

The Freedom Seeker

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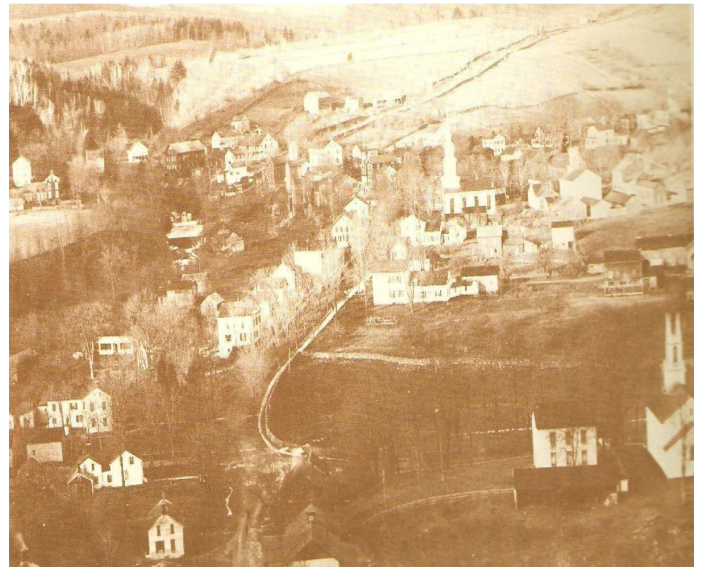
Just Who Were Ranse and Patience?

By: Robert W. Arnold III

In 1810, Nathan Hawley died in Albany, leaving behind his wife and ten children, about half of whom were adults. Hawley, a former schoolmaster from Connecticut was part of the massive post-Revolutionary Yankee out-migration from New England into the richer farmland (and opportunities) of New York State. First settling in Rensselaerville, Hawley is mentioned in the minutes of that town as holding minor public offices - roadmaster, fenceviewer, and poundmaster. The Federal Census of 1800 identifies him in Rensselaerville with his wife, Elizabeth Sears, and 6 boys under the age of 16 and a girl aged 10 to 16.

In 1800, Nathan and Elizabeth's youngest son, George Hawley I, was born and is shown as a baby in his mother's arms in the William Wilkie painting of the family now in the collection of The Albany Institute of History and Art. Nathan was by that time the keeper of the City of Albany's "Gaol", a position he would keep until his death in 1810. According to Albany City Directories, Nathan's widow then kept a boarding house nearby on Albany's Maiden Lane. (Full disclosure: Nathan and Elizabeth Hawley and their son George I are my ancestors.)

In Nathan Hawley's will is listed his "Black Woman Patience," a human being whom he leaves to his widow. Nathan's granddaughter, Edith Skinner of Baldwinsville, Onondaga County, who



Village of Rensselaerville, ca. 1866. *People Made It Happen Here: History of the Town of Rensselaerville, ca. 1788 - 1950.* The Rensselaerville Historical Society, Rensselaerville, New York, 1977, p.42.

died in the 1960s, left *Kinfolks*, a biographical novel in manuscript about the Hawleys. In *Kinfolks*, Edith mentioned an adult male slave, "Ranse." While Ranse may be fictional, or apocryphal, he may also have had an existence in fact.

Who were Patience and Ranse? There is a legal document that establishes the existence of Patience. There seems to be no record of Ranse. While in Rensselaerville, Nathan Hawley owned no slaves, according to the 1800 Federal Census. Evidently at some time between 1800 and 1810 he acquired Patience.

In 1799, the New York State Legislature provided for the gradual manumission of all slaves by Independence Day of 1827. In the years leading to universal state manumission, male slaves were to be

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Coming Events

Walking Tours Continue
Father's Day - 1-3 pm
Bring Dad for free

Clean Up Days
Contribute to the preservation
and beautification of the
Myers Residence grounds

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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 four times a year. Editorial inquiries can be sent to URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, New York 12201. Email at info@ugrworkshop.com.

Myers Residence

Great News! Work will progress across spring and summer on some restoration issues for the Myers Residence. Western Contracting, a roofing contractor, will donate time and materials toward work on the roof. The Building Committee of URHPCR has selected a contracting firm, Western Building Restoration Co., Inc., to complete work on shoring an internal basement wall that has needed attention. Following completion of this work, some temporary front façade beautification work will commence.

Thank You

- *to the Albany County Legislature* for awarding URHPCR \$3000 for roof and gable repair on the Myers Residence.
- *to Rev. Maurice Drowns and the Interdenominational Ministers' Conference* for a \$400 donation.
- *to Upstate History Alliance and Heritage New York* for grants to fund a consultant that will help URHPCR implement a capital campaign for restoration work on the Myers Residence.
- *to NYS Assemblymen Jack McEneny and Ron Canestrari* for a \$50,000 Community Capital Assistance grant.

Shirley Farrell Paints Myers Residence, Donates Work

We would like to thank Shirley M. Huhn Farrell for her donation of an oil painting of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence to URHPCR. Ms. Farrell is 83 years old and has been painting since the 1960s and 1970s. She was the mother of five children and is presently a resident of the City of Rensselaer. Her works have only recently begun to be exhibited.

In 1986 her works were exhibited at June's Place in Clarksville and Studio 85 in Slingerlands. She has painted hundreds of works over the years for friends, and family and has had works commissioned by those who have enjoyed her art. In 2007 she completed an image of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence which she painted from a photograph shared with her by her daughter.

The painting was donated in 2007 to Underground Railroad History Project. Ms.

Farrell's work joins that of Bob Link who created a watercolor of the Myers Residence in 2005. He had painted his in connection with the vacant buildings art works that were done for Historic Albany's annual fund raiser. The Link painting was purchased by William Bouchard and donated to URHPCR at the 2005 annual conference.



BECOME A MEMBER

The Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. (URHPCR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting knowledge and understanding of the 19th-century Underground Railroad Movement and its legacy in the Capital Region, in New York State, and in the United States. Among other goals, URHPCR promotes and encourages historical research and education on the Underground Railroad Movement and seeks to mark places of historic interest relating to the Underground Railroad Movement in the Capital Region.

Benefits of Membership:

- ◆ Invitation to the annual Albany Conference
- ◆ Subscription to *The Freedom Seeker*, published four times a year
- ◆ Invitations to URHPCR special events
- ◆ Walking tours of Capital District Underground Railroad Sites at a reduced rate
- ◆ Announcements of local, state, and national events on the Underground Railroad Movement

A limited number of subsidized individual memberships are available. Please call 518.432.4432 for more information.

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News and Notes

People of Courage, People of Hope, Seekers of Justice - UGR walking tours in downtown Albany will be held on June 11, July 20, August 17, September 14, October 12. Tours begin at 1pm at the Albany Heritage Area Visitors' Center at Clinton and Broadway. Cost is \$7 for walkers 16 years and older, free for walkers younger than 16 years. Tours do not visit safe houses, they visit locations key to underground railroad work and celebrate the stories of freedom seekers and those who assisted them.



Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence and UGR Campus clean-up dates - bring your gloves, gardening tools, enthusiasm, and muscle power to 194 Livingston Avenue on June 7, July 12, August 9, September 13, and October 4. Clean ups begin at 9am and conclude by 1pm. Light refreshments will be served.



Invite URHPCR to speak at your event - call 518-432-4432 or email info@ugrworkshop.com.

Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members John P. Hogan, Jean Adam Forti, Isabel Mills, Mary Munteer, Jane Meader Nye, Denise Clement, Helen Kim, Mary E. Jones, Verna Carr, Cindy DeMarco, Ian Mackay, Katherine Storms, David Jon Greenwood, Michael Barret, Donald Baxter, Elizabeth Condon, Helen Torian, Deborah Tarrow, William Ritchie, Robert Arnold, Roberta Nunn, Johanna Patience, Janet Walker, Sharon Calhoun, Ahimsa Teabout, New York Council for the Humanities, Laura LeClair, Robin Toia, Peter Hess, Kathy Quandt, Peter Tunney, Charles Touhey, Karen Hartgen, Ron Canestrari, Albany County Historical Association, GirlFriends, William Lithgow, Virginia Cummings, Julia O'Hara, AKA - Delta Mu Omega chapter, Marcia Smith, Charlotte Criner, Margaret J. Smith, and Mary Lou Baum.



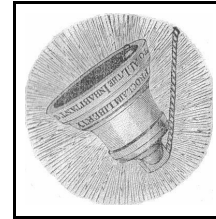
Visit www.ugrworkshop.com Highlights page - new information and photos are frequently posted there.



Welcome to new Board Member John Inman - a NYS registered architect, John brings his community activism and architectural expertise to the restoration of the Myers Residence.

ON THE WEB AT WWW.
UGRWORKSHOP.COM

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**UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
HISTORY PROJECT OF THE
CAPITAL REGION, INC.**

Just Who Were Rance and Patience?

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freed when they reached the age of 29 and females by the age of 28. The Albany County Manumission Register, kept in the archives at the Albany County Hall of Records, makes no mention of either Rance or Patience or of the manumission of any slave belonging to any family named Hawley. It is likely, then, that Patience, and Rance if he existed, "aged out" of slavery without need for manumission by their owner.

What happened to them? Did they eventually die in Albany for burial in the plot set aside for "Africans" in the City cemetery later removed from Albany's Washington Park? Or were they in the largely unrecorded hillside cemetery off Sheridan Avenue (nee Canal Street)? If buried in the Park, were their remains among those taken to Albany Rural Cemetery when Washington Park was first established in the 1840's?

County Legislative Grant Helps



Above: In 2007 The Albany County Legislature voted to provide grants to help local organizations complete important projects. URHPCR was fortunate to receive a grant of \$3,000 to support restoration work on the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. Pictured above, board President Ahimsa Teabout, right, thanks County Legislator Virginia Maffia-Tobler.