritage House to Life".

To support the Jane Gates Heritage House project, visit [gofundme.com/bringingtheJaneGatesHeritageHousetoLife](https://www.gofundme.com/bringingtheJaneGatesHeritageHousetoLife)

