

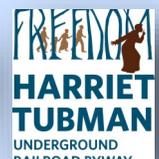


# Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park: Information Booklet



## Maryland Park Service Mission:

“To manage the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.”



Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park • 4068 Golden Hill Road • Church Creek  
Maryland 21622 • 410-221-2290 • [dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands](http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands)

# ABOUT THE PARK

## SITE CONTEXT

The 17-acre site is adjacent to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, along MD 335. Approximately nine acres of the site are within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. The state park will be a key destination for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program will be administered from the site.

## DESIGN PROGRAM

- 16,000 square feet LEED Silver rated Visitor Center/Exhibit Hall and Administrative Building
- Legacy Garden
- Picnic Pavilion
- Information Kiosk
- Storage Garage
- Parking for 75 cars and 3 buses
- Overflow parking for 100 cars



## SITE DESIGN CONCEPT

The selected design, “The View North,” was developed from a concept that expresses the importance of moving northward to escape the circumstances of slavery. Most notably, the design solution splits the building program into two structures that frame the view of the legacy garden as the visitors approach.

## SITE FEATURES

- Two sculptures are planned. The first is a statue of Tubman set between the administration and exhibit buildings. The second is of a group of figures headed towards the woods on their escape journey.
- The legacy garden is an open quiet space bounded by a network of paths that provide opportunities for more interpretation and reflection.
- A 2,600 square feet open air picnic pavilion with stone fireplace and serving area is located along the western boundary of the park.
- Landscaping materials are plants native to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, showcasing native trees with seasonal interest (spring bloom, strong fall color, etc).
- Lawn areas are a combination of mowed and unmowed grass to recall the farm fields.
- The design maximizes the incorporation of permeable roads and paths.



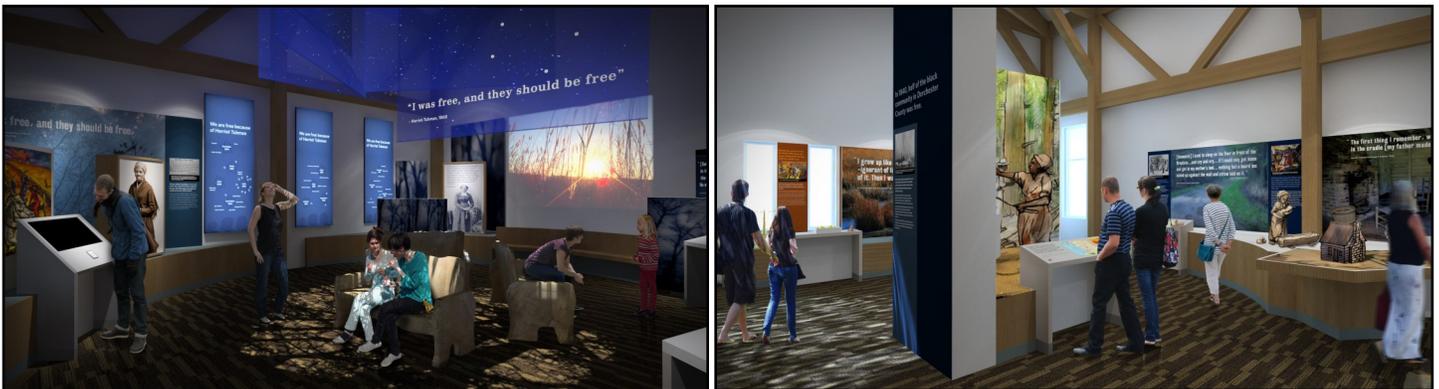
# ABOUT THE PARK

## BUILDING FEATURES

- The exhibit building is the primary destination for visitors. It houses the restrooms, gift shop, information desk, research library and the main interpretive experience or permanent exhibition. The layout of the exhibit building is a series of four pitched roof volumes connected by a linear spine. The linear spine represents the northbound journey of the Underground Railroad. The volumes could be interpreted as “stations”.
- The permanent exhibition space is approximately 5,000 square feet. An additional 700 square feet is available for temporary exhibitions in the multi-purpose room.
- The administrative building houses most of the park staff and volunteers. It is designed for private access. The storage garage is also reserved for park staff.

## EXHIBIT FEATURES

- Visitors will begin their exhibit experience with an orientation film.
- The permanent exhibition focuses on Tubman and the Underground Railroad resistance movement from the Maryland perspective.
- Visitors are encouraged to wander the site, where paths meander through landscape reminiscent of Tubman’s world.



# HARRIET TUBMAN: MYTHS & FACTS

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman rescued 300 people in 19 trips.

**Fact:** According to Tubman's own words, and extensive documentation on her rescue missions, we know that she rescued about 70 people – family and friends – during approximately 13 trips to Maryland. During public and private meetings during 1858 and 1859, Tubman repeatedly told people that she had rescued 50 to 60 people in 8 or 9 trips. This was before her very last mission, in December 1860, when she brought away 7 people. Sarah Bradford exaggerated the numbers in her 1868 biography. Bradford never said that Tubman gave her those numbers, but rather, Bradford estimated that was the number. Other friends who were close to Tubman specifically contradicted those numbers. We can name practically every person Tubman helped. In addition to the family and friends, Tubman also gave instruction to another 70 or so freedom seekers from the Eastern Shore who found their way to freedom on their own.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman was born around 1820 in Bucktown, Dorchester County, Maryland on the farm of Edward Brodess.

**Fact:** According to the most recent research and oral traditions, Tubman was born in early 1822 on the plantation of Anthony Thompson, Brodess's stepfather, located south of Madison in an area called Peter's Neck in Dorchester County. Tubman was later brought to Bucktown, with her mother and siblings, to live on Brodess's small farm.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman had a \$40,000 "dead or alive" bounty on her head.

**Fact:** The only reward for Tubman's capture is in the October 3, 1849 advertisement for the return of "Minty" and her brothers "Ben" and "Harry," in which their mistress, Eliza Brodess, offered \$100 for each of them if caught outside of Maryland. Slaveholders on the Eastern Shore of Maryland had no idea it was Harriet Tubman (or, Minty Ross, as they knew her) who was helping and inspiring people to run away. The \$40,000 bounty figure was made up by Sallie Holley, a former anti-slavery activist in New York, who wrote a letter to a newspaper in 1867, arguing for support for Tubman in her pursuit of back pay and pension from the Union Army. To put this in perspective, the US government offered \$50,000 for the capture of John Wilkes Booth, who murdered President Lincoln in 1865. \$40,000 is equivalent to several million today, and for that, she would have been captured, and every newspaper in the nation would have posted that advertisement.

**THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD.**  
RANAWAY from the subscriber on Monday the 17th ult., three negroes, named as follows: HARRY, aged about 19 years, has on one side of his neck a wen, just under the ear, he is of a dark chestnut color, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high; BEN, aged about 25 years, is very quick to speak when spoken to, he is of a chestnut color, about six feet high; MINTY, aged about 27 years, is of a chestnut color, fine looking, and about 5 feet high. One hundred dollars reward will be given for each of the above named negroes, if taken out of the State, and \$50 each if taken in the State. They must be lodged in Baltimore, Easton or Cambridge Jail, in Maryland.  
ELIZA ANN BRODESS,  
Near Bucktown, Dorchester county, Md.  
Oct. 3d, 1849.  
The Delaware Gazette will please copy the above three weeks, and charge this office.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman rescued people from all over the south using the underground railroad.

**Fact:** Tubman returned only to Maryland to bring away loved ones – family and friends she could not live without and whom she could trust. It was too dangerous for her to go places where she did not know people or the landscape.

# HARRIET TUBMAN: MYTHS & FACTS

**Myth:** Jacob Jackson operated an underground railroad “safehouse” at his home in Madison, Maryland.

**Fact:** Jacob Jackson, a free black farmer and veterinarian, was Harriet Tubman’s confidante. Tubman had a coded letter written for her in Philadelphia and sent to Jackson in December 1854, instructing him to tell her brothers that she was coming to rescue them and that they needed to be ready to “step aboard” the “Ol’Ship of Zion.” There is no documentation that he actually sheltered runaways in his home. Jackson would be referred to as an agent.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman helped build Stewart's Canal

**Fact:** Harriet Tubman did not help build the canal, which was built between 1810 and 1830 when she was still a child. She probably used it to transport timber and agricultural products when she worked in the area as a young adult during the late 1830s and early 1840s. We do not know if her father Ben Ross helped build the canal, but he certainly would have used it for transporting timber.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman used the quilt code to follow the Underground Railroad.

**Fact:** Harriet Tubman never used the quilt code because the quilt code is a myth. Tubman used various methods and paths to escape slavery and to go back and rescue others. She relied on trustworthy people, black and white, who hid her, told her which way to go, and told her who else she could trust. She used disguises; she walked, rode horses and wagons; sailed on boats; and rode on real trains. She used certain songs to indicate danger or safety. She used letters, written for her by someone else, to trusted individuals like Jacob Jackson, and she used direct communication with people. She bribed people. She followed rivers that snaked northward. She used the stars and other natural phenomenon to lead her north. She also trusted her instincts and faith in God to guide and comfort her during difficult and unfamiliar territory and times.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman carried a rifle on her underground railroad rescue missions

**Fact:** Harriet Tubman carried a small pistol with her on her rescue missions, mostly for protection from slave catchers, but also to encourage weak-hearted runaways from turning back and risking the safety of the rest of the group. Tubman carried a sharp-shooters rifle during the Civil War.

**Myth:** Harriet Tubman sang ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,’ and ‘Wade in the Water’ and ‘Follow the Drinking Gourd’ as signals on the underground railroad.

**Fact:** Tubman sang two songs while operating her rescue missions. Both are listed in Sarah Bradford’s biography [Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman](#): ‘Go Down Moses,’ and, ‘Bound For the Promised Land.’ Tubman said she changed the tempo of the songs to indicate whether it was safe to come out or not. Follow the Drinking Gourd was first written and performed by the Weavers, a white folk group, in 1947, nearly 100 years after Tubman’s days on the underground railroad. Swing Low, Sweet Chariot was written and composed after the Civil War by a Cherokee Indian living in Oklahoma and therefore would have unknown to Tubman before the Civil War.

**Source:** Dr. Kate Clifford Larson’s website about Harriet Tubman, Dr. Larson is the park’s historical consultant: [www.harriettubmanbiography.com/harriet-tubman-myths-and-facts.html](http://www.harriettubmanbiography.com/harriet-tubman-myths-and-facts.html)

# HARRIET TUBMAN BIOGRAPHY

Harriet Tubman is best remembered as one of America's most famous conductors on the Underground Railroad. Born into slavery in early 1822 in Dorchester County, Maryland, Tubman gained international acclaim during her lifetime as an Underground Railroad agent, abolitionist, Civil War spy and nurse, suffragist, and humanitarian. Suffering under the lash and disabled by a near fatal head injury while enslaved, Tubman rose above horrific childhood adversity to emerge with a will of steel. Owing her success to unique survival techniques honed in the forests, fields and marshes of Maryland's Eastern Shore, Tubman transcended victimization to achieve personal and physical freedom from her oppressors. Refusing to be bound by the chains of slavery, or by the low expectations limiting the lives of women and African Americas, Tubman battled amazing odds to pursue lifelong dreams of freedom, equality, justice and self-determination.



Named Araminta, or "Minty," by her parents Ben and Rit Ross, Tubman was the fifth of nine children. Daily survival remained her biggest challenge; frequent separations forced upon her family, in service to their white enslavers, were compounded by the sale of three sisters to distant plantations in the Deep South. Taken from her mother and hired out to cruel masters at the early age of six, she was often physically and mentally abused and neglected. She was nearly killed by a blow to her head from an iron weight thrown by an angry overseer and she suffered debilitating seizures from the injury for the rest of her life. Such injustices and mistreatment tested Tubman's profound faith. "Slavery," she said, "is the next thing to hell."

Married to John Tubman, a free black, in 1844, "Minty" then changed her name to Harriet. Faced with certain sale away from her loved ones to settle her dead master's debts in 1849, Tubman determined to seize her liberation instead. Late that fall, Tubman fled enslavement by tapping into a regional Underground Railroad network that was already functioning well in Caroline and Dorchester counties. Traveling by night, using the North Star and instructions from black and white helpers, she found her way through Delaware to freedom in Philadelphia.

Freedom was bittersweet. "I was free," Tubman later recalled, "but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there. But I was free, and they should be free." In Philadelphia, she easily found work as a domestic, enabling her to save money and plan for her family's escape.

Tubman ensconced herself in the anti-slavery and Underground Railroad networks centered in Philadelphia, New York City and Boston where she found respect and the financial and personal support she needed to pursue her private war against slavery on the Eastern Shore. In spite of the grave consequences to her own life, including certain death if captured, Tubman successfully ferried

# HARRIET TUBMAN BIOGRAPHY

approximately seventy people, among them her brothers, parents and other family members, to freedom by 1860. She could not accompany all who sought to escape from the Eastern Shore, but through detailed instructions she enabled another seventy or more to find their way north to freedom independently. Though a few freedom seekers returned to rescue family member from bondage, Tubman's numerous journeys back into dangerous slave territory were unequalled and earned her the biblical nickname "Moses."

Tubman used disguises and various ruses to affect some of her escapes, and she relied on a trustworthy system of safe houses, from Dorchester and Caroline counties to Canada, where black and white sympathizers risked their lives to help hide freedom seekers.

Tubman's commitment to destroying the slave system eventually led her to collaborate with John Brown the anti-slavery activist whose failed raid on Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in 1859, helped spark the Civil War. Sent to South Carolina during the war by the governor of Massachusetts, Tubman alternated between roles as nurse, scout, cook and spy in service to the union. Under the command of Colonel James Montgomery, she was an integral part of the Combahee River expedition with 150 black union soldiers of the 2nd South Carolina Regiment. The troops came ashore and succeeded in destroying several South Carolina estates that were owned by leading secessionists and freeing approximately 750 people. Later she settle with her family and friends in Auburn, New York, where Secretary of State William H. Seward sold her a small farm. In 1869, after the death of her first husband, Tubman married Civil War veteran Nelson Davis and they adopted a baby girl named Gertie. Three biographies about her were published, reaping international acclaim for her accomplishments.



Tubman's passion for racial and gender equality drove her to challenge women's and African American's inferior political, economic and social roles through suffrage and civil rights activism during the remainder of her life. Her humanitarian work triumphed with the opening of the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, located on her land in Auburn, which provided nursing and respite care for aging African Americans. She died there on March 10, 1913.

Harriet Tubman's life was rooted in a thirst for freedom, a deep spiritual faith, and life-long humanitarian passion for family and community. Rising from the most oppressive of beginnings, Tubman's unyielding and courageous resolve to secure liberty and equality for all has immortalized her among America's most famous historical figures.

A bronze bust is being sculpted by Mr. Brendan O'Neill, Sr. to create an exceptional likeness of Tubman during the period of her life when she was most active on the Underground Railroad. Working from photographs taken later in Ms. Tubman's life, Mr. O'Neill consulted with Tubman biographer, Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, who prepared this brief biography and conferred with Tubman relatives Valerie and Charles Ross and members of the Harriet Tubman Museum in Cambridge. The bust will be placed in the lobby of the Visitor Center upon a pedestal and base crafted by McMartin and Beggins in Wittman, Maryland with wood from the great Wye Oak and a sweet gum tree harvested from a Century Farm in Harriet's home place of Dorchester County. Wood from the sweet gum was also used to complete a replica of Tubman's childhood cradle. The 460 year old Wye Oak, the honorary state tree of Maryland and the largest white oak tree in the United States, stood in the Town of Wye Mills until a severe thunderstorm blew it down in 2002.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## When will the Visitor Center Open?

March 10, 2017 on Harriet Tubman Day.

## What are the park's hours?

The Visitor Center will be open from 9-5 pm, seven days a week.

## Where can I take my pet?

Provided that it's leashed, anywhere in the park.

## Who is the building architect?

GWWO, Inc./Architects in Baltimore, Maryland.

## Who designed the exhibit?

Haley Sharpe Design from the United Kingdom, based out of the Toronto Office.

## Why was this locations chosen?

The view is preserved by the surrounding Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. There are no structures remaining from Tubman's time, so the view is a large part of the experience. Tubman most likely walked through here going between Madison and Bucktown.



# PHOTOS

