

Volume XII, No. 1

The Freedom Seeker

Winter 2014-2015

Visitor's Guide to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

By Paul Murray, Professor of Sociology, Siena College

Sitting on a high bluff overlooking the Ohio River in downtown Cincinnati, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center educates thousands of visitors each year about the worldwide struggle for freedom and human rights. In several aspects the Center's stated mission parallels that of Underground Railroad History Project. Its goals are "to reveal stories of freedom's heroes, from the era of the Underground Railroad to contemporary times, challenging and inspiring everyone to take courageous steps of freedom today."



In October I attended the "Fifty Years after Freedom Summer" conference sponsored by Miami University of Ohio. The first day's events took place at the Center and I took advantage of the opportunity to inspect its many exhibits. The first thing I learned about this spacious, modern structure which opened in 2004 was that it is much more than a building dedicated to preserving the history of the underground railroad. Street signs direct visitors to the "Freedom Center" and freedom

is the central theme of its displays and programs.

The first floor contains administrative offices and a well stocked gift shop. I browsed its collection of books on African American history, the Underground Railroad, and the Civil Rights Movement and couldn't resist purchasing a delightful picture book about the sit-ins for my grandchildren. I was also pleased to find recordings by Schorharie County musicians Kim and Reggie Harris among the CDs available for sale. Those who would like a t-shirt or coffee mug to remember their visit will not be disappointed.

Taking the advice of a helpful docent, I began my tour at the "From Slavery to Freedom" exhibit on the third floor. This area traces the history of people of African descent in North America from the early days of the slave trade to the end of Reconstruction. Also included



are the stories of other people fighting for freedom such as women and Native Americans. Also on the third floor, the "Invisible: Slavery Today" section reminds visitors that more than 12 million people worldwide are enslaved today. It relates the stories of five individuals trapped in forced labor, child bondage, sex trafficking, and domestic servitude and suggests (Cont'd. on p. 2)

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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 three times a year.

Editorial inquiries can be sent to
URHPCR, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, NY 12201 or
info@undergroundrailroadhistory.org

Bonnets & Bayonets: an Evening of Victorian Dance

Saturday, January 24, 2015 - - 6pm-9pm
195 Second Street, Troy, NY
Sponsored by Young Abolitionists

*In an authentic 19th century ballroom on
historic Washington Park in Troy*

Period attire encouraged

\$15 in advance - \$20 at the door

Reservations at:
www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org

Refreshments, live music, great conversation,
& dance instruction will be available



All proceeds benefit the restoration of
The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (cont'd from page 1)

actions to halt these abuses. The area devoted to "Everyday Freedom Heroes" contains portraits and quotes from modern freedom fighters such as Marion Wright Edelman, Cesar Chavez, the Dali Lama, and Martin Luther King.

The exhibit I found most compelling was situated on the Center's second floor. It is a two story, rough-hewn log building used by Captain John W. Anderson, a Kentucky slave trader, to temporarily hold enslaved people before they were transported for sale in the Deep South. Discovered only 50 miles from Cincinnati, the structure was disassembled and rebuilt inside the Center. Its impact was greater because it closely resembles the slave pen in which Solomon Northup described being confined in "12 Years a Slave." An adjoining photo display traces the land and water routes used to deliver the unfortunate captives to their final destination in Natchez, Mississippi.

The Center also is a venue for artistic presentations. The main hall on the second floor is dominated by two floor-to-ceiling wall hangings created by Ohio fabric artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson. Done in a folk art style similar to the work of Faith Ringgold, these pieces trace Robinson's world travels and her personal

journey. A special exhibition for the Freedom Summer conference was "All for the Cause" by Cincinnati artist, Larry Collins. It consists of portraits painted in the style of religious icons of 34 people killed during the Civil Rights Movement. The Harriet Tubman Theatre, also on this floor, offers continuous showings of "The Suite to Freedom," an impressionistic animated film about slavery, freedom, and the Underground Railroad with an inspirational musical score.

The National Underground Freedom Center is well worth a visit by both young and old. Guests should allow three or four hours to take in all of the exhibits. It is easily accessible off Interstate 75 or 71. Perched between Paul Brown Stadium, home of the Bengals, and the Great American Ballpark, home of the Reds, the Center offers plenty of parking, but you should check schedules to avoid game days. The Center's proximity to the ball parks also provides easy access to a variety of dining establishments.

For further information: <http://www.freedomcenter.org/>

Paul Murray, PhD, teaches at Siena College. His primary research interest is the modern Civil Rights Movement. He has published "The Civil Rights Movement: References and Resources" (1993), and numerous journal articles and reference work entries.

Over the Past Months

The Myers Residence Rising: External Restoration Nears Completion

We have passed day 101, as of November 25th, of the work being completed under the current work contract on the Myers Residence. The various contracts in recent years have restored the chimneys and gutters, repaired the seriously damaged back wall, eliminated cracks in the side walls and rebuilt and reinforced a basement wall. There still remains much to be done. As we go to print the windows are being replaced. Soon we will have a building where we can have heat inside to warm it in colder months.



The Myers Residence is an artifact and monument to the work of the abolitionist community in Albany. While it is a shame that so many of the other buildings that are related to this history have been lost, it is our good fortune that this building, which can be tied to the Myers' story, the Vigilance Committee, and known Freedom Seekers who were referred there, has remained for us to celebrate the important history that is the Underground Railroad story. — *Paul Stewart*

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.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend -

- ◆ **URHPCR Board Meetings** - 3rd Thursday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ◆ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 5:30 - 7:00pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ◆ **Building & Properties Mtg** - monthly, 5:30 - 6:30pm at Albany Center for Economic Success
- ◆ **Finance Committee Mtg** - 2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:30-6:30pm at Albany Center for Economic Success

Information about these meetings and events is available at 518-432-4432 or at info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

Questions? Concerns? Contributions? Interested in volunteering? Contact us by calling 518-432-4432 or by visiting www.UndergroundRailroadHistory.org.

Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Zoe Nousianien, Joe Lemmond, Douglas Arnott, Fredda Peretz, Noelle Kinsch & Darius Shahinfar, Sue Clark, William Suggs, Robert Emery, Joan Traver, William Stanley & Dora Lee Stanley, Susan Haswell, Barbara Traver, Sylvia Barnard, Peter Sokaris, Linda Hart, Christina Cummings, David Hochfelder, Mario & Sandy Salerno, Paul Herman, Ron Canestrari, Mary E. Jones, Peter Tunny, Paul T. Murray, C. W. Allen, Mary Scanlan, Fred & Maren Stein, Albert DeSalvo, William G. Ritchie, Barbara J. Tommaso, Thomas F. Martin, Jacqueline Robinson, Roberta Villanova Nunn, John Coniglio, Paul Rosenberg, Mark Platt, Joanne Bakeman, Sydney Nathans, John Wolcott, Deborah Tarrow, Matthew George, Jean Adam Forti, Eileen Kawola, The Sage Colleges, Peter Hess, Roger Tilden, Tonya Owens, Vera P. Michelson, Michael O'Brien, Fergus Bordewich, Lynne Dolan, Michael Bosanko, Karla Guerri, Lucy Wong, Nell Stokes-Holmes, Mary Ellen Johnson, Merle Longwood, Harvey Strum, Preston Eugene Pierce, Bianca Englese, Laura Lee Linder, Dale Black-Pennington, John T. Battin, Nancy Rosenberg, Major Eddie Gurewitz, Joan Feuss, Mary Stewart, Norman Dann & Dott Wilsey, Donald Papson, Willie Terry, Anthony Opalka, Delta Mu Omega Alpha Kappa Alpha, Lisa Anderson, Alexandra Sautin, Deborah Rausch, Kizzy Williams, Barry Walston, John T. McDonald III, Julia Hastings, Jim Owens

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

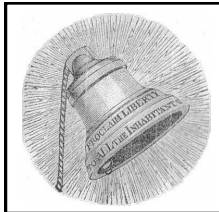
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SPECIAL ADVANCE SCREENING



The Board of Directors and Co-Founders of
Underground Railroad History Project (URHP) of the Capital Region
Invite You to Attend a

Special Benefit Advance Screening and Reception

of Paramount Pictures'

SELMA

Master of Ceremonies

The Honorable H. Carl McCall
Chairman of the Board of Trustees
The State University of New York

Dress: Business Casual

**Please support URHP's efforts to
help keep the lessons of the past**

relevant to today by buying a ticket at one of the levels below. Thank You!

Honorary Committee - \$200 per person/\$300 per couple (Must be received by 12/28/14)

Honorary Committee and Sponsors are entitled to tickets to the **"Cocktails and Conversation" Party** hosted by
The Cheesecake Factory from 5:00 - 6:00 pm, priority seating and other benefits

General Admission - \$75

Seniors 65+, Youth 13-18, Active Military - \$70

URHPCR Members - \$65

NOTE: Tickets will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Only 400 tickets available.

Tickets, Sponsorship and additional information available at www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org

If you would like to purchase a ticket but need assistance to purchase it online, please call 518-432-4432.

Additional Donations Welcome. All proceeds benefit Underground Railroad History Project.

URHPCR is a nonprofit 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York

Tuesday, January 6, 2015

7:00 pm Advance Screening of **SELMA**

Complimentary movie pass available for all participants

Regal Cinema, Colonie Center, Wolf Road, Albany, NY

9:00 pm Reception for all ticket-holders

Reception generously hosted by

Myers Circle Platinum Sponsor Colonie Center

Additional Sponsors to date include *Cheesecake Factory,*
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and Whole Foods Market, list in development



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