

THE CONDUCTOR

DECEMBER 2002

NATIONAL SCENE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE NETWORK TO FREEDOM!

The National Underground Railroad (UGRR) Network to Freedom Program (NTF) proudly turned four years old in July. Congress mandated the Network in 1998, following up a 1995 UGRR Special Resource Study. Grassroots organizations lobbied for the legislation, and are still actively involved with documentation, commemoration, and preservation of the varied UGRR resources at local and regional levels across the US. The six coordinators across the US continue to educate, preserve, and document Underground Railroad history in partnership with national parks, local governments, universities, and commemorative groups. Visit our web site to see the list of current and prospective Network members www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr. If you would like to receive the national newsletter, contact Diane_Miller@nps.gov.

TONY COHEN BRINGS UGRR TO NIW

Tony Cohen is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the UGRR. It is hard to research the UGRR in the greater DC area without hearing his name. He is known as a personable speaker with a breadth of knowledge gained from years of research. Tony Cohen, founder of the Menare Foundation, was a well received speaker at this year's National Interpretation Workshop (NIW) in Virginia Beach. He captivated the audience of interpreters with his account of long-distance walks to retrace the steps of escaping bondspeople, of collecting local stories, and of mailing himself in a box from Washington, D.C., to New York City (a parallel to Henry "Box" Brown). His career with UGRR started when he wrote his senior thesis at American University on the UGRR in Montgomery County where he grew up. The local county historical society then published his research as a driving tour. He has just started the Menare Foundation's *E-News Weekly*. Check his website www.menare.org

ARE YOU A HARRIET TUBMAN FAN?

Yes, Harriet Tubman ran away from slavery, and was a famed UGRR conductor, but she was also a Civil War spy and nurse, and founded an Old Age Home. Learn about Harriet Tubman's entire career. Consult the new web site www.harriettubmanstudy.org created by the Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study team to collect and compile information on places and stories

associated with Harriet Tubman's life. There may be related places in Washington, D.C., where she came to consult with the Secretary of War and the Sanitary Commission.

FREEDOM STAR AWARD FOR ROCK CREEK

Rock Creek Park was the first national park to receive a Freedom Star Award for an interpretive program relating to UGRR. "Night Sky to Freedom" is a planetarium program focusing on use of the North Star to navigate to freedom. It is estimated that over 10,000 people have seen the program in the past five years. Dwight Madison represented the park at the NPS session at the NAW, when the park's plaque was awarded. In addition, the park received \$500. The first individual to receive an award (\$500 and a plaque) was Chuck Arning of Blackstone River Valley NHC for his cable television series. The third award was a surprise. Don Wallenhaupt, Chief of Interpretation in SER, received a plaque in recognition of his tremendous support for the UGRR program. He has worked with Barbara Tagger, SER UGRR coordinator, on a regional UGRR exhibit and brochure, on a junior ranger program, and on hosting meetings of UGRR coordinators.

NETWORK NOMINATIONS "MADE EASY"

UGRR coordinators cannot help each applicant effectively, because of the large number of potential Network to Freedom (NTF) facilities (museums, archives, and libraries), sites, and educational and interpretive programs on the East Coast. As an alternative, local people can learn to help those filling out NTF applications. The first East Coast NTF application workshop was held in September in Philadelphia, PA, sponsored by the coordinators from the NER, NCR, and SER. Instructors stressed that the first step is to complete the primary research on "verifiable association with UGRR." A good application is one that uses the results of this research to discuss explicitly the UGRR significance of the site or program or holdings of a facility. Each application should be a source of information for the general reader; as a result, it should stand on its own, without specialized knowledge, or consultation of attachments by the reader.

The East Coast team then took advantage of the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in Florida to hold another workshop on the day before the conference began. Florida is actively organizing -- recognizing freedom seekers at Fort Mose, in maroon settlements in the Everglades, and among the Black Seminoles who fought in the Seminole Wars and were then forced to move to Oklahoma. Florida is eager to organize supporters into a state-wide UGRR organization.

FAM FEST SEEKS UGRR DESCENDANTS

The William Still Underground Railroad Foundation, Inc., is spearheading the first annual National Underground Railroad Family Reunion Festival in Camden, NJ, and Philadelphia,

PA, June 27-29, 2003. The first of its kind, the three day celebration will reunite black and white descendants of participants in the UGRR from all over North America. This event will offer activities designed to appeal to all ages and cultures, and will give the descendants, as well as those intrigued with the UGRR, a forum to educate, network, and share legacies through art, books, music, exhibits, and reenactments. For more information, contact Eve Elder (513) 853-0297 or www.undergroundrr.com, clicking on the UGRR Family Reunion Festival link. As it will be an unrivalled opportunity, NTF coordinators plan to collect oral traditions from descendants of conductors, freedom seekers, and others involved in UGRR.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

ONE-TIME GRANTS AWARD?

It is a major accomplishment that FY 02's community grants were awarded in a timely fashion to NTF members from five regions. Projects ranged from "bricks and mortar" (Parker House, Milton House) to research (Mississippi River) to enhancement of a California chautauqua (Mary Ellen Pleasant). A major criterion for application was membership in the NTF. The Maryland State Archives in Annapolis was a recipient in NCR. It is using the grant to fund research on UGRR in three MD counties; it will eventually add the results to its web site. Whether or not there are federal UGRR funds available, the Network to Freedom coordinators work to identify and publicize grants available to entities promoting preservation of UGRR history. For example, Dr. Fred Winter from the National Endowment for the Arts has attended several regional gatherings. Unfortunately, there are no community grants programmed in the FY 03 budget.

DECATUR HOUSE EXHIBIT, "Freedom: The History of US"

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and the Meserve-Kunhardt Collection present a joint exhibition at Decatur House Museum that will document and illustrate critical figures, events, and issues in American history from its founding through World War II. This exhibition will be at Decatur House from February 4 through March 30. It features rare documents such as a first draft and final official copy of the Constitution of the United States; autographed manuscript letters and documents from Presidents (Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Jefferson) and eminent leaders of the nation (Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe); and historical broadsides. The display is timed in conjunction with the January 12, 2003, premiere of the PBS series "Freedom: A History of US." For more information, contact the Education Department at (202) 842-0918.

MORE NCR MEMBERS IN THE NETWORK TO FREEDOM

The applications received by the July 15 deadline were reviewed at a public meeting in Cleveland in October. As a result, there are now over 100 members of the National

Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 24 states plus DC. Among these members are 12 NPS units and the NPS's Southeast Archeological Center. For the first time, there are now members from Delaware and North Carolina. Those nominating the Freedman's Colony of Roanoke Island, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, NC, were so excited that a delegation was sent to the meeting. The delegation included descendants of the freedmen who settled in the colony. Other new nominations highlight fascinating ties between regions. The nomination of First Baptist Church, Elmira, NY, commemorates the flight of John W. Jones from Loudoun County, VA, and his establishment in NY as an UGRR conductor.

Among the successful applications submitted were four from NCR. There were historic sites -- from Southern Maryland: Sotterley Plantation; and from Alexandria: Bruin's Slave Jail and Gadsby's Tavern. Sotterley Plantation (public) and Gadsby's Tavern (public) were eligible on the basis of documented escapes from slavery. Bruin's Slave Jail (private) is part of the story of the *Pearl* Affair, because it was the site of enslavement of the two Edmondson sisters who had tried to escape on the *Pearl*; the two sisters were redeemed from slavery through efforts of their parents and abolitionists. The City of Leesburg submitted the Thomas Balch Library as a facility for its wealth of resources for researching slavery and escapes (maps, microfilms of period newspapers, memoirs, local histories).

Round Five applications for the NTF are due to regional coordinators by January 15. Please remember to include letters of support from program managers or property owners, and detailed bibliographies. The statement of significance should be an essay which assumes no prior local knowledge by the reader. Maps are helpful.

NEW NCR PUBLICATION FROM NETWORK MEMBER

The beautiful first issue of Catoctin History (the magazine of the Catoctin Center for Regional Studies) is out. Dean Herrin's article directly relates to UGRR. Read "Forging Freedom: The Fugitive Blacksmith James W. C. Pennington," and pay particular attention to the illustrations -- Pennington, his Washington County owner's home "Rockland," a runaway ad in the Hagerstown paper (December 13, 1827), and the title page of Pennington's autobiography, The Fugitive Blacksmith.

ENTHUSIASM FOR UGRR SPREADS

NER and NCR coordinators cooperated to sponsor two recent gatherings in Southern Maryland and Petersburg, VA. Because of NPS regional boundaries, these coordinators share responsibility for Virginia and Maryland. This dynamic duo of coordinators plans further joint events for the coming year, in the DelMarVa Peninsula and Cumberland, MD, area. Each of these planned events is expected to draw participants from across states lines -- PA, DE, MD, and VA.

Inspired by the Richmond Gathering last year, Petersburg, VA, hosted a gathering on

September 26. Although known for Petersburg National Battlefield and other Civil War associations, the area is just starting to delve into UGRR history. Petersburg was an area entrenched in the institutions of slavery and slave trading. It was near Petersburg in 1858, however, that the ship *Keziah* ran aground and was discovered to have aboard, not only 1200 bushels of wheat, but also five freedom seekers. Needless to say, the ship's captain, William Baylis from DE, was convicted and spent over six years in the state penitentiary. Petersburg also claims the People's Cemetery burial place of Rev. Leonard Black, pastor of Petersburg's First Baptist Church (1873-83). Rev. Black, born in Anne Arundel County, MD, was the author of [The Life and Suffering of Leonard Black, a Fugitive from Slavery](#) (1847). (See Interpreters Corner to find narrative online)

Southern Maryland celebrated the UGRR through a meeting hosted at the new Visitors Center (VC) at Thomas Stone NHS. Planners, preservationists, and historians from Charles, St. Mary's, and Calvert Counties eagerly began to explore UGRR history and consider inclusion in heritage tourism. Thomas Stone NHS would like to make UGRR part of the permanent exhibit in its new VC. Civil War activity in the area meant that the enslaved flocked to Union camps at Benedict and Point Lookout for jobs and enlistment in the USCT. Manuscripts at Georgetown University record escapes among those enslaved at the Jesuit Manors in Southern Maryland (before the orders sold their slaves South). Participants at the meeting committed themselves to preparation of at least three nominations by January 15.

AAAM AND AAGHS MEET IN DC

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) met in DC in August, and included a panel on the Underground Railroad in museums. Local panelists included John Kneebone, Library of Virginia, and Karen White, director of the Afro-American Association of Fauquier County, VA. To the surprise of panelists, the program was taped and broadcast by cable television. Perhaps you saw the session!

The annual DC Historical Studies Conference was struck by a snowstorm. Not literally, but by the panel on October 18 covering the DC riot in 1835 called the "Snow storm." When news of an attempt on the life of US Capitol architect Thornton's widow by an enslaved African American spread, blame was placed on abolitionists, specifically Dr. Reuben Crandall recently arrested for possession of abolitionist materials. Given pre-existing tension created by Nat Turner's revolt in Virginia, his arrest sparked a riot which destroyed an African American neighborhood, including a hotel owned by Beverly Snow (accused by the mob of slandering the wives of white mechanics). Fred Saddler (Temple University) spoke about class consciousness among marine carpenters, part of the mob. Gregory Baggett (Columbia University) presented a paper on an associated topic, compensated emancipation in DC.

INTERPRETERS' CORNER

Do you need primary sources on slavery and resistance through escape? There is a treasure trove of texts online. An ambitious project of the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) Libraries is called, "Documenting the Old South." (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/neh.html>) Included among the electronic texts is a series called, "North American Slave Narratives," funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. When finished, the collection will include all the narratives and biographies of former bondsmen published in English in broadsides, pamphlets, or books up to 1920. The collection is already extensive, and is frequently augmented. Included are many out-of-print and hard-to-find items. The collection makes available little-told stories about slavery across the South and about individuals described as African princes, soldiers, sailors, preachers of the gospel, and poets.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina by David S. Cecelski (Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina, 2001) draws attention to the importance of waterways in the Underground Railroad. While Cecelski's book focuses on North Carolina, there is more and more evidence nationwide about the value of waterways as transportation and communication routes, and as a source of skills for those wishing to escape slavery. Thomas H. Jones, author of a narrative published in 1854, loaded cargoes in Wilmington, NC, and was able to make the contacts that, first, enabled his wife and children to escape to freedom in New York and, then, enabled his own escape. Compare Frederick Douglass' years working in the shipyards of Baltimore before he borrowed a seaman's clothes and papers to escape north (described in The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.) Cecelski emphasizes the more egalitarian and ambiguous society of watermen, heavily reliant on African American labor, both on shore and aboard ships, and the farflung networks.

UPCOMING

- FORGOTTEN PATRIOTS SEMINAR -- Jan. 11, 2003, DAR, 1776 D. St., N.W., free (202) 879-3229
 - SMITHSONIAN UGRR CONFERENCE, February 25-March 1.
 - MONTGOMERY COUNTY NETWORK TO FREEDOM WORKSHOP, March 2002.
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HELP! HELP!

Show off your interpretive writing skills and knowledge of history. How do you deal with the sensitive issues of slavery and UGRR? Make this newsletter a forum by directing your contributions to: jenny_masur@nps.gov.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS! A YEAR OF PEACE AND
GOODWILL TO ALL HUMANITY!