

The Freedom Seeker

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Martha and the Slave Catchers

Written by Harriet Alonso and Reviewed by Sharon Robinson

Although Harriet Hyman Alonso's recently published young adult book, *Martha and the Slave Catchers*, features a brief appearance by one very famous person, the real story here revolves around extraordinary actions by ordinary people. Martha Bartlett is a feisty adolescent who sometimes chafes against her responsibilities and a sense that adults underestimate her strengths and abilities. Her parents and many of the townspeople in Liberty Falls, Connecticut, are part of the Underground Railroad, and from Martha's point of view, this creates an isolating web of secrecy and tension that pervades family and small-town life. There are too many secrets and too many rules for this girl, who loves to learn and hates to lie. When an orphan unexpectedly joins the Bartlett family, the central drama—and Martha's frightening adventure—begins.

Alonso is an historian and a story-teller—the perfect background for a novel that will give middle school readers an excellent sense of life in the mid-1850s. It never veers into textbook mode, but rather uses character and action to draw the reader into issues such as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As Martha travels from Connecticut to

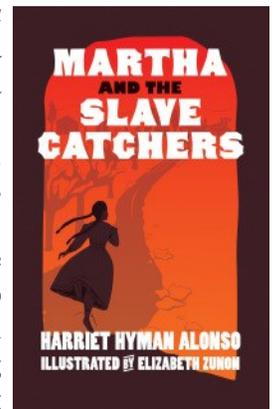


Harriet Alonso

Maryland, Alonso evokes a sense of place through small towns and big cities through the eyes of a young teenager, whose state of mind wavers between abject fear and unquestioning self-confidence.

suspenseful rescue story, *Martha and the Slave Catchers* is also a coming of age novel. Martha confronts questions about family, race, religion, slavery, adoption, depression, romance, conditions suggesting autism and ADHD, human cruelty, and, of course, the Underground Railroad. Alonso brings the reader along with Martha as her understanding evolves, within an overarching shroud of secrets and mystery that makes this book a real page-turner.

Elizabeth Zunon's illustrations add interest and drama; the dust-jacket design, in particular, suggests Martha's dangerous and lonely journey to rescue her little brother. Patricia Caro's maps on the inside covers ground the reader in geography and reveal the enormity of Martha's challenge. All told, this is a compelling and carefully-wrought book, enjoyable literally from cover to cover.



Elizabeth Zunon

Abundant resources are available at the author's website: <http://harrietalonso.com>. Parents and teachers can also consult a curriculum guide by Catherine Franklin, Professor of Childhood Education at CCNY, at the Publisher's website: www.sevenstories.com.

Alonso is also the author of an award-winning book for adults, *Growing Up Abolitionist*, the story of William Lloyd Garrison, his wife, Helen Benson Garrison, and their seven children.

Illustrator Elizabeth Zunon's work can be found at lizzunon.com

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Presented in the form of a



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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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Why Do You Support URHP?

“One of the things that makes The Myers Residence of Underground Railroad History Project really special among historic houses is that it's not just telling you about what happened in the mid-19th century but it uses the abolitionist movement as an entry point to have a greater conversation about the civil rights movement.” (John D.)



“I support Underground Railroad History Project because it is a change agent for reconciliation in the community. It brings people together to take a new look at the past and to relate that past with us today.” (Chaquoia)

THANK YOU to those who showed their support for URHP by casting a vote on Albany.com for The Myers Residence as the best museum in the Capital Region. The Myers Residence came in second place!!!!

Read *your* response here by sending your reflection to info@undergroundrailroadhistory.org

Do We Have a Picture of You at The Myers Residence?



Siena Bonner Service Leader expanding the social media horizons for URHP



Building and Properties Committee members consider best strategies for next steps in the preservation of The Myers Residence



Siena student volunteers designed a record keeping system for the numerous period outfits owned by URHP



Hudson Valley Community College students stepping back in time

A UAlbany student revisits The Myers Residence with her family



Over the Past Months

Metro [NY] Friends continue to meet in Brooklyn every other month and are busy planning an event highlighting Underground Railroad history and its relationship with us today. The September 2018 event will involve educational programs held in each borough with format and content reflective of the particular borough's history. Join with this energetic group to bring front and center the great wealth of UGRR history residing in NYC. Stay tuned for details.



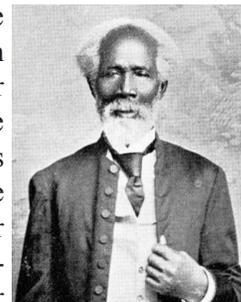
NEXT Consulting (Non-profit Excellence and Transformation) of Siena College, composed of Siena students and faculty, worked with URHP to develop a set of metric measuring tools that URHP can use to collect the data it needs to show growth over time. Thank you, *NEXT*!

Prof. Anne Glynn's First Year Seminar class from Siena College visited The Myers Residence and agreed that "all first year seminar students should be required to visit The Myers Residence."



Freedom Seeker Stories

Lewis Washington was active in the Albany and Capital Region area in the 1840s. He had been enslaved for 40 years and took his freedom. He came to the Albany area as part of his journey for freedom. While here he was appointed a lecturer for the Northeastern New York Anti-Slavery Society and traveled all over the region telling his story of enslavement and his escape to freedom. We are fortunate to have his picture from later in life as he was later active in the Midwest and his picture was included in the Olin family history of Wisconsin. Lewis Washington became a close associate of the white Baptist minister Abel Brown and traveled with him on lecture work for the Northeastern New York Anti-Slavery Society. Lewis Washington helped many to freedom through his antislavery work. His story reminds us that not all who escaped enslavement and made their way to freedom went on to Canada or other places. Some stayed within the United States and worked tirelessly for the freedom of others.



News and Notes

Mission Statement of URHPCR:

Underground Railroad History Project researches and preserves the local and national history of the Underground Railroad movement, its international connections, and its legacy to later struggles, engaging in public education and dialogue about this movement and its relevance to modern society.

Join with other volunteers in making great things happen -

- ◆ **URHPCR Board Mtg** - 3rd Tuesday of each 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** - 2nd Thursday of each month, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Myers Residence

Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Susan DuBois, Devorah Tarrow, Prentice Carnell, Edith Ruth Piwonka, Larry Tune, Mario Salerno, Mary Ellen Johnson, Yvonne Abunaw, Bill Baldwin, Brittany Beyus, Tammy & Conrad Crasto, Deborah LaFond, Brea Barthel, Thomas Ellis, Ahimsa Teabout, Barbara Traver, Joan Traver, John Kalas, Darius Shahinfar, Diane and Steven O'Connor, WAMC NE Public Radio, Lacy Thaler Reilly Wilson Architecture and Preservation, APSTA, Capital Wine, Congressman Paul Tonko, Mayor Kathy Sheehan, MAGCAR Insurance, Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region, ACCVB, Albany (NY) District Chapter of the Links, Anthony Opalka, Assembly Member Pat Fahy, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, B. Lodge Co., CLFCG, Eyedentity Eyewear, First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Assembly Member John T. McDonald III, Senator Neil Breslin, Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway, Krispin's Automotive Repair, Solidarity Committee of the Capital District, Union College's Public History Program, Vale Cemetery, A+ Home Improvement



Stevie Wants You



Renew your membership - Invite someone you know to become a member - give the gift of membership - one time payments and subscription memberships are available on the Membership Page at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

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

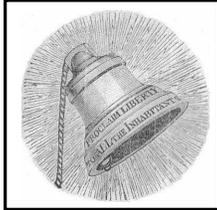
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***Learn the Past, Be the Present,
Create the Future®***

ON THE WEB AT

UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG

Mark Your Calendars and Plan to Attend!

"Proost! A Brewed & Boozy sampling of 1850's Albany"

Beer and spirits have long been a part of Albany's heritage. Step back in time with distiller Johnny Curtain, beer historian Craig Gravina, and brewer Scott Veltman as they take you back to the 1850s and with boozy samplings inspired by what 19th century Americans in Albany drank, learn how they were made, and how alcohol affected and influenced the city's culture and history. **(6/22/18)**



July 4th Oration: In These Challenging Times with featured speaker Congressman Paul Tonko - the legacy of the institution of slavery weighs us down as a nation, but, together, we can rise up and shake off the weight by carrying on the enduring legacy of our abolitionist forebears. **(7/4/18)**

Young Abolitionist Teen Scholars' Institute Open House Celebrate with Institute teens as they showcase the culmination of their transformative service learning experience. **(8/09/18)**



Seeking Sanctuary Exhibit Grand Opening & Reception

Our nation was founded on the principle of sanctuary. It has been reiterated by our embrace of the Statue of Liberty and the engraved poem on its base. Yet, seekers and providers of sanctuary have been feared and demonized across time, from the Underground Railroad period forward. Join with us in a celebration of the commitment, bravery and tenacity of our past and present seekers and providers of sanctuary. **(9/07/18)**



Jazz+@theUnderground We're livening things up with Albany Distilling Co. and a VIP tasting hour and some jazzy jazz. Stay tuned. It's the jazz event of the season! **(9/26/18)**

Veteran's Day Remembers African Americans living and passed who have represented our country in armed conflicts, from the USCT forward. **(Date and time TBD)**

Giving Tuesday will be with us on November 27, 2018. We hope we can count on you to help URHP make its match. **(11/27/18)**

Complete details will be available at 518-432-4432 and at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org/events-calendar.