



THE CONDUCTOR

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

Fall 2006 Issue no. 18

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Flood At National Archives

After record-breaking rainfall in the Washington, DC area, Constitution Avenue flooded on Sunday night, June 25. At approximately 10:30 PM, National Archives security staff discovered that rain water had poured down the driveways on both the 7th and 9th Street sides of the National Archives Building and flooded the transformer vaults and the sub-basement. The two transformer vaults were submerged- one in four feet of water, and one in eight feet of water.

Power to the building went out immediately, although the sprinkler and security alarm systems still worked. Sump pumps, continuing to operate

powered by the emergency generator, were overwhelmed and had no place to pump the water to. Cleanup operations began immediately. Emergency pumps and generators were operational by Monday morning (June 26).

Employees and staff worked 12-hour shifts, around the clock to clean-up. By Tuesday morning (June 27), the standing water in the sub-basement, the downstairs McGowan Theater, and the transformer vaults was removed.

The Charters of Freedom (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights) are in

environmentally-protected encasements and were not affected by the flood. Most of the records storage stacks have not seen significant environmental changes as a result of the storm. The thick walls of the building and closing the stacks have been very helpful in maintaining these conditions. National Archives staff continues to monitor these conditions closely. The building closure comes during the peak summer visitor season, when attendance is typically 5,000 visitors a day. The College Park facility and the downtown building are currently open.

Montgomery Co. Hosts Interpretive Program On Summer Saturdays

The Maryland- National Capital Park and Planning Commission's historic preservation staff invites Civil War and African American history buffs, park neighbors and trail users to take a hike on the Underground Railroad Experience Trail in Sandy Spring, Maryland, on Saturday mornings from May 6 to November 4, 2006. Each free hike (part of a Network to Freedom -approved program) begins at 10 a.m. at Woodlawn Manor Park's stone barn, a possible stop on the Underground Railroad, located at 6501 Norwood Road in Sandy Spring.

Trained volunteer "conductors" will lead groups on a simulated Underground Railroad experience on a 1 ½ mile trail (and 1 ½ mile back) through fields and woods and across streams to the village of Sandy Spring. Hikers will learn various techniques that people escaping slavery would have used to elude pursuers, find water and food, and find their way. They will also hear fascinating, true stories of peril, daring escapes and heart-breaking unforgettable captures. More information on the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, including a trail map, is available at www.montgomerytrails.org. Those interested may also call 301-563-3405. No advance registration is required.

Alexandria Black History Museum Opens New Exhibit

On Friday, June 23, 2006, the Alexandria Black History Museum opened a new exhibit, "Securing the Blessings of Liberty: Freedoms Taken and Liberties Lost." It is free and open to the public. The opening concluded the museum's Juneteenth programming. "Securing the Blessings of Liberty," honors the enslaved men and women whose labor built the Commonwealth, but left little personal evidence behind. The exhibition looks at the parallel paths whites and blacks have taken to achieve the American dream. The exhibition raises the questions - "What is Liberty?" and "When is one truly free?"

It begins in Africa, and follows the Middle Passage -- the harrowing voyage endured by Africans. Areas of the exhibit highlight early Virginia landowners, the development of a tobacco-based economy, and the prosperity brought to the Chesapeake region. The exhibit examines the differences between plantation and urban slavery and the rise of a free black class in Alexandria by the 1820s. Artifacts were borrowed from a various sources: the DAR Museum, Mount Vernon, Schomburg Center for the Study of Afro - American History, Alexandria Archaeology, Claude Moore Colonial Farm, Smithsonian Institution, and the Arlington County Courthouse. The Alexandria Black History Museum, located at 902 Wythe Street (5 blocks from the Braddock Street Metro) in Alexandria, is open Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm.

DC Premieres Exhibit On The Slaves Who Built The Capitol

Ironically, the building of the "Temple of Liberty," the U. S. Capitol, was made possible by the work of enslaved African Americans. The Historical Society of Washington, DC, and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society proudly opened the Washington DC Premiere of the free traveling exhibit, "From Freedom's Shadow: African Americans & the United States Capitol," on July 6. The exhibit is at the Carnegie Library (formerly known as the City Museum), 801 K Street, NW at Mount Vernon Square. Curator Felicia Bell of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society was on hand to autograph copies of "A Vision of Freedom," a companion text to the exhibit. The exhibit is open Tues. - Thurs. 10 am - 6:00 pm but confirm by calling 202 -383 -1850. The exhibit will be up until September 15.

News From Canada

A Canadian newspaper is doing an extensive series called, "Tracks to Freedom: Canada and the Underground Railroad." A reporter is walking 850 kilometers from Kentucky to Ontario and there are a whole series of articles on the Underground Railroad (yes - Harriet Tubman is featured - - but with the common, legendary interpretation). <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/features/freedom/index.html>

Franklin and Armfield Office Receives Grant

Birch Slave Pen, also known as Franklin & Armfield Office historically and currently as Freedom House, is owned by the Northern Virginia Urban League. The site is a member of the Network to Freedom because it housed refugee bondsmen during the Civil War. The Urban League is to receive \$245,000 in earmarked appropriations from the Departments of Interior and HUD for a new museum. The earmarked funds have been approved, so the recipient is just waiting for the money. The Urban League expects the museum to be completed by next summer.

History Days at Home In Prince George's County

The Prince George's County History Consortium sponsored History Days at Home, a two day celebration, July 23 and 24, of the rich local history of Prince George's County. Historical sites and museums throughout the county offered exhibits and special events at Seabrook Historic School, Dorsey Chapel, Montpelier Mansion, Marietta Mansion, and Riversdale Mansion. Marietta is on the Network to Freedom and Montpelier may be eligible. Riversdale is associated with the Plummer family which included Henry Vinton Plummer who escaped from bondage and joined the Navy.

Network To Freedom Nominations, Round 11

As of July 15 deadline, there are the following applications to the Network to Freedom in our region: Leesylvania State Park, Prince William County, VA, for multiple escapes from bondage; Uncle Tom's Cabin/Riley House, Montgomery County, MD, a site where Josiah Henson was enslaved; and Thornton Poole House, Frederick County, MD, from which a family escaped to freedom.



Thornton Poole House, Montgomery County, Maryland.
NPS Photo.

Network To Freedom Grants

In FY 2006, Congress provided the Network to Freedom over \$250,000 to award in matching grants on a competitive basis to members. In NCR there were two awards:

- Burial Site of Blanche K. Bruce Monument Restoration, \$6,610 Woodlawn Cemetery, Wash., DC, and

- Belair Mansion, Research & Interpretation Development, the Belair- at - Bowie Flight to Freedom, \$13,300 Bowie, MD.



Blanche K. Bruce stone marker, Woodlawn Cemetery, Washington, DC
NPS Photo.



Front view of the Belair Mansion, Bowie Maryland.
Photos are courtesy of Belair Mansion Museum.

Who Is This???

by Nicole Kerr, summer intern

Charles T. Torrey (1813-1846)

Charles T. Torrey, a white activist that helped many people flee slavery, was committed to the development of people of color, both free and enslaved.

Torrey, with the help of Thomas Smallwood (an ex-slave who helped other slaves flee to the North) challenged slavery in the Mid-Atlantic area by creating a secret means for blacks to escape slavery using various methods. This system came to be known as The Underground Railroad. The great struggle between pro-slavery and anti-slavery efforts was illustrated through The Underground Railroad.

Torrey was also a reporter for various anti-slavery newspapers that were formed as a result of the Gag Rule (the strategy of the US House of Representatives from 1836-1844 to immediately reserve

and not discuss any and all petitions pertaining to the issue of slavery.) Torrey was instrumental in challenging the idea of slavery continuing to exist in the Mid-Atlantic region.

In 1842, Torrey was jailed by local authorities and charged with defiance, for being a reporter at a slave holder's convention. He regained his freedom shortly after when the judge considered the charges groundless and dropped the case. In jail, Torrey shared a cell with a rather large black family. The family was waiting for the court to determine whether they were free or still the property of their former master's heirs. Torrey feared the family would be sold. Torrey's encounters with the family intensified his actions against slavery.

On June 4, 1844, Torrey was arrested in Baltimore, accused of assisting slaves to

escape to the North. The complaint was from an unidentified slave-dealer from Virginia. Not only was assisting slaves to find freedom dangerous, it was a crime. Torrey was found guilty and sentenced to six years in prison. He died two years later in the Maryland Penitentiary of tuberculosis.

Torrey risked his own life on numerous occasions in order to help freedom seekers. He believed slavery was demoralizing and degrading to both black and white races. Torrey often encouraged others to take action against slavery, but unlike many abolitionists, he never used any instrument of violence against anyone in his endeavors.

Torrey was buried at the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge Massachusetts. He was deemed a martyr for liberty.

Interpreter's Corner: *Do you agree?*

Q. Why include places of enslavement in the Network to Freedom or the definition of Underground Railroad (UGRR)?

A. These places where enslaved African Americans worked or lived, the points from which they escaped, were the starting point of the UGRR. Someone had to make the choice to leave. Too much focus has been on the places they hid along the way; we are never going to find many of these sites.

NCR UGRR PARK UPDATES & ACTIVITIES

People

Please welcome 2 summer interns: Western Illinois University intern Nicole Kerr is in the NCR Interpretation and Education Office helping with the Junior Ranger brochure for NCR. Nicole is a junior majoring in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration. Mary Lee, Student Conservation Association (SCA) Diversity Intern, is working with the Network to Freedom team in Omaha. Mary is a rising senior at the University of Wyoming, majoring in cultural anthropology.

Slave Descendants Freedom Society Meeting

On August 3, 9am-2pm, at Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel, in Portsmouth, Virginia, the ancestors of enslaved and free will be honored for digging the canal in the Great Dismal Swamp.

To find out more or to request a hard copy of the registration brochure, call (443) 542- 5807 or email: info@slavedescendants.org

NCR Network to Freedom Reunion

August 21, come one, come all to Woodlawn Manor, Sandy Spring, MD, 9:30 am-1:00 pm. We will enjoy face-to-face networking of NCR NTF members and allies.

Please RSVP to:
Jenny Masur
The NCR Manager, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.
jenny_masur@nps.gov.

Grants for Stewardship-National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

The Design discipline at the NEA is currently accepting applications for its August 14 Stewardship deadline. This grant category is well suited to the historic preservation of valuable buildings, landscapes, and other designed artifacts. Grants do not pay for bricks and mortar, but can support all design aspects of preservation projects. Average grant size is approximately \$25,000. For more information, call 202-682-5796. Deadline: August 14.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR EVENTS

Visit This Website

The University of Maryland hosts "Archives UM" <http://www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/index.jsp>.

For more information about the collections listed at Archives UM, visit Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland, College Park (<http://www.lib.umd.edu/GBK/hornbake.html>) or contact :

Jennie A. Levine,
Curator for Historical Manuscripts, Archives and Manuscripts Department,
(301)314- 2712
LEVJEN@UMD.EDU.

Opportunities

Caring for old papers, family documents, and photos...

Family history often begins with the mementos that have been saved by your relatives. The old family Bible, photo albums, letters, and legal papers all can be important for documenting your heritage. How best to preserve and protect those precious keepsakes? Roxana Adams, Curator of the Manassas Museum, will describe techniques and materials you can use for caring for important paper documents in a free program at Bull Run Regional Library. To reserve a seat for this free program on August 22, contact:

RELIC at (703) 792-4540 or
TTY: (703) 792-4524 or
Email: relic2@pwcgov.org.

Challenge Grants- National Endowment for Humanities (NEH)

NEH Challenge Grants are offered when NEH funds will make a significant improvement in humanities programs, help institutions carry out long-term plans for strengthening their basic resources and activities in the humanities, and enhance financial stability through increased non-federal support. These Fast-Track Review Grants extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations and are for \$10,000 each. They receive an expedited application review. Applications are submitted to the Challenge America Fast-Track Review Grants staff and are reviewed by a diverse group of arts experts and other individuals with broad knowledge. See <http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/GAPo7/ChallengeAmerica.html>. Deadline: November 1.

Sources

In June 2006, Readex, a publisher of online historical collections, announced the completion of "Early American Newspapers, Series I, 1690-1876." This digital edition offers fully searchable, cover-to-cover reproductions of nearly 350,000 issues from over 700 historical American newspapers, totaling more than 1.5 million pages. It was digitized primarily from the extensive historical newspaper holdings of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS). Users can easily view, magnify, print and save items. For more information on this digital edition. Visit www.readex.com.

How do you deal with sensitive issues of slavery and UGRR? Direct your contributions to: Jenny_masur@nps.gov



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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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