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# The Freedom Seeker

## Stories Central to Underground Railroad History

By: Paul Stewart

Reclaiming documented accounts of Underground Railroad activism often focuses on stories of abolitionists. The collection of Freedom Seeker accounts retained by William Still and Sidney Howard Gay offer valuable, though limited, insight into the experiences of those brave, tenacious individuals who courageously stepped out in pursuit of the liberty that was rightfully theirs. These are the stories that are at the heart of Underground Railroad activism and are central to the reclamation of this part of American history.



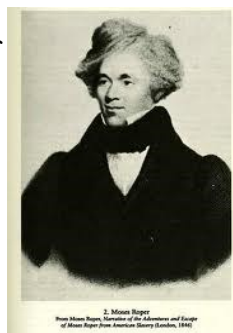
While there are a host of Freedom Seeker stories related to the Capital District of NYS, a few have been selected for inclusion here. Most notable is that of Charles Nalle, who had settled in Troy in the late 1850s, was captured under the fugitive slave law and was rescued on Troy's streets. A huge brawl ensued in the streets of Troy in an attempt on the part of conflicting forces to aid or

prevent the escape of Charles Nalle. Eventually Nalle was assisted across the Hudson River to what was then West Troy, which is today's Watervliet, and then on to Niskayuna, where he secretly resided until it was safe for him to return to Troy.

Other briefer stories include accounts of Walter Freeman, William Locks, and James Simms. Walter Freeman had escaped from North Carolina and passed through Albany in the 1840's. Having the trade of a carpenter, he was able to get work for hire which enabled him to raise money to pay for his own freedom and the freedom of other members of his family. William

Locks came to Albany in 1858. He had escaped from Maryland and found his way to Arbor Hill in Albany and the Anti-Slavery Office run by Stephen Myers. Myers gave him food and money to carry on his journey. Mr. Locks was directed to the Capital Region from a station to the south of Albany where William John Jay provided assistance. James Simms came to Albany from Boston in 1858. In Boston he received help from the Boston Vigilance Committee, from whom food and clothing were regularly provided. Locks received similar help here in Albany from Stephen Myers and other members of the Albany Vigilance Committee.

One story for which significant information is available is that of Moses Roper. After engaging in sixteen unsuccessful escape attempts, Mr. Roper persisted and on the seventeenth attempt in 1834 he successfully escaped from South Carolina and arrived in Albany, New York. Among things he relates is that, while spending time in Albany, he obtained employment on the Erie Canal. However, because his employment situation was not able to be sustained, he ended up traveling a great deal around the country, spent many years in England and Canada, wrote his memoir, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery*, and finally returned to the United States in 1861. He spent his last years supporting himself through lecturing and being employed at various jobs. He was working on the farm of James T. Skillings in Franklin County, Maine, when "his strength gave out" in April 1891.



Scores of other stories could be identified. What is important to note is that Freedom Seeker stories are plentiful. There is no need to tell the story of the Underground Railroad without focusing in on UGRR travelers. Each account gives us a glimpse into the deeper story of the UGRR, helping us to better understand the complexities and nuances of this part of American history.

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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, 194 Livingston Ave., Albany, NY 12210 or [info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org](mailto:info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org).

This newsletter is printed by Modern Press

## Volunteer Profiles



**Brittany Beyus**, is, by day, an administrative assistant at Russell Sage College in the Upton Women's Center. Brittany graduated from Russell Sage College with a major in English. Evenings and weekends, she is a social media wizard, a roller derby aficionado known as RIPunzel, a great organizer and graphic designer, and a tremendously generous volunteer with URHPCR. Brittany has worked with URHP as a Focus Group Facilitator in the Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars' Institute, and is currently volunteering on the Conference Planning Committee. Brittany brings a lot of energy, laughter, and great ideas to her work with URHP. THANK YOU, BRITTANY!



**Strawberry Thomas** and **Vershawn Patterson** are two SUNY Albany undergrads who have been updating URHP's database and membership lists. They are fulfilling community

service requirements for their courses of study. Their work has been invaluable to keeping URHP records organized and updated. THANK YOU, STRAWBERRY and VERSHAWN!

## African Burial Grounds Mini-Conference



On December 3, 2016 The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence hosted the first African Burial Grounds Mini-Conference. Interested individuals from Schenectady, Albany, Kinderhook, Nassau, Troy, the NYS Museum, the NYS Office of Historic Preservation, and the Schuyler Flatts Burial Project gathered together to discuss burial

grounds in the region and to discuss constructive ways to support each other and honor those buried at various sites. Attendees agreed to help each other with grant identification and writing, with generating community support, with technical information, with troubleshooting, and with identifying resources available through NYS agencies.

will be held at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany from 10am-2pm. A \$10 donation is requested to cover the costs of morning refreshments and lunch. Please notify Paul Stewart of your intention to attend by calling (518) 432-4432 or by emailing [pstewart@localnet.com](mailto:pstewart@localnet.com). Please leave contact information for Paul so that he can contact you prior to the February 18 mini-conference.



Care to attend the next mini-conference? Mark your calendar for **Saturday, February 18**. The mini-conference

Schuyler Flatts Burial Project -  
Interment at St. Agnes Cemetery on June 18, 2016

## Over the Past Months



**Stories from The Dirt** - an International Archeology Day event held in October, brought together a multi-age, diverse group. They learned of Ron Baxter's experience with the archeological dig that uncovered on his Fishkill property the ruins of a 19th-20th century African American Zion Pilgrim

Methodist Episcopal Church. Everyone then got down and dirty with digging in the dirt, sifting what was dug, and finding, labeling, and bagging period artifacts, all of which was complemented by great food, drink and conversation. Join in the fun in October, 2017.

**Jazz+ @theUnderground** - "I had such a great time! The music was unsurpassed, the venue was amazing, the conversation was great! Met lots of new folks and rekindled old acquaintances. I'm looking forward to this November! (Mike) **Save the Date - the Friday before 2017 elections!**



## 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.

### **Join with other volunteers in making great things happen -**

- ♦ **URHPCR Board Mtg** - 3rd Tuesday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at The Myers Residence
- ♦ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00 - 8:00pm at Schenectady County Comm. College
- ♦ **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

**Stay updated on URHPCR events - sign up for the URHPCR email listserv at [UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/home](http://UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/home)**

Questions? Concerns? Contributions? Interested in volunteering?  
Contact us at (518) 432-4432 or at [UndergroundRailroadHistory.org](http://UndergroundRailroadHistory.org)  
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

## THANK YOU!

**THANK YOU** to the major donors who supported URHPCR in 2016 - Lewis & Irene Greenstein, Hannaford, Andrea Crisafulli, Anonymous, Mark & Megan Brown, Steve O'Connor, David Hochfelder & Ann Pfau, Chris Cummings, Jerome Robinson, Sharon Robinson, Bernard Robinson, Stewart's, Renaissance Albany Hotel, Albany Rotary Foundation, and John and Cynthia Behan.

**Thank you** also to donors Julia O'Hara, Jim Knowles-Tuell, Rose Lamorella, Peter Tunney, Susan McCormick, Ralph Pennington Jr., Peter Hopper, Sharon Calhoun, Marie & Michael Purcell, Michael Salz, Janet Hart, Maud Easter, Carol Hills, Tom Fenlon, Matthew Bender, C.W. Allen, Darryl Straight, Donna Jeffress, Hollyday Hammond, Judith White, Leah Golby, Lucinda Huggins, Margo Olson, Maeve McEneny, Oscar Williams, Peter Finn, Ron Greene, Ronnye Shamam, W. Frost White, Warren Applegate, Worth Gretter, Yolanda Caldwell, Hon. Pat Fahy, Pioneer Bank, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Hon. Andrew Joyce, Adirondack Trust Co., Capitol Hill Management, Andrew Feffer & Michelle Chilcoat, Paul Murray, Hon. Kathleen Jimino, Hon. John T. McDonald III, Hon. Philip Fields, DeGraff, Foy & Kunz, LLP, Lorraine Wynne, Matt Kirk, Hon. Kathy Sheehan, Fr. Peter Young, Tanya and Leroy Owens, Wayne S. Harrison, Richard Melita, Mike Mathews, Julia Holcomb, Bruce Robinson, Women Against War, Frank Ritter, and Di Janaise Pollock.

### **Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:**

A to Z Productions: Allies for Freedom publishers, Alexandra Sautin, Amy Jacobson, Andor Skotnes, Angelique Craig, Anne Savage, Bernard Robinson, Black Heritage Tours, Carol Green, Carol Hills, Caroline Beauty Apreku, Christina Cummings, Christopher Brazee, Cordell Reaves, Darry Straight, Deborah Haber, Deirdre Sinnott, Di Janaise Pollock, Edward Nizalowski, Eileen Kawola, Frank Ritter, Gale Carter, Heather Hewitt, Holly Montgomery, Janet Kealy, Jennifer Yezzi, Jerome Robinson, John Sacca, Joseph Okoniewski, Kate Clifford Larson, Kristen Jorgensen, Lara Williams, Laura A. Lee, Linda O'Malley, Lucinda Huggins, Mari Shopsis, Mark Barth, Mark Schaeffer, Merle Longwood, Mia Morosoff, Michael Salz, Monica Driver, Nell Stokes, Patricia Oldham, Paul Nance, Peter Finn, Peter Hopper, Prentiss Carnell, Ralph Pennington, Jr., Richard Melita, Sam Fein, Sandra Cardinelli, Sharon Robinson, Susan McCormick, Vera Michelson, Warren Applegate, Worth Gretter, Yolanda Caldwell, Yvonne Abunaw, Anne Pfau & David Hochfelder, Andrea Crisafulli, Mary & Megan Brown, Steve & Diane O'Connor, Peter & Kathleen Tunny, Andrew Feffer & Michelle Chilcoat, DeGraff, Foy & Kunz LLP, Fr. Peter Young, John T. McDonald III, Katherine Sheehan, Kathleen Jimino, Philip Fields, John & Cynthia Behan, Julia Holcomb, Maria & Michael Purcell, Sharon Calhoun, Janet Hart, Matthew Bender, Thomas Fenlon, Leroy & Tanya Owens, Lorraine Wynne, Matthew Kirk, Mike Mathews, Paul Murray, Wayne S. Harrison, Pioneer Bank, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Adirondack Trust Co., Andrew Joyce, Capitol Hill Management, Renaissance Albany Hotel.

*Invite someone you know to become a member, or give the gift of membership - details at [UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/product/become-a-member/](http://UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/product/become-a-member/)*

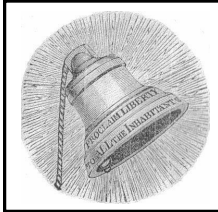
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**- - Liberty Con 2017 - - - Liberty Con 2017 - - - Liberty Con 2017 - -**

# Liberty Con

## Americans@Risk:

Race, Denial, Privilege,  
and Who Matters

When: March 24-25, 2017

Where: Schenectady County  
Community College



Presented by:  
Underground Railroad  
History Project

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### HIGHLIGHTS:

Keynote speakers: Tim Wise and CeLillianne Green

Panels: Talk to History

What's the Story?

Twisting the Truth, and how shall we respond?

Parallels of Racism Then and Now, and how  
shall we respond?

Schenectady's Piece of the Puzzle

Lesser Known Women Passing the Torch

Round Table Topic Sampler:

White privilege

Gendered racism

Our resegregated schools

Islamophobia

Humor and the Underground Railroad

Come in period costume / Find Stevie / Visit Exhibitors &  
the MarketPlace & the Art Exhibition / Play online games /  
Review and critique selected films and documentaries

**Full details at [UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/conference](http://UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/conference)**

Open House at The Myers Residence - Sunday, March 26