

Volume IX, No. 3

The Freedom Seeker

Winter - 2012

What Price, Freedom?

The documents below are found in their original form in
Register of Manumitted Slaves - 1800 -1828
held at The Albany County Hall of Records, Albany, New York

Even when manumitting enslaved persons, enslavers refused to give up power or privilege. One of the consequences of slavery was how it corrupted the minds of the enslavers. Enslavers saw no conflict or complication in their claims regarding freedom and the existence of enslavement. In the example of manumission offered below, from enslavers who lived right in New York Capital Region communities, the enslaver offers freedom to someone held in bondage. But, instead of simply agreeing to free the enslaved, conditions are added that transform the offer of freedom into another form of bondage. In the record copied here Elizabeth Ten Broeck offers Susanah her freedom, but as a condition of freedom requires Susanah to return without pay to complete numerous chores. In other manumission documents those in bondage were required to make scheduled payments to enslavers; late payments would even incur interest. Isn't this a strange way to offer freedom? It is clear the enslaver is divided in the desire to provide freedom and yet looking to find a way to maintain the enslavement relationship.

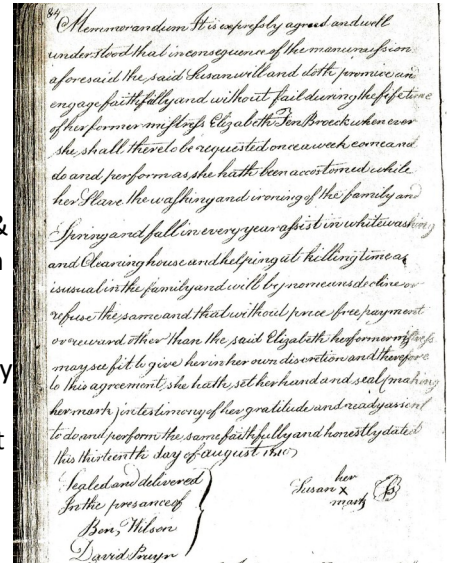
We give freedom to ourselves, we enable freedom in others.

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We take freedom from ourselves and others and they from us. Upon what principles are these decisions made? What are the outcomes of these decisions? What precedents are being set? What price do we put on freedom? Can freedom carry a price?

(Numbers denote line in original document)

- 1) Know all men by these presents that I Elizabeth
- 2) TenBroeck widow & Relict of Abraham Ten Broeck
- 3) late of the Colonie in the county of albaney Esquire deceased
- 4) Executrix of the last will and testament of the said Abraham
- 5) my deceased husband for divers good causes and considerations
- 6) me thereunto moving and by and with the advice and consent
- 7) of all my children have and by these presents Do man
- 8) umit liberate and forever set free my negro woman slave
- 9) named Susan or Susanah aged about Thirty seven
- 10) years and her three children Dinah aged about seven
- 11) years Susan aged about five years and mary aged about
- 12) three years hereby fully and absolutely releasing all and
- 13) every claim right title and property I have or may have
- 14) to her them or either of them and hereby do henceforth
- 15) declare them to be free and in all respects manumitted



(Continued on page 4)



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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@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org.

Harriet Tubman National Monument - A call from National Trust for Historic Preservation

In a letter dated November 16, 2012, Stephanie Meeks, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, asked President Obama to use his executive authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a national monument to Harriet Tubman. Meeks' letter pointed to the National Park Service's work of elucidating and articulating Harriet Tubman's story and legacy through its Special Resource Study, noting a number of potential locations for the designation including the Harriet Tubman Home, the Bucktown Village Store, and Poplar Neck.



Harriet Tubman is remembered for her role as a conductor in the Underground Railroad and as an advocate for human rights during and after the Civil War. Since her passing one hundred years ago this coming March in 1937, her story and her meaning have witnessed great resurgence. In the past 140 years nearly half a dozen researched biographies and hundreds of youth focused books, commemorative stamps, several public statues and an uncountable number of public remembrances have celebrated Harriet Tubman's life and legacy. Dedication of a national monument to Harriet Tubman can inspire us all to carry on her legacy that is part of our American heritage.

Milestones on the Road to Freedom: the Emancipation Proclamation, Harriet Tubman, and the March on Washington - A Legacy and a Future

Save the Date - Spread the Word

April 12 - 14, 2013

Save the Date - Spread the Word

2013 is the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the 100th anniversary of the death of Harriet Tubman and the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. This 12th annual conference on the Underground Railroad seeks to connect the Underground Railroad, these key events and present day struggles for freedom and justice. To that end, an extraordinary schedule of events is planned for young and old alike.



Michele Wallace Friday's Educators' Workshop will focus on racial identity and white privilege. The afternoon segment of the workshop will be privileged to have Michele Wallace, Black feminist, art analyst and daughter of Faith Ringgold, offer her comments on the topic. As well, Ms. Wallace will provide Friday evening's Opening Address, *The Portrayal of Slavery and the Underground Railroad in the Visual Art of Faith Ringgold, with Reference to the Work of Jacob Lawrence*.

Leading off Saturday morning, Historian Andor Skotnes will speak on *The Importance (or Non-Importance) of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and Today*. He will be joined by Tubman scholar Kate Clifford Larson, speaking on *Harriet*



Andor Skotnes



Kate Larson

Tubman: Then and Now. Over 25 workshops will be available, along with the inclusion of family friendly programming, new and returning vendors, more exhibitors, and the annual raffle. Keynote speaker Colia Clark, lifelong social activist with roots in the NAACP and SNCC, will speak on *The Southern Civil Rights Struggle in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Legacy of the Underground Railroad*. With their artistry, performers Travelin' This Road, SUNYA Chamber Singers, and soloist MaryNell Morgan will help us touch the past to be inspired in the present. A palate-pleasing reception with stimulating conversation will close Saturday's events.



Colia Clark

The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence will be the focus of Sunday's events with tours, slide show, USCT re-enactment unit demonstration, and discussion about the future of the Myers Residence. There is a chance that the Ghost of Liberty Church will be present as well.

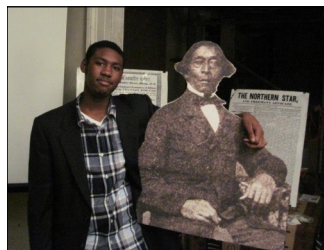
An enriching weekend awaits! Mark your calendars! Spread the word! Website and paper registration will be available in mid-January. See you in April!

Over the Past Months



Young Abolitionists continue to meet twice a month at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence in the warm months and at the Arbor Hill / West Hill Public Library in the colder months. A Halloween fundraiser was planned and implemented this past October 27. Currently, three focus groups have formed. One is working on the formation of a USCT re-enactment unit. Another is working on writing a grant to support the design and

implementation of an educational program that can be taken by the teens to local schools. A third focus group is planning a presentation for the 12th annual UGR Public History Conference. Come join in the fun!



The Stairs! The Stairs! (for those of you old enough to remember, "The plane! The plane!") of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence now have railings in place thanks to the generous contributions of time and talent

from the husband and wife team of Michael Rhodes Devey and Christine Spelich. While not historic, the railings provide much needed safety and security. Come try them out!

80' drill holes were achieved by Dente Engineering as part of a **Geo-technical Study**



to be completed before architectural plans are drawn for the exterior restoration of The Myers Residence. Over 350 artifacts were unearthed by Hartgen Archeological Associates, LLC prior to the drilling, most of which represent early 19th century material culture. Never a dull moment! Come pay us a visit.



News and Notes

Mission Statement Adopted by 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 Cynthia Battiste, Billie Aul, Douglass Arnott, Dale Black-Pennington, Mary Grates Stoll, Virginia Mafia Tobler, John Wolcott, Linda Hart, Lucy Mcknight, Robert Emery, The Free School, Mary L. Bailey, Michael O'Brien, Jelani Rice, Barbara Quackenbush, Alexandra Sautin, Kathleen R. Bronson, Mary Elizabeth Jones, Susan Haswell, Jane Meader Nye, Andrea Howell & family, Dora Lee Stanley, and John J. Coniglio.

Websites to visit:

www.GerritSmith.org
www.NorthCountryUndergroundRailroad.com
www.FarmingtonMeetingHouse.org
www.HarrietTubmanByway.org
www.HarrietTubmanBoosters.org

Mark your calendars and plan to attend -

- ♦ **URHPCR Board Mtg** - 3rd Thursday of each month, 5:45-7:30pm at the Upton Center, Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm, Rm 105, Gurley Hall, Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Building & Property Mtg** - Thursday, every two weeks, 5:30 - 6:30pm, check for location in cold weather months
- ♦ **Gardening & Landscaping Mtg** - 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00pm, check for location in cold weather months
- ♦ **Finance Committee Mtg** - 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm in Rm. E, Gurley Hall, Russell Sage College, Troy

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

Witticisms

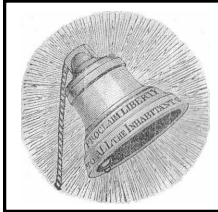
A GEOLOGIST NON-REPULSED – An old bachelor geologist was boasting that every rock was as familiar to him as the alphabet. A lady, who was present, declared she knew of a rock of which he was totally ignorant. "Name it, Madam!" cried Coelebs, in a rage. "It is *rock the cradle*, sir," replied the lady. Coelebs evaporated.

Provincial Freeman, July 1, 1854, Vol. 1, No. 15

**UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
HISTORY PROJECT OF THE
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*Underground Railroad History Project
of the Capital Region, Inc.*

ON THE WEB AT
WWW.UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG

What Price, Freedom? *(cont'd from p.1)*

16) and liberated from all rights of servitude I may or can
17) claim in consequence of the said Susan having been
born
18) my slave and her children above mentioned being
born of her in
19) my family while she was my slave ---- In Witness
20) whereof I have hereunto set and put my hand and
seal
21) the Thirteenth day of August in the year of our Lord
22) one thousand eight hundred and Ten.
23) (signed) Elizabeth TenBroeck
24) Sealed & delivered
25) In the presence of
26) Ben Wilson
27) David Pruyn
28) Memorandum It is expressly agreed and well
29) understood that in consequence of the manumission
30) aforesaid the said Susan will and doth promise and
31) engage faithfully and without fail during the lifetime
32) of her former mistress Elizabeth Ten Broeck when
ever

33) she shall thereto be requested once a week come and
34) do and perform as she hath been accustomed (sic)
while
35) her Slave the washing and ironing of the family and
36) Spring and fall in every year assist in whitewashing
37) and Cleaning house and helping at killing time as
38) is usual in the family and will by no means decline or
39) refuse the same and that without price free payment
40) or reward other than the said Elizabeth her former
mistress
41) may see fit to give her in her own discretion and
therefore
42) to this agreement she hath set her hand and seal and
making
43) her mark in testimony of her gratitude and ready
assent
44) to do and perform the same faithfully and honestly
dated
45) the thirteenth day of August 1810.
46) Sealed and delivered
47) In the presence of
48) Ben, Wilson
49) David Pruyn

her
Susan x JS
mark