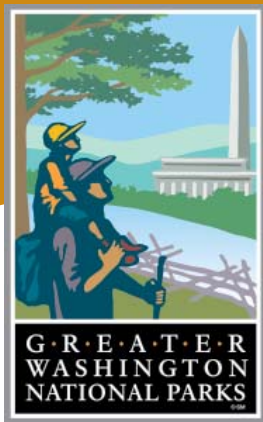




# The Current



## The Frederick Douglass Home, Cedar Hill, is Restored to its Victorian Splendor



Formerly painted white, the Douglas Home is now restored to its historic earthtone colors.



When Frederick Douglass, one of the most prominent African American leaders of the 19th century, died on February 20, 1895, he left behind Cedar Hill,

his estate overlooking the capital city. In February 2007, after a \$2.7 million preservation project, the National Park Service will re-open Cedar Hill, today known as Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, to the public.

This three-year effort had two purposes. First, the NPS had to address the physical needs of the Douglass Home and the collection

of artifacts usually on display within it. The home's failing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system was replaced with new equipment and a computerized climate control system that regulates temperature and humidity, providing a stable environment for the museum collection. 56 historic windows have been restored to their original luster. 61 new louvered shutters have been installed on the home, replacing replica shutters from the 1980s. A fire protection system has also been added.

The second goal focused on restoring the Douglass Home to its 1893-1895 appearance in order to accurately portray Douglass' residence. This house, where he spent the last 18 years of his life, remains a symbol of his success and reflects the status he achieved during his lifetime. Research conducted during the past three years has shown that Douglass expanded the house from six to 20 rooms. Following the last addition (1892-1893), he painted the house dark beige, one of the earth tones that people of the Victorian period found stylish. The NPS has returned the home to this historic color scheme. Inside, new wallpaper accurately reflects popular Victorian-era patterns and colors.

The home will be open for tours beginning February 15, 2007. A series of events, open to the public, will celebrate the grand reopening. Please call the site for details. Reservations are encouraged for all people wishing to tour the Douglass Home and are required for groups of ten or more. For further information on tours and programs at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, call (202) 426-5961 or visit us on the web at [www.nps.gov/frdo](http://www.nps.gov/frdo).

by Julie Galonska, Site Manager, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, [julie\\_galonska@nps.gov](mailto:julie_galonska@nps.gov)



Worn and peeling wallpaper, painstakingly reproduced and replaced by experts, was one of many details undertaken during the restoration project.

## Regional Director's Corner

We dedicate this issue of *The Current* to African American History Month, focusing on the sites, memorials, and programs that help celebrate the rich contributions African Americans have made to this region and to our nation.

In this issue you'll learn how the Greater Washington National Parks tell the story of America in microcosm. You'll read about recent changes at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, on-going research into the role that Washington, D.C. played as a hub of activity for the Underground Railroad, and other stories that might not be as well known yet, but which contribute to the rich fabric that weaves us all together as Americans. The National Capital Region is committed to promoting these stories and communicating them for the enrichment of our visitors.

It is our privilege to be the stewards of these significant public treasures. We take our role in the preservation and interpretation of these sites with pride and diligence.

Enjoy, enhance your knowledge, and return often!

Joseph M. Lawler  
Regional Director  
National Capital Region

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- Digs Reveal Slave Quarters at Arlington House.





1998 Congressionally-authorized National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom logo, representing the aspiration for freedom through flight symbolized by the North Star.

## Underground Railroad Network Documented



The National Capital Region’s Underground Railroad program researches and shares stories about

Washington, D.C.’s role as a hub in the Underground Railroad. Many of those fleeing enslavement came to Washington, some remaining and some passing through. The National Capital Region (NCR) has found and relies on primary sources for its research.

The NPS seeks to raise awareness of the untold parts of the Underground Railroad story. The C&O Canal NHP documented Ferry Hill, a small plantation where the owners intercepted freedom seekers, sending them back to slavery. NCR assembled the history of camps for U.S. Colored troops and refugee bondsmen on Roosevelt Island during the Civil War.

In order to dispel myths about the Underground Railroad, the NCR’s program seeks to highlight “conductors” such as Leonard Grimes or runaways such as the Edmonson sisters on the ship *The Pearl*. Research continues with grassroots activists, academics, and preservationists documenting the flight to freedom, protecting sites, and creating compelling educational programs.

by Jenny Masur,  
NCR Underground Railroad  
Coordinator, [jenny\\_masur@nps.gov](mailto:jenny_masur@nps.gov)

## Rock Creek Park Programs Highlight African American History



During the time of the Underground Railroad, enslaved Africans sang songs as they labored and toiled during their chores and tasks. One song was called “Follow the Drinking Gourd.” This simple and lilting song was actually “code” directing slaves to use the night sky and stars as a compass to the North, and thus to freedom. During February, on Saturdays and Sundays at 4:00 p.m., the “Night Sky to Freedom” planetarium program at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium (5200 Glover Road, NW) will include NPS rangers who will “decode” this song, demonstrating how song and stars led to freedom.

The exhibit “African American Connections in Rock Creek Park,” explores the compelling stories of African Americans in the park, and will be displayed in the Nature Center auditorium during February. This exhibit features the Whitbys, an African American family who moved to Washington after the Civil War and rented a small house in what is now Rock Creek Park. Their house was recently discovered during an archaeological inventory study. According to the 1900 census, the family was headed by Sarah Whitby, a widow who worked as a laundress. Sarah had six children. Although she was illiterate, all of her children could read.

Test excavations have shown the Whitby house had a cellar hole measuring about 10 by 12 feet, with stone foundations and a stone floor. Most of the artifacts found in the cellar date to around 1900, but a few are older. These include two shards of colonoware, a kind of pottery made by slaves before the Civil War. The discovery of these shards suggests that the house was quite old, perhaps dating to the early 1800s, and that it was probably occupied by African Americans for many decades.

For those wanting to explore Washington, D.C.’s African American History while hiking, the “Black Georgetown Hike” will start from the Old Stone House (3051 M Street, NW, Georgetown) at 10:00 a.m. every Saturday in February. This 1.5 mile hike will take visitors through the scenic streets of Georgetown and examine the lives of the residents of Herring Hill, a Georgetown neighborhood steeped in 300 years of African American history.

All programs are free and open to the public. Contact the Rock Creek Park Nature Center at 202-895-6070 for more information.

by Perry Wheelock, Cultural Resource Specialist,  
Rock Creek Park, [perry\\_wheelock@nps.gov](mailto:perry_wheelock@nps.gov)



The Old Stone House at Rock Creek Park.

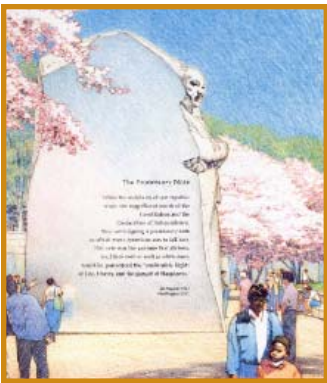
## MLK Memorial Planners Have a Dream, Too

*Groundbreaking heralds construction of new memorial*



In anticipation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial taking its place alongside other memorials within the National Mall & Memorial Parks, a ground-breaking ceremony was held in mid-November heralding what will become the way in which Americans will recognize a man who forced this nation to stop, think and change its ways.

The first memorial to neither a president nor our war veterans is planned to be built on a four-acre site along the Tidal Basin halfway between the Jefferson and the Lincoln Memorials and is designed to commemorate a man who embodied the American tradition of peaceful protest and activism. President Bush, former President Bill Clinton, talk show host Oprah Winfrey and poet Maya Angelou attended the groundbreaking.



Conceptual drawing of the Stone of Hope at the proposed MLK Memorial.

When completed, visitors will walk through a tall, dark passage symbolizing the memorial’s Mountain of Despair and then enter a portal to reveal the Tidal Basin’s water and trees and a sculpted image of Dr. King in the memorial’s Stone of Hope. The memorial is expected to be completed in 2008.

by Bill Line,  
NCR Public Affairs Officer,  
[william\\_line@nps.gov](mailto:william_line@nps.gov)



# Archeology News

## Unearthing the African American Experience at NCR Park Archeologists Excavate One of the Largest Slave Villages in Maryland



During 2003 and 2004, archeologists uncovered evidence of what may be the largest documented slave village in Maryland on the Best Farm at Monocacy National Battlefield, near Frederick. The Vincendières, a French farming family who came to the United States in 1793 from

France and Saint-Dominique, along with their cousin Jean Payen de Boisneuf, established a 748-acre plantation known as L’Hermitage. Census records indicate as many as 90 enslaved individuals resided there by 1800. By 1820, that number dropped to 48. Archeological and historic research helped paint a clearer picture of enslaved life at L’Hermitage.

Researchers have uncovered a 1798 travelogue which described a “row of wooden houses [the slave quarters] and one stone house with the upper stories painted white” at L’Hermitage. The account also references allegations of extreme mistreatment of the enslaved population, which were confirmed in court records. Later excavations revealed a



Archeologists excavate features at the slave village site, which may be distinguished as the darker stains in the foreground. These stains are believed to be the remnants of a fence or enclosure. Pictured: (left-to-right) NCR archeologists Joy Beasley and Brandon Bies.

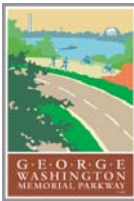
series of pit features which are likely the archeological signature of the “row of wooden houses.” Future

research and excavation are expected to shed more light on this important and unusual site.

by Joy Beasley, Cultural Resource Program Manager, Monocacy National Battlefield, joy\_beasley@nps.gov

## Digs Reveal Slave Quarters at Arlington House

Investigations provide glimpse into daily life of slave community



While the vast walls of Arlington House disclose the stories of Robert E. Lee and his family, the modest slave quarters that flank the mansion quietly protect the memory of the slaves who worked the plantation.

Recent excavations of the two slave quarters have yielded new and exciting results. Completed in 2003, the project revealed numerous architectural details; the original floor of the quarters was not brick but dirt. Archeologists were even able to determine the original size of the hearth due to soot and ash traces found on the walls.

However, the most interesting aspect of the excavations allows the story of daily slave life at Arlington to unfold. Selina Gray, Mrs. Lee’s personal maid, lived with her husband and eight children in one of the small stone quarters. Within that home, long-buried near the hearth, the hand of a tiny porcelain doll and a teacup conjures up the image of Selina’s children stealing a rare moment of childhood. A sherd of a china plate, stamped with the seal of the Society of Cincinnati, was uncovered beneath the window of the Gray residence. How amazing to think that this plate, which may have sat on the table of Martha Washington, somehow found its way to the



Archeological investigation in the hearth of Selina Gray’s quarters at Arlington House, part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

home of Selina Gray, a slave woman living in the shadow of Lee’s mansion.

The excavations of the slave quarters peel away the layers of time, revealing untold stories that allow us a personal glimpse into the lives of the slaves at Arlington House.

by Emily Weisner, Visitor Use Assistant, Arlington House, emily\_weisner@nps.gov

## Archeology & African Americans at Manassas National Battlefield Park



Twenty years of archeological investigations at Manassas National Battlefield Park, Virginia, have resulted in the discovery of the below-ground remains of structures and a diversity of artifacts associated with 18th - and 19th -century African American life. The architectural features range from multi-family, antebellum-slave quarters to post-Civil War single-family houses. Artifacts include a rare African heirloom—a carved, ebony finger ring—ceramic gaming pieces used in the African-derived game of Manacala, hand-built, low-fired earthenware bowls used and, perhaps, made by African Americans, blue-glass beads worn or sewn on clothing to protect the wearer against “the evil eye,” and quartz crystals possibly used to predict the future or in curing rites. Analysis of the

architectural features and artifacts has provided new insights into the adaptation of African slaves to their New World environment and to the survival of African-inspired customs and traditions in the post-Civil War period. Information and photographs from the NPS archeological research at Manassas appears in the 1991 book “Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South,” published by the University Press of Virginia.



Historic, 19th-century photo of the Robinson House at Manassas National Battlefield Park.

by Dr. Stephen R. Potter, NCR Regional Archeologist, stephen\_potter@nps.gov

# Upcoming Events

For GWNP event information, call 202-619-7222



Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial

## African American History Month, throughout February

Numerous events scheduled at various Greater Washington National Parks

Program highlights include:

- Special ranger-guided tours of Arlington House and historic Slave Quarters, 2:00 p.m., daily, February 1-28, Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, VA. Call 703-235-1530.
- Historic Black Georgetown Walking Tour, 10:00 a.m., Saturdays, February 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, and 25; Meet at Old Stone House, 3051 M Street NW, Washington, D.C. Call 202-426-6851.
- The Life and Times of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Saturday, February 10, 10:00 a.m., Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, 1318 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. This program is designed for children ages 8-13. Reservations are required. For reservations, call 202-673-2402.
- “Night Sky to Freedom,” 4:00 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, February 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, and 25, Rock Creek Park, Nature Center, 5200 Glover Rd, NW, Washington, D.C. Call 202-895-6070.

## Special Exhibits

Throughout the month of February

### Clara Barton and the Sea Islands Hurricane

The exhibit commemorates the American Red Cross relief work conducted in the African American communities of Sea Islands, South Carolina, following the devastating hurricane of 1893. *Clara Barton National Historic Site, Glen Echo, MD.*

### Freeman Henry Morris Murray: Pioneer for Civil Justice

The opening and reception for this new exhibit on the life and accomplishments of F.H.M. Murray, an organizer of the 1906 Niagara Movement, will be held on Sunday, February 4, at 2:00 p.m. on the second floor of the John Brown Museum on Shenandoah Street in Harpers Ferry, WV.

## A Moment in Time: African Americans who Knew the Lincolns

Monday, February 26, Time TBA

Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site

Call 202-426-6924, ext. 222 for reservations.

# Greater Washington National Parks

*Where you are never far from history and nature*

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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## GRAND RE-OPENING! FREDERICK DOUGLASS HOME

Join National Park Service staff on February 14th at 10:00 a.m. as the National Park Service celebrates the 189th birthday of Frederick Douglass and the re-opening of the historic house on Cedar Hill after a three-year, \$2.7 million dollar restoration project.

The reopening will feature student winners of a recent oratorical contest, a wreath laying ceremony, and other activities. For more information, call 202-426-5961.

### EDITORIAL OFFICE

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