

Cooling Springs

Explored 1704 ♦♦♦ Founded 1768
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Preserved Historic Legacy Country Estate

Cooling Springs, founded in 1768, represents more than 250 years of continuous Maryland history. Established by the son of the explorer credited with opening Western Maryland in 1704, the estate has remained in the stewardship of the same family for seven generations. The remarkably intact 1879 residence, officially recognized by the Maryland Register of Historic Properties and as a local landmark, stands within its historic 20-acre setting as an exceptional example of the Maryland's architectural and cultural heritage. Cooling Springs offers a rare opportunity to become the next steward of one of Maryland's oldest and enduring historic estates.

The property takes its name from its four freshwater springs. Cooling Springs is located along a pretty, well-maintained, paved, lightly-traveled, two-lane country road twenty minutes from Frederick and ten minutes from the quiet rural commuter train station at Point of Rocks and the Potomac River. Ballenger Creek Pike follows the ancient aboriginal Carolina Path running from the Carolinas to a few miles north of Cooling Springs where it met the Susquehanna Path going north into Pennsylvania. In 1704, Francis Michael trod these paths when he explored from the Potomac River to what would become Fredericktowne in 1745.



The home lies about 100 yards from the road along a level, graveled driveway lined on both sides by towering Norway spruces planted in 1936. These rows parallel a newer row of Norway spruces planted in the late twentieth century.

The farm sits on 20.1 acres of rolling pastureland zoned agricultural, qualifying the property for State and County agricultural property tax rates. The farm's property taxes for 2026-2027 are \$3,624. Regular taxes for 20 non-agricultural acres with a similar home would be approximately \$11,000 per year, a saving of over \$7,000 annually.

Cooling Springs comprises about fifteen acres of pastures, three acres of lawn, and the remainder

in woods and creeks. Trees include the three rows of Norway spruces lining the entrance driveway, dogwood, redbud, chestnut, weeping cherry, tulip poplar, ginkgo, mimosa, boxwood, crabapple, persimmon, pine, birch, maple, English walnut, and other large old shade trees. The farm's four pastures are rented to a young farmer who raises cattle, which has proven to be a comfortable and useful arrangement for the owners. His lease stipulates that he will tend pasture maintenance which he does well.

The westerly view from the front of the home is of farm fields and then, one mile distant, Catoctin Mountain, the first mountain of the Appalachian range heading west. Sunsets over Catoctin Mountain can be beautiful. The attractive views in other directions are of distant tree lines.

The property's Freedom Creek and its tributary, North Star Creek, have their headwaters about a mile from the farm near the foot of Catoctin Mountain. The two year-round creeks flow through and join into one on the farm. The joined creek flows off the property into Tuscarora Creek which flows into the Potomac River three miles downstream. The farm's four springs feed North Star Creek.

Protected Standing

With its State and local historic designations, Cooling Springs is a legacy estate offering stewardship of a documented piece of Maryland history. The property is also officially protected. In 2006, the owners donated a conservation easement to the Maryland Environmental Trust, a State agency, placing Cooling Springs in perpetual protection against development or any significant alteration to the farm's historic home.

The Home

The farm's original home stood until about the 1920s and was replaced by the current two-story Gothic Revival home built by County Magistrate Ezra and Margaret Michael in 1879. Since then, the home has closely kept its integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. It retains its original floor plan, parlour wings, stone foundation, large basement beams, lath-and-plaster walls, nearly all of its original refinished floors, and most original doors and door hardware.



High ceilings, high baseboards, detailed built-in bookcases, paned double French doors at both entrances to the dining room, the original kitchen fireplace, maid's stairs, picture molding, and other design elements, many original, round out the olden charm of the home. During the 2000s, the owners tastefully refurbished the interior, carefully keeping the home's original motifs in period.

The home has four bedrooms, two full baths, parlour/living room, traditional dining room, original kitchen with fireplace and modern appliances and counters, two pantries, enclosed sun porch, sitting alcove, and two offices, one of which is currently used as a painter's studio. The smallest bedroom is furnished as a dressing room/large walk-in closet with exterior window. The carpeted owner's suite includes bedroom, dressing room, sun porch, and bath with original oversized claw-foot tub and brass fittings. The home's interior covers 2,600+ square feet, plus full floored attic and front and rear basements. The home has four interior and two exterior stairwells, three repointed chimneys, and five fireplaces, though one is sealed over. Five interior doors have their original transoms.

Plumbing and wiring are modern and built to code when installed as are appliances, heating and air-conditioning. The home is served by cable television, Internet, and its own well. Cell tower signal strength is dependable. As far as known, the home and property have been kept free of intrusive "smart" appliances.

The home's front porch columns, railings, corbels, and splats are original from 1879. The porch was reroofed in the late 2000-teens. In 2019, the family installed off the back of the home an attached, two-level, 650-square-foot, low-maintenance banistered deck with wrought-iron patio furniture, deep soaking tub, and shaded hammock. The addition was approved by the Maryland Environmental Trust.

The home's standing-seam steel roof is in excellent condition and has been resurfaced regularly, most recently in 2026.

The Appurtenances

The farm has seven out-buildings.

A foot bridge spans North Star Creek, giving access to the stone **spring house**, which may have been present before the Michael family's purchase of the property in 1768. The age of the spring house is unknown but would not pre-date the late 1720s when European settlers first began arriving in what was to become Frederick County. The spring house was completely restored and repointed in 2004 and functions as originally designed with its adjacent spring flowing through a hand-dug channel along two interior walls, and then out into North Star Creek. The spring house is floored with its original large flagstones and was reroofed in 2019. The spring house's setting is exceptionally serene.



The **barn** retains its original colonial-era, two-story "Switzer" (Swiss) configuration of upper ground-level barn and lower hillside dugout loafing shed. The 1,000-square-foot barn, painted barn red, stands on its original eighteenth-century stone foundation adjacent to the west pasture. The barn houses the farm's riding mower and its tow cart. There is ample storage space in the barn. Down one level from the barn, the attached **loafing shed** and adjacent stone bay are rented to the pasture tenant for animals and equipment.

Near the home, the **tool house** secures various power tools, hand tools, and, during winter, some outdoor furniture. The tool house's attached **refuse shed** may be used for bulky-item disposal staging or as a pet shelter. The tool house was reroofed in the late 2000-teens.

The farm's **garden shed** and **woodshed**, housed under the same roof, occupy an extension off the back deck of the home. The woodshed holds nearly three cords of wood, a winter's worth for the home's air-tight wood stove if used daily. The garden shed houses gardening tools, wheeled recycling and refuse barrels, and a wall display of artifacts found around the property.

Included in Sale

- Roster of preferred vendors
- Owner equipment manuals
- Kitchen, laundry, humidifier, dehumidifier, and other appliances
- Window treatments
- In-built 120-bottle wine rack
- Solar credit subscription
- Lawn tractor and tow cart
- Lawn and garden power equipment and hand equipment

Front porch and back deck furniture
Outdoor deep soaking tub
3+ cords of seasoned firewood
Balances of fuel oil, propane and tractor gas
Balance of property tax payment
Cooling Springs website
Frederick County Landmarks Foundation marker
Framed Cooling Springs Farm official citations and proclamations

Optional

Stocks of plumbing, electrical and cleaning supplies (recommended)
Autographed hardcover copy of *First Explorer*
Facsimile of Francis Michael 1704 local map (oldest map of western Maryland)

The Environment

Carbon-Neutral Energy Use

Cooling Springs is powered entirely by sun and wind, and uses no fossil fuel, hydroelectric or nuclear sources for power. Electricity used during daylight hours is provided by the farm's owned 10.5-kiloWatt solar array situated unobtrusively on the downward slope of the middle pasture out of sight of neighbors and passers-by. Energy used at night is from purchased wind or solar power delivered by standard utility power line. The array is sized to sell excess production to the local electric utility to offset night power so that the farm's annual net electricity cost is minimal. Sales of solar renewable energy credits further offset the cost of night power so that the farm spends less for electricity resulting in lowered operating costs.

In 2018, the home was re-sided in four-layer exterior insulation resulting in a gain in energy efficiency in the already well weatherized home. At the same time, oversized gutters and oversized downspouts were installed. The metal roof was recently recoated with new fiberized paint. The home's exterior windows are air-tight and double-paned. The home's heating and cooling systems are designed to permit the home to be heated or cooled floor by floor and nearly room by room with a combination of a programmed forced-air oil furnace, programmed room-by-room base-board heaters, switch-controlled bathroom heaters, an efficient air-tight Sierra wood stove, ceiling fans, and both active and passive solar heating and cooling. Resulting efficiencies keep home heating costs to around \$2,000 per year. Since central air conditioning power is provided by the solar panels, cooling the home is essentially costless.

Protected Rural Environment

Southern Frederick County, which surrounds Cooling Springs, is the most rural and least densely populated part of the county, Maryland's largest and most agricultural since its 1748 founding. One of twelve designated districts in the county, the Buckeystown District where the farm is located, has the lowest poverty rate – 13 percent as of 2020 – of any district. Nearby Adamstown, the largest town in the district, has a population of about 2,400 and a commercial center consisting of store, Grange hall, restaurant, elementary school, fire station, and post office.

Cooling Springs lies within the Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy Area, a 38,978-acre tract bounded roughly by the Potomac River on the south, Catoctin Mountain to the west, the Monocacy River to the east, and Ballenger Creek to the north. In early Maryland colonial times, Charles



Carroll of Annapolis, one of the most influential men of the colony, was granted the tract by the British Crown. In 1765, Carroll created the Manor when he granted its entirety to his son who took the title Charles Carroll of Carrollton. This Charles Carroll became a Signer of the Declaration of Independence and in 1831 was the last Signer to die.

Cooling Springs lies amidst or near the following federal, state, and locally designated areas assigned to preserve most of southern Frederick County as rural, scenic and, for the most part, not intended for development. An asterisk * indicates an area that Cooling Springs is within.

County

- County of Frederick Rural Legacy Program
- Carrollton Manor Land Trust*
- County of Frederick agricultural zoning*
- Sugarloaf Mountain Natural Area Park
- Monocacy Natural Resources Area Park
- Unnamed future County park near Cooling Springs

State

- Maryland Rural Legacy Program
- Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Farmland Preservation Partnership Program
- Mid-Maryland Frederick Rural Legacy Area*
- Carrollton Manor Rural Legacy Area (38,265 acres, 60 square miles)*
- Washington Run Rural Area Historic District*
- Maryland Environmental Trust Preservation Easement Program*

Federal

- United States Department of Transportation US Route 15 Historic Corridor
- United States Department of Transportation Catoctin Mountain Scenic Byway
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area
- United States Park Service Civil War Heritage Area
- United States Park Service Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park
- United States Park Service Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Byway
- United States Park Service Monocacy National Battlefield

Conservation Organizations

- Scenic America recognition of Cooling Springs and surrounding area*
- Scenic Maryland recognition of Cooling Springs and surrounding area*
- Envision Frederick County*

The State of Maryland Priority Preservation Area in which Cooling Springs lies is legally designated by State statute as preferably to remain rural and zoned for agriculture, woodlands, parkland, and other pastoral uses. The 19,337-acre area contains a large concentration of preserved farmland, characterized mainly by larger farms on some of the most fertile and productive agricultural soils in the county. The Priority Preservation Area contains nearly 4,000 acres of officially preserved land, over 20 percent of its total, including Cooling Springs.

The County

Frederick County has been Maryland's most agricultural since it was founded in 1748. Its school system ranks high among the state's 23 counties in a state whose public school system consistently ranks among the top public school systems in the United States, in some recent years ranking first. The county boasts 104 listings on the National Register of Historic Places and more 400 designated Frederick County Landmarks. *Forbes* magazine named downtown Frederick one of the nation's "greatest neighborhoods." Frederick is also known for the President John Hanson National Memorial, a vibrant arts scene, broad array of restaurants, and many antique stores.

Historic Recognition

Cooling Springs is a registered historic landmark listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (no. F-1-138) and is a Frederick County Landmark (no. 355). In 2006, Scenic America and Scenic Maryland in a presentation at the farm officially recognized Cooling Springs and the surrounding area as deserving special protection to preserve scenic beauty. Cooling Springs and its home have been featured in a number of television documentaries and in newspaper and magazine articles as an example of deep local history and beauty. When Cooling Springs celebrated its 250th anniversary on July 12, 2018, the *Frederick News Post* ran a front-page article on the farm.

In 2020, the owners of the adjacent 181-acre Copper Penny Farm, which used to be part of Cooling Springs, purchased the nearby Calico Rocks Farm. Cooling Springs, Copper Penny and Calico Rocks comprise all but 30 acres of the original 340-acre Cooling Springs from 1768. Copper Penny Farm is also listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties.

Scouted by Western Maryland's First Explorer

Cooling Springs was founded from virgin wilderness in 1768 by Andrew and Barbara Michael.

Andrew was the son of Francis Michael, a Swiss naturalist, humanitarian, and earliest European explorer of western Maryland where Cooling Springs is located. Francis Michael was the son of David Michel von Schwertschwendi, Lord of Rallingen, Switzerland, the equivalent of a state governor.

After emigrating to Virginia in 1702, Francis became a British citizen and changed his name to Francis Michael from his birth name Frantz Michel. In 1704, he became the first European to explore inland as far as western Maryland, Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, and the Appalachians.

Francis drew a detailed map of his exploration with his 15 campsites shown by the pup tent symbol here. Before he crossed the Potomac River, Francis made a side-trip to the site that in 1745 would become Frederick, Maryland. The side-trip shows one of his campsites to be near, or at, where Cooling Springs is located (arrow). This is where his son Andrew settled in 1768 and founded Cooling Springs.



In 1705, Francis married Anna von Lerber, a persecuted Swiss Mennonite religious refugee who in 1699 had fled to Virginia with her sisters and mother. Francis and Anna Michael lived on their large land grant near Williamsburg. The grant became all or a large part of King William County, Virginia.

Francis Michael devoted his entire career to rescuing thousands of European religious and war refugees and arranging their relocation to colonies that he established for them in America. A copy of Francis's 1704 exploration map of western Maryland, the oldest known map of the region, is housed in the British National Archives. In 2022, Cooling Springs owner Peter Michael authored *First Explorer*, the biography of Francis Michael, available at Amazon and wherever books are sold. In 2023, *First Explorer* was awarded a national book prize in biography and in 2026 a second edition was published featuring new material uncovered by Mr. Michael during research in Switzerland.

A Son Founds Cooling Springs

Up through the 1760s, Francis and Anna's four sons migrated the 150 miles from their home in Virginia to Frederick, Maryland, to invest in what had become one of British America's major boom towns. By the end of the decade, Frederick County was Maryland's largest in area, population,

and product, and the most politically influential. In 1762, youngest son Andrew established the Michael Foundry in Frederick, the first foundry in western Maryland. The old stone foundry survives and is now used as Sky Stage, a performing arts venue.

In 1768, Andrew sold the Michael Foundry and purchased a 340-acre tract that he named Cooling Springs, located where his father's famous map showed Francis as having camped on his 1704 expedition. Only a handful of properties in the United States have had a length of ownership by one family as long as has had Cooling Springs. By 1786, Andrew had amassed 447 contiguous acres, making Cooling Springs at the time one of the largest properties in Frederick County. Over the generations, the farm was divided among sons as was the custom, with the original homestead part of the farm continuing in Michael ownership down to the present. Today's Cooling Springs comprises the 20 acres surrounding the farm's original homestead and appurtenances including its springhouse.

Ten Generations

Beginning with explorer Francis Michael, ten generations of Michaels have enjoyed the bucolic setting of Cooling Springs at the foot of the Appalachians. Consecutive generations beginning with Andrew's son included a War of 1812 veteran, a long-serving County Magistrate, the co-founder of Frederick's Commercial State Bank, a Methodist clergyman who held the first doctorate in the family, a career Air Force commander, a prize-winning author, and a professional geographer. The ninth and tenth generations are children and grandchildren of Cooling Springs' owners.

