

Volume IX, No. 2

The Freedom Seeker

Autumn - 2012

Stephen Myers Writes to the Provincial Freeman

Published by Mary Ann Shadd

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at York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Mr. Editor: A short time ago I had the opportunity and pleasure of visiting several localities West, in some of which I found large numbers of colored people interspersed amongst other classes of her Gracious Majesty's subjects, who by their sobriety, industry and enterprise, are gaining the respect and confidence of all who have any dealings with them, and thereby giving a most practical and palpable contradi[c]tion to the hypocritical cavil of slaveholders and their abettors, who are constantly prating about the incapacity of not only their slaves, but of the colored people as a class. Thus, that which has been their sole pretext for perpetuating the accursed system of slavery, is, by such repeated and continued evidences as are daily seen in this Province, and even in the U.S. most demonstrably proved to be without the last foundation in the truth. It is not my purpose however, at the present, to go into an elaborate argument to show how totally false, and basely absurd, such charges are. But I will content myself with giving a brief statement of facts respecting the colored people of this Province, which have recently been within the scope of my own observation. In St. Catharines there is a population of 500 persons; who are doing well, as mechanics and common laborers. Work is abundant and

Baptist. They have had rather an inferior school, in consequence of a few negrohaters, who a few years ago took the advantage of their ignorance, and against the law and usage of the country, assigned to them an exclusive school. However they understand their rights better now, and the best of all they have the courage to demand



them. In Hamilton the colored population number between 600 and 700 persons who are not one whit behind those of St. Catharines. There are several mechanics, several in business, &c. &c. They have two chapels in this place also Methodist and Baptist. They enjoy equal privileges &c. London, there are about 500 colored people in this, the handsomest and largest town in Canada West. The colored people are making most rapid progress in this place. Mr. A. B. Jones, a resident of London himself and owner of some very valuable property there, showed us a very beautiful site of land laid out in half acre lots, many of which have been purchased by colored persons. There is not a better location in London than this site of land. Here, too, the colored people have two chapels, viz. Methodist and Baptist. I suppose that by this time

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wages good. Many of them are owners of real estate property, and in comfortable circumstances; and the desire and determination of all is to become possessors of the soil or some kind of property. They have two chapels viz. Methodist and



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Call for Proposals

12th Annual UGR Public History Conference

Milestones On the Road to Freedom:

Emancipation Proclamation, Harriet Tubman,

and the March on Washington - a Legacy and a Future

April 12 - 14, 2013

In collaboration with the Sage Colleges



The year 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. These, and other key anniversary events, are milestones along the road to achieving Martin Luther King's vision articulated in his "I Have a Dream" speech.

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. Toward this end the committee solicits proposals that elaborate, analyze and articulate these stories, connections within them and their relationship to the present.

*Details are available at www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org
or by calling 518-432-4432*

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.

What's the buzz? Tell me what's happenin'!



*July 4th Oration,
"What to the Slave is
the 4th of July?"*



*Young Abolitionists of
the Artists in Residence
Summer Youth Program*

Archeology Field School



*Young Abolitionists of
the Artists in Residence
Summer Youth Program*



*Building & Properties
Committee and Gardening
& Landscaping Committee*

*June 30 Work Party at
the Myers Residence*



*Green Tech High and
URHPCR volunteers*

*Reach Out St. Rose,
Green Tech High, and
URHPCR volunteers*



Over the Past Months



Corey McQuinn, an archeologist and Project Director with Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., joined the URHPCR Board in August. He is completing a Master's Degree in Anthropology with a focus on historic archeology. Corey conducts the Summer Archeology Field School that has become a collaboration between URHPCR, Ten Broeck Mansion, and Hartgen.

Corey is prepared to "... offer the organization my youth and energy, my professional skills and connections, and my belief that history belongs to those who live it." Welcome aboard, Corey!



Alexandra Sautin, Sales Officer and Branch Manager of Pioneer Savings Bank, Glenmont, joined the URHPCR Board in July. Recently graduated from Sage College, Albany, with a BA in Business Administration, Sandra brings a wide array of personnel and management skills and volunteer experiences to help

URHPCR implement its mission. Welcome aboard, Alexandra!

Thank you to Kathy Pelham, Joe Cavasos, Michael Flinton, and Annette Johnson for their service on the URHPCR Board.

1772 Foundation awarded URHPCR a \$25,000 grant to be used toward restoration of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. The funds will contribute to URHPCR's goal of raising an additional \$200,000 which, when added to a \$350,000 EPF grant, will provide the funds needed to complete exterior restoration.



The 1772 Foundation is a private foundation based in Pomfret, Connecticut. In recent years it has maintained a program of assisting museums and historic sites that are tied to the African American story in the northeastern United States. "We are very excited about receiving this support," says Paul Stewart, a co-founder of Underground Railroad History Project.

"Thus far we have been able to involve hundreds of volunteers in the general work of restoration. Raising funds is essential to bringing the work to completion. We're looking forward to when we can open the building to the public on a daily basis," Stewart said. "It's an extremely important representation of how the Underground Railroad was operating."

The Building and Properties Committee, which oversees the ongoing restoration process, consists of Paul Stewart, Director of Historic Albany Foundation Susan Holland, Preservation Architect Lee Pinkney, Michael Rhodes-Devey who is a lawyer with Towne, Ryan and Partners, P.C., and Patricia West who is curator of the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site.

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
Michelle Rogers, Joseph Mitlof, Katherine Larson, Sandy and Mario Salerno, Matthew Smalls, Sharon Calhoun, Patrick Murphy, and Sue Bogdan-Ritty.

Visit www.gerritsmith.org for a full listing of programs scheduled at the Gerrit Smith National Historic Landmark - National Abolition Hall of Fame and Smithfield Community Center.

North Star Underground Railroad Museum celebrates the UGR history of the Champlain Valley. Information is available at www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com.

Visit www.farmingtonmeetinghouse.org to learn about the Quaker meeting house that "stood at the crossroads of activism" for the rights of African Americans, women, and Native Americans.

Witticisms

MOVING WEST – "Philura, dear," said a loving husband to his loyal spouse, who was several years the junior, "What do you say to moving out West?"

"Oh, I'm delighted with the idea. You recollect when Morgan moved out there, he was as poor as we are, and he died in three years worth a hundred thousand dollars."

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, at the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
- ♦ **Gardening & Landscaping Mtg** - Wednesday, every two weeks, 5:30-7:00pm, Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence
- ♦ **Finance Committee Mtg** - 3rd 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.

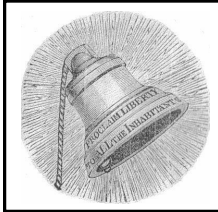
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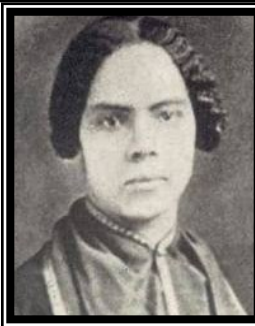
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Stephen Myers Writes *(cont'd from p.1)*

you have concluded that we are all Methodists and Baptists, or that, that is the extent of our religious divisions. It is pretty much the case, I assure you, to which I am quite agreed they should be limited. But I must resume my subject. All that has been said in favor of the other places, may in truth be said of London, and I am disposed to think, that London is a little ahead of either of the other two. But they are all doing remarkably well, when it is remembered that a few years ago the most of them were slaves, and came into this Province penniless, some of them almost naked; who have in a few years by their perseverance and industry, raised themselves to respectability, and if not the affluence, they are to say the least in a way fair to it. I have had the pleasure of seeing several colored farmers owning from 50 to 400 acres of land, many acres of which are now cleared and in a fine state of cultivation. I think that without doubt, our farmers are far excelling every other class amongst us. They have a decided advantage over the other classes; of which we may speak hereafter.

ELEVATOR

The Provincial Freeman, May 6, 1854



Mary Ann Shadd Cary, born in Wilmington, Delaware in 1853, rose to prominence as the editor of The Provincial Freeman newspaper published in Canada West between 1853 and 1857. This weekly publication advocated for equality, integration and self-education for Afro-Canadians and Afro-Americans.

In his letters to the Provincial Freeman, Stephen Myers describes his travels in Canada West in the early 1850s. He tells how freedom seekers successfully settled in a number of Canadian communities. Stephen and his wife, Harriet, worked continuously for the betterment and "elevation" of the enslaved, freedom seekers, and free persons of color. One of his earliest publications was called "The Elevator". Hence, his "nom de plume", Elevator, as the signatory of the correspondence in a number of issues of The Provincial Freeman.

