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The Freedom Seeker

Fall 2015

Anthony Allen, from Schenectady, NY to Hawaii

By: Jenny Masure, National Park Service & Deloris Guttman, University of Hawaii

Anthony Allen (1774-1835) was a freedom seeker.¹ Allen had been enslaved by Dr. Duncan McDougall. Following McDougall's death on August 25, 1795, Allen feared that Mrs. McDougall might sell him. After finding a new owner by the name of Kelly who purchased him for \$300, Allen decided to join the growing ranks of African Americans fleeing slavery. Escaping enslavement in Schenectady, New York, he made his way by land to Hartford, Connecticut and by sea to Boston, Massachusetts.² His escape took place at a time when Americans of all races and classes were converging on Boston and other city ports looking for jobs. He was hired as a steward for seven years and a cook for one year under the same captain. Faced with recapture in 1806, he bought his freedom with help from the ship's owner.

Not surprisingly, once acquainted with Hawaii during his journeys, Allen was attracted to this island nation. Around 1812, after many adventures and seeing the world, Allen left the sea to make the Hawaiian Islands his home. The islands offered safe harbor for men of African descent because they could reside there without harassment from slavers. In Hawaii, Allen served as a steward and confidante to Hawaiian King Kamehameha the Great. The High Priest Hewahewa invited him to live in his home. In 1811, Hewahewa gave him six acres near Waikiki where he would establish a home and business, catering to the local royalty, chiefs, missionaries, and visiting ships' crews.

By the time the contingent of American missionaries arrived, one of them wrote in 1820, "There is one black man, Anthony Allen, brought up in Schenectady, New York, who I believe lives the most comfortably of any on the island..." The missionaries, who are acknowledged as influencing subsequent Hawaiian history, found Allen an important contact who not only supplied them with fresh meats and vegetables, but more importantly, provided them with introductions to important Hawaiians, invitations to dinner, and American company. He, in turn, attended their services, sought their educational services for his children, and tried to hide from them the extent to which he had adapted to the Hawaiian cultural practice of having two wives.⁴ Allen was also on good terms with visiting mariners to whom he supplied goats and milk, and offered hospital and burial facilities. By the 1820s his boarding house/restaurant was well established, and he was considered respectable, honorable, and hospitable. Since a cross-section of those on the island made use of his establishment, it likely was a clearinghouse of information run by a well-connected host.⁵ Anthony Allen, a man worth knowing.



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While by no means the only person of African descent who came to Hawaii between the late 18th and early 19th century, Allen is significant for the myriad primary sources documenting his successes and for the prominent role that he played in Hawaiian society.³ He arrived at a crucial point.

¹ The major sources for Allen's story are an 1822 letter written to his former enslaver's son and accounts of missionaries.

² Anthony Allen, letter to Dr. McDougall, 11 Oct. 1822, Mark Blackburn Collection, Philadelphia, Pa. A transcript of this letter has been published in Marc Scruggs, "Anthony D. Allen: A Prosperous American of African Descent in early 19th Century Hawaii". *Hawaiian Journal of History*, Vol. 26, 1992, p. 55-93.

³ Scruggs, 80.

⁴ Scruggs only cites Allen's own letter for this two wives, but notes that "he freely dictated that fact to Hiram Bingham in the course of writing to Doctor 'Dougall' "(62). From surviving signatures, it appears that Allen was literate, (63).

⁵ Scruggs, *passim*.



URHPCR Board of Directors

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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 NYS, in the United States, and relating that history with us today. This newsletter is published three times a year. Editorial inquiries can be sent to URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, NY 12201 or info@undergroundrailroadhistory.org.

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NYC Slavery and UGRR Tour



Saturday, September 26

A unique walking tour designed for URHPCR - don't miss this opportunity!

Follow the Freedom Trail in New York! Learn the inspiring history of how a band of brave men and women formed the networks that became the Underground Railroad. Visit an archeological site and memorial dedicated to the memory of enslaved Africans in colonial America. View the former stations that were on the Underground Railroad. Learn about the riots, revolts and dramatic escapes that occurred during American slavery. Listen to tales of courage and triumph and discover the stories of real New Yorkers who risked life and property to help people escaping American Slavery.

Leaving at 8am from Albany Center for Economic Success parking lot - 255 Orange St., Albany, NY 12210 - Returning 8pm

Seats are selling! Don't delay!

Complete details available at (518) 432-4432 and at www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org/events

The Underground Railroad and American Identities - April 15-17, 2016

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 15th annual Underground Railroad Public History Convening! Spread the word! Invite your fellow congregants, colleagues, book group members, family, friends, children's teachers, affinity group members, and anyone else you can think of. This conference is too good to miss!

The Underground Railroad shaped, and was shaped by, the identities of many individuals, groups, and institutions during the years of its operation, and in the many decades since. The theme of this convening is the exploration of the many aspects of the relationship of the Underground Railroad to the broad question of identity.

Topics suggested by this theme might include:

- How the UGRR impacted perceptions and self-concepts of enslaved people, of free people of color, of abolitionists, and of anti-abolitionists
- The reciprocal influences between the UGRR and Black Nationalism in the pre-Civil War decades and since
- Local stories of the UGRR and their effect on the changing identities of local communities today
- The growing importance of the UGRR and Abolitionism in the narrative of the long Black freedom movement

- How the UGRR, the Civil War, and Reconstruction transformed understandings of African American ethnicity
- Freedom seekers adopting and adapting Canadian identity
- Preserving African identity within today's larger American context
- Music as a pathway for defining identity
- The imposed stereotypes of enslaved people and stories of how people reshaped identities during Reconstruction
- Reclaiming slave genealogy in shaping identities today
- The relationship between the UGRR and the African diaspora
- How do we integrate our understanding of the influences on American identities into strategies that effect change in how we and our youth go forward to build a just and equitable society

The Call for Proposals and other details are available at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/

Bring your voice to the conversation. Share your stories. Engage with UGRR history and its relevance with us today. Family friendly activities and interactive experiences will be part of this enriching program for all ages.

Over the Past Months



Welcome to new URHPCR Board Members who have joined the URHPCR Board over the last several months (from left, back to front) Lai-Monte' Hunter, Lorraine Wynne, Deborah Rausch, Kevin Henchy, Yolanda Caldwell, Yomika Bennett, and Lisa Renee Harris. Below left are Christine Cowieson, John Dion, and Matt Kirk. We are excited about the



talents and expertise that each new board member brings to share to help realize URHPCR's mission!

NEH Teachers' Seminar led by Graham Hodges, PhD, Colgate University, visited with Paul and Mary Liz Stewart for two days to learn about Capital Region UGRR history and URHPCR.



Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars' Institute 2015



Year #4 was a great success! Learning about history, civic responsibility, preservation, public speaking, literacy development, archeology, carpentry, movie production, gardening, computer applications, and showcasing it all at the July 30 Open House!



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.

Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Madeline Kennedy, Matthew Kirk, Katherine Nadeau, Tara Ross, Peter Tunney, Donald Eberle, Sylvia Barnard, Lois Siegel, Douglas Egerton, Edward Nizalowski, Joni Blackman, Jacqueline C. Robinson, Matthew George, Deborah Goss, Dorothy Willsey, Norman Dann, Tom Ellis, Maryann Winters, P. Jenson Monroe, Julia Holcomb, Katherine Storms, Deborah Abel, Paul Delamater, MaryNell Morgan, Mary Pliska, Brenda Cave-James, Brea Barthel, Charmaine Cave-Dersham, Annette Johnson, Karl Barbir, Sharon Calhoun, Steve Trimm, Alan Singer, William and Dora Lee Stanley, Paul Tonko

Invite someone you know to become a member, or give the gift of membership - details available on the Membership Page at www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

Mark your calendars and plan to attend -

- ♦ **URHPCR Board Mtg** - 3rd Thursday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00 - 8:00pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Building & Properties Mtg** - 1st Thursday of each month, 6:00 - 7:30pm at The Myers Residence
- ♦ **Collections Committee Mtg** - 2nd Thursday of each month, 6:00 - 7:00pm at The Myers Residence
- ♦ **Library Committee Mtg** - 4th Thursday of each month, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Myers Residence

Sept. 12 - 9:30am-12:30pm - Reach Out St. Rose – join with 30+ College of St. Rose students who will be attending to grounds tasks at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. Tools and refreshments will be provided. Info at 518-432-4432.

Sept. 12 - A Dishonorable Trade: Interpreting Human Trafficking in the Dutch Atlantic World - exhibit at Crailo State Historic Site - info at <http://www.nysparks.com/historic-sites/30/collections-exhibits.aspx>

National Abolition Hall of Fame & Museum - info available at <http://www.NationalAbolitionHallofFameandMuseum.org/>

North Star Underground Railroad Museum - info available at <http://www.NorthCountryUndergroundRailroad.com>

Questions? Concerns? Contributions? Interested in volunteering?
Contact us at (518) 432-4432 or at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org.

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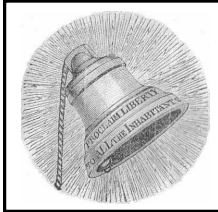
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***Learn the Past, Be the Present,
Create the Future®***

ON THE WEB AT

UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG

Taking the UGRR & URHPCR on the Road - Paul Stewart

Underground Railroad History Project (URHP) may be based in the Capital Region but its story is getting around to lots of places. In recent months co-founders Mary Liz and Paul Stewart provided workshops in a variety of places including Buffalo, New York, Cambridge, Maryland and Manchester, Vermont.

This past June Mary Liz and Paul presented a workshop at the New York State History Conference at Niagara University in Buffalo. The conference was attended by scores of historians, academics and public history workers who engage the broader community with NYS history. There were many workshops and presentations and among them was a workshop on community engagement featuring the story of Stephen and Harriet Myers, the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, and the work of URHP.

In Cambridge, Maryland the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Conference took place in early June. This three day conference featured many speakers on Harriet Tubman and the UGRR in general. The Myers's story and the story of our project in Albany were presented in terms of the eight principals for interpreting the Underground Railroad which have become a regular feature of Paul and Mary Liz's presentation of the history. These principals include how the story of the Underground Railroad can be understood as a document based story which has greater depth and meaning than the mythicized version, that the UGRR was a movement of civil disobedience, that African Americans held leadership positions, that the language we use to retell this history is important, and that it has connections to current day events and issues.

The Green Mountain Academy of Life Long Learners in Manchester, VT invited URHP to present in June. The long drive was scenic and pleasant for the traveling presenters. Manchester is a very scenic community nestled amongst the greenery of the Green Mountain State. The Manchester Free Library was the location, a beautiful building finished merely six months ago. A good crowd of 50 people gathered to hear the presentation.

The story of the Underground Railroad, of the Myers, the Myers Residence and URHP continue to be told far and wide. The unique history offered through the story of Stephen and Harriet Myers and the Myers Residence is an important offering and accent to what people should know about the Underground Railroad story.

The Underground Railroad and American Identities — April 15-17, 2016