

ASSEMBLY, No. 3201

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

Assemblyman GORDON M. JOHNSON

District 37 (Bergen)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Zwicker

SYNOPSIS

Recognizes Howell House in Cape May as Harriet Tubman Museum in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/25/2020)

1 **AN ACT** recognizing the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape
2 May, New Jersey as the Harriet Tubman Museum in New Jersey
3 and supplementing chapter 9A of Title 52 of the Revised
4 Statutes.

5
6 **WHEREAS**, The Macedonia Baptist Church was officially recognized
7 as a Baptist church by the West New Jersey Baptist Association on
8 December 23, 1895 and was organized to provide a place for
9 African-American residents of the city of Cape May to practice
10 their faith together; and

11 **WHEREAS**, The Macedonia Baptist Church continues to meet today in
12 its historic church building, part of which dates back to 1799, on the
13 corner of Lafayette and Franklin Streets, in a neighborhood that
14 contains most of Cape May's civic institutions, and that was the
15 core of the city's African-American society for much of the 20th
16 century; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Next to the church stands one of Cape May's oldest
18 houses, the Howell House, which was built in 1850 and willed to
19 the church in 1909 by its former owner, Philadelphia Quaker Joseph
20 Howell, and has been used as a parsonage until only a few decades
21 ago; and

22 **WHEREAS**, The house has been acknowledged as "a contributing
23 resource to the Cape May National Historic Landmark district," and
24 in 2012, was declared one of New Jersey's top-10 endangered
25 historic structures by Preservation New Jersey, a Statewide private
26 historic preservation organization; and

27 **WHEREAS**, On December 16, 2018, the church signed a lease with
28 developers Robert and Zack Mullock that will permit the Mullocks
29 to renovate the Howell House into a museum honoring Harriet
30 Tubman, with an expected completion date in 2020; and

31 **WHEREAS**, Plans for the museum indicate that it will showcase Harriet
32 Tubman's role as a champion of civil rights and the time she spent
33 in Cape May in the 1850s earning income to support her efforts in
34 the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses designed to
35 help African-American slaves escape into free territories; and

36 **WHEREAS**, Given New Jersey's role in allowing safe passage for many
37 on the Underground Railroad and the significance of Harriet
38 Tubman's contribution to the freedom of dozens of people,
39 supported by her time in Cape May, it is altogether fitting and
40 proper that this State recognize the Howell House on Lafayette
41 Street in Cape May, New Jersey as the Harriet Tubman Museum in
42 New Jersey; now, therefore,

43
44 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
45 *of New Jersey:*

46
47 1. The Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New
48 Jersey is recognized as the Harriet Tubman Museum in New Jersey.

1 2. This act shall take effect upon the first day the museum is
2 open to the general public.

3
4
5 STATEMENT

6
7 This bill designates the Howell House on Lafayette Street in
8 Cape May, New Jersey the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman
9 Museum.

10 The Macedonia Baptist Church was organized in 1895 to provide
11 a place for African-American residents of the city of Cape May to
12 practice their faith. The congregation continues to meet today in its
13 historic church building on Lafayette Street, in a neighborhood that
14 was the core of the city's African-American society for much of the
15 20th century. Next to the church is one of Cape May's oldest
16 houses, the Howell House, given to the church in 1909 by Joseph
17 Howell, which has been used as a parsonage until only a few
18 decades ago. On December 16, 2018, the church signed a lease with
19 developers Robert and Zack Mullock that will permit them to
20 renovate the Howell House into a museum honoring Harriet
21 Tubman, with an expected completion date in 2020.

22 The museum will showcase Harriet Tubman's role as a champion
23 of civil rights and the time she spent in Cape May in the 1850s
24 earning income to support her efforts in the Underground Railroad.
25 Thus, given New Jersey's role in allowing safe passage for many on
26 the Underground Railroad, and the significance of Harriet
27 Tubman's contribution to the freedom of dozens of people,
28 supported by her time in Cape May, and given the historical
29 significance of the Macedonia Baptist Church area to the African-
30 American community, it is appropriate for this State to designate
31 the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New Jersey as
32 the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum.

33 Consistent with current practice, the bill provides that State or
34 other public funds are not to be used for producing, purchasing, or
35 erecting any signs bearing the designation provided for in the bill.
36 The bill authorizes the Governor, or the designee thereof, to receive
37 financial assistance from non-profit, non-governmental, and private
38 sources to be used for producing, purchasing, or erecting any signs
39 bearing the designation.