

Underground Railroad

Network to Freedom
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



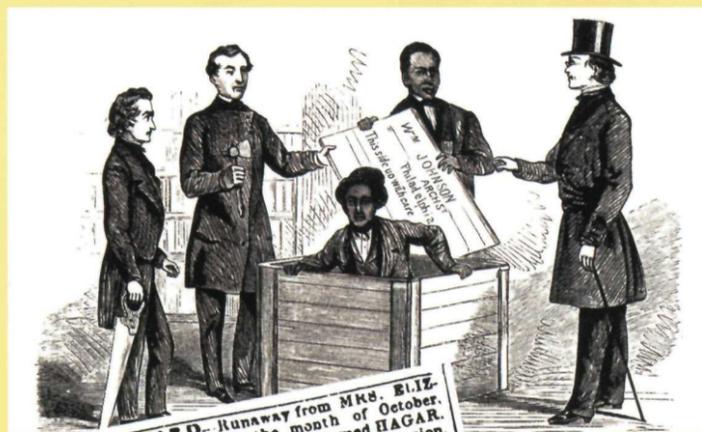
What is the mission of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program?

Recognizing that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression, the historical Underground Railroad (UGRR) sought to address the injustices of slavery and make freedom a reality in the United States. The National Park Service, through shared leadership with local, state, and federal entities, as well as interested individuals and organizations, will:

- promote programs and partnerships to commemorate,
- preserve sites and other resources associated with, and
- educate the public about the historical significance of the UGRR.

What is the importance of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program?

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program tells the story of resistance against the institution of slavery in the United States through escape and flight. It is illustrative of a basic founding principle of this Nation, that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression. The Network to Freedom Program demonstrates the significance of the Underground Railroad not only in the eradication of slavery, but as a cornerstone of our national civil rights movement.



\$100 REWARD—Runaway from MKB. ELIZABETH WARR in the month of October, 1850, from Marysville, a BLACK GIRL, dark complexion, 5 feet 5 inches high, 24 years of age, dark complexion, round face, broad front teeth. Since leaving she has changed her name to MARY. The above reward will be paid if found in this county, or \$150 in any other county; to be delivered in the hands of the Sheriff of San Francisco. Je26 1w

The dramatic moment of release for Henry "Box" Brown, who was shipped in 1848 from Virginia to friends, including William Still, in Philadelphia.

What are the activities of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program?

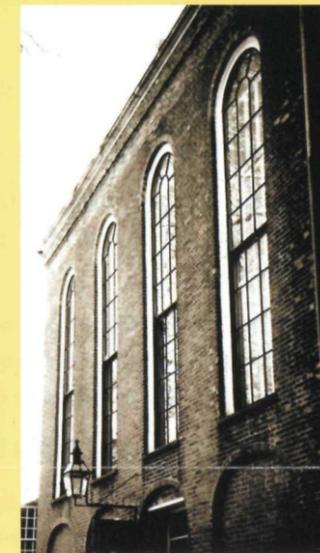
The National Park Service (NPS), through the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, is coordinating preservation and education efforts nationwide, and is working to integrate local historical sites, museums, and interpretive programs associated with the Underground Railroad into a mosaic of community, regional, and national stories. The Network to Freedom Program:

- Develops a Network of sites, programs, and facilities related to the Underground Railroad;
- Educates the public about the historical significance of the Underground Railroad;
- Identifies and works to preserve associated sites and other resources;
- Promotes commemorative and interpretive programs;
- Assists in the development of community and statewide organizations for researching and preserving Underground Railroad sites;
- Facilitates communication and partnerships among community, state and national Underground Railroad site owners, preservation organizations, educational associations and commemorative groups.

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program builds upon and is supported by local initiatives around the country as well as federal legislation passed in 1990 and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998.

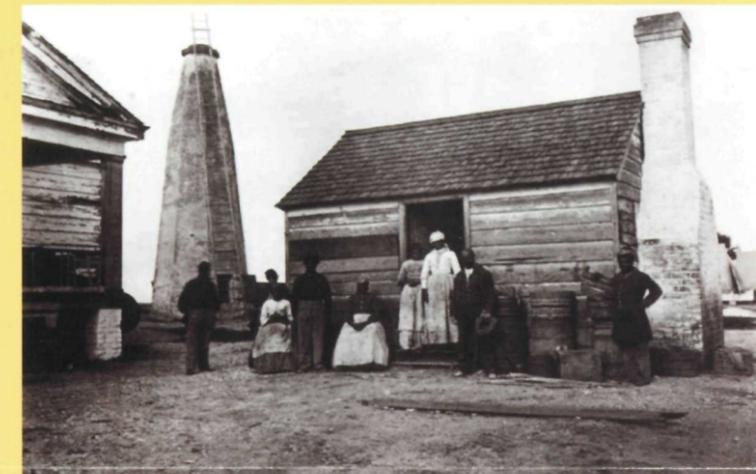


The Nathan and Polly Johnson House in New Bedford, MA was home to Frederick Douglass after he escaped from bondage in Maryland. The Johnson House was added to the Network to Freedom in September 2001.



The African Meeting House (1806) was a center of antislavery activity and today it is a site on Boston's Black Heritage Trail.

(Left) Not all routes to freedom ended in Canada. Congaree Swamp and other Southern landscapes provided a refuge for freedom seekers.



As a result of the Union victory in April 1862, Fort Pulaski became a haven for African American refugees. Fort Pulaski was added to the Network to Freedom in May 2001.

What is the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom?

A significant yet distinct element of the Program is the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, referred to as the "Network." The Network is a diverse collection of elements, comprised of historic sites, facilities, and programs that have a verifiable association to the Underground Railroad. The Network is inclusive and incorporates the broadest range of elements possible to tell the story of the Underground Railroad which occurred whenever resistance to slavery took the form of flight.

What is the Underground Railroad?

The Underground Railroad refers to efforts of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage. Wherever slavery existed, there were efforts to escape, at first to maroon communities in remote or rugged terrain on the edge of settled areas. Their acts of self-emancipation made them "fugitives" according to the laws of the times, though in retrospect "freedom seeker" seems a more accurate description. While most freedom seekers began their journey unaided and many completed their self-emancipation without assistance, each decade in which slavery was legal in the United States saw an increase in active efforts to assist escape. In many cases the decision to assist a freedom seeker may have been a spontaneous reaction as the opportunity presented itself. However in some places, particularly after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Underground Railroad was deliberate and organized.

What is the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program?

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program provides technical assistance to organizations that are attempting to identify, document, preserve and interpret sites, approximate travel routes and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad, or that are developing or operating interpretive and educational programs and facilities. One of the principal components of the program is to validate the efforts of local and regional organizations, and make it easier for them to share expertise and communicate with NPS and each other through inclusion in the Program as Network Partners.

What types of sites are associated with the Underground Railroad?

Associations or connections to the Underground Railroad and the resistance to slavery through flight can encompass various activities. Common Underground Railroad associations include a site that might be a water or overland route, a hiding place, a church with a congregation active in the Underground Railroad, a home of someone active in the Underground Railroad (even if it was not a safe house), the location of a legal challenge to slavery, a plantation where an escape began, a maroon community, a destination settlement, and even a location where the kidnapping of freedom seekers occurred. These are just some of the possible associations that define Underground Railroad activity. The definition is meant to be fluid to incorporate and encourage new and original investigations, interpretations and commemorative activities around the country.

Can sites that have been altered or destroyed be part of the Network?

There are a multitude of Underground Railroad-related sites around the United States that have suffered the impacts of prolonged negligence or developments inconsistent with the historical character of the site. Nonetheless, these sites are often integral parts of the Underground Railroad story. Their significance should not be lost, so the Network to Freedom is designed to include these impacted sites, with the provision that they must be associated with an interpretive program or signage.

Join the Network to Freedom



Federal forces established this encampment for freedom seekers on the grounds of the former Musket Factory at Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park was added to the Network to Freedom in April 2002. (Historic Photo Collection, Harpers Ferry NHP)

How do you research sites for inclusion in the Network?

Any element nominated to the Network must have an association to the Underground Railroad. The association of such a site must be documented in a verifiable way using professional methods of historical research, and must be related to Underground Railroad activity. NPS provides technical assistance to researchers documenting Underground Railroad properties.

NPS has produced two publications to provide guidance in researching places and people who were part of the Underground Railroad phenomenon.

• *Exploring a Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad.* This booklet includes a historic context for interpreting the Underground Railroad, guidance on using original sources, a case study, and a detailed bibliography. View this booklet at http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/ugrr/exugrr1.htm

• *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study.* An overview of slavery and Underground Railroad activities through American history. The theme study can be viewed at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/themee.htm>

The Network to Freedom Program is developing tools such as a publication on methodologies and the uses of oral tradition that will aid in researching Underground Railroad properties.

What programs and facilities are included in the Network?

The Network to Freedom Act specifies that the Network include elements such as "governmental and non-governmental facilities and programs of an educational, research, or interpretive nature that are directly related to the Underground Railroad."

This provision of the legislation invites the inclusion of a variety of different types of elements. Facilities and programs in the Network can have an educational, research, or interpretive scope, as long as they are directly related to, and verifiably associated with, the Underground Railroad. Facilities can include, but not be limited to, operating archives and libraries, research centers, museums and museum collections, and cultural or commemorative centers. Programs can be even more diverse in nature. They can include, but not be limited to, tours, interpretive talks, traveling exhibits, theater productions, living history productions, and educational programs.

Benefits

Specific advantages of inclusion in the Network include:

- National recognition of the authenticity of historic sites, programs, and facilities.
- Inclusion in a Network database featured on the Program's web site, that will include standard information on every site, program, and facility that has been reviewed and accepted into the Network.
- Eligibility for Network to Freedom grants, when funds are appropriated, and assistance in locating project funding. The Network to Freedom Program is working with partners to identify funding sources and raise funds to support interpretation and commemoration efforts.
- The use and display of the Underground Railroad Network logo.
- Inclusion in a nationwide system of comparable sites, programs, and facilities that fosters networking and coordinating educational, preservation, and commemorative activities.

What is a Network Partner?

Partnerships between and among the National Park Service and local, grass-roots organizations, that have as their goal the preservation, commemoration, and interpretation of Underground Railroad-related sites and stories, are the foundation of the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. The vehicle through which this can happen is for these local entities to become Network Partners. It is often through the dedicated efforts of Network Partners that elements are added to the Network to Freedom.

Partners can range from a small one-person organization that works tirelessly to teach schoolchildren about Underground Railroad-related resources in his or her town, to an agency such as a State Historic Preservation Office, which runs multifaceted programs consistent with the National Park Service's mission. No effort is too small or too large, and each one is integral to the success of the Network to Freedom Program and the collective effort nationwide to enhance our understanding of the significance of the Underground Railroad to American history.

Individuals and organizations can obtain information about becoming Network Partners by contacting the Regional Coordinator for their state.

Where can I find additional information?

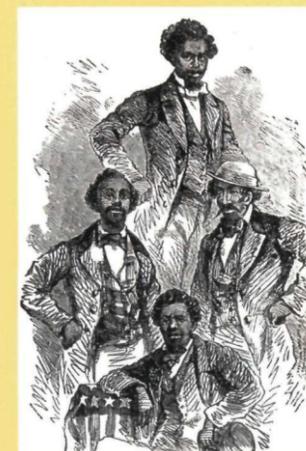
The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program maintains a web site that includes a history of the Underground Railroad, narratives of Underground Railroad activity, technical assistance to site owners, a forum for Underground Railroad-related community activities, links to other related web sites, and an application form to join the Network. As part of the web site, National Park Service maintains a database that links Underground Railroad governmental and non-governmental sites, programs, facilities, organizations and partners from around the nation. The Network to Freedom Program web site can be accessed at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr>

National Park Service has also published the *Underground Railroad Handbook*, which includes artwork, graphics, and historical documents related to the historic Underground Railroad, as well as essays by noted scholars and suggested sources for further research. This can be obtained by contacting the Government Printing Office at (202) 512-1800 or by accessing www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/ for pricing and volume discounts.

The National Register of Historic Places maintains a Travel Itinerary that includes Underground Railroad properties listed in the National Register. It can be accessed at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ugrrhome.htm>



Mary Ellen Pleasant, a Civil Rights heroine in California, was born enslaved and became an operative on the Underground Railroad. A Chautauqua program interpreting her life was added to the Network to Freedom in May 2001. (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)



In 1862 Robert Smalls and fellow enslaved crewmen of a Confederate gunboat stole the vessel and escaped with their families to freedom. (Kitt Alexander)

CONTACT INFORMATION

National Park Service Underground Railroad Regional Coordinators are available to provide assistance for researching, preserving and commemorating Underground Railroad sites, and to facilitate communication and networking among community groups, historical societies, and interested parties. Please contact the Regional Coordinator for your state for assistance with Underground Railroad related activities.

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