

The Freedom Seeker

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Summer - Autumn 2017

London's Black History: A Walk in the Shoes of Britain's Abolitionists

By: Paul Stewart

When I was in grade school there was often an assignment that came with school's start for the fall. "What did I do on my summer vacation?" was the assignment topic. People often reported on their trips to the beach or unique projects or hobbies. Me? I don't think I ever had anything to report as I do not recall ever taking what might be called a "vacation". But this year, my 65th, I have a report topic, "My Trip to London," and for this publication setting I want to report on the Black History Walking Tour I was pleased to participate in that was conducted in Clapham, London, UK.



S.I. Martin

I made a trip to London this past August and engaged in many activities but the Walking Tour in Clapham was among the highlights. The tour was led by S. I. Martin, British author, historian, journalist, and teacher, and was provided through blackhistorywalks.co.uk. Mr. Martin has written the novel *Incomparable World* (1996), the non-fiction *Britain's Slave Trade* (1999), a children's novel *Jupiter Williams* (2007), and another novel, *Jupiter Amidships* (2009).

As a close student of the Black experience in London, Mr. Martin had many subject areas he could have covered, but he chose for this walk to focus on the Clapham Sect and the transition of Britain from a promoter of enslavement to a liberator. He walked our group of 10 people through the streets of Clapham, visiting the Trinity Church, the homes of Zachary Macaulay and George Hibbert, and the two locations of the African School. These were all late 18th and early 19th century people, places and noted events related to the Black British experience.

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Trinity Church is an Anglican church, now located in a park in Clapham, which was the home church for a contradictory set of people who were important to the story of the abolition and continuance of the slave trade. The group of people referred to as the "Clapham Sect" is "British speak" for the collection of people in



Trinity Church

Trinity Church who worked together to begin Britain's abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Martin used the word "conflicted" to describe the Trinity Church's community of faith as it was composed of white anti-slavery and pro-slavery advocates as well as congregants of African ancestry. I wondered what the content of the minister's sermons were like, having such a varied congregation. Further research is required to answer this query.

Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838) and George Hibbert (1757-1837), congregants of Trinity Church, were British businessmen involved in the Sugar and Spice trade which had huge impacts on Jamaica and London. These men possessed great wealth because of it. They were both deeply involved in slavery, but on opposite sides of the issue. Macauley, a member of the Clapham Sect, worked his way into a management position on a Jamaica sugar plantation. Even though immersed in ways of the pro-slavery world, his encounters with William Wilberforce (1759-1833) contributed to his conversion to an anti-slavery activist, becoming, among other things, a co-founder of The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery in 1823. Other members of the Clapham Sect, whose numbers totaled 17, included William Wilberforce, a well-known name in international anti-slavery work, and Granville Sharpe.



In opposition to the Clapham Sect was George Hibbert, a pro-slavery activist who amassed significant wealth through his slave trade and plantation dealings. Hibbert attended Trinity church alongside anti-slavery activists and African descended Britains. Hibbert is known to have owned half of the enslaved population in Jamaica. He was an outspoken opponent of the abolition of slavery, taking issue with Wilberforce's arguments and attempting to influence the merchant class. Hibbert's home, originally consisting of eleven acres south of today's central London, still stands today as a reminder of this history.

In between many of his major stories Mr. Martin sprinkled

(cont'd on p.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 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.

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Call for Proposals

**Liberty Con 2018:
Embracing Equity in a Global Society**
Proposal submission deadline - October 30, 2017

Embracing equity in a global society is a struggle and an affirmation. In our increasingly polarized society, the symbol of the 19th century Underground Railroad movement and its abolition activists challenge us to publicly reflect and act upon the legacy of the institution of slavery in contemporary times. Elements in society that oppose equity, such as racism and discrimination, must be challenged, overcome, and corrected. Proposals are invited that address these themes with consideration of recognized freedom struggles both past and present. Additionally, proposals that articulate a path forward in embracing equity in a global society are welcomed.

Proposals for workshops and Round Tables are welcome.

Full details are on the enclosed flier and are available at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/conference.

Please help spread the word.



Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars Institute 2017



THANK YOU to the Donors who make Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars' Institute possible -



David Hochfelder , Ann Marie Hess, Sharon Robinson, Christina Cummings, Susan DuBois, Frank Wicks, Linda O'Malley, Heather Hewitt, Richard Melita, Cordell Reaves, Glenna Spits & Paul Nance, Susan Antos & Edward Fallon, Matt George

“On July 27 I attended the Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars’ Institute Open House at The Myers Residence Campus in Albany, It was truly inspirational to meet the many young adults who are involved in their various history and community related projects. I was particularly impressed by one student originally born in Malaysia whose dream it to eventually go to Law School. I encouraged him to never give up his dream. this organization is to be commended an supported.” (Matt George, 9/2017)

Over the Past Months

Welcome new Board Members -

Jennifer Burns - Professor, University at Albany and Hudson Valley Community College



Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard - Educational Consultant

Janine Moon - Registrar, Albany Institute of History and Art



Ruth Kassel - Assistant Director, Siena Office for Academic Community Engagement

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 - 7:00pm at The Myers Residence
- ◆ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00 - 8:00pm at The Myers Residence
- ◆ **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
- ◆ **Events Planning Committee Mtg** - 4th Thursday of each month, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Myers Residence

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

Plan to Attend!

Treasures in the Trenches

International Archeology Day -
Saturday, October 21, 2017 - 1pm-5pm
at The Myers Residence Campus

Join with panel invitees Mike Lucas, NYS Archeologist, Marilyn Masson, Professor, Department of Anthropology, SUNYA, and others to discuss the Summer Archeology Field School finds and impact on the continually developing Underground Railroad story. Work in self-selected groups researching information about selected artifacts from the Field School investigation.

Report back research findings to the whole group, contributing to the development of an exhibit highlighting the antebellum period artifacts uncovered during the Summer Archeology Field School. Refreshments will be provided.



Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Patricia Hicks, Patricia Eldridge, Laura Lee, Frances Tesser, Ralph Pennington, Jr., Claire Stahler, George Stahler, Debra Fagans, Elizabeth Congdon, Shana Davis, Paula Hennessy, Tomas Martin, Catherine Roeber, Jacqueline Schmidt, Frank and Virginia Wicks, Marilyn Masson

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



Mark Your Calendars

October 21 - International Archeology Day at The Myers Residence Campus - 1pm - 5pm



October 27 - Jazz@theUnderground: a Night at the Electric City - URHP's major fundraiser - 6-9pm at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady - with American jazz, blues, and roots music aficionado Bill Sims, Jr.



December - Holidays at The Myers Residence - info coming

Details at www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/events-calendar

Stay updated on URHPCR events - sign up for the URHPCR email listserv at undergroundrailroadhistory.org/home

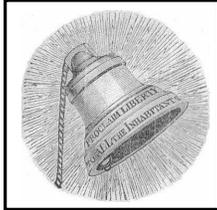
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London's Black History: A Walk in the Shoes of Britain's Abolitionists (cont'd)

the stories of the 21 African youth who were brought to London by Zachary Macaulay from Sierra Leone and were made to be students at a place called the African Academy. The students were brought to London from prominent Sierra Leone families in order to become acculturated to British values, learn industrial habits, reading, writing, and religion. Some students remained in Britain, entering successful merchant and political careers, while others returned to Sierra Leone to pursue influential political and commercial positions in the country.



African Academy

The details of this story of the African Academy in the early 19th century in London are told through the archival material held at the Brixton Museum, an independent Museum of Black History of London. Martin used his research at the Brixton Museum to elaborate on the individual circumstances of the students at the African Academy. One of these students was John Kizzel (circa 1760-circa 1830s) whose family had been involved in the Black Corps of the British Army and lived in Nova Scotia but was later resettled in Sierra Leone. In his mature years Kizzel collaborated with Paul Cuffee (1759-1853) of America, business man, sea captain, and abolitionist, on a shipping line similar to Marcus Garvey's ship line of the early 20th century. Cuffee in particular saw a need for an independent Black Shipping line that was independent of the business machinery of the slave trade and those companies associated with it.

Is there a better way to spend a summer vacation? This was a memorable and enriching walking tour that helped expand my understanding of the international aspects of the abolition movement in which our local abolitionists played a part.



Paul Stewart, Independent Researcher, Co-founder of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc., Scholar-in-Residence at Russell Sage College, public speaker, recipient of numerous awards for his Underground Railroad work, and lifelong learner.