

# The Freedom Seeker

Volume III, No. 1

Spring 2006

## Conference: “Exceptional, Awesome, Enlightening”

It was our most ambitious and successful conference yet. Over 350 people attended Saturday workshops alone for the Fifth Anniversary UGR History Conference at Russell Sage College the last weekend in February. While the majority of participants came from the Capital Region, many came from communities scattered throughout New York, Massachusetts and Vermont. Still others came from as far away as Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Ontario.

This year we added a Friday evening dinner, with guest speaker Professor David Blight, Director of the Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University. To a sold out audience Blight addressed the role played by myth and memory in shaping our knowledge of the past, especially of the Civil War and slavery. The effect of such influences on our use of

### Coming Events

UGR tours began March 19:  
see p. 3 for schedule

UGR Canada Tour — “Going  
to the Promised Land” August  
21-24: see p. 3

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historical evidence generated a lively discussion, during the question and answer period as well as after the dinner. Professor Erica Ball of Union College addressed the Saturday plenary on the networks of “brothers, sisters and revolutionaries” that sustained the Underground Railroad as a social movement.

Cold and blustery weather cut into attendance at the Saturday eve-



*Enthusiastic students from Hartwick College spend their day in pursuit of knowledge*

ning dance party led by old-time fiddler Earl White. But White led the several dozen people gathered there through a spirited and amazing experience of mid-nineteenth century history in music and dance. White displayed some remarkable fiddling and caller Gail Griffith skillfully guided novices through complicated and challenging dance steps.

A dozen conference participants attended Sunday’s religious service at Oakwood Street Presbyterian Church, the descendent of Henry Highland Garnet’s Liberty Street Presbyterian Church. They, other conference participants, and members of the congregation, gathered for lunch before embarking on a walking tour of two of Troy’s most significant Underground Railroad locations. Refreshments following the tour provided a pleasant conclusion to the conference weekend.

As at past conferences, we asked participants to provide feedback on their experience. Many

*(Continued on page 4)*



## URHPCR Board of Directors

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*The Freedom Seeker* is a publication of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting and encouraging knowledge and understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Underground Railroad Movement 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. Email at [info@ugrworkshop.com](mailto:info@ugrworkshop.com)

## Myers Residence Update

We are pleased to report that in early March we were able to have engineer Ed Meade of Robert Silman Associates, P.C. visit the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence and evaluate it thoroughly. His final report will provide details on the extent of the structural problems as well as directions for their resolution. At this point it is estimated that the structural restoration of the Residence will cost \$1,500,000.

A full-scale grant-writing campaign is now underway; at the same time we are planning a capital campaign and a public fund drive for the fall. We hope you will join with us to raise the funds needed to restore and preserve this national treasure.

Additionally, URHPCR has purchased from Albany city and county three nearby properties that will be part of a UGR campus. One of these properties was the residence of Albany Vigilance Committee member Dr. Thomas Elkins during 1850 - 1864. Volunteers are needed for clean-up, maintenance, and gardening at these properties. Contact us or join us for clean-up session - dates are listed in News and Notes.

## Thank you to our conference donors and supporters

We would like to offer a note of thanks to financial supporters who helped make the February conference possible:

### Benefactors (\$1000):

- ◆ Albany District Chapter of the Links
- ◆ Archives Partnership Trust
- ◆ Dr. Sally Lawrence, VPAA, The Sage College
- ◆ Mr. Charles Touhey, Touhey Associates
- ◆ M&T Charitable Foundation

### Sponsors (\$500):

- ◆ Ms. Karen Hartgen, CEO, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.
- ◆ Schenectady Teacher Center

### Supporters (\$250):

- ◆ Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- ◆ Hon. David Paterson, NYS Senate

### Contributors (\$100):

- ◆ Albany County Historical Association
- ◆ Albany Public School Teachers Association
- ◆ Girl Friends, Inc., Albany Chapter
- ◆ Greater Capital Region Teachers Center
- ◆ Historical Society of the Town of Colonie
- ◆ Hon. Gerald Jennings, Mayor of Albany
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- ◆ Ms. Eleanor Baker
- ◆ Pioneer Savings Bank
- ◆ RPI – Institute Diversity
- ◆ Schenectady County Historical Society
- ◆ Troy's RiverSpark Visitor Center

Thank you to all our Scholarship Sponsors  
 And of course, thanks to all who attended.

## News and Notes

An Underground Railroad Tour, "Going to the Promised Land: A Canadian Adventure" will travel north on August 21-24. For more information on this exciting adventure, contact Debi Craig at [dcraig1@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dcraig1@nycap.rr.com)



Welcome to **new and renewed members:** Lisa Anderson, Marey Bailey, Roseann Buchnel, Sharon Calhoun, Castellani Art Museum, Capital District Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Judy Doesschate, Anthony Falco, Jean Forti, Historic Albany Foundation, Trudy Hutchinson, Suzanne Isaksen, Rebecca Johnson, Deborah LaFond, Joanna Patience, Billie Luisi Potts, Lucy Pagan, Virgia Phoenix, Louise Remick, Michael Rice & Sondra Spronkling, Jacqueline Robinson, Sheila Rorke, Cynthia Seacord, Joyce Lee Williams, Catherine Stanford, Katherine Storms, Arthur Ware III, Judy Wellman



Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence and associated property **clean-up** dates: Saturdays - 9am - 1pm - May 20, June 17, July 15, August 19, September 16



Our next **Board Meeting** will be on Tuesday, July 18 at 5:30pm. Location TBA.



**Pioneer Savings Bank's** contribution to the November Jazz Event was not noted in the list of supporters. We thank them for their financial support.



**Did you know?** Enslaved Afro-Canadians escaped from Canada to freedom in Detroit, Michigan in 1805. (Gerard.T. Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men, African Americans in the War of 1812*, Ohio: The Perry Group, 1996)

## UGR Tours Have Started

Tours of underground railroad sites in downtown Albany began on March 19. **Sunday walking tours** depart at 2 pm from the Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center. Call 518-432-4432 for information.

Remaining tour dates:

**May 21, June 11, July 16, Aug 20, Sept 17, Oct 15**

## BECOME A MEMBER

The Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. (URHPCR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and encouraging knowledge and understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Underground Railroad Movement 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 in February 2007.
- ◆ Subscription to *The Freedom Seeker* (published three times a year).
- ◆ Invitations to URHPCR special events
- ◆ Walking tour of Downtown Albany Underground Railroad Sites for a nominal charge.
- ◆ Calendar of local, state, and national events on the Underground Railroad Movement

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

### Check one:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual	\$ 25.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family	37.50
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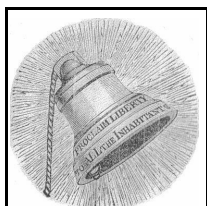
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ON THE WEB AT  
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## *Conference impact*

*(Continued from page 1)*

people praised the conference as “fun,” “inspiring,” “enlightening,” and “exceptional.” Many also offered useful suggestions for future conferences. Among the improvements they proposed were lengthening each workshop, allowing more time between sessions, extending workshops over two days, and building in more time



*(Above) Workshop participants (Left) Sheri Jackson of the National Park Service speaking on the Network to Freedom Program*

for networking. We will be considering these suggestions as we plan for the 2007 UGR history conference.

**SAVE THE DATE for the 6th annual UGR  
History Conference: February 23, 24, 25, 2007 at  
the College of St. Rose, Albany, New York  
*UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: UNCOVERING  
THE VOICES OF WOMEN***