

# The Freedom Seeker

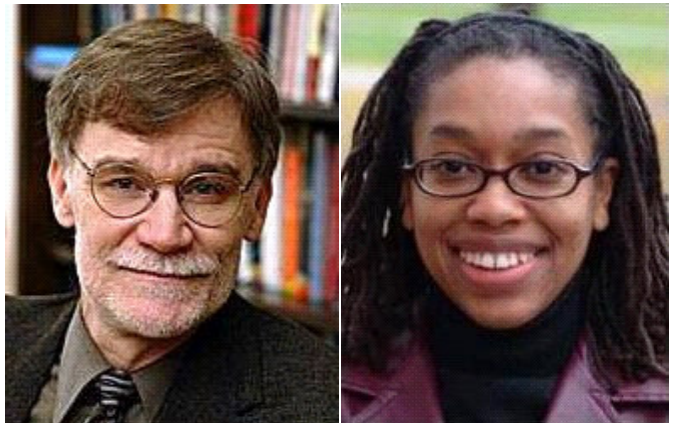
Volume II, No. 3

Winter 2005-6

## Conference: Connecting Pathways

It's that time of year again and UGRHPCR is mounting its annual conference. This year's event, "The Underground Railroad: Connecting Pathways to Liberty," will take place at Russell Sage College in Troy, New York from Friday, February 24 through Sunday, February 26.

Expanding on last year's schedule, we have added a special keynote address on Friday evening by Professor David Blight, Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at Yale University. Dr. Blight is one of the nation's most widely recognized authorities on the history of the Civil War, race relations, historical memory and the legacy of slavery. He is the author of *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the Civil War* (2002) and *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001), as well as other books and articles.



Yale University Professor David Blight and Union College Professor Erica Ball will be keynote speakers at February's conference ( Photo credit: Yale University and Union College)

ion College in Schenectady and a URHPCR Board member, who specializes in Black abolitionism and northern Black political activism before and during the Civil War. She is currently finishing a manuscript titled *Mothers and Fathers of the Race: A Cultural History of Northern Black Activism During the Civil War Era*. Ball will speak at Russell Sage's Bush memorial on "Brothers, Sisters, Revolutionaries: Freedom Seekers, Activists and the Underground Railroad."

Saturday's workshops are as diverse as they are plentiful. Among them will be sessions on using the web to research abolitionism, slavery and the Underground Railroad, writing freedom seeking into fiction, and Black troops in the Civil War. A number of dramatic reenactments will also be presented.

Workshop presenters include academics, writers, amateur historians and even local schoolchildren

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### Coming Events

UGR tours begin March 19:  
See p. 3 for schedule

February 15: Paul and Mary Liz present at Federal and State Black History Month event. Call 432-4432 for de-

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Blight's address, "Why Such a Hold on Our Imagination? The Underground Railroad in History and Memory," will commence a dinner celebrating the fifth anniversary of URHPCR's history conference. The dinner starts at 6:30 pm. Reservations are required and must be made by February 10, 2006.

On Saturday, conference events will kick off with a second keynote address by Professor Erica Ball of Un-

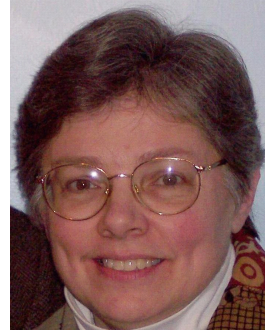


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*The Freedom Seeker* is a publication of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting and encouraging knowledge and understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Underground Railroad Movement in the Capital Region, in New York State, and in the United States. This newsletter is published three times a year. Editorial inquiries can be sent to URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany NY 12201. Email at [info@ugrworkshop.com](mailto:info@ugrworkshop.com)

## Our New Executive Director



**U**RHPCR has turned an exciting corner: we now have staff.

In January, the board hired Mary Liz Stewart, one of the founding organizers of the Project, as Executive Director. Mary Liz's work will involve developing the operations and capacities of URHPCR, advancing the restoration of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence Historic Site, and organizing the annual conference and other educational programming. She comes to this position with more than ten years experience in education, and practical experience in research, grant writing, organizational development and fundraising. Support for this position is provided in part by the Community Foundation of the Capital Region with a grant from its Education and Recognition of the Underground Railroad History Fund.

## Fundraising Notes

**W**e are delighted to announce several grants received in the last few months: In December, Citizens Bank generously provided a \$5,000 grant. M & T Bank also generously committed \$5,000 to our project.

This January we are starting work on the restoration of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence under a \$75,000 grant from Heritage New York. Last June we were awarded a \$50,000 award from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, also for restoration of the Myers Residence. State Assembly representatives Jack McEneny and Ron Canestrari are working to add another \$50,000 to this amount. We thank them for their continued support. We currently have requests pending for much of the \$355,000 needed for the restoration of the first floor inte-

rior and for the exterior of the building.

Thanks to the Community Foundation of the Capital Region for a grant through its Education and Recognition of the Underground Railroad History Fund, which, when combined with other sources, makes it possible for us to hire staff for 2006.

### M & T Bank

We are pleased to acknowledge the support of M & T Bank. Their contribution funds several programs of the Underground Railroad History Project: the annual conference, the restoration of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, the newsletter, and the fall Jazz Fundraiser. We thank M & T Bank for helping us advance our research and educational programming goals and look forward to working more closely with their staff in the future.



# News and Notes

This year's annual fund-raising jazz evening was an enormous success. The URHPCR netted over \$2,500 from ticket sales. The fund-raising committee, and especially Board members Vera "Mike" Michelson and Al Wells, deserve a round of applause for organizing this tremendous event. We'd also like to thank the owners of Red Square, who generously provided use of their club, and Adrian Cohen, who helped book the event.



We would like to welcome the following new members and renewals: Susan DuBois, Ray and Roberta Nunn, Bob Emery, Kira Zaikowski-Gorman, Carol Lewis, Corinne Hillard, Jack Mayer, Stan Maldecki, Bill Bouchard, Peter Hardman, Ann Savage and Michael Myers.



Julia Holcomb, who has served for more than a year

on the URHPCR Board of Directors, regrettably has resigned. Julia will continue to serve on the project's Conference Planning Committee. Julia's tremendous energy and commitment will be greatly missed at the Board's quarterly meetings



## UGR Tours

Once again URHPCR will offer tours of underground railroad sites in downtown Albany. Sunday tours start at the Albany Visitor's Center at Quackenbush Square. There is a modest charge for the tour. For more info call Executive Director Mary Liz Stewart at 518-432-4432. Tour dates:

**March 19, April 23, May 21, June 11, July 16, August 20, September 17, October 15**

## BECOME A MEMBER

The Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. (URHPCR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and encouraging knowledge and understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Underground Railroad Movement in the Capital Region, in New York State, and in the United States. Among other goals, URHPCR promotes and encourages historical research and education on the Underground Railroad Movement and seeks to mark places of historic interest relating to the Underground Railroad Movement in the Capital Region.

### Benefits of Membership:

- ◆ Invitation to the annual Underground Railroad History Conference
- ◆ Subscription to *The Freedom Seeker* (published three times a year).
- ◆ Invitations to URHPCR special events
- ◆ Walking tour of Downtown Albany Underground Railroad Sites for a nominal charge.
- ◆ Calendar of local, state, and national events on the Underground Railroad Movement

A limited number of subsidized individual memberships is available. Please call 518.432.4432 for more information.

### Check one:

- |                          |                         |                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Individual</b>       | <b>\$ 25.00</b> |
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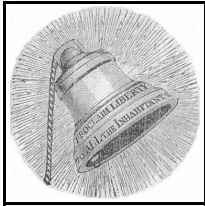
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## *Connecting pathways*

*(Continued from page 1)*

from New Covenant Charter School in Albany who will present a workshop on “What the Underground Railroad Means to Me”. As always, it will be a diverse conference that draws widely from the community of Underground Railroad researchers and activists.

To continue the anniversary celebration, Saturday will be capped off with a dance party led by Earl White, the leading African American old-time fiddler in the country. White was a founding member of the Green Grass Cloggers and is one of the few contemporary African American musicians playing in the Appalachian tradition that once was an integral part of rural Black communities in the southeastern United States.

The conference will end on Sunday with religious services at Oakwood Avenue Presbyterian Church, followed by lunch and a tour in the early afternoon of Troy’s historic Underground Rail-



*Fiddler Earl White will perform at Saturday’s dance party. Photo credit: Earl White Promotional Photo*

road sites. For more information, to register, and to make dinner and lunch reservations log on to the URHPCR website at [www.ugrworkshop.com](http://www.ugrworkshop.com), or call: (518) 432-4432.