

# CORP. ISAIAH FASSETT



*“Uncle Zear”*



Isaiah “Uncle Zear” Fassett was born into slavery southeast of here in Sinepuxent in 1844. His owner, Sarah A. Bruff, released him from bondage at age nineteen on November 11, 1863, when the U.S. Army paid her \$300 in compensation. That same day, Fassett enlisted in Company D, 9th United States Colored Troops. This infantry regiment served in South Carolina and also fought in several battles in Virginia in 1864–1865, including the Wilderness, Deep Bottom, Fussell’s Mill, Fort Gilmer at Chaffin’s Farm, and the siege of Petersburg. The regiment was among the first to occupy Richmond on April 3, 1865. After the Confederate capital fell, Fassett was promoted to corporal then discharged on November 26, 1866. His brothers, Franklin, Andrew, John, and George, also were freed and served in the U.S. Army.

Isaiah Fassett settled here in Berlin after the war. Known in his later years as Uncle Zear, he was among Maryland’s “Boys of ’61” who attended the 75th reunion at Gettysburg in July 1938. Fassett served as commander of the Grand



Army of the Republic post in Berlin until it disbanded, then was GAR department commander in Delaware from 1943 until his death. He was Maryland’s next-to-last surviving Civil War soldier when he died on June 24, 1946.

Memorabilia associated with Isaiah Fassett and other African American Civil War soldiers are in the collections of the Calvin B. Taylor House Museum here in Berlin.

Berlin is located in Worcester County, whose southern boundary forms the border between Maryland and Virginia. Like many other Eastern Shore counties, Worcester County was a haven for spies and smugglers because it was home to many Confederate sympathizers and because of its proximity to the Pocomoke River and the Chesapeake Bay. One such smuggler, Dr. Isaac Costen, made many clandestine trips by sailing down the Pocomoke River, hugging the coastline to Exmore, Virginia and crossing the bay into the Rappahannock River.