

SENATE, No. 2585

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 15, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator RONALD L. RICE

District 28 (Essex)

Senator MICHAEL L. TESTA, JR.

District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

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

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/29/2020)

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
32 Harriet Tubman's role as a champion of civil rights and the time
33 she spent in Cape May in the 1850s earning income to support her
34 efforts in the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses
35 designed to help African-American slaves escape into free
36 territories; and
37 **WHEREAS**, In addition to fighting for abolition and becoming a Civil
38 War heroine, Harriet Tubman spent her summers between 1850 and
39 1852 in Cape May; and
40 **WHEREAS**, Given New Jersey's role in allowing safe passage for
41 many on the Underground Railroad and the significance of Harriet
42 Tubman's contribution to the freedom of dozens of people,
43 supported by her time in Cape May, it is altogether fitting and
44 proper that this State recognize the Howell House on Lafayette
45 Street in Cape May, New Jersey as the Harriet Tubman Museum in
46 New Jersey; now, therefore,

1 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
2 *of New Jersey:*

3
4 1. The Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New
5 Jersey is recognized as the Harriet Tubman Museum in New Jersey.

6
7 2. This act shall take effect on June 19, 2020, known as
8 Juneteenth Independence Day.

9
10
11 STATEMENT

12
13 The bill designates the Howell House on Lafayette Street in
14 Cape May, New Jersey the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman
15 Museum.

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

28 The museum will showcase Harriet Tubman's role as a champion
29 of civil rights and the time she spent in Cape May in the 1850s
30 earning income to support her efforts in the Underground Railroad.
31 In addition to fighting for abolition and becoming a Civil War
32 heroine, Harriet Tubman spent her summers between 1850 and 1852
33 in Cape May. Thus, given New Jersey's role in allowing safe
34 passage for many on the Underground Railroad, and the
35 significance of Harriet Tubman's contribution to the freedom of
36 dozens of people, supported by her time in Cape May, and given the
37 historical significance of the Macedonia Baptist Church area to the
38 African-American community, it is appropriate for this State to
39 designate the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New
40 Jersey as the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum.

41 Consistent with current practice, the bill provides that State or
42 other public funds are not to be used for producing, purchasing, or
43 erecting any signs bearing the designation provided for in the bill.
44 The bill authorizes the Governor, or the designee thereof, to receive
45 financial assistance from non-profit, non-governmental, and private
46 sources to be used for producing, purchasing, or erecting any signs
47 bearing the designation.