



THE CONDUCTOR

(Fall 2009 – No. 26)



UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

New NCR Network to Freedom Members

Virginia

Alexandria Library Special Collections (facility), is an outstanding research facility. Among what it collects are Free Negro Registers, private papers, wills, tax records, censuses, ship records, and dissertations. Unfortunately, its hours have been cut back this year.

Fairfax Circuit Court—Historic Records Room (facility) is the archive of the county Circuit Court with court records and local government documents going back to 1742. Enslaved African Americans appear in records as jailed runaways, values in estates, property in inventories, defendants in criminal cases, and lost valuables.

Rippon Lodge, Prince William County (site) was a site of enslavement and one of the few plantation homes saved by the county. It is now open to the public with interpretation of past slavery.

Facilities include archives and libraries which are good sources for research on resistance to slavery by flight and the context of slavery like maps, local histories, and genealogies.

NEW HERITAGE TRAVEL STUDY

Mandala Research has completed a national research study on cultural and heritage travelers for the U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Marketing Council, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce. The new study found that 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities while traveling, translating to 118.3 million adults and \$192 billion each year.

Underground Railroad preservation is part of the growing movement toward “heritage tourism,” that is, tourism to spots unique for their local historic and cultural interest. Cultural and heritage activities identified by travelers include visiting historic sites (66%); attending historical re-enactments (64%); visiting art museums/galleries (54%); attending an art/craft fair or festival (45%); attending a professional dance performance (44%); visiting state/national parks (41%); shopping in museum stores (32%); and exploring urban neighborhoods (30%). The vast majority of these travelers (65%) say that they seek travel experiences where the “destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character.”

Historic parks and local heritage events can be big draws. Cultural-heritage travelers are frequent travelers, reporting an average 5 leisure trips in the past 12 months versus non-cultural/heritage travelers who make 4 trips. More than half cultural/heritage travelers prefer their leisure travel to be educational, and are likely to travel farther to get the experiences they seek. About half most recent overnight leisure trips were 500 miles or more from home, and over a third say they traveled between 100 and 300 miles for a day trip.

UNDERGROUND CONFERENCE IN INDIANAPOLIS

On September 16-19 the conference, “Freedom Trails at the Crossroads” was held in Indianapolis. Among the sponsors were the Network to Freedom friends group, Indiana Freedom Trails, and NPS. Highlights were the keynotes by Keith Griffler and by Margaret Washington, author of a new biography of Sojourner Truth; and a panel on “Myths and Realities” featuring Lara Gara, Tom Calarco, Kate Larson, and Susan Soderberg. Local tours were offered during the conference.

The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) sadly announces the passing of Donna Marcia Wells suddenly on Monday, November 2, 2009. Ms. Wells was Prints and Photographs Librarian at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center from 1993 until June 2009. Ms. Wells co-authored with Thomas C. Battle, MSRC's director the highly-acclaimed *Legacy: Treasures of Black History*, published by National

HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BYWAY RECEIVES NATIONAL DESIGNATION



On October 16, 2009, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway in Dorchester and Caroline Counties, MD, received the prestigious All American Road designation by the U.S. Department of Transportation's America's Byways program in DC.

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway brings to life the stories of the Underground Railroad and freedom seekers from Dorchester County, where Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman was born. It continues through Caroline County, to the Delaware border. The byway also connects multiple historic landscapes, small towns, water trails, the new Harriet Tubman State Park, and the proposed Harriet Tubman National Historical Park.

The U.S. Transportation Department recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways, based on archeological, cultural, historic, natural,

recreational, and scenic qualities. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway attained the higher recognition, All American Road, because it demonstrates unique cultural and historic characteristics. Three other Maryland roadways received National Byway status.

"The federal government recognizes Maryland's strong Byways system and its collective commitment to preserving and promoting the exceptional aspects of our state," said Governor Martin O'Malley. To learn more about the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, contact the Dorchester County Visitor Center, 410-228-1000, or visit:

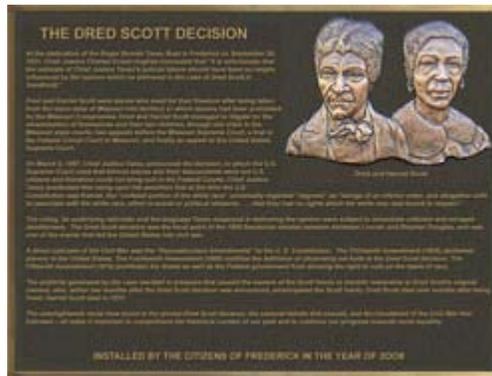
www.harriettubmanbyway.org,
www.tourchesapeakecountry.com.

GILDER LEHRMAN SUMMER SEMINARS are open to rangers as well as to history teachers. Most expenses are covered. Deadline: Feb. 15, 2010. Visit www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar. See especially the seminars: "Passages to Freedom: Abolition and the Underground Railroad", "North American Slavery in Comparative Perspective"; "Slavery in the Age of Revolution;" and "The South in American History."

The Dred Scott Decision, a case presented to the US Supreme Court in the Old Supreme Court Chamber at the US Capitol, was brought on behalf of Dred Scott. The case tested whether an enslaved man taken from a slave state into a free state might thus become free. The case began at the Old Courthouse in St. Louis, now a part of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. The decision had consequences unforeseen by those who brought it.

Dred Scott (1795-1858) was born in VA and taken by his master's family first to AL and then to MO. After his owner's death, he was sold to a surgeon in the US army stationed in MO, but then transferred to the free territory of IL. In Missouri he escaped to the Lucas Swamp but was caught.

After his marriage to Harriet, the couple was hired out by which time Dred Scott had taken that name. Upon trying to buy his and his family's freedom, he was refused. Approached by two lawyers, he then sued for freedom in the St. Louis County court, and the case worked its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court as Scott v. Sanford in 1857.



DRED SCOTT PLAQUE

The City of Frederick, MD, unveiled the Harriet and Dred Scott Plaque at a dedication ceremony on Tuesday, November 17, 2009, in front of City Hall. Following more than 2 1/2 years of work spearheaded by local attorney E. Kevin Lollar, Mayor Jeff Holtzinger, and many local leaders, the new plaque explaining the Dred Scott Decision will counterbalance an adjacent bust of former U.S. Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney. The portraits of Harriet and Dred Scott on the plaque were taken from National Archives images in a museum in St. Louis, MO. The City of Frederick's Historic Preservation Commission responded to requests last year by local civil rights leaders to remove the statue dating from 1921. The plaque explains the role of Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney in the slavery debate of the mid-1800s. Taney was a Frederick resident who wrote the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott ruling that enslaved Africans and their descendants were not U.S. citizens. The decision stated that the framers of the Constitution regarded

blacks as "beings of an inferior order." Kevin Lollar, a Frederick Housing Authority official who helped negotiate the compromise, says all sides are satisfied with the plaque.

CATASTROPHE STRIKES

Interim Director Thomas Battle says financial and structural setbacks may close Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) after 95 years. MSRC is recognized as one of the world's largest and most comprehensive repositories for the documentation of the cultural history of people in the African Diaspora. Much of the property owned by the research center is in storage. By the end of the semester there may be no staff in the research room. Let the university hear from you.



THE EDITOR OFFERS A PRIZE TO THE FIRST TWO READERS WHO NOTICE THIS PARAGRAPH AND RESPOND TO HER.

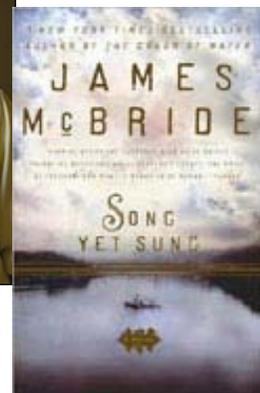
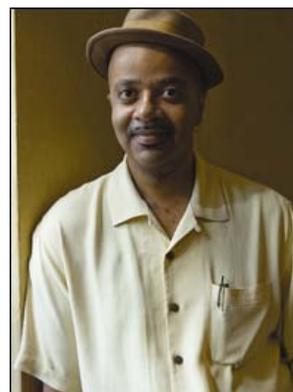
James McBride's Song Yet Sung

Imagine if everyone in Maryland read the same book at the same time. What kind of conversations could you have? With whom could you connect in your community?

This past summer and fall the Maryland Center for the Book, a program of the Maryland Humanities Council, invited Marylanders to be part of Maryland's only statewide community reading program-- *One Maryland One Book*.

The book chosen this year was Song Yet Sung by James McBride. The book gives a sense of the Eastern Shore in the period of Harriet Tubman. It has engaging characters, and combines historic details with fiction. It depicts relations between black and white, enslaved and free. It

personifies the enslaved individual's thirst for freedom, and gives a good idea of the implicit communication among blacks used to protect themselves and those fleeing capture. The heroine is endowed with Tubman-like visions, which are Cassandra-like views of the worst of our times. Unlike the iconic Tubman, McBride's heroine focuses on a search not for only freedom from enslavement but also for the freedom of ownership of self, that is, freedom from fads or trends toward self-destruction. The book is thought provoking. It throws in Patty Cannon, the slave catcher, as a deliciously evil heroine, who is less than human. Unfortunately the author turns to the improbable device of an Underground Railroad code.





(1813-1897) Born in Edenton, NC, Harriet Jacobs wrote her autobiography Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) under the name Linda Brent. She wrote the history of her very painful life at the request of a white abolitionist who felt the public should know about the sexual exploitation and suffering of enslaved women in the South. Her authorship was forgotten in the 20th century until rediscovered by historian Jean Yellin who later wrote a definitive biography, Harriet Jacobs: A Life, and edited Jacobs' papers.

Jacobs' hometown, Edenton, has a park commemorating her. After unhappy years enslaved, she hid beneath the crawl space of her free grandmother's house. Finally after seven years, a ship passage was arranged. She had hidden from everyone but her grandmother, even from her two children. In the North, Jacobs was reunited with her children, although she was pursued by her owner. She was redeemed by a friend.

During the war she and her daughter helped contrabands and operated a school in Alexandria, VA.



NEW PLAY ON HARRIET JACOBS

During the conference, "Abolitionism in Black and White," an audience was exposed to a provocative staged reading at Suffolk University, Boston, by the Underground Railway Theater. Part of a new play about freedom seeker and author Harriet Jacobs was presented. Following this performance on Oct. 23, playwright Lydia Diamond (Boston University) and scholar David Blight (Yale University) led a discussion about slave narratives and how drama can be employed to communicate history.

This play is more than a summary of Jacobs' autobiography (1861), dramatic as that may be. According to one critic, Diamond is able to make this a sophisticated consideration of how the horror of slavery "seeped into the cultural bloodstream and how some rose beyond it." In an interview the author said: "I have an immediate, visceral response when I see slavery presented on a stage," and "I have discomfort around that. And I think that the modern world has too much of a comfort zone around all things slave." The work was commissioned from Diamond by Steppenwolf Theater and, despite her repugnance for slavery, she went on to write the play. The play premiered in Chicago, the site of Steppenwolf theater.

NORTHEAST REGION'S SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE

"Abolitionism in Black and White," was held on October 23-24, at Suffolk University in Boston. It featured James and Lois Horton and David Blight as keynote speakers. Panels covered: abolitionism and women, popular culture, Charles Sumner, and the Boston area. There was a performance of music of the 19th century abolitionists, the Hutchinson Family Singers. Jean Yellin, the author of a biography on Harriet Jacobs, presented a paper. Sponsors of the conference included NPS.

OPPORTUNITIES

- *FELLOWSHIP*: The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, at the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library at Duke University, announces grants for travel to their collections. The center documents the public and private lives of women. Research grants are for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and independent scholars conducting research using collections held by the Sallie Bingham Center. Applicants must live outside of a 50-mile radius from Durham, NC. The maximum award per applicant is \$1,000. Deadline to apply is January 29, 2010. See: <http://library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham/grants>
- *CALL FOR ARTICLES*: Deadline is February 9, 2010. *Heritage Matters*, the newsletter of the Cultural Resources Diversity Program of NPS, is accepting articles for its next issue. The newsletter addresses historic preservation and cultural resources pertaining to diverse communities. Contact Brian D. Joyner, Editor, *Heritage Matters*, DOI/NPS, 1849 C Street, NW, (2280), Washington, DC 20240, e-mail: brian_joyner@nps.gov, fax: 202.371.2422.
- *TOOLKIT*: The Heritage Tourism Program, National Trust, will survey cultural and heritage organizations and attractions this fall as the first step towards developing a toolkit of strategies to adapt to the economic downturn. While development will continue through the fall of 2010, toolkit resources will be posted as available on www.culturalheritagetourism.org and www.preservationnation.org. Your ideas and suggestions are needed. Contact amy_webb@nthp.org or (303) 413-1986.

FYI

- The **Fairfax Library's Historical Newspaper Index** now has four choices of data searches: all dates (the default), before this date, after this date, and between these dates. See <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/newsindex/Default.aspx>
- A new digital project at the College of William and Mary's Swem Library: an online version of an exhibit called "**Slavery in Virginia**" Go to: <http://swem.wm.edu/departments/special-collections/exhibits/slavery/>
- **Slave Burial Database Project** is a project of the African American Studies, Department of Fordham University (Lincoln Center, NY), to create a database for burial grounds and cemeteries of enslaved African Americans in the US. Initially it will collect information on burial sites. Contact Sandra Arnold at arnold@fordham.edu.
- The DC Historic Preservation Office has an alphabetical version of the **District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites**, officially designated historic properties, available at <http://planning.dc.gov/hp> under DC Historic Sites.”
- Check out Internet Archive for ex Life of Isaac Hopper. <http://gutenberg.org/files/111859/111859.txt>

National Park Service website: www.nps.gov

National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive , SW
Washington, D.C. 20242



The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) was created by Congress in 1998 to honor those who resisted slavery through flight. *The Conductor* was established to inform readers about Underground Railroad (UGRR) history and resource within the National Capital Region. It describes the activities of NTF.

www.cr.nps.gov/uqrr



NPS readers can find past issues of *The Conductor* at “The Conductor Archives”

<http://www.ncr.nps.gov/>



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Comments? Please send to: Jenny_Masur@nps.gov
National Park Service website: www.nps.gov