

The Freedom Seeker

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Thrilling Options offered at 15th annual UGRR Public History Conference *The UGRR and American Identities* --- by Paul Stewart

There's no shortage of excitement regarding the upcoming 15th Public History Conference on the Underground Railroad Movement and its relevance for us today – *The Underground Railroad and American Identities!* Co-Sponsored by Russell Sage College, New York Council for the Humanities, and Rensselaer County Historical Society, the conference will explore what it meant to be an American and what it means today. Among the speakers and featured events are Bree Newsome, Graham Russell Gao Hodges, Alan Singer, a tour of sites related to African enslavement by the Dutch, the Myers Residence and much more!

As it has been for many of our recent Educator workshops, Singer will instruct and entertain while delving deeply into education and history. He will be sharing that role this year with colleague April Francis, a teacher of ten years in the Uniondale, NY School District. Their focus will be on *Racism in America: Where Do We Go From Here?* Alan Singer is Professor of Secondary Education and Director of Secondary Social Studies Education at Hofstra University. Singer is a frequently published author and has often presented at the annual Underground Railroad Public History Conference.



Bree Newsome, the young social activist, artist and film maker who scaled the 30' flag pole to remove the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House in 2015, will speak at the Friday evening Opening Address at Bush Memorial Hall. She has set her course on being an outstanding witness for justice and healing as a non-violent activist. A Reception will be held prior to her Opening Address for those who join the Honorary Committee. (Details are on the conference page of the URHPCR website.) The Opening Address will be styled as a conversation that will provide the opportunity for more audience participation than is usually available with the traditional Q&A. The program promises to be an outstanding evening for the start of the conference program.



Saturday's keynote speaker, Graham Russell Gao Hodges, is the George Dorland Langdon, Jr. Professor of History and Africana Studies at Colgate University. Among his many books, he published in 2012 a ground breaking biography of Underground Railroad activist David Ruggles. According to the Library Journal, "Hodges contributes to a better understanding of antebellum black activism and to shaping a fresh synthesis regarding how abolitionism shook America to its core. . . Essential for readers and scholars interested in antebellum America, the antislavery movement, black activists, or New York City history."

Hodges's Saturday keynote is titled, *The Underground Railroad in Colonial and Revolutionary New York: Redefining the Passage to Freedom*. His thorough, scholarly examination of issues and events connected to Underground Railroad history will open new vistas for understanding the Underground Railroad Movement.

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Prior to the Friday evening program Alan Singer and April Francis will lead the Friday Educator workshop at St. John's Episcopal Church at 146 1st Street near the Russell Sage College

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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, P.O. Box 10851, Albany, NY 12201 or info@undergroundrailroadhistory.org.

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Volunteer Profile



Volunteers and active members are the life blood of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region (URHPCR). Little of what is done can be done without their involvement and investment. One such active member and volunteer is **Brea Barthel** of Albany. Brea teaches courses in communications at the University at Albany and at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy. She has been volunteering with URHPCR for a decade. Brea started out as a volunteer at the URHPCR work parties. She wielded some wicked clippers when she waged a battle with overgrown foliage in the days before the major construction work on The Myers Residence. She has lead walking tours, spoken to groups on behalf of URHPCR, and is an incredible ambassador who is always on the lookout for others who present themselves as potential volunteers for URHPCR. As well, Brea is always on the lookout for good deals at garage and estate sales for items on the URHPCR wish list. She has been a longstanding member of the conference committee and organizes the vendors and exhibitors for URHPCR's annual conference program. A major THANK YOU goes out to Brea for her longstanding support of URHPCR.

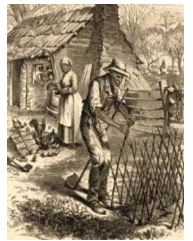
From the Voices of Those Who Came Before - by Paul Stewart

In honor of those who, with fortitude and courage, remained strong in the face of brutal oppression, we offer a few inspiring stories in this occasional piece. May their courage inspire us to carry on our work to insure that all may have access to "... life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

William Peel, aka William Box Peel Jones, was enslaved in Maryland by grocer Robert Carr. The enslavement was suffocating to William's temperament. William also noticed that Mr. Carr seemed to sell off enslaved people like he was selling more groceries. So William decided for freedom. He made arrangements to be shipped in a box to the North on the Ericson Line of steamers that operated for the purpose of transporting cargo. A friend of William's met the box at the depot to retrieve it and found that William had successfully made the trip. Once out of the box William continued his journey, stopping in Albany for a short while, staying at 125 Lydius Street, our current Madison Avenue, from which he wrote William Still. This letter appears in William Still's volume, *The Underground Railroad* (1871).

Levi Carroll escaped enslavement in the early 1840s. He passed through the Capital Region and was seen by the

Vigilance Committee of the day. He went on to Canada. Little is said of him in the initial material we found but we were fortunate to find a blog that speaks of Levi Carroll settling in the Queensbush region of Canada West. He worked various trades such as a farm laborer and shingle maker. He also took on some tenants as well in his efforts to make a living. The former enslavers placed a bounty of \$100 on him but he was never recaptured. His liberty was assured in his chosen Canadian home. [Picture: Drawing of Canadian Settlers, courtesy Buxton Site]



In the early 1840s a women by the name of **Leah Brown** passed through Albany. She had been enslaved by a Mrs. McDonald, a resident of Maryland. Ms. Brown was seen by the Vigilance Committee in Albany and Rev. Abel Brown was involved in helping her. Ms. Brown left behind a number of relatives as many were forced to do when escaping enslavement. Though her record is slim, she is one of the many women who, through her interactions with Underground Railroad activists, left an account of her name and actions. Documents indicate that she went on to Canada. A bounty was placed on her by her enslaver for her return, but it was never realized.

Over the Past Months

Welcome to new **URHPCR Board Members** who have joined the URHPCR Board over the last several months.



Daniel Butterworth is Program Director for Community Engagement for the President's Office at the University at Albany. He brings nine years of non-profit management experience with him.

Leola Edelin is the General Manager for Renaissance Albany Hotel, a newly renovated 203 room luxury hotel in downtown Albany. As GM, Leola directs and coordinates all aspects of the hotel's services and staff.



John Behan is Principal-Planner with Behan Planning and Design. As a planner, he has engaged in creative and collaborative planning projects across the last 25 years. Engaging the community in planning is integral to his endeavors.



Thank you to retiring board members Paul Murray, Michael O'Brien, and Lai-Monte' Hunter for their many contributions to the growth and development of URHPCR.

Mark Your Calendars!

URHP Reads - the second Friday of each month join this casual, thought provoking conversation focusing on the first person accounts of abolitionists from the period.

Talk Tuesdays - the third Tuesday of each month come to The Myers Residence for a delicious dinner from 5-6pm and great conversation from 6-7pm. Topics include:

- ♦ **Feb. 16** – Child Custody and Family Issues, Lauren Hunt, Attorney
- ♦ **March 15** – What To Do If Arrested, Kevin O'Brien, Attorney
- ♦ **Apr. 19** – Defending Yourself in NYS Courts, Jonathan Gradess, Attorney
- ♦ **May 19** – Human Trafficking, Victoria Braunstein, Attorney
- ♦ June / July - TBD
- ♦ **Sept. 20** – Landlord or Tenant, What are My Rights?, Max Smelyansky, Attorney
- ♦ **Oct. 18** – The Power of Introverts: Reflections on the book *Quiet, the Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, by Susan Cain, facilitated by Lisa Renee Harris

Details at undergroundrailroadhistory.org or 518-432-4432

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 Mtg** - 3rd Thursday of every month, 5:45 - 7:30pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **Conference Planning Mtg** - 1st Monday of each month, 6:00 - 8:00pm at Russell Sage College, Troy
- ♦ **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
- ♦ **Library Committee Mtg** - 4th Thursday of each month, 5:30 - 6:30pm at The Myers Residence
- ♦ **Communications Committee** - 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 6:00pm-7:30pm at The Myers Residence

Questions? Concerns? Contributions? Interested in volunteering? Contact us at (518) 432-4432 or at UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

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Welcome and thank you to new and renewing members:

Deidre Sinnott, Julie O'Connor, Jianling Yue, Alexandra Sautin, Michael Rhodes-Devey, Christine Spelich, Dorothy Willsey, Ann von Linden, Dale Black-Pennington, Ralph Pennington, Jr., Matt George, Karl Barbir, Michael Barrett, Roberta Nunn, Mary Ellen Lee, Dora Lee Stanley, Beverly Mills, Major Eddie Gurewitz, Margaret Lavelle, Linda Hart, Peter Hess, Linda Becker, William Suggs, Douglass Arnott, Nell Stokes, Thomas F. Martin, Lisa Renee Harris, Sydney Nathans, John Behan, Lucy Wong, Jacqueline C. Robinson, K. Michael Matthews, Susan Haswell, Eliza Rohan Sharpe, Vera Michelson, Albert Desalvo, Paul Rosenberg, Roger Tilden, Paul Rehm, Mary E. Jones, Joseph Lemmond, Robert & Allison Radliff, Ron Canestrari, Judy Doesschate, Barbara Traver, Peter Sokaris, Preston Pierce, John & Jan McEneny, William Carter, Melissa Landau-Strauss, David Hochfelder & Ann Pfau, Sylvia Barnard, Donald Papson, John Coniglio, Mario & Sandy Salerno, Yvonne Abunaw, Robert Emery, Enid Mastriani, Michael Bosanko, Robert K. Wallace, Brea Barthel, Deb LaFond, Michael O'Brien, Diane O'Brien, Matthew Bender, Christine Connell, Fergus Bordewich, Julia Holcomb, Anthony Opalka, Paul Murray, Tanya & Leroy Owens, Ann C. Savage, Sharon Robinson, Tom Ellis, Zoe Noisiaininen, Vicie Rolling, Harris Oberlander, Kate Storms

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

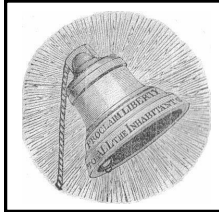
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***Learn the Past, Be the Present,
Create the Future®***

ON THE WEB AT

UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG

In addition to these outstanding components, 20 workshops will be facilitated by scholars, artists, educators, independent researchers, and teens who contribute their research, information, art and witness to the expanding story of the Underground Railroad from the voices of those who lived it. A Saturday evening art exhibit and reception features Marcus Kwame Anderson and Daesha Devón Harris, two area artists who, through different techniques and with ardent respect for a profound past, challenge the viewer to consider the complexity of issues facing communities of color today. Attendees will have time to interact with the artists while viewing some of their current work. Art pieces will be available for purchase.

Sunday's program will be a bus tour of African-American-Dutch Heritage sites in the Capital Region. This tour is part of a larger project known as Mapping the History of Slavery, African and Dutch Heritage in the Hudson River Valley, which grew out of the Mapping Slavery Project in the Netherlands. The tour will be led by Jennifer Tosch, co-researcher and founder of Black Heritage Amsterdam Tours, a Netherlands based tour company providing tour programs in five cities in the Netherlands and, now, expanded to America.



The conference program promises to be an exciting, engaging and thrilling program. We look forward to seeing you there! Bring your friends, colleagues, family, neighbors, congregants, children's teachers, affinity group members, and anyone else you can think of! It is a great way to spend part or all of a weekend!

Complete details are available on the UndergroundRailroadHistory.org conference page. Registration in advance is encouraged and is available online or by calling (518) 432-4432.

The Underground Railroad and American Identities — April 15-17, 2016