



THE CONDUCTOR

The official newsletter of
The National Capital Region
Network to Freedom Program

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NCR Sites Accepted Into Network to Freedom



Auburn NY Gathering. NPS Photo.

Public review for Round 12 was held in Auburn at a site associated with the later life of Harriet Tubman, the "Moses of her people." New NCR sites included: Leesylvania, Virginia; Thornton Poole House, Maryland and Riley Farm, the newly acquired property in Montgomery County associated with the enslavement of Josiah Henson. The Thornton Poole House application was prepared by students from a Frederick County school under a Save

Our History grant from the History Channel, arranged by Dean Herrin, Catocin Center for Regional Studies. "Leesylvania" (at Leesylvania State Park), a former home of the Lee family, is the first member in Prince William County and the first VA state park in the NTF.

The regional coordinators of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) met in Auburn, New York (NY), in commemoration of Harriet Tubman's formation of a black community there among Underground Railroad (UGRR) activists. Overjoyed, the local hostess was longtime partner, Dr. Judy Wellman, emerita at the State University of New York (Oswego, NY), who has instigated a number of successful nominations. The

visit began on September 11, with a welcome by the City of Syracuse and the Preservation Association of Central New York at the Jerry Rescue Monument. The Jerry Rescue, a famous incident in 1851, occurred in Syracuse when the Syracuse Vigilance Committee, Gerrit Smith, and Jermain Loguen rescued William "Jerry" McHenry from recapture under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Finger Lakes of NY were also home to Gerrit Smith, a wealthy supporter of the UGRR, and to William Seward UGRR activist (a governor and a Cabinet member who instigated the purchase of Alaska). Associated sites are NTF members. Women's Rights NHP, Seneca, NY, also hosted the coordinators since it includes several sites associated with the UGRR.

Marker For William Chaplin Dedicated In Montgomery County

The Maryland- National Capital Park and Planning Commission unveiled a marker commemorating the arrest of William Chaplin for his involvement in the UGRR. This site is on the NTF and the marker features the program logo. The unveiling occurred on September 16, in Jesup Blair Park, Silver Spring.



Unveiling of the William Chaplin Marker. NPS Photo.

On the night of August 8th, 1850, William Chaplin, an UGRR operative, was driving a carriage with two freedom seekers when he was forcibly stopped by a sheriff's posse from Washington, D.C., right at the border of Maryland. There was a shoot-out. The freedom seekers were the valets of southern Senators Robert Toombs and Alexander Stephens. Chaplin was subjected to double trials; he arrested, tried, and imprisoned first in the District, then in Rockville, Maryland. He had come to the District of Columbia from NY in 1845 to help African Americans, both free and enslaved, in court cases; he became involved in helping freedom seekers escape. He was involved in the ill-fated attempt of 70 plus slaves to escape aboard the ship, the *Pearl* in 1848. When abolitionists raised money for his bond, Chaplin left for NY and never again ventured south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

A Tribute To The Story of The US Colored Troops

Held at Sumner School on September 22 and 23, "The Untold Stories of the Civil War: A Special Tribute to the U.S. Colored Troops" was sponsored by the Military Road School Preservation Trust. It paid special tribute to the Washington, D.C., Troop, known as the First Regiment, United States Colored Troops (USCT). If you didn't attend, you missed presentations by Dr. Frank Smith (founder of the African American Civil War Museum), Bennie McRae (Civil War researcher), Hari Jones (co-worker with Frank Smith), and C. R. Gibbs (author of a book on the First Regiment). Re-enactors included those representing the 54th Massachusetts, USCT, and Aunt Beety Thomas from Fort Stevens (Ms. Donise Thomas).

Maryland African American Preservation Conference

The fourth annual Maryland African American Heritage Preservation Conference on "Charting the Pathways of the African American Journey" met October 5-7 at Nyumburu Cultural Center (Freedom House), University of Maryland, College Park. The sponsors included: the Lincoln Park Historical Foundation, Leroy E. Neal African American Research Center, and Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, and Banneker- Douglass Museum. The conference included a road trip to African American sites in Prince George's County, in addition to featuring nominations for the Maryland African American Heritage Preservation Award.

SMSC Completes Research On USCT

The Southern Maryland Studies Center (SMSC), Charles County Community College, has just completed and posted research on formerly enslaved members of Companies A and B, Ninth Regiment USCT. A researcher tirelessly combed enlistment, pension, Freedman's Bank, and Slave Commission records for members of both companies to find evidence of enslavement of recruits. The study was funded by one of last year's NTF Community Grants. To see the results of the grant from the Network to Freedom, visit: <http://www.csmd.edu/tmp/dbase/smsc/people.php>.

Kudos to the project's researcher and digitizer!

Congress Passes Gullah Geechee Legislation

The Sea Islands of South Carolina are renowned for the heavily African-influenced heritage of descendants of enslaved African Americans. As a followup to NPS's Special Resources Study on the area, Congress approved an act establishing the Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Corridor, just before closing the current session. One million dollars over the next ten years was authorized. There will be a Cultural Heritage Center at the Penn Center on St. Helen's Island. Contemporary Gullah Geechee people are overjoyed.

Pace Conference On Harriet Jacobs

In an effort to revise her place in American history and literature, during October 6-7, Pace University, NY hosted a conference on Harriet Jacobs, the first enslaved African American woman to write an autobiography. "The Legacies of Slavery and Sisterhood: The Life and Work of Harriet Jacobs" included a reading by actress Ruby Dee from Jacobs's harrowing account of her escape in 1842. Among conference participants were Ira Berlin, James Oliver Horton, Nell Painter, and a keynote address by Jean Yellin, who is editing Harriet Jacobs' papers.

The research of Pace professor, Jean Fagan Yellin, solved the mystery of who actually wrote Jacobs' narrative. For more than 125 years, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) was assumed to be a novel written by a white author. Yellin discovered and published correspondence from Jacobs, proving the book was indeed "written by herself," as its subtitle announces. In 1987, Professor Yellin edited an edition of the narrative with Harvard University Press, providing extra details on the life of Harriet Jacobs. For example, Jacobs hid herself in a three-foot-high crawl space above a storeroom, living there for seven years before fleeing North Carolina (NC). After gaining her freedom, Jacobs became an antislavery activist in the North. During the Civil War, she worked in Alexandria establishing a school among the refugees from slavery. In 2004, Yellin published the prize-winning biography Harriet Jacobs: A Life.

Colonial Park, the site in Edenton, NC, where Jacobs stowed away in a ship going north to escape bondage, is part of the NTF Program. The Colonial Park site will be officially dedicated on Thursday morning, November 9, 2006, as an NTF member.

Network To Freedom Goes To Tulsa State Fair

NTF went to the Tulsa State Fair, Tulsa, Oklahoma (OK), by invitation, to introduce UGRR to OK, where it is not recognized as part of state history. Despite popular opinion, there was slavery in Arkansas and Indian Territory (OK) and runaways headed toward sympathetic tribes or away from the territory. Research on runaway ads in Arkansas newspapers by Professor Charles Bolton (University of Arkansas--Little Rock), funded by NTF, is the source for this documentation. Guy Washington (NTF Manager, PWR and IMR) painstakingly coordinated arrangements and interpretation for the UGRR tent.



Tulsa State Fair, Tulsa, Oklahoma. NPS Photo.

Pam Machuga (Cuayahoga NRA) designed and directed a special program for school children, with some interpreters in period dress. Jerry Gore (Maysville, Kentucky), a direct descendant of a freedom seeker, brought his artifacts related to slavery and provided his powerful interpretation of his collection and his family history. Stephen Marc, a photographer and professor (Arizona State University) loaned his photographic collages of UGRR and slave sites and documents. The exhibit was well received. Over the course of two weeks (September 28-October 8), 12,000 visitors came to the tent, most of whom took a careful look at the photographs and artifacts. Many even stayed to watch the History Channel video on UGRR. The director of the fair was impressed both by the compelling nature of the exhibit and the number of visitors.

SER NTF Manager Helps to Organize ASALH In Atlanta

By Peter Hanes, NPS

On September 27-October 1, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) met in Atlanta, Georgia. Since there is no local chapter of the organization, loyal member Barbara Tagger (SER Manager, NTF) was one of the organizers. She did an exceptional job of coordinating and leading NPS representation at the ASALH 2006 National Convention. In terms of participation, she made a presentation on the UGRR at the Dialogue Session providing an UGRR program overview, and updates on the Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study, the Gullah Geechee Special Resource Study, and UGRR outreach efforts in SER.

Relevant NPS-programming included: a forum on UGRR; two consecutive sessions on Black Canadian Studies, and the Film Festival featuring screenings of titles on UGRR and other black history in England, Canada, and the U.S. Barbara Tagger and other NPS staff integrated Black Canadian Studies into the Convention program in consultation with Parks Canada and the Canadian Consulate General (Atlanta).

Return to Those Exciting Days of Yesteryear....Article Related to the Port Tobacco Courthouse Nomination

Runaway Negroes From Port Tobacco [Charles Co., MD]

Under this head, the Washington Union of the 9th, has the following:

"We learn from a police magistrate, that sixty or seventy runways passed through this city last night, en route for Pennsylvania. They have clopped [sic], doubtless, according to a preconcerted arrangement, from the neighboring counties of Prince George, Charles and St. Mary's, in Maryland, and are said to be armed with scythes, bludgeons, and some guns. They left the city by the road leading out through 7th street, and are probably hoping to make good their escape through the counties of Montgomery and Frederick, Maryland. We understand that nearly two hundred citizens of Washington and the vicinity have started [sic] in pursuit, who will, doubtless succeed in securing most, if not all of them."

On the 10th, the National Intelligencer, referring to the escape of these Negroes, has the following: "We learn that they continued along the road to Rockville, diverging a little to the right, so as not to pass through the village, and then struck into the Frederick road, and continued until they arrived at a place near Clubtown, where they were overtaken by a large party of armed citizens, on foot and on horseback, whom the Sheriff of Montgomery county had summoned to his aid, and who turned out with alacrity in pursuit of the fugitives. When the armed citizens overtook the Negroes, they were commanded to surrender; but they refused, and immediately commenced resistance, when it appeared that some of them had pistols, and one of them a gun. One who had a pistol, snapped it three times at a Mr. Jackson, who then fired and shot his assailant in the back, severely wounding him. The armed

citizens were resisted so vigorously by the slaves that it was found necessary to fire upon them. Eight were wounded, and seventeen more wee [sic] captured and conveyed to Rockville jail, where they are now confined. In the course of last night six more of the fugitives were taken and put in jail - - - making, up to the latest account for "[sic]Rockville, thirty-one of the gang secured and lodged in prison. We learn that a party of about twenty citizens started from this city at 9 o'clock yesterday morning in pursuit of the fugitives; but the citizens of Rockville had succeeded in subduing and capturing the runaways before the arrival of the party from Washington. Only one citizen was wounded during the onset."

(The Nashville Politician 7 -18-1845, transcribed by C. M. Boxley, Friends of Forks of the Roads Society)

Interpreter's Corner:

Q. Why include places of enslavement in the NTF or the definition of UGRR?

A. If these places where enslaved African Americans worked or lived were the points from which they escaped, they were the starting point of the UGRR. Without knowledge of the conditions of enslavement, escapes do not make sense. A plantation, a tavern, or an iron forge where bondsmen worked and from which some fled for freedom can provide clues to verify and supplement "slave narratives" and runaway ads. Too much focus has been on the places where freedom seekers hid along the way; we are never going to find many of these sites, and it is important to consider the journey toward freedom from beginning to end, including intermediate stops.

NCR UGRR UPDATES & INFORMATION

Valuable Information

- Interested in VA state markers? Visit the web site at <http://www.historical-markers.org>. As a result of Jason O. Watson's travels, the project includes an interactive web map which shows the location of each marker along with photographs, text descriptions, and location directions for each marker loaded (to date, over 1,200+ VA markers).

- Due to popular demand, despite recent cutbacks, there will be some days with extended research hours at the National Archives, Washington, DC, and College Park, MD (See <http://archives.gov/dc-metro/extended-hours.html>). On some Thursdays and Fridays, hours will be: 9:00 a.m. - 8:45 p.m. and on some Saturdays, hours will be: 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. In the next few months, days will be: November 16, 17, 18; December 14, 15, 16; January 18, 19, 20 (2007); February 15, 16, 17 (2007); and March 15, 16, 17.

- The Library of Congress online guide, U.S. Civil War Regimental Histories, has now been re-designed to incorporate a live catalog search each time a user clicks on a unit's link. In addition to published regimental histories, the guide now includes materials such as published diaries and collections of letters, and personal memoirs. See <http://www.loc.gov/rr/main/uscivilwar/>.

- Here is an example of use of runaway ads for school curriculum: http://www.nops.k12.la.us/SchoolWebs/Reed/departments/runaway_slaves_webquest.htm

- VA will begin digitizing the Freedmen's Bureau records. For more information, go to www.governor.virginia.gov or contact the Black History Museum Director Stacy Burrs at (804) 780-9097.

- For transcriptions of oral history interviews, consult the second edition of Mary-Jo Kline's Guide to Documentary Editing (1998) and Michael Stevens and Steven Burg's Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice (1997).

People

We say goodbye to another member of the NCR UGRR committee, Karen Kinzey, who is moving to the West Coast...Keith Everett of NER, a longtime supporter of the national program of the NTF, is retiring.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR EVENTS

Opportunities

*The District of Columbia (DC) Historic Preservation Office announces available matching grant funds from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund. In FY2007, total grant funds available are approximately \$70,000. Subgrant or contract project applications might not begin before April 1, 2007, and may not extend past August 31, 2008. In most cases, subgrant funding sought must be matched by the applicant at 40% of the total cost of the project. The deadline for applications is Friday, November 17, 2006. Mail them to the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, 801 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 3000, Washington, DC, 20002. Eligible are: applicants, nonprofit organizations, or groups working in partnership with nonprofits, institutions of higher learning, and other agencies of the Government of DC. Examples of projects accepted are: preservation planning, historic resource nomination, public education. Contact Bruce Yarnall at (202) 442-8835 or bruce.yarnall@dc.gov.

*The Accent on Architecture grants competition is open to 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) organizations whose projects are specifically targeted to teaching children about architecture and design. Projects should illustrate an increased awareness, appreciation, and understanding of architecture and design among students in the K-12 age range. The sponsor is especially interested in programs targeting underserved populations. Applications must be postmarked by 12/15/2006 and sent to The American Architectural Foundation Grants Program, 1799 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006.

*The History Press, Charleston, SC, is searching for archivists and historical societies who are interested in publishing books about towns and regions in MD. Examples include: brief or comprehensive histories of towns, the history of significant buildings and sites, historical walking and driving tours, collections of essays on historical events and people, folklore, crime history, Native American history, sports history and the historical role of a town industry. The History Press is a traditional trade publisher. For information see historypress.net or e-mail Lee Handford at lee.handford@historypress.net.

*Start thinking now about the 2007 Gilder Lehrman Summer Seminars for teachers and NPS rangers. For schedules and applications, visit:
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/seminars1.html>.

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U.S. Department of the Interior

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The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) was created by Congress in 1998 to honor those who resisted slavery through flight. The Conductor Newsletter was established to inform readers about areas of interest as it relates to the NTF program within the National Capital Region.

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