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The Freedom Seeker

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The Grand Emancipation Day Jubilee

By Alan Singer, PhD, Hofstra University

January 1, 2013, was the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. On January 1, 1863, after almost two years of uncertainty, questioning, and debate, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation ending slavery in rebelling states as a war measure. While only a few thousand out of three million enslaved Africans were initially affected, there was a wave of celebration in African American communities and in many northern cities.

In Albany, New York, and in other cities across the North, cannons exploded in one hundred gun salutes. However, reaction in Albany was not all positive. Governor Horatio Seymour, a pro-southern Copperhead Democrat, denounced the Emancipation Proclamation as "impolite, unjust, and unconstitutional" and accused President Lincoln of diminishing confidence in government.

But the reception in the African American community could not be diminished. The January 1, 1863 issue of *The New York Times* described a "GRAND EMANCIPATION JUBILEE" on New Year's Eve at Shiloh Presbyterian Church on the corner of Prince and Marion Streets in what is now Soho: "By 9 o'clock in the evening the church was filled to overflowing, nearly one-third of the audience being White. Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, pastor of Shiloh Church, presided, and among the speakers were Rev. S.C. Jocelyn, C.C. Leigh, Edward Gilbert, Junius C. Morell, and others." Garnet was a leading Black abolitionist for over two decades whose family had escaped from slavery when he was a child. Jocelyn, Leigh, Gilbert, and Morell were all prominent local White abolitionists.

For many years Rev. Garnet lived in Troy, New York, where

Inside this issue	
Board Welcomes New Members	2
Annual Conference News and Notes	3
Over the Past Months	4

he was a teacher and pastor of the Liberty Street Presbyterian church. He is probably best known for the fiery speech he gave in 1843 at a National Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York where he called for armed resistance by enslaved Africans.

At Shiloh Church, "The ceremonies

were opened at 10 o'clock by prayer from Rev. Danl. H. Vandewoort, colored. After this came a hymn, and the Chairman then introduced Rev. G.S. Jocelyn, who spoke of the progress of Emancipation throughout the world . . . The most loyal people in this country he said were the blacks, and if the President's Emancipation Proclamation had been issued on the firing of the first gun at Fort Sumter the nation would have been saved the deluge of blood that had since flowed throughout the land." Jocelyn's comments were greeted with loud applause.

At five minutes to midnight, Reverend Garnet interrupted the speaker, Edward Gilbert, a prominent New York lawyer and White abolitionist, and announced that "the audience would unite in silent prayer . . . A solemn dirge was then played on the organ. At the close of which the whole audience knelt for five minutes in silent prayer. At the expiration of that time the choir sang the hymn commencing, 'Blow, ye trumpets blow, the year of jubilee has come,' in which the audience joined."

"Blow ye the trumpet, blow, The gladly solemn sound, Let all the nations know, To earth's remotest bound: The year of Jubilee has come, Returning ransomed sinners home, Returning ransomed sinners home."

Reverend Garnet "then read a dispatch from Washington, saying that President Lincoln would issue the Emancipation Proclamation at 12 o'clock M., to-day. This announcement was greeted with the most tumultuous cheers, which lasted some minutes, and was followed by three cheers for Abraham Lincoln, three cheers for freedom, &c., &c."

After the cheers had subsided, Gilbert resumed speaking. However, he "threw a damper on the enthusiasm of the audience by commencing to grumble and find fault because the Proclamation was to be 'issued as a military necessity, and not as an act of justice.' His audience did not appear to sympathize with his troubles in that line, and he soon dried up. Other speakers followed, and the jubilee was kept up to a late hour in the evening, the audience singing 'Old John Brown' and other similar songs, shouting, praying and rejoicing."

On Monday, January 5, "the 'Sons of Freedom,' an association

(Cont'd. on p. 2)



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The Freedom Seeker is a publication of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting knowledge of the 19th century Underground Railroad Movement and its legacy 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.

URHPCR Board Welcomes New Members



A native of Brooklyn, where she was an Assistant District Attorney, **Dale Black-Pennington** also worked as a labor relations manager with the NYC Transit Authority. **She** is currently an Administrative Law Judge with the U.S. Social Security Administration.



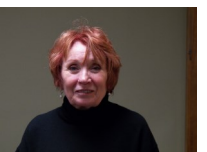
Dr. Julia F. Hastings is assistant professor in the Schools of Public Health and Social Welfare at the University at Albany. Her research interests include health and mental health disparities among ethnic minority populations and African American mental health.



Ralph Pennington, Jr. is a Senior Attorney for the NYS Workers' Compensation Board, Administrative Review Division. He previously served as an attorney with the NYC Human Resources Administration and as an Administrative Law Judge with the NYC Dept. of Health.



Marva Richards has a background in education and service learning, including work with The Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago. She is currently the Director of Community Outreach and Service Learning at Albany Medical College.



Currently the owner of Scanlan Communications Group, **Mary Scanlan** has been an editor at *Harper's Bazaar* and Director of Public Information for the NYS Department of Social Services. She received the Albany-Colonie Chamber's Women of Excellence Award.

Emancipation Day Jubilee (cont'd from page 1)

of colored people," sponsored a rally at the Cooper Institute in New York City where Abraham Lincoln had delivered a speech in 1860 that helped propel him to Republican Party nomination and the presidency. Rev. Garnet again presided. According to a report in *The New York Times*, "A living stream of people set swiftly toward the doors long before the hour appointed for commencing the exercises, and filling the body of the house with a rush, eddied into the lobbies, percolated into the aisles, dashed its spray upon the platform, and overflowed into the street" (<http://www.times.com/1863/01/06/news/edict-emancipation-cooper-institute-crammed-with-jubilant-crowd-rev-henry-ward.html>, accessed December 10, 2012).

Frederick Douglass, in the February issue of his monthly newspaper, reported, "Rev. H.H. Garnet presided with dignity, reading the Proclamation, and making a most appropriate and eloquent address" that concluded with "three cheers for the President . . . followed successively by cheers 'for our native land,' for the Stars and Stripes, for the Abolitionists, and for Horace Greeley"

Unfortunately, the promise of the Grand Emancipation Day Jubilee has still not been fulfilled. One hundred years later, at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded listeners: "We must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of

discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lies on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land."

And just this August, at a rally in Washington DC commemorating both the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th anniversary of the 1963 march, we were reminded that it was time to march again because of racial profiling by police in major U.S. cities; because young Black men like Trayvon Martin are targeted by vigilantes; because of chronic unemployment in the United States, especially in inner-city Black communities; because state, local and federal governments pursuing austerity programs cut government hiring; because a Supreme Court dominated by right-wing ideologues invalidated crucial sections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and made it no longer enforceable; because despite, or because of, federal No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top initiatives, American schools are increasingly segregated and most African-American children receive inferior educational opportunity; because gentrification of urban communities means throwing out the poor and minorities and condemning them to live in overcrowded, substandard conditions, when they are lucky enough to have a place to live; and because hard-working immigrant families live in constant fear that friends and family members will be arrested and deported. And so the struggle continues.

You are invited to—

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Meet the stars behind the voices and win prizes!
Antebellum period costume optional

March 19, 2014

6:00—8:00 PM

195 Second Street, Troy, NY

In an authentic 19th century ballroom on historic Washington Park

Menu

Hot and cold hors d'oeuvres
Amuse-bouche featuring period cuisine
Sweet confections
Wine — Soft Drinks — Punch

Tickets: On or before March 18: \$45 — At the door: \$50
Make checks payable and mail to URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, NY 12201
or purchase online on the News Page at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

Questions? (518) 432-4432

We regret that the ballroom is accessible only by stairs

All proceeds to benefit Underground Railroad Project of the Capital Region
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Complete updated information at: UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

News and Notes

Mission Statement of URHPCR:

Underground Railroad History Project
researches and preserves the local and national history
of the anti-slavery and Underground Railroad movements,
their international connections
and their legacies to later struggles;
it engages in public education and dialogue about
these movements and their relevance to modern society.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend -

- ♦ **URHPCR Board Meetings** - 3rd Thursday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00 - 7:30pm in Rm. 105, Gurley Hall at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Building & Properties Mtg** - monthly, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
- ♦ **Gardening & Landscaping Mtg** - monthly, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
- ♦ **Finance Committee Mtg** - 2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:30 - 6:30pm at Albany Center for Economic Success
- ♦ **URHPCR Grounds Beautification and Maintenance Work Parties** - the last Saturday of each month, June through October, from 10am-1pm

Information about these meetings and events is available at 518-432-4432 or at info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Michael P. Barrett; Paul Rosenberg; Thomas F. Martin; Diedra Butler; Lisa Anderson; Christine Fowler; Mary Ellen Johnson; Patricia Oldham; Claire Nolan; Michael Bosanko; Malcolm Willison; William Tuthill; David Hochfelder and Ann Pfau; Vera P. Michelson; John Battin; Sheila Roark; Phil Hilferty; Barbara Irwin; Barbara Traver; Carol Lewis; Roger Tilden; Felicia Huerta; John McDonald; C.W. Allen; Gretter Worth

In Memorium

Charles Swain passed away December 22, 2013 at the age of 73 years. He was long known as the Minority Historian for Greene County. He was founder of the Black Rodeo in Cairo, New York and a descendent great grandson of a Buffalo Soldier and civil war veteran. He authored several books about African American history and was a good friend to the UGRR community.



Invite someone you know to become a member, or give the gift of membership. Details available on the membership page at www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org.

Questions? Concerns? Contributions? Interested in volunteering? Contact us by calling 518-432-4432 or by visiting www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org.

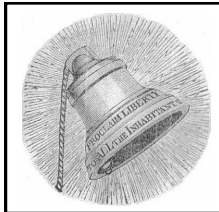
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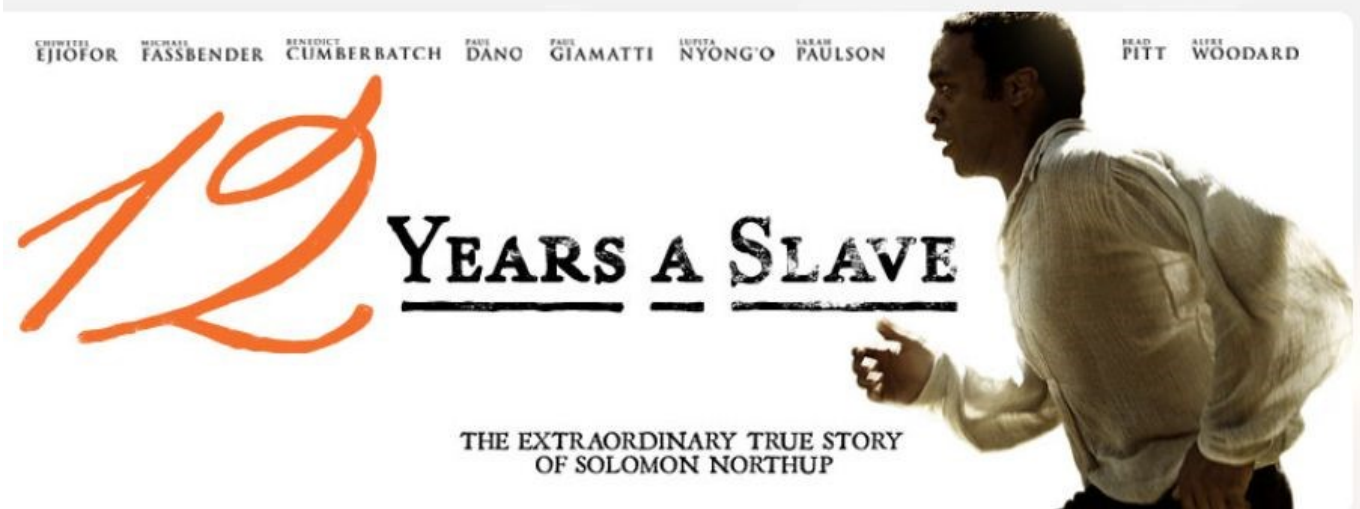


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ON THE WEB AT

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OVER THE PAST MONTHS



Searchlights lit up the Albany sky and the red carpet was unfurled for an advance screening of Steve McQueen's stunning film, *12 Years a Slave*. The standing-room-only event at the Spectrum 8 Theatres was followed by a reception at My Linh Restaurant, where WNYT anchor Elaine Houston hosted a program that included Clayton Adams, a descendant of Solomon Northrup, and violinist Colin McCoy, as well as local scholars who participated in informal conversation with guests about the film. Funds raised at this event will support the educational initiatives of URHP, including the Young Abolitionists summer program.

12 Years a Slave won the Best Motion Picture award at the Golden Globes, and garnered nine nominations at this year's Academy Awards.