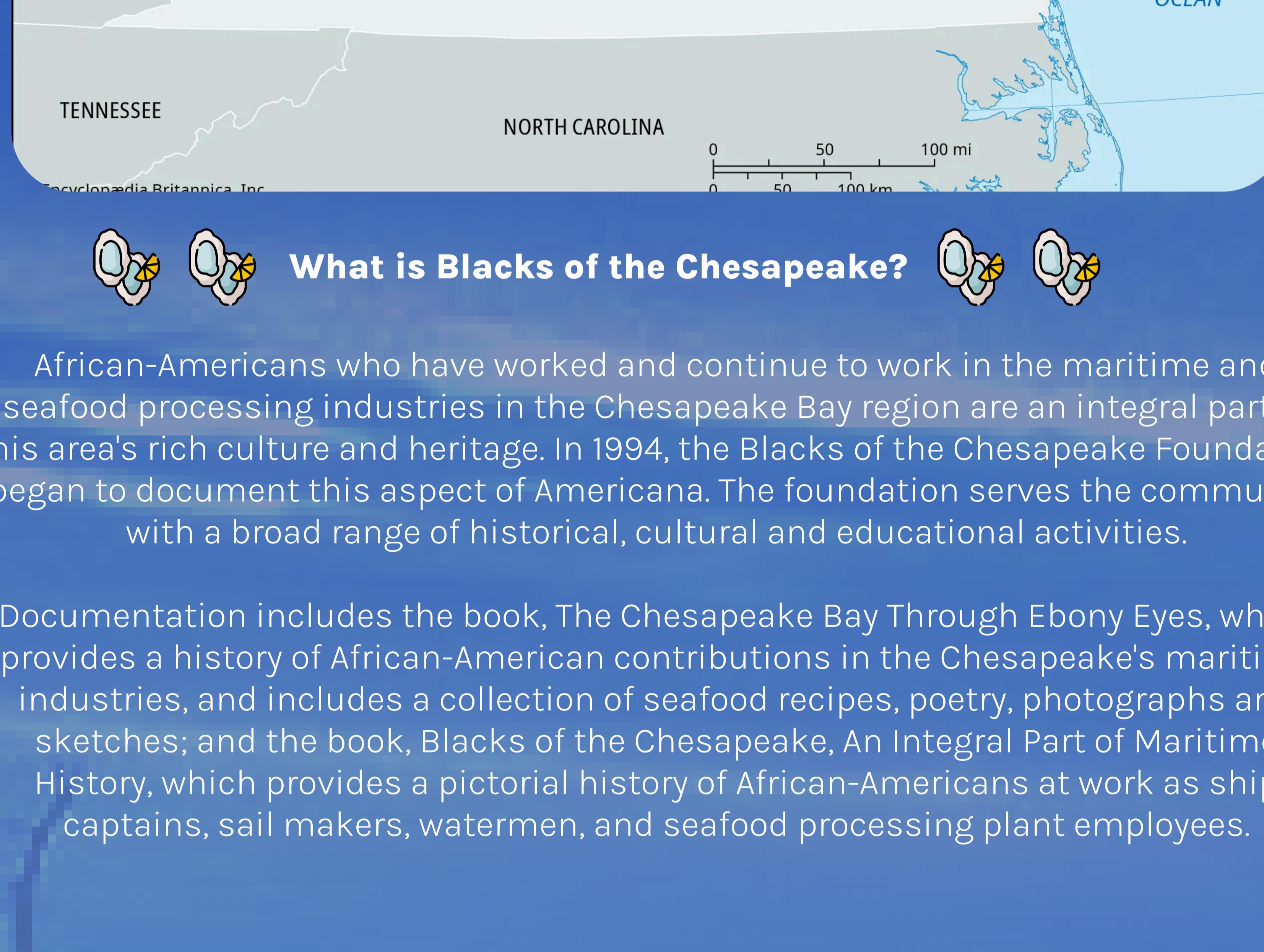




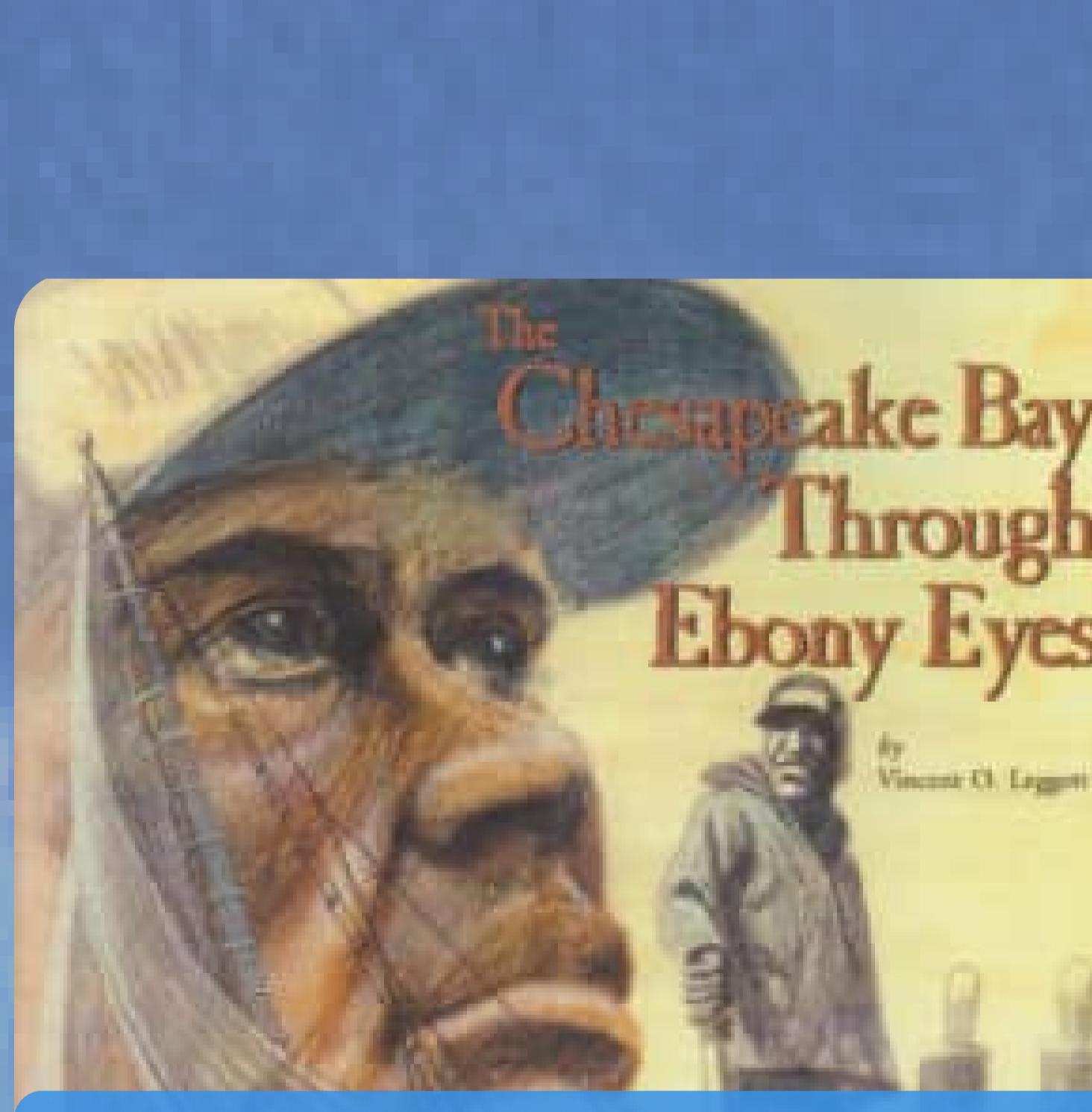
“I caught the spirit of the Chesapeake.” –Vincent Leggett

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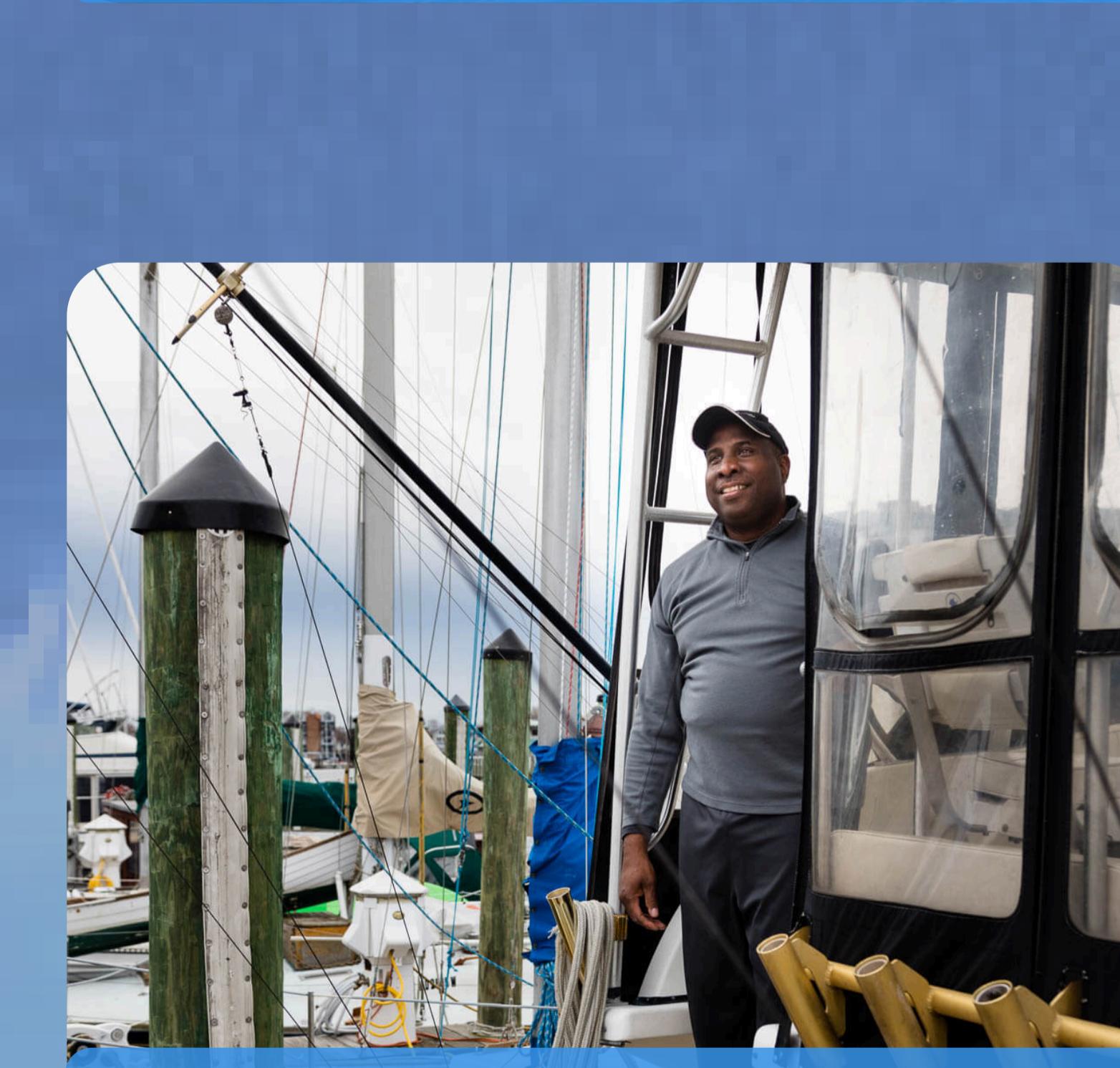
What is Blacks of the Chesapeake?

African-Americans who have worked and continue to work in the maritime and seafood processing industries in the Chesapeake Bay region are an integral part of this area's rich culture and heritage. In 1994, the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation began to document this aspect of Americana. The foundation serves the community with a broad range of historical, cultural and educational activities.

Documentation includes the book, *The Chesapeake Bay Through Ebony Eyes*, which provides a history of African-American contributions in the Chesapeake's maritime industries, and includes a collection of seafood recipes, poetry, photographs and sketches; and the book, *Blacks of the Chesapeake, An Integral Part of Maritime History*, which provides a pictorial history of African-Americans at work as ship captains, sail makers, watermen, and seafood processing plant employees.



PROGRAMS



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PROJECTS



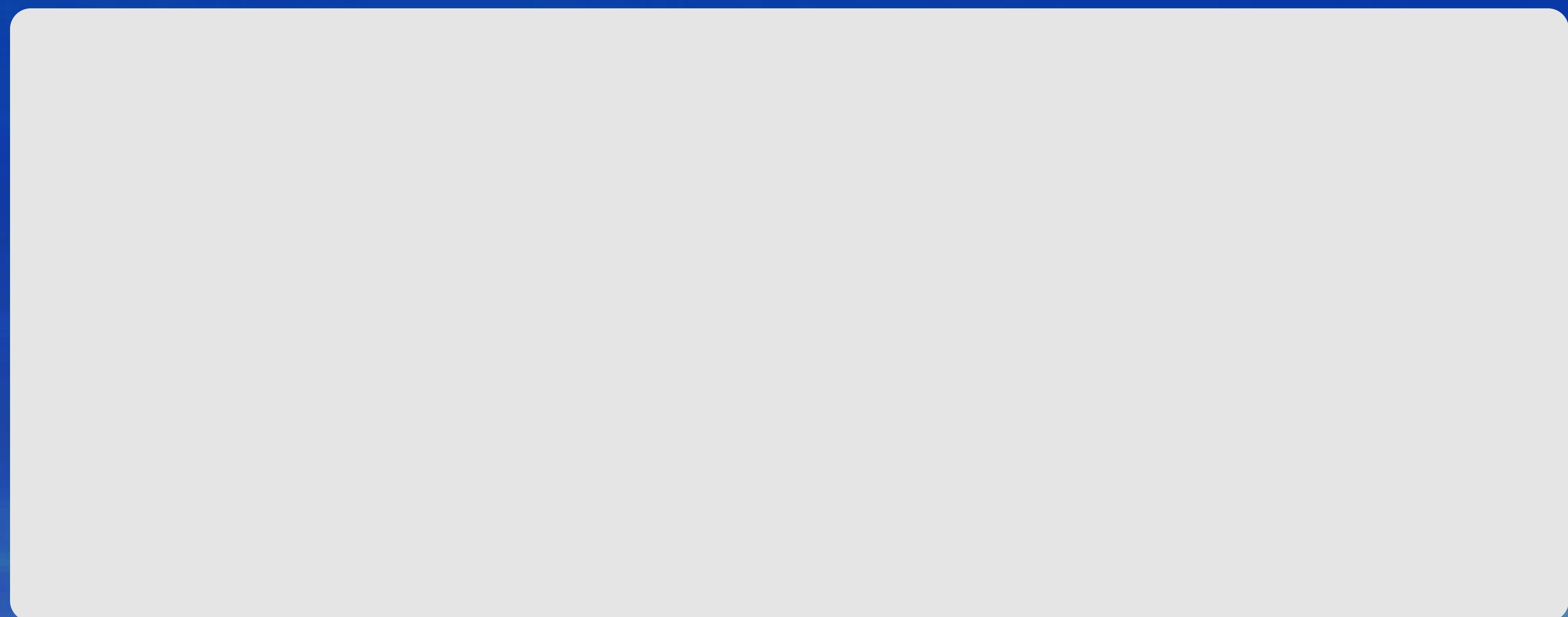
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NEWS



OUR FOUNDER



Vincent Omar Leggett, 1953 - 2024

Founder and President of the Blacks of the Chesapeake

Education and Career

Vince was educated in the Baltimore City Public School System, graduating from Edmondson Senior High School. He earned his bachelor's degree in urban planning and community development from Morgan State University, a historically Black college in Baltimore, in 1975. During his college years, Vince also pursued his passion for geography and history and developed an interest in education. He returned to school in 1996, attending Central Michigan University and completing his master's degree in public administration in 1999.

His early career was spent as an education planner for the Baltimore City Public Schools in 1975. Beginning in 1980, his career spanned over three decades in various agencies throughout Anne Arundel County. He served in many roles, such as Executive Director of the Anne Arundel County Housing Commission and Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis, Campus Planner and Academic Advisor at the Anne Arundel Community College, and Coordinator of Special Projects in Maryland's Department of Natural Resources. He also served on many boards throughout his career, including the Board of Directors for the Chesapeake Legal Alliance, Wiley H. Bates Legacy Center, the Seafarers Yacht Club of Annapolis, and the prestigious Chesapeake Bay Commission, to name a few.

Vince demonstrated a special gift as an educator, orator, lecturer, book author, cultural historian, planner, and influential conservationist. Through his special gifts, he achieved many accomplishments and accolades, most recently receiving the Carol Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award from the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County, followed by induction to the Anne Arundel Chamber of Commerce Business Hall of Fame, Class of 2024. Past achievements include a political commission from Maryland Governor Parris Glendening in 2002 as "Admiral of the Chesapeake," the highest honor the state of Maryland can award to an individual for achievements in the environmental field; Appointment by Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer to the Anne Arundel County Board of Education where he was elected vice president and followed by service as president of the board from 1988 to 1993. Vince published his first book in 1997, *Blacks of the Chesapeake: An Integral Part of Maritime History*, followed by his second book two years later, *The Chesapeake Bay Through Ebony Eyes*. He entered the Maritime Hall of Fame in 2005 through nomination and affirmation by the Annapolis Mayor and City Council.

Influenced by his upbringing, Vince shared his love of nature and outdoor activities with his children, grandchildren, and nieces. He'd often incorporate the kids in his various projects. Vince and Dena would bring the kids along on his many "field trips." While these adventures were fun and exciting for the kids, Vince never missed the opportunity for teachable moments as he'd share bits of history while they explored. His wife, children, and grandchildren were an integral part of the beginning of Vince's beloved Blacks of the Chesapeake project. Vince considered his greatest achievement to be the evolution of the Blacks of the Chesapeake project to the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, Inc. in 1991, establishing it as an IRS-recognized 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation, with the mission and purpose to promote environmental justice and land conservation in historically established African American communities found at the water's edge while highlighting the maritime achievements of enslaved Africans and their descendants. The Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation (BOCF) was recognized as a Local Legacy Project by the Library of Congress and the United States Congress in 2000.

The public will remember him best for the 17-year campaign he championed with other preservationists and conservationists to "Save Elktonia Beach," representing the last 5.0 acres of the 180 acres of Annapolis waterfront land accumulated from 1902 to 1930 by a formerly enslaved man, Mr. Fred Carr. But Vince wasn't done yet - In 2024, an additional 0.67-acre property was added to the park. The cottage, more commonly known as the "Moore Property," belonged to Parlett L. Moore, an educator and former president of Coppin State University. Vince was "more than determined" to preserve this piece of local and regional Black History for public access.

Still, others will remember Vince Leggett for the many documentaries he was featured in, sharing the stories of such Maryland notables as Harriett Tubman and Frederick Douglass. He told of the fate of far too many historical Black communities at the water's edge, losing ground and cultural sites in a recent documentary called "Water's Edge." This documentary won a regional PBS Emmy award in the spring of 2024, with him narrating a great part of it. These were two projects he embraced as a public testament to his "grit" and perseverance, hoping others would follow his example, emerging as champions of the mighty Chesapeake Bay and guardians of the legacy built by generations of enslaved Africans and their descendants. We will continue to honor his memory by working together to build a more just, inclusive, and compassionate world, just as he envisioned.



FIND US

Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, Inc.
1011 Bay Ridge Ave
Annapolis, MD 21403

CONTACT

TEL: (410)461-2623 (BOCF)
FAX: (833)321-2623 (BOCF)