

Volume VIII, No. 1

# The Freedom Seeker

Spring / Summer 2011

## “Let your motto be resistance!”

Henry Highland Garnet, August 21, 1843

By: Paul Stewart

Let your motto be resistance! *resistance!* RESISTANCE! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance." These were the words of Henry Highland Garnet to the more than four million enslaved people in America in 1843. These words were spoken in a speech before the National Negro Convention in Buffalo at a time when Garnet was the pastor of the Liberty Presbyterian Church in Troy, New York. The words symbolize his thinking with respect to how enslaved Africans across the country should respond to their plight. Garnet's speech was typically eloquent and helps one to get a better understanding of this important person in the story of the region's Underground Railroad network.

Garnet was born into enslavement in 1815 near New Market, Maryland. On the occasion of a funeral, George, Garnet's father, took the entire family and fled to freedom in Pennsylvania. Later they settled in New York City, where they changed their name to Garnet to celebrate their freedom from enslavement, and then fled when slave catchers came looking for the family.

Schooling came for Henry through the African Free School and the Phoenix High School for Colored Youth in New York City. Later he attended the Noyes Academy in New Hampshire and the Oneida Institute at Whitesboro near Rome, New York, where he studied theology. In 1839 Garnet came to



Henry Highland Garnet

Troy, New York where he taught school and studied theology with Rev. Nathaniel S. S. Beman of the First Presbyterian Church. Garnet was soon called to pastor the newly established Liberty Street Presbyterian Church, an all black congregation which quickly became a center for seeking an end to slavery

and a refuge for freedom seekers.

Garnet's speech in 1843 called on the enslaved to resist their enslavement. In quick paragraphs it summarized the history of African enslavement, the argument offered by the early American Colonists that it was England's fault that there was slavery, the quick proof of the argument's falsehood by the failure to abolish enslavement, and the inconsistency of those in America calling themselves Christians while preventing the enslaved from reading the Bible or providing education. He highlighted as heroic the rebellions of Denmark Vesey (1822), Nat Turner (1831), Joseph Cinque (1839) and Madison Turner (1841) and called them "Noble men! ... their names are surrounded by a halo of glory" because of their efforts to achieve freedom.

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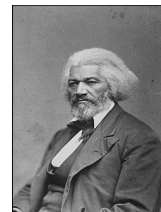
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The Freedom Seeker is a publication of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting knowledge of the 19th century Underground Railroad Movement and its legacy in the Capital Region, 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, New York 12201. Email at [info@ugrworkshop.com](mailto:info@ugrworkshop.com).

## A 4th of July Oration - Liberty and Justice for All ?

*In 1852 Frederick Douglass challenged the rhetoric of America with the conditions of Africans in America at that time. Today we revisit Douglass's challenges in light of our modern setting in a new political era.*



Monday, July 4th \* 11 am - 1 pm

The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence  
194 Livingston Ave., Albany

Free & open to all

Bring your own chair - Limited facilities available

**Join in the 3rd annual July 4th Oration**

Parking available on Livingston Avenue and on Third Street



Guest speaker:

**Dr. Andor Skotnes**

Professor, History of the Americas in the Department of History, Law, and Government, Sage Colleges, Troy, NY

## Abolishing Slavery in the Atlantic World: the 'Underground Railroad' in the Americas, Africa and Europe

THANK YOU !

THANK YOU !

THANK YOU !

A great time was had by all in attendance at the 10th annual UGR Public History Conference co-sponsored by Sage Colleges and Rensselaer County Historical Society! The Conference Planning Committee and Board of URHPCR would like to express our gratitude to those of you who attended, to the vendors and poster display participants, and to our donors and to our advertisers.

**Myers Circle** donors (\$3000+) included New York Council for the Humanities and Russell Sage College. **Johnson Circle** donors (\$2000+) included The Arts Center of the Capital Region, M&T Bank, and Charles Touhey. **Beulah Circle** donors (\$1000+) included Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. **Vigilance Committee Circle** donors (\$500+) included Brighter Choice Foundation, The Community Foundation of the Greater Capital Region's Standish Family Fund, Joseph Cavazos, Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation, Alice Moore Foundation, Times Union, and The Gazette. **Anti-Slavery Advocates (\$250+)** included Assemblyman Ron Canestrari and Congressman Paul Tonko. **Lamplighter** donors (\$100+) included Albany District Links, Eyedentity Eyewear, Hon. Kathleen Jimino, Krispin's Automotive Repair, and Family Planning Advocates of NYS. **Watchman** (\$50+) included Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Hon. Dominick

Calsolaro, Laura Lee Linder, and Katherine Storms. **Friends** included Barbara K. Spring, Barbara Traver, Judith Wellman, Kate Clifford Larson, Mary Elizabeth Jones, Mia Morosoff, New Jerusalem Home of the Saved, Rose Marie Lamorella, Rosemary Nichols, Sue Clark, and Tim McDonnell.

Our advertisers included The Adult Learning Center, Affordable Housing Partnership, Al Tabari Court No. 28 D. of I., Albany County Historical Association, Albany Friends Meeting, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany City Historian Anthony Opalka, APSTA, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, Brooklyn Historical Society, Capital Area Council of Churches, CDCWRT, Clifford Oliver Photography, CLFCR, CSEA Local 1000, First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Girl Friends, HAF, Historic Cherry Hill, Hon. Catherine Fahey, Hon. Dominick Calsolaro, Hon. Doug Bullock, Hon. Jack McEneny, Hon. Michael O'Brien, JKO CPA, John Brown Lives, Mabee Farm, Macedonia Baptist Church, Mayeesa Mitchell, Metropolitan NTM Baptist Church, Modern Press, NAHOF/GSE, Nine Mile Farm, Parcel Post Plus, Pioneer Bank, RCA, SCHS, Solidarity Committee of the Capital District, Soul Session, TAP, The Legal Project, The Sweater Venture, Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region, Union College Public History Program, URHPCR Board of Trustees, Versatile Club, and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Health Services.

## Over the Past Months



expertise enriching the development of URHPCR.

**Welcome to Jacqui Williams**, new Board member for URHPCR. Jacqui is Principal with JC3Consulting and Founding Director of Filling in the Gaps in American History (FIGAH), Inc., a not for profit organization on people of African descent who do not usually appear in text books. URHPCR Board members look forward to Jacqui's



**Archeology Summer Camp**, cosponsored by URHPCR, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. and Albany County Historical Association, will be held 9am-3pm the week of July 11-15. Open to students entering 6th through 10th grades. Registration

information is available at [www.hartgen.com/outreach/arch\\_camps.aspx](http://www.hartgen.com/outreach/arch_camps.aspx). Explore the site where Albany abolitionists Harriet and Steven Myers lived. Learn about archeological tools, excavation, artifact identification, and artifact preservation. Partial scholarship funding is available through the Community Foundation of the Greater Capital Region's Standish Family fund.

Work on the **Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence** continues. The properties committee continues to meet to strategize on ways to move forward the restoration of this treasure. New members are always welcome.



Currently a 50 page draft of the Master Plan that will govern restoration construction is being reviewed. The plan will provide a pathway for the progress of the restoration work to follow. The work on the Master Plan is being funded by a grant from the Johanna Favrot Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (\$5,000) and funds raised from the community (\$7,000).

The Standards set by the Department of the Interior for buildings on the National Register, such as the Myers Residence, require a process that starts with an Engineering Report, Existing Conditions Report, Historic Structures Report, and finally a Master Plan. Each of these has taken time and money to produce. We are now at the stage of the Master Plan. So our most focused period of construction work cannot be far behind.

In addition, we are gearing up for work on the gables of the building. We will be doing some repairs that will re-work the existing timber and brick work to stabilize it and rebuild it. Plans have already been drawn up and we are gearing up to solicit bids for this work.

## News and Notes

**Donations to Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.** are gladly accepted online at [www.ugrworkshop.com](http://www.ugrworkshop.com) or through postal mail to URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, New York 12201.

**Mark your calendars for these upcoming events -**

- ♦ **URHPCR Board Meetings** - the 3rd Thursday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at the Upton Center, Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Property Committee meetings** - Time and location information available by calling 518-432-4432
- ♦ **Conference Planning Meetings** - the 1st Monday of each month, 6-8pm at Sage College, Troy - location information available by calling 518-432-4432 or emailing [info@ugrworkshop.com](mailto:info@ugrworkshop.com)
- ♦ **Finance Committee meetings** - Time and location information available by calling 518-432-4432
- ♦ **July 4th Oration** - 11am -1pm - Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence - 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany
- ♦ **Harriet Tubman: Myth, Memory and History** - July 17 - 2pm - National Abolition Hall of Fame, Peterboro
- ♦ Visit [www.gerritsmith.org](http://www.gerritsmith.org) for a full listing of Peterboro programs

- ♦ **Solomon Northup Day** - July 16 - Saratoga Springs Heritage Area Visitors' Center, Saratoga Springs - go to <http://www.saratogaspringsvisitorcenter.com> for information or call 518-587-3241
- ♦ **North Star Underground Railroad Museum** - North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association invites you to visit this new museum celebrating the UGR history of the Champlain Valley. Information at [www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com](http://www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com).
- ♦ **Myers Residence Work Part** - Saturday, July 2 - 9am-12noon - 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany - tools and gloves provided, refreshments available

**Volunteers needed for work of URHPCR.** Can you contribute time to the Jazz Event Committee, the Conference Committee, the Finance Committee, or the Building / Properties Committee? Do you like to maintain databases? Would you like to assist with fundraising? Join us in achieving the mission of URHPCR by volunteering your time and talents.



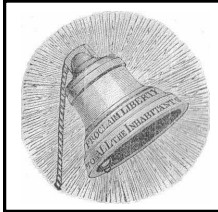
July 4th Oration  
2009



**UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
HISTORY PROJECT OF THE  
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**Let Your Motto be Resistance** (*cont'd from p.1*)

While Garnet celebrated these rebellions he also advised the enslaved that the kind of resistance to be offered was not a foregone conclusion. While armed rebellion was one kind of resistance, he supported resistance to oppression in any way deemed appropriate. And so he embraced those who disobeyed enslavers' orders, slowed work, sabotaged work, rebelled, or fled enslavement. The Liberty Street Church was known as a center of activism on the Underground Railroad. Under Garnet's leadership it offered schools for reading and general education as well as food, clothing, legal help and refuge for those just coming to the Troy community fleeing enslavement.

Other highlights of Garnet's life include preaching in England and Europe on behalf of the Free Produce Movement, a protest movement targeting products produced by enslavement (1850-52), being a missionary in Jamaica (1852-4), and being the pastor of the Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City (1855-1861) and the 15th Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C. (1864-66). He was the first African American to

preach a sermon before the United States Congress in 1865. Later in his life, in 1868, he was appointed President of Avery College in Pennsylvania, and in 1881 he was appointed Minister to Liberia where he died in 1882.



Liberty Street Church, Troy, New York, which is now commemorated with a historic marker on Liberty Street between 3rd and 4th Streets

*Paul Stewart is co-founder of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. and Scholar in Residence at Russell Sage College, Troy, New York.*