

# The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

National Capital Region

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## THE CONDUCTOR

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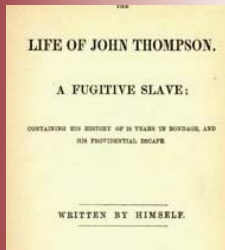
### New NCR Nominations

At Monocacy National Battlefield, MD, what is now called Best Farm was once L'Hermitage Plantation, owned by French refugees. Both as Best Farm and L'Hermitage, the site has been nominated to the Network to Freedom for its history of escapes from slavery.

The site of the property of Leonard Grimes at George Washington University has been nominated to the Network to Freedom. Leonard Grimes ran a hack business in Washington, DC, but was convicted for helping an enslaved family to escape. There is a plaque commemorating the site.

When Brentsville was the capital of Prince William County, VA, its Courthouse and Jail were tied to freedom seekers and antislavery activists. Awaiting review for the Network to Freedom, the county park site reveals the county's Underground Railroad history.

### Escapes by Water



when his ship docked in Baltimore. Steamships like the City of Richmond regularly carried illegal passengers from Richmond to northern cities. Two famous trials of "fugitive slaves" in Boston-- of Anthony Burns and Thomas Sims-- concerned men who had escaped by sea, respectively from Richmond and Savannah to MA. The Pearl used the Potomac River to carry away over 70 freedom seekers from Washington, DC. Such trips led to prison for helpful captains like the Pearl's Daniel Drayton and the Keziah's William Bayliss. Ferryman at Harpers Ferry went to trial for being accomplices to runaways.

ship to turn himself, other freedom seekers, and the ship itself over to the Union.

The sea could be a refuge. New Bedford, MA, a whaling port, was an Underground Railroad hub, drawing runaways with water- or shipyard skills. Though often treated badly, sailors were treated equally regardless of race. John Thompson escaped slavery in MD, traveling overland to Columbia, PA, and then to New Bedford. He reasoned that nothing could be safer than a whaler hundreds of miles from pursuers. He traveled the world, including to Madagascar off the coast of Africa. John S. Jacobs, a freedom seeker from North Carolina, also signed on to a whaler out of New Bedford for 3 1/2 years.

Blacks – enslaved and free – were often skilled watermen. Frederick Douglass reached freedom from Baltimore disguised as a seaman, with borrowed papers. During the Civil War, Henry Jarvis sailed a stolen canoe from the Eastern Shore to Fort Monroe, VA, and then shipped out to Cuba. Robert Smalls became famous for using a Confederate

The public does not realize how common escapes by water were. Water was a major transportation route, easy and cheap before the building of roads and railroads. Enslaved African Americans used rivers, the Chesapeake Bay, and East Coast ports to flee. Tom of the Phoenix easily ran when



U. S. Steamer "Coeur de Lion."

Henry Vinton Plummer (HVP) was born enslaved in Prince George's County, MD. He was the son of Adam Plummer, a trusted foreman at Riversdale Mansion. His father secretly taught him to read and write.

During the Civil War HVP escaped slavery and went to Washington, DC, to live with an aunt. He enlisted in the Union Navy and served honorably on the *Coeur de Lion*. After the Civil War, he went to New Orleans to bring back his sister who had been sold south but kept in touch by letters.

## Unsung Heroes

If a person recognizes any figure of the Underground Railroad, it is bound to be either Harriet Tubman or Frederick Douglass. The NCR Network to Freedom Program sponsored an event to publicize lesser known figures of the Underground Railroad. The seminar "Unsung Heroes of the Underground Railroad" was held on the morning of January 24, 2008, at Sumner School, Washington, DC. Participants were encouraged to cooperate to identify, document, and celebrate local heroes associated with resistance to slavery through flight.

The first panel introduced some intriguing stories. Oney Judge, a freedom seeker from Mount Vernon, reached New Hampshire where she spent the rest of her life. John W. Jones escaped Loudoun County, VA, to Elmyra, NY, where he help others fleeing slavery. Phebe Myers, a free black woman from Queen Anne's County, MD, was convicted of harboring escaped bondsmen, and spent from 1855-1856 in the state penitentiary until pardoned.

The next panel demonstrated a variety of ways to educate the public about and commemorate little-known figures. Hortense Prout, a freedom seeker who sought refuge with Union troops, is remembered with an annual tour in the Adams Morgan neighborhood in DC. At Riversdale Mansion a birthday celebration was held for Henry Vinton Plummer, a runaway from Prince George's County who joined the Union navy and later became an army chaplain. The Freedmen's Cemetery in Alexandria was rededicated with the help of local children who decorated graves with luminarias with the names of forgotten contrabands. Montgomery County Parks and Planning Commission draws attention to Maryland's date of emancipation in 1864 with an annual Emancipation Celebration.



## Forks of the Road Research

Ser Seshs Ab Heter-CM Boxley nominated Forks of the Road in Natchez, MS, to the Network to Freedom for its role in helping contrabands (those who escaped slavery during the Civil War). Afterwards he received a community grant from the Network to Freedom for research on runaways in the area. The results of his research are now available in an on-line database. As he puts it, "advertisements for enslaved persons in jail and running away show and tell the real story of constant resistance to and defiance against chattel enslavement in the Deep South." See [http://www.forksoftheroads.net/ser\\_boxley/advertisement](http://www.forksoftheroads.net/ser_boxley/advertisement).

## New Library Hours

- April 14, 2008 until October 1, the National Archives extends its DC and College Park research rooms' hours: 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Saturday. (Monday and Tuesday will still be 9 A.M to 5 P.M.)
- Beginning January 4, the Kiplinger Research Library opens on Friday and Saturday in addition to the regular Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday schedule. Open from 10 A.M.– 5 P.M. Call 202-383-1850 with questions.

# Hampton NHS Sponsors a Symposium

On April 23, with Goucher College and Historic Hampton, Inc., Hampton NHS, Towson, MD, will hold a symposium, "Forces of Freedom: Manumission and Emancipation in the Mid-Atlantic," 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. at Goucher College's Merrick Hall. The fee is \$45 for non-students. The title refers to private voluntary freedom for individuals versus freedom enacted for all those enslaved. Speakers will include Debra Newman-Ham (Morgan State University), Joseph Becton (Independence NHP), and David Terry (Reginald Lewis Museum).

Hampton Mansion, at Hampton NHS, has just reopened after a three-year \$3.3 million renovation. The park is the core of a plantation owned by the Ridgely family from about 1760 to 1948. It is a Network to Freedom member on account of the numerous freedom seekers fleeing toward PA or Baltimore. The site is unique for its combination of Ridgely family papers, Federal architecture, 18th and 19th century outbuildings and garden, and artifacts from the plantation owners' almost two hundred-year residence. Visitors can contrast the opulent 18th- and 19th-century furnishings in the Mansion with the outbuildings and slave quarters where bondsmen lived and worked.



# Lincoln Cottage

Some historians believe the Emancipation Proclamation was drafted at a cottage three miles from the White House. Designated a National Monument by President Clinton in 2000, President Lincoln's Cottage is located on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in northwest Washington, DC. During the Civil War President Lincoln and his family spent the summers here, from June to November of 1862 to 1864. The cottage provided privacy and a cooler and healthier setting than the White House. Lincoln commuted to the White House on horseback.

Lincoln Cottage ca 1860



On Presidents' Day President Lincoln's Cottage was opened to the public for the first time after a \$15 million restoration by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center, near the Cottage, features exhibits and the opportunity for children to reenact the debate of cabinet secretaries on emancipation.



The Alexandria Archaeology Museum and the city archeologist Pam Cressey have developed and used a research strategy to identify Underground Railroad sites in Alexandria. They have also developed an extensive database of historical information on the antebellum black population of Alexandria. They have conducted or contracted out archeological surveys and excavations at sites like the Freedmens' Cemetery.

## New Brochure for Sully

Sully Plantation at Sully Historic Site was the 1794 home of Richard Bland Lee, northern Virginia's first congressman. Sully is a Network to Freedom site because it was a beginning point for flight. The site is administered by Fairfax County. Sully Historic Site's new brochure, "The Forgotten Road," highlights the lives, work, and contributions of Sully's enslaved community. Nearly 30 enslaved African Americans toiled in the fields, worked in the house, or were skilled craftsmen. Their labor gave Lee the opportunity and means to enjoy the life of a gentleman farmer.

Through this brochure and its accompanying tour visitors can learn about the bondsmen who lived and worked at Sully in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The tour is given daily at 2 P.M. except on Tuesdays. Visit the representative slave cabin and learn the names and stories of some people enslaved at Sully. Hear about their living conditions and see objects similar to those they may have used. For a copy of this brochure or for more information about this tour, contact this Fairfax County Park Authority site at 703-437-1794.

Sully Historic Site is located on Route 28 in Chantilly, VA. From the Beltway (495) take either I66 west to Rt. 28 North or the Dulles Toll Rd. to exit 9A (Rt. 28 South). From Route 28: Take Air and Space Museum Parkway East Exit. At the first stop sign turn right and follow the paved road to parking lot.

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## Anniversary of End of Slave Trade

The abolition of the international slave trade was a step on the road to the abolition of slavery. A public symposium at the National Archives highlighted the 200th anniversary of the end of the Slave Trade in the U.S. The Slave Trade Act of 1808 became effective January 1, 1808. While slavery and internal slave trade continued to be legal, forced immigration of bondsmen from Africa or the Caribbean for sale in the United States was banned. The slave trade in the British Empire was abolished the year before on March 25, 1807.

Thanks to the leadership of the Bicentennial Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the symposium at the National Archives on January 10, 2008, was a success. "Abolition and the Road to Freedom: 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1808," set the Act into a larger national and international context, both past and present. The purpose of the day-long symposium was to raise awareness of the slave trade, its abolition, and the impact on US history and culture. Among the speakers were Pulitzer Price winner David Levering Lewis; Allan Weinstein, the Archivist of the United States; and Lonnie Bunch, Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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## WANTED!!!!

A designer is needed for an Underground Railroad (UGRR) podcast to help a technology-challenged manager; an interpretive writer is needed to develop a regional UGRR brochure to complement the completed Jr. Ranger booklet awaiting funding. Contact Jenny\_Masur@nps.gov or 202-619-7136.

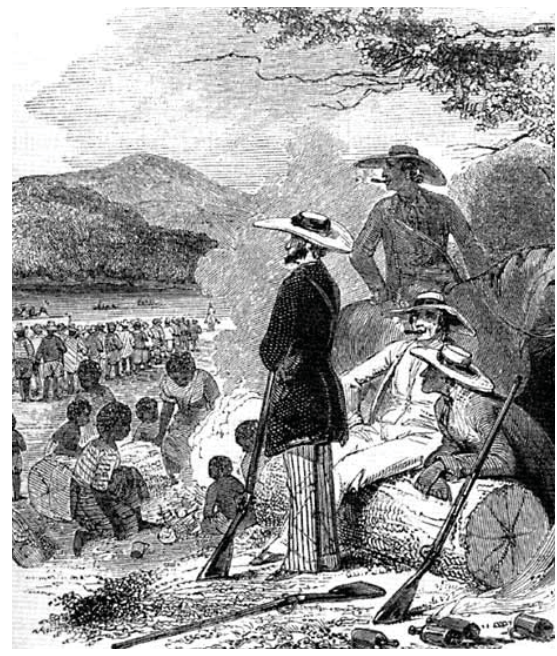
# Underground Railroad in Alexandria



## Freedman's Cemetery

Formerly marked only by a sign and covered by a road, a gas station, and a small office building, the Freedmen's Cemetery will soon become a Memorial Park. The site was accepted into the Network to Freedom on the basis of the interpretive marker. In February, the City of Alexandria celebrated the cemetery with a reception at the Alexandria Black History Museum. The call for proposals for the design of "Contraband and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial" was officially announced. The cemetery is a site on the Network to Freedom, honoring the refugees from slavery who were buried there during the Civil War. In 2006 the cemetery received \$73,897 from "Save America's Treasures" to help publish new research and post it on the cemetery's website. The first burials occurred in March 1863. Archaeological investigation located 428 graves, thus providing information crucial to protection of the graves. Clean dirt fill will create a two foot buffer over these graves.

Submissions for the new park's design will be accepted from architects, artists, and students until April 25, 2008. The best entries will go on public display in Alexandria before award of the first, second, and third place prizes which range from \$2500 to \$10,000. See [http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-freedmens\\_memorialpark\\_project.html](http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-freedmens_memorialpark_project.html).



## Slave Trade

Ironically the abolition of the importation of enslaved labor to the US in 1808 stimulated a vigorous domestic slave trade. The expansion of cash crops in the Deep South required cheap labor. One center of the trade was Alexandria, VA. A National Historic Landmark, 1315 Duke Street, was used as the office of the infamous slave traders, Franklin and Armfield. Franklin and Armfield were only the first in a series of slave traders to own and use the building until the Civil War. See the lesson plan, "A Loathsome Prison: Slave Trading in Antebellum Alexandria," <http://oha.alexandriava.gov>.

Anxious to preserve this sad history, the Northern Virginia Urban League purchased the building and made it their office. The Urban League leadership became determined to make the public aware of the building's past. When held on February 12, 2008, the inauguration for Freedom House Museum was well-attended. Funded by various grants, the basement exhibit on the slave trade relies on careful research.

## Valuable Information

- The Freedmen and Southern Society Project has indexed all documents surveyed for their publications. They have the National Archives citations for each document, indexed by subject, place, and date. Contact Leslie Rowland or Steve Miller, History Department, University of MD.
- “The Diary of Betty Herndon Maury, June 3, 1861 - February 18, 1863,” is published in serial form at: <http://thehouseoncarolinestreet.blogspot.com>.
- The Allegany County African-American History website is <http://www.whilbr.org/AlleganyAfricanAmericans/index.aspx>.
- The Library of Virginia Legislative Petitions Database (over 25,000 petitions) is available as a searchable website at <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/gov/petitions>.
- Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History has posted a podcast on Harriet Tubman by Catherine Clinton <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/wp/?p=31>.
- To learn more about the 175th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire, see [http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/black-noir/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/black-noir/index_e.cfm). For information on the United Kingdom’s Abolition Act 1833 see <http://www.anti-slaverysociety.addr.com/huk-1833act.htm>.



JOHN W. JONES

Once he reached Elmira, NY, and became settled, John W. Jones hid as many as 30 freedom seekers a day in his home. With the help of a baggage handler on the train, those fleeing slavery rode a night train to Niagara and then into Canada. Jones dared to return to VA to help his younger brothers escape bondage.

## New Books

*A Slave No More*, edited by David W. Blight (Harcourt, NY, 2007), presents two narratives never before in print. One narrative (found in the MA Historical Society), was written by John Washington who fled to freedom in Fredericksburg, VA, and then migrated to DC. There he joined the Shiloh Baptist Church, founded by those formerly enslaved in Fredericksburg who received Union help to seek refuge in DC during the Civil War.

*Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775-1865* by T. Stephen Whitman, professor at Mount St. Mary’s, (MHS, Baltimore, 2007) was published in association with the recent exhibit at MD Historical Society.

Canada Council for the Arts gave a 2007 Governor General’s Literary Award to archeologist and historian Karolyn Smardz Frost of Collingwood, Ontario, Canada. She received the award as author of *I’ve Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (Thomas Allen Publishers). The tale of the flight of Thornton and Lucie Blackburn from slavery in KY to freedom in Toronto, Canada, makes Underground Railroad history more personal and less abstract.

*The Slave Ship: A Human History* by Marcus Rediker (NY, Viking) takes a new perspective on the Middle Passage by looking at the microeconomy of the slave ship after 1700. The slave ship formed a micro-society as well, meriting attention to relations between captain, crew, and involuntary passengers.

*African American Lives*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., & Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford, 2004), is a new encyclopedia with 611 biographical profiles. It supplements and updates *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, editors, Rayford Logan & Michael Winston (NY, Norton, 1982).

# Announcements & Calendar Events

## Opportunities

- Washington History seeks articles for April & Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 issues. The journal publishes articles based on original scholarship, photo essays, and book reviews. Contact Matthew Gilmore (dchist@hotmail.com). See <http://www.historydc.org/media/publications/guidelines.asp>.
- Maryland State Archives is accepting applications for paid summer internships for students until March 31, 2008. For questions, contact Emily O. Squires, 410-260-6443, or [emilyo@mdsa.net](mailto:emilyo@mdsa.net).
- Submit proposals for papers, panels, and sessions by April 30, 2008, for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History conference. Contact [js8@psu.edu](mailto:js8@psu.edu) or Association for the Study of African American Life and History <http://www.asalh.org>.

## Grants

- The District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities' Folk & Traditional Arts Mini-Grant quick-response grants of up to \$1,000 each to artists and arts organizations practicing or supporting folk tradition projects. Upcoming deadline for the application is April 9, 2008. Visit <http://dcarts.dc.gov>.
- Preservation Maryland Heritage Funds provide help up to \$5000 to protect endangered historic resources and promote innovative projects which can serve as a preservation model. Priorities for 2008 are organizational development for local preservation organizations and legal services to save endangered resources. The next deadlines are June 1 and October 1. Contact [jphillips@preservationmaryland.org](mailto:jphillips@preservationmaryland.org).

## Events

- 31st Annual Conference on Black History, "Crossroads of the World: 250 Years of African Americans in Greater Pittsburgh," Pittsburgh, PA, April 3-5, 2008.
- "Forces of Freedom: Manumission and Emancipation in the Mid-Atlantic," April 23, 2008, Goucher College, Towson, MD.
- Maryland's Annual Preservation & Revitalization Conference, May 29-30, 2008, Hagerstown, MD.
- 2nd Annual Conference, Friends of the Network to Freedom, September 15-20, 2008, Philadelphia, PA.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference, October 21 - 25, 2008, Tulsa, OK.
- Annual Association for the Study of African American Life and History Convention, "Carter G. Woodson and the Origins of Multiculturalism," October 1-5, 2008, Birmingham, AL.



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NATIONAL  
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) was created by Congress in 1998 to honor those who resisted slavery through flight. *The Conductor* was established to inform readers about Underground Railroad history, resources within the National Capital Region, and the activities of NTF.

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Comments? Please send to:  
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*National Park Service website:*

[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)



NPS readers can find past issues of *The Conductor* at “The Conductor Archives” <http://www.ncr.nps.gov/>.

[www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr)