

# THE CONDUCTOR

JULY 2003, No. 11

## FAMFEST

The William Still Underground Railroad (UGRR) Foundation hosted the first annual National UGRR Conference and Family Reunion Festival, June 27 to 29, at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel. The event was also supported by the Harriet Tubman Historical Society. Descendants came from as far west as Seattle, WA, as far north as Canada, and as far south as Miami, FL. Many who attended brought narratives, artifacts, and cherished photos of people who participated in the UGRR. "The weekend was a huge success, and we are already planning for next year," stated Eve Elder-Mayes, Director of Marketing and Programming for the William Still UGRR Foundation. To learn more about William Still and the UGRR go to <http://www.undergroundrr.com>.

The three-day festivities were kicked off by unveiling a replica of a statue of the famous businessman, abolitionist, and writer, William Still, sculpted by Philip Sumptor. A campaign was launched to raise funds for the 6-foot statue and to seek it a permanent home in Philadelphia. Famfest also included workshops, re-enactments, a book fair, and UGRR exhibits from across the country. During performances at the Loews Hotel and the African-American History Museum, Chicago-based actress Kemba Johnson-Webb portrayed Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, and Kim and Reggie Harris performed UGRR songs in a soulful manner. UGRR workshops were led by educators and historians from across North America. ZSun-nee Matema of the Washington Curtis-Lee Enslaved Remembrance Society, led a workshop on American Indian contributions to the UGRR. The Philadelphia-based African American Genealogy Group conducted interviews and genealogy research workshops for descendants. Peter Hanes and Vincent deForest, NPS, contributed an exhibit, information table, and historical perspectives on the UGRR.

The UGRR Awards Reception held Saturday evening, honored several including Charles Blockson (who revived interest in UGRR), Vivian Abdur-Rahim (a pillar of the Harriet Tubman Society), and the historic Shadd Family

of Canada (related to Mary Ann Shadd Cary, owner of a house in DC). Keynote Speaker, E.J. "Jay" Williams, Jr., President of American Urban Radio Networks, spoke on the "New UGRR" as he parlayed the conflict resolution and the struggle of abolitionists, stationmasters and the enslaved into today's youth who remain mentally and spiritually shackled and chained.

## MARYLAND STATE ARCHIVES RESEARCH ON THREE COUNTIES COMPLETE

Visit the Maryland State Archives (MSA) web sites (<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us> and <http://www.mdslavery.net>). The results of "Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Antebellum Communities in Maryland, 1830-1860," funded by the Network to Freedom, are being posted in the latter web site.

Work focused on Baltimore (near a city), Prince George's (large enslaved population), and Frederick

(centrally located, changing) Counties. The subject was the "subversive plot" against slavery in Maryland of those who broke state laws and helped freedom seekers. Slaveholding was important in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Frederick City. What was the environment from which the enslaved fled in MD? What kind of help originated in MD? Interns from several area colleges listed census results and created databases of runaway ads, jail dockets, and the MD Penitentiary Prisoner Record, and compiled case studies of some discovered to have been involved in the flight to freedom.

The results emphasize the agency of the enslaved African American, and the role of every day folk of all backgrounds, races, and ethnic groups. Because of MD's large free black population, many free and enslaved African Americans were compelled to help freedom seekers, bound by kinship or friendship. With the Large number of free blacks in the cities of Baltimore (then one of the US's top ten cities) and DC, runaways could hope to disappear into the populations of free blacks.

## NEW MEMBERS OF NETWORK TO FREEDOM

The Network to Freedom now has over 120 members in 25 states plus DC. Happy fifth birthday of the Network to Freedom!

In NCR, new members in the Network to Freedom resulting from the round of January 15, 2003 are: Oatlands, Leesburg, VA; Catoctin Furnace, Thurmont, MD; Mary Ann Shadd Cary House, DC; and Camp Stanton, Benedict, MD. The associations with resistance to slavery range from: a site of enslavement and escape (Oatlands); a site of kidnapping into slavery a child of a free black laborer (Catoctin Furnace); a site of enlistment of USCT directly from enslaved men (Camp Stanton), and the post-war home of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a pre-war journalist and UGRR activist in Canada. So, in the metropolitan DC area there are Network members in Alexandria; Arlington, and Loudoun Counties, VA, in Harpers Ferry, WV, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery and St. Mary's Counties, MD.

## ADDITIONS TO NR TRAVEL ITINERARY

Have you visited the National Register UGRR Travel Itinerary lately? It lists sites from the National Register (NR) state by state, and then permits the user to click onto a photo and description of the site mentioned. Recent additions, Network to Freedom member, sare: Bruin Slave Jail (Alexandria, VA) and Mary Ann Shadd Cary House (DC). The Itinerary's requires that the NR nomination mention UGRR or abolitionists. Although associated with freedom seekers, some older nominations to NR or NHL need to be amended to be eligible for either the Travel Itinerary or the Network to Freedom. Many older NR sites of enslavement or refuge, for instance, were nominated on the basis of architecture, the significance of the white owner of the land, or the significance of just one historic period.

## DC MUSEUM OPENS

Let's take some of the pressure off the Mall rangers, and lead tourists to other parts of the city. Across from the new Convention Center at 801 K Street, N.W., the Historical Society of Washington, DC (HSW), has opened the beautifully remodeled Carnegie Library as the new DC museum. Here you can learn about the last 200 years of the city's history through exhibitions and a multimedia show. The City Museum tells the stories of Washington's neighborhoods and people, and encourages visitors to explore "off-the-Mall" historic sites. One exhibit features the Pearl Escape, and there is an enthralling exhibit of DC maps. Relish the tradition of this building as a place to research in a beautiful environment. The library re-opened June 17, and a shop and café have opened too. An on-site archaeology lab and exhibit will open this fall.

Founded in 1894, the HSW seeks to make the city's history accessible and understandable to a diverse public and to foster a sense of identity, place and pride for Washingtonians. In addition to managing the City

Museum, HSW offers public programs and publishes the journal *Washington History*.

## ISO...

The Network to Freedom staff plan to interview descendants of participants in UGRR. Do you know any you can refer to us who are willing to share family traditions and genealogical research?

## DC HISTORY DAY

For the second year running, NCR Network to Freedom has presented prizes to the best UGRR project among competitors in DC History Day. This year the city-wide prize was awarded to three sixth graders at Hardy School -- Richard Percival, Dylan Glenn, and Dominico McIntosh for their project, "Amistad Revolt: Whose Rights and Whose Responsibilities?" Helena Sweet at the DC Museum is DC's History Day coordinator (202-383-1840).

## NCR PARKS ROUNDUP

### THE POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

Text is finished for the Potomac Heritage Trail's UGRR brochure, and illustrated with the same picture by Jerry Pickney that appears on the cover of the UGRR Handbook. The brochure highlights the story of the attempted escape on the *Pearl*, and lists some sites in the area of the Trail associated with UGRR. The logos of NPS, the Trail, and the Network to Freedom appear on the brochure.

### CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN PARK

Catoctin Mountain Park, Cunningham State Falls Park, and the Network to Freedom sponsored a special event to celebrate Cunningham State Park's successful nomination of Catoctin Furnace to the Network to Freedom. Undeterred by pouring rain, Max Grivno, doctoral candidate at University of MD (College Park), gave a campfire talk at Cunningham Falls State Park on July 12. He spoke on slavery and resistance to slavery in Western MD. His research shows that, contrary to current opinion, Western Marylanders gave up on slavery from 1820 on because of discipline and escape problems. Despite mixed agriculture, masters were able to keep laborers busy all year-round fixing fences and hauling grain to market. Ads began to appear headed "Bargains," as masters sold bondspeople, and turned to immigrants and free labor. In the 1840s-1860s masters insisted that local runaways received help, because they were sure that bondspeople were happy and wouldn't want to leave. Many freedom seekers from Western MD had family in PA; when a man from Emmitsburg was caught in Chambersburg, PA, a mob of free blacks rescued him and spirited him away.

### CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Ferry Hill, a member of the Network to Freedom, is now open to the public on weekends. Volunteer-led tours are available. Ferry Hill is "verifiably associated" with UGRR because owners of the estate noted in their journals that they intercepted African Americans fleeing slavery and sent them to the local jail until their masters claimed them.

We will miss historian James Perry when he graduates from his mid-level program in August.

### WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL PARK

Decatur House, the White House Visitor Center, the White House History Association, and Octagon House continue to work on their curriculum on the search for freedom from slavery in DC, an outgrowth of the

teachers workshop held in January.

## HARPERS FERRY NHP

In October the park will piggyback a WV UGRR Gathering and a speech on John Brown by scholar Merrill Peterson. Aside from Harpers Ferry NHP, there are no Network to Freedom members in the state although it is known there was UGRR activity and many fleeing slavery crossed the Ohio River to freedom.

## MONOCACY

While no escaped bondspeople have been identified yet, scholars are stuying Best Farm's Haitian connection. The Vincendiere family fled Saint Domingue (as it was then called) in the 1790s because of a successful revolution by the enslaved. Articles by Paula Reed published in Catoctin Hisory (Fall 2002, Catoctin Center for Regional Studies) and in Maryland Historical Magazine (Spring 2002) discussed the establishment of "The Hermitage" in Frederick County because of the relatively high percentage of people of French descent and the lucrative growing and milling of grain. The Haitian family were slaveholders; the 1800 and 1810 censuses list 90 enslaved Africans, and the one for 1820 lists 52. The French/Caribbean style architecture of the farm's buildings stands out, unlike most farmsteads in the area. The farm was acquired by NPS in 1993 and before that was occupied by tenants for almost 180 years. Sara Rivers, an archeologist, has written a contextual study to help evaluation of the farm's archeological resources.

## NACE

Greenbelt Park celebrated Juneteenth on June 28 with a DJ, vendors, exhibits on Juneteenth and UGRR, and performances by local kids, experts at tumbling, martial arts, and theater.

## PRINCE WILLIAM

Congratulate Intake historian Ed Roach when graduates from his program in August.

## INTERPRETERS' CORNER

Here's an interpretive conundrum. How should NPS explain the Emancipation Group by Thomas Ball in Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill? Have you ever walked by and heard derogatory comments by visitors? First, is the figure representing a newly freed person kneeling (subservient) or beginning to rise (changing status)? Is the figure insufficiently dressed compared to Abraham Lincoln? Why is Mary McLeod Bethune facing the statue if the park is called "Lincoln Park"?

It's necessary to understand the history of the statue to understand the context. Ironically, the expense of the artwork largely came from contributions from USCT, and the first contributor was a newly freed woman in Richmond who wanted to commemorate the assassinated president. Although he didn't approve of the design, Frederick Douglass gave a speech at the sculpture's unveiling in 1876, with the president, Supreme Court justices, and cabinet attending. As Douglass pointed out, it was the first US statue in which an African American appeared, and the first erected by African Americans. The complete story appears in Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves by Kirk Savage (Princeton University Press, 1997).

## FYI: WEB SITES OF INTEREST

"Freedmen and Southern Society Project" <http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedman/home.html>

"Documenting the American South" <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh>

"Making of America" <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>

"Making of America" <http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>

*CORRECTIONS*

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*DON'T MISS:*

**DAR MUSEUM EXHIBIT, "Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Service in the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783"-- through August 2.** For more details, call (202) 879-3241.

**ANACOSTIA MUSEUM EXHIBIT, "The Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas" -- through August 31.** For more details, call (202) 287-3306.

**UPCOMING**

- UNBOXING THE PAST: A SYMPOSIUM ON THE UGRR, ABOLITIONISM, & SLAVERY IN VA, Library of VA, Richmond, October 9. For details, call Gregg Kimball (804-692-3722)
- ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING, Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, MD, October 8-12, 2003. "Creating Communities: Cultures, Neighborhoods, Institutions." See OHA web site.
- FREDERICK DOUGLASS CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 6-7, 2003, Howard University, DC. "Frederick Douglass: an Intimate View." For more information, contact Dr. Edna Medford (202-806-6815) or [emedford@howard.edu](mailto:emedford@howard.edu)
- ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON DC HISTORICAL STUDIES, November 7-8, 2003. To attend or to volunteer with planning, contact Gail Redmann (202-383-1851 or [gredmann@citymuseumdc.org](mailto:gredmann@citymuseumdc.org)) or Susan Schreiber (202-383-1835 or [sschreiber@citymuseumdc.org](mailto:sschreiber@citymuseumdc.org)).

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**HELP! HELP!** Show off your interpretive writing skills. How do you deal with sensitive issues of slavery and UGRR? How do you educate about UGRR? Direct your contributions to: [jenny\\_masur@nps.gov](mailto:jenny_masur@nps.gov).

