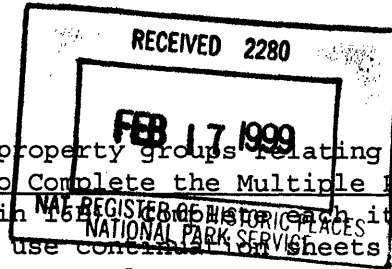


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM



Cover

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 155) for each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission                       Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic Properties Relating to Harriet Tubman in Auburn, New York

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period of each.)

Harriet Tubman's life, activities and commemoration in Auburn, N.Y., 1859-1913.

**C. Form Prepared by**

name/title Susanne R. Warren, Architectural Historian/Consultant  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date October 27, 1998  
street & number 101 Monument Avenue telephone 802-447-0973  
city or town Bennington state Vermont zip code 05201

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

J.W. Alden Signature of certifying official                      15 Dec. 98 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper                      4/2/99 Date of Action

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The properties comprising this multiple property nomination all relate to the life of Harriet Tubman between 1859 and 1913 in Auburn, New York. They include her own residence, the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, a charitable organization for aged and indigent African Americans which she founded, the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street, where she worshipped, and her grave site in Fort Hill Cemetery.

Harriet Tubman is most famous for her role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a fugitive slave herself, who repeatedly made dangerous trips to the South to escort others to freedom, actions which earned her the title "Moses of her people." She dedicated her years in Auburn to selflessly and tirelessly looking after those who could not take care of themselves, and she did it with the same conviction that she was doing God's will that she brought to her rescue work before the Civil War. The heroism of her underground railroad work has overshadowed other aspects of Harriet's remarkable life, character, and work to some degree, and it is with these aspects of her life that the sites in Auburn are interwoven.

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery as Araminta Ross in Bucktown, near Cambridge MD in 1820 or 1821. One of eleven children of Harriet Green and Benjamin Ross, Araminta (who later changed her name to Harriet) was as a young girl "hired out" to a succession of masters, in an effort by her owner to recoup some of the financial losses that he was experiencing. By all accounts her work was difficult physical labor and at the age of 12 she sustained a head injury at the hands of an overseer, an injury that for the rest of her life would cause her to fall into a deep trance-like sleep without warning. In 1844 she was married to a free African American, John Tubman, but no children came of this marriage. In 1849, hearing that she and two of her brothers were to be sold into the deep South, Harriet determined to make her escape. Although the brothers started out with her, they turned back fearing the consequences of capture, and Harriet continued alone into Delaware, where she received assistance from Quaker sympathizers. She then moved on to Philadelphia, where she was safer among the larger free African American population. After working and saving for two years in Philadelphia, Harriet secretly returned to her home and began her work of escorting other slaves, family and strangers alike, to freedom. She eventually managed to guide a number of her siblings and their spouses and children to freedom, but her husband John Tubman remained behind, having remarried after her first disappearance.<sup>1</sup> The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 made this work even more dangerous, for it provided that anyone found assisting fugitive slaves would suffer severe penalties.

Harriet's work as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad has been extensively documented in biographies, histories of the underground railroad, children's literature, and newspaper, magazine and encyclopedia articles. Accounts of how many trips she made and how many slaves she led to freedom differ,<sup>2</sup> but the danger and hardships she and the other refugees experienced cannot be disputed. The stories of night

<sup>1</sup> Alden Whitman, *American Reformers*, p. 817

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Bradford cites number of trips that she made as 19, and credits her with rescuing about 300 individuals. Most sources follow Bradford's numbers, though some claim many more trips and rescues.

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flight, hiding in fields and ditches, being hunted with dogs, and riding under cargo in wagons are too numerous to be recounted here, but such accounts fired the imaginations of abolitionists and others engaged in Underground Railroad work. As her fame spread, she received contributions of money to carry on her work from many quarters, and "by 1858, she was well known in progressive circles in England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Liberia and South America."<sup>3</sup> Her activities were known, of course, to those who would have stopped her and at one time a \$40,000 reward was offered for her capture, an immense sum at that time, and a reflection of the threat she represented to slave holders. Her success in bringing others to freedom was an inspiration to antislavery activists, and undoubtedly added to the building tensions between North and South in the 1850's, her chief period of underground railroad activity.

A less well known aspect of Harriet's life are the friendships that she formed with powerful and influential abolitionists and politicians during her Underground Railroad days. In 1857 she managed to bring her aged father and mother north, first to Canada and then later to Auburn, NY. That she should choose a permanent home for them in Central New York is not too surprising since this was an area deeply involved with abolitionist and other reform causes. The religious revivals of the 1820's and 30's had caused central New York to be dubbed the "burned-over district" for the zeal and passions exhibited by converts in their new-found faith. In the several decades before the Civil War, the reform spirit in the "burned-over district" extended to abolitionism, women's rights, dress reform, spiritualism, and various types of health cures.<sup>4</sup> Many of the best known and vocal advocates of abolitionism and women's rights lived, wrote and proselytized from their homes in Rochester, Syracuse, Auburn, Seneca Falls, Onieda, and Peterborough.

Harriet was a close friend of Frederick Douglass who published his paper the *North Star* in Rochester, and of the Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Syracuse, and a leading abolitionist. She frequently stayed with these famous figures as she escorted fugitives to Canada.<sup>5</sup> Harriet also counted Susan B. Anthony as a friend and she spoke out on women's rights and temperance issues, as well as abolition. John Brown admired her greatly, an admiration she returned, and she took great interest in his activities. She advised him on his campaigns, inspiring him to dub her "General Tubman." Harriet even planned to accompany Brown on his raid on Harpers Ferry to advise on geography and tactics, although ill health prevented her participation in the end.<sup>6</sup> Prominent abolitionists Gerrit Smith, Wendell Phillips and Douglass testified to her bravery, strength of character, and her contributions to her the abolitionist movement, in letters published in a biography underwritten by prominent Auburn businessmen in 1869. She was befriended by the intellectual elite of New England as well, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Bronson Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mrs. Horace Mann.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Walls, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Yellin and Van House, p. 150

<sup>5</sup> Blockson, p. 248-249)

<sup>6</sup> Whitman, p.817, Bradford, p. 96, Wall, p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Telford, *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914. p. 7

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One of the most frequently mentioned of her connections with the powerful and influential was that of her friendship with William Henry Seward, Governor and Senator from New York, and Lincoln's Secretary of State, who lived in Auburn. In 1859 Harriet contracted with Seward for seven acres of land and a house on South Street just over the town line in Fleming. It was to this property she brought her parents after their initial stay in Canada, and where they stayed while she was assisting the Union troops in the South during the war. According to all contemporary accounts, the \$1200 price for the property and the lenient terms of repayment were a generous gesture on Seward's part, and this arrangement certainly may be a significant reason for her choosing Auburn as home for herself and her family. It can also said with some assurance that the general climate of reform and enthusiasm for abolition in central New York, and the presence and friendship of such figures as Douglass, Loguen and Anthony also influenced her decision.

During the Civil War, Harriet served as nurse, scout and spy for the Union forces. Recruited by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts, she served under Col. Robert Gould Shaw in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry, the first African American regiment in the US Army.<sup>8</sup> Her duties ranged from nurse and cook, to spy and scout. It seems that it was easy for her to pass unnoticed behind enemy lines, and report on positions and numbers.<sup>9</sup> According to a contemporary (1863) newspaper account, "Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 black soldiers, under the guidance of a black woman, dashed into the enemies' country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings, and striking terror to the heart of rebellion, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch. It was a glorious consummation."<sup>10</sup> When the war was over, Seward and a number of the high ranking officers whom Harriet had known and assisted, petitioned Congress to grant her the Army pension extended to other soldiers. (Bradford, 1st ed. p.64) Congress refused, however, and Harriet was only granted a widow's pension in 1890, after the death of her husband, who was a veteran.<sup>11</sup>

After the war she returned to the home on South Street where her parents had remained. Several of her siblings and their families had settled nearby as well. Here Harriet began what was to be her life-long work of caring for those African Americans who were too ill or old, or otherwise unable to provide for themselves. In 1869 she married Nelson Davis, a Union soldier whom she had met during her service in the army. Having no regular income of her own, she eked out a living on her seven acres and accepted gifts of clothing, food, and money to support her charitable work. Contemporaries recall that she always had several people living with her, accepting her assistance. As in her days as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, Harriet requested assistance, not for herself, but for her charges, and accepted these gifts as being the natural outcome of the work of God. It seems that more affluent citizens of Auburn and friends in Boston were there to help her when the need arose. Research into the accounts of the Seward family reveal that Harriet

<sup>8</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, March 12, 1913 p.5

<sup>9</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, march 11, 1913

<sup>10</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser and Union*, 5? August 1863

<sup>11</sup> Walls, p. 440.

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continued to borrow from William Henry Seward against her property throughout his lifetime. Since the debts over and above that owed for the property itself were forgiven after his death in 1872, it would seem that Seward was subsidizing Harriet's work through these loans.<sup>12</sup> For the better part of the next half century, Harriet would continue in her charitable work, immediately passing on all that was given to her to those who had greater need.

In practically all accounts of Harriet Tubman, her remarkable character and personality are mentioned, and one of the defining aspects of that character seems to have been her deep faith and commitment to God. Harriet's own accounts of many of the events of her life (in Sarah Bradford's *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 1869, and *Harriet Tubman: Moses of Her People*, 1886) reveal that she saw herself merely as a instrument of God, that her work, the miraculous escapes, and her remarkable physical endurance, were all due to His will and intervention. When she was in a difficult situation, her solution was prayer, and according to Harriet, an answer always came to resolve the difficulty. Indeed, as her friend Thomas Garrett wrote in a letter: "... in truth I never met with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul. She has frequently told me that she talked with God, and he talked with her every day of her life, and she has declared to me that she felt no more fear of being arrested by her former master ...for she said she never ventured only where God sent her, and her faith in the Supreme Power truly was great."<sup>13</sup> Above all, Harriet's work, whether repeatedly risking her life to free fellow African Americans, or devoting her energies to caring for others, she regarded as the working out of divine will, of which she was just a tool.

In that every action was imbued with the conscious need to serve her Lord, there is no doubt that the A.M.E. Zion Church had a central importance in the life of Harriet Tubman. If she lived her religion through her day-to-day activities, she rejoiced in it at Sunday worship. There are accounts of her enthusiastic rejoicing, leading the congregation in singing and praising the Lord.<sup>14</sup> She also worked to strengthen the Church in the central New York and took an active part in seeing that the new church was built on Parker St. in 1891.<sup>15</sup> Her family, too, were active members of the church and as early as 1863, her brother J.T. Stewart is listed as a trustee of the A.M.E. Zion Church., as was later her husband Nelson Davis. It is worth noting that a number of the descendants of Harriet's siblings still reside in Auburn and are active in the church today.

<sup>12</sup> Rebekah Green, Unpublished paper, "History of Harriet Tubman's Brick House."

<sup>13</sup> Bradford, 2nd. ed. pp. 83-84.

<sup>14</sup> "Pays Tribute to Harriet Tubman, *Advertiser-Journal*, Saturday, June 6, 1914 p.4. James E. Mason recalls his first meeting with her at the "old one-aisled frame church on Washington Street" where he noted a "a woman with shoulders somewhat stooped, and head bent forward....At the close of a thrilling selection she arose and commenced to speak ...in a shrill voice she commenced to give testimony to God's goodness and long suffering. Soon she was shouting, and so were others also. She possessed such endurance, vitality and magnetism, that I inquired and was informed it was Harriet Tubman - the Underground Railroad Moses."

<sup>15</sup> Walls, p. 158-59.

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Her authority in the church and in the African American community was considerable, as it was in the larger white population. In orations at her funeral listeners were reminded that "Aunt Harriet's life should be an inspiration to the young men and to the young women of this congregation....In this workaday world filled with activities, what a contrast we find between the average person's life filled with petty vanities, as compared with the unselfish life of our good sister, filled with sympathy and devotion to her people."<sup>16</sup> In all likelihood, the members of the congregation did not need to be reminded of her moral or personal authority, for she had been a living monument in their midst, carrying on the spirit of her underground railroad work in the her struggle to care for her charges.

That Harriet was a figure of prominence in Auburn is seen in the interest in which the local press took in her life and activities. In 1905 the *Auburn Daily Advertiser* reported that she attended and addressed a suffragist convention in Rochester, noting the detail that she had to spend the night at the railroad station due to the late arrival time of the train. On another occasion, the theft of a small amount of money from her home was reported on in considerable detail for several days. When she was briefly hospitalized in 1907 the *Daily Advertiser* reported on her condition. Clearly, in the eyes of her fellow citizens, Harriet was someone of consequence.

Harriet's greatest desire in these years in Auburn, however, was to establish a charitable institution, a Home that would carry on her work after her death. In 1896 she made a bold move to secure that dream when she purchased at auction the 25 acres adjoining her property to the north. Although she had no funds of her own, she bid upon the 25 acre plot and managed to secure the property through a mortgage. The property included two houses, barns and some outbuildings, though only one, the current landmark Tubman Home for the Aged remains.

For the next seven years Harriet struggled to care for her charges and to find the funds to permanently establish the John Brown Home, as she wished to call it. As her own age advanced, it became harder for her to sustain these efforts, however, and in 1903 she deeded the 25 acres and buildings to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church with the understanding that the church would run the Home. A Board of Trustees and a Board of Lady Managers assumed the debt on the property. For several more years the Church worked to raise enough money to renovate and equip the second house on the property for use as part of the home.<sup>17</sup> In 1908 the second facility was opened to receive inmates amid much fanfare.<sup>18</sup> Harriet continued to live in her home on the adjacent 7 acres until 1911, when her health deteriorated to the point where she herself needed to be cared for at the Home.

<sup>16</sup> "To Aunt Harriet: 100's Pay Tribute at Funeral Services." *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913.

From address by President of the Common Council.

<sup>17</sup> The second house was brick and stood back on the property (east) from South Street. Abandoned, it eventually fell into disrepair and eventually disappeared except for the cellar hole. Recent excavations indicate that it may have been bulldozed when its condition reached the point of being a hazard.

<sup>18</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser* June 24, 1908 p.5

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On March 10, 1913 Harriet Tubman died at the age of 92 or 93 in the Home for the Aged she had founded. Her death received considerable note in the press, which recounted in detail events of her life, praising her bravery and lifelong sacrifice and selflessness. After a service at the Home, Harriet lay in state at the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street wearing, by one account, the Diamond Jubilee medal sent to her by Queen Victoria.<sup>19</sup> Hundreds of people came to pay their respects, including local dignitaries and Bishops of the A.M.E. Zion Church from as far away as Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup> In the absence of Auburn's mayor, the President of the City Council gave an oration saying, "It is appropriate that the city give official recognition of the passing of this wonderful woman. No one of our fellow citizens of late years has conferred greater distinction upon us than has she. I may say that I have known "Aunt Harriet" during my whole lifetime. The boys of my time always regarded her as a sort of supernatural being; our youthful imaginations were fired by the tales we had heard of her adventures and we stood in great awe of her. We came to believe she was all-wise.... Greatness in this life does not come to people through accident or by the caprice of fate or fortune; it is the reward of great zeal accompanied by great faith in the object sought and the persistent fighting against great obstacles and difficulties for its accomplishment."<sup>21</sup> Burial took place later that day at the adjacent Fort Hill Cemetery with military honors.

The degree of esteem in which Harriet Tubman was held by her fellow citizens was further marked a year later, when a large bronze tablet honoring her and her achievements was placed on the County Courthouse by the citizens of Auburn. A lavish ceremony and celebration was planned long in advance and covered in detail by the press. The Mayor of the city directed that flags be flown on every municipal building on the day of the ceremony and requested that Auburn residents display Old Glory at their homes, "in recognition of "her loyal and patriotic service to our country and flag."<sup>22</sup> Booker T. Washington traveled to Auburn to address the throng gathered at the City Auditorium for the unveiling of the tablet. Testimonials to Harriet's life and work were given by noted African American educators and clergy, souvenir programs were sold, the Auburn Festival Chorus sang and Olmstead's Orchestra played hymns and anthems<sup>23</sup> According to one newspaper account, "The fame of Aunt Harriet combined with that of Dr. Washington will undoubtedly fill the huge theater to capacity. The demand for tickets has been very heavy and Secretary Adams of the Business Men's Association declares the services will be a big event in the history of the City."<sup>24</sup>

The four sites included in this nomination are all closely associated with Harriet Tubman's life and activities in Auburn. Other than these properties there are hardly any artifacts relating to her that still exist; only a few personal possessions, and, since she couldn't read or write, no written materials from her hand. The three buildings, her residence, the Tubman Home for the Aged, and the church where she worshipped, and one

<sup>19</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913, p.6. "Aunt Harriet's Funeral." Oral tradition has it that this much-prized possession had disappeared before her death, however.

<sup>20</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, March 12, 1913 p.5

<sup>21</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913.

<sup>22</sup> "National Flag to be Displayed," *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914 p. 4

<sup>23</sup> *Advertiser-Journal* June 9, 1914 p.4

<sup>24</sup> *Advertiser-Journal*, June 8, 1914, p.5

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commemorative site, her grave, are all that remain to mark her more than fifty year presence in the city. Harriet Tubman's significance as a someone famous and admired, both in her own time and today cannot be denied and these sites, documenting and commemorating her life derive their significance from her.



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F. Property type: Properties Associated with Harriet Tubman's Life, Activities, and Commemoration in Auburn, NY between 1859 - 1913.

Harriet Tubman's legacy as a champion of human rights is well established. The four sites in Auburn that are the subject of the nomination are all directly connected to the life that built that legacy and to its commemoration in Auburn (Criterion B). The significance of her own home, for many years the place where she carried out her charitable work, and where she herself lived is clear, being the most intimately connected with her long life and activities. The Tubman Home for the Aged is an embodiment of her lifelong dedication to helping others, whether through guiding slaves to freedom, or caring for the aged and indigent. The Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church stands as a monument to her dedication to her religion and to doing the work of God in all aspects of her life. Harriet's grave is where all these strands come together in confirmation and commemoration of what one person can achieve in a lifetime.

The three buildings and the grave are all quite modest examples of their type, and are indicative of the simplicity of Harriet Tubman's own life in Auburn. The brick house which was Harriet Tubman's residence is a two story, brick, gable-roofed house with little embellishment beyond the shallow relieving arches of the windows. The frame Home for the Aged is a two story, gabled house with a one-story porch wrapping around one side, similarly unadorned. The Thompson Memorial Chapel is a small two story frame church with modest Queen Anne-Eastlake details. Harriet Tubman's grave is marked by a simple stone with curved top, carved only with her name and an inscription of her life dates and commemoration of her role in the underground railroad and the Civil War.

These properties are eligible for inclusion in the Multiple Property nomination under Criterion B, and Criteria considerations A and C, in accordance with the following registration requirements:

**Residential Property** - The Harriet Tubman Residence is eligible for inclusion as it served as the primary residence for her and certain members of her family from 1859 - 1913 and maintains integrity of location, setting, feeling, design and association.

**Institutional Property** - The Tubman Home for the Aged has already been designated a National Landmark as it represents an important example of Harriet Tubman's charitable work and activities in Auburn. It maintains integrity of location, setting, feeling, design, and association.

**Religious Property** - The Thompson Memorial Chapel, A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street is a religious property eligible for inclusion because of its association with a person of outstanding importance in our history. It reflects significant and symbolic aspects of Harriet Tubman's spiritual, social and cultural life. It also has commemorative value not only as her regular place of worship, but also as the site of her funeral. The chapel retains integrity of design, location, setting, feeling and association.

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Grave Site - The Tubman grave site is eligible for inclusion on the basis of Harriet Tubman's significance as a person important in our history. It also has become a significant site of commemoration not only for individuals, but as a regular part of the Pilgrimage celebrating Harriet Tubman's life and achievements, conducted each year by the A.M.E. Zion Church. It retains integrity of setting, feeling, association and location.

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The four properties in this nomination are the remaining resources in Auburn known to have been directly associated with Harriet Tubman between 1858 - 1913. Research was conducted to establish the particulars of her life and activities during this period, and to determine how each of the properties related to them. The resources employed in this research included census records, city directories, city and county maps and atlases, county land records, wills, the Seward family papers, newspapers, city histories, oral histories, and the large body of published material about Harriet Tubman.

The sources revealed that Harriet Tubman acquired the 7 acre parcel at 182 South Street in 1859 and that she lived there, first in a frame house and then in the present brick house, from the time she returned from the Civil War until 1911. The Tubman Home for the Aged at 180 South Street<sup>1</sup> was acquired by Harriet in 1896 for use as a charitable institution for aged and indigent African Americans. It was run initially under her direction, and then under that of the A.M.E. Zion Church, to which she deeded the property in 1903. The connection between the Thompson Memorial Chapel and Harriet Tubman is also clear, since it is the church where she worshipped. She was a long time member of the A.M.E. Zion Church and assisted with the efforts to have the present building on Parker Street constructed. It was also the site of her funeral. The Tubman grave in Fort Hill Cemetery is the final, formal commemoration of her life and activities in Auburn, documented in this nomination.

<sup>1</sup> The Tubman Home for the Aged was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974. It has been included in this multiple property nomination in order to link it to the other properties associated with Harriet Tubman in the greater Auburn area, and in order to expand upon the limited documentation included in the Landmark nomination.

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## Resources and Bibliography

The resources utilized in this nomination were located in the office of the Cayuga County Historian, the Cayuga County Clerk's Office, the Local History Room of the Seymour Library, Auburn, the Tubman Memorial Library of the Tubman Home, Auburn, NY and the Cornell University Archives, Ithaca, NY. Additional information may be found at the National Park Service (Tubman Home for the Aged National Landmark Nomination), and the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Preservation.

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