



# The Freedom Seeker

Volume XIX, No. 1

Summer 2022

## Hudson Valley Abolitionists - Along the Freedom Movement from Queens to Albany (Pt.1)

By Sherrie Dulworth - Published in *Examiner+* on 2.02.22

In honor of Black History Month in 2021, Examiner News featured a story about people in the lower Hudson Valley who had important roles in the social network and movement commonly referred to as the Underground Railroad or UGRR. E+ is pleased to expand upon the breadth and depth of that story today.

Where they still exist, places or landmarks serve as tangible artifacts that help us relate to the past. But it is the stories of the *people* — the freedom seekers; the people who assisted them; *and* people persevering today to uncover facts and preserve history — who are the life’s blood of this ongoing story.

### Flushing: Roots of Activism

In the mid-1800s when Samuel Bowne Parsons, Sr. came home to Flushing from his travels to southern states like the Carolinas, his wagon was filled with dogwoods, azaleas, roses, and other flowering foliage to sell at the Parsons’ family nursery. But plant life was not his only cargo.

Samuel later said that hidden amidst the flora, he smuggled Black escaping enslaved individuals. Did the wagon have a hidden compartment, or did he conceal the people who traveled with him some other way? We can only wonder how creative he was.

Samuel’s brothers, Robert and William also helped raise funds for and shielded freedom seekers. During this period, they lived in the family’s historic 1661 home, The Bowne

House, along with two unmarried aunts, Ann and Eliza Bowne.

Although the women were then in their sixties and some thirty years older than their nephews, researchers surmise that they likely knew about the activity and possibly participated.

According to SUNY professor

Kathleen Velsor, women were often the overlooked strongholds in abolitionist homes. A UGRR researcher and author, Velsor said, “Women helped educate escaping people about how to walk, talk, and act like their northern counterparts, so they wouldn’t stand out as being runaways. They made them identification, birth certificates, fed, clothed, and made quilts for them.”

It was a high-risk time for freedom seekers and those who aided them due to the penalties they faced if caught, but the roots of activism ran deep within this Quaker family. Their uncle Robert Bowne was a founding member of the New York Society for the Manumission of Slaves, a group of prominent activists who worked for the emancipation of the enslaved and whose members included founding fathers John Jay and Alexander Hamilton.

When Samuel died in 1906, his obituary included his boast that “he assisted more slaves to freedom than any other man in Queens County.”

### Westchester: The Unsung Role of Black Communities

There were numerous Black activists throughout New York, such as David Ruggles in New York City and Stephen and Harriet Myers in Albany, who aided others to escape to freedom.

Historian and author Fergus Bordewich wrote, “In reality from its beginnings in the early 19th century, the underground thrived by virtue of a dynamic partnership between Blacks both free and enslaved and whites, first Quakers and later evangelical Christians and others.”

In Peekskill, Hawley and Harriet Green’s home was a UGRR safe haven and they were conduits to freedom. Hawley was a free Black, successful businessman, and barbershop owner who was said to have “strict religious (cont’d p.4)



The Bowne House (Photo courtesy of The Bowne House)

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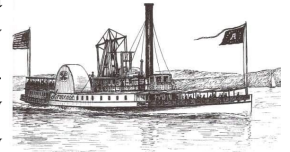
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**Freedom Seeker Corner**

In a December 30, 1900 article in the *Rochester Democrat*, Archie Barlow, a Black resident of Boston, recounted his story of escape from enslavement in 1832. The detailed story narrates how he was assisted in Virginia by abolitionists who secured passage for him on the steam ship *City of Richmond*. On board the ship he was hidden under a pile of lumber and later in a storage area of the ship. Arriving at Philadelphia he was then set on a train and arrived in New York City where he connected with Mr. Gibbs. Finally taking a Steamer to Albany he stayed in a hotel run by Abolitionists, after which he was put on a train to Rochester where he made connections for a steamer to Toronto.



*Image of a Hudson River Steamboat*

By hiding at one point in a storage area on board a steamer and at another point being put up in a hotel, Archie Barlow's story offers a challenge to the "always hidden in a barn" versions of Underground Railroad stories.

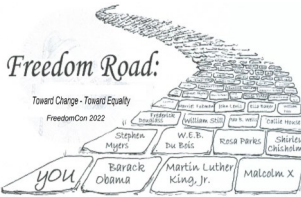
*Follow Underground Railroad Education Center on Facebook for more Freedom Seeker Friday accounts*

The Freedom Seeker is a publication of Underground Railroad Education Center, a non-profit corporation dedicated to researching and preserving the local and national history of the Underground Railroad movement, its international connections, and its legacy for today's social justice issues, thereby empowering people of all ages to be agents of change toward an equitable and just society.

Editorial inquiries can be sent to Underground Railroad Education Center, 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany, NY 12210 or urhpcr@localnet.com.

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**FreedomCon 2022: Toward Change - Toward Equality**

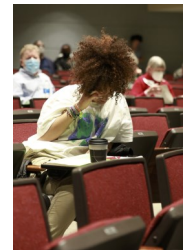


*Locked In and Left Out: Ota Benga, the Diversity Industry and the Power of Portrayals*, the Friday Opening Address provided by Pamela Newkirk, PhD, set the stage for a transformative weekend program. The 20<sup>th</sup> UREC conference brought together through a hybrid format 63 people on Friday to be enriched and challenged by Pamela Newkirk's presentation, 80 people on Saturday for a rich selection of presentations by community activists, authors, historians, and change-makers, and 30 people on Sunday for an

engaging Open House experience at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. Hudson Valley Community College deserves a loud shout-out as its staff went above and beyond to ensure that we had a smooth, user-friendly weekend experience.

The list of Sponsors who made FreedomCon 2022 possible is too long to include here. Please visit <https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FreedomCon-Journal.pdf> on the UREC website FreedomCon page to view the FreedomCon Journal which includes a listing of Sponsors. We ask you to patronize and support these generous sponsors without whose support we could not offer this enriching program. Scholarship donors, as well, ensured that those who could not afford the modest registration fees could participate. And of course, there would be no conference without the participation of so many community members near and far gathering to learn, preserve and celebrate the work of our communal ancestors and the continuation of their work by us today.

Looking to expand FreedomCon in 2023, the planning team is organizing FreedomFest 2023 anticipated to be a month-long celebration in August. Stay tuned as plans develop!



## Looking Backward and Looking Forward with UREC



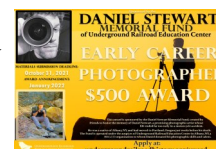
**December Dash 2021** was a smashing success thanks to all of you who were able to donate in support of UREC. We reached our \$40,000 goal! **THANK YOU!!!!**

Institute will have the opportunity to engage with Focus Group Facilitators who are professionals in the fields of visual art, videography, entrepreneurship, and cycling. Enrichment experiences will include financial empowerment, college preparedness, and the world of work for Black museum professionals and Black architects.

**A Special YALI Video** - A Young Abolitionist interested in photography applied his skills to create a magnificent 8 minute video of Young Abolitionist Leadership Institute 2021. View the video on the Youth Activities page of the UREC website.



**Awardees of the first Daniel Stewart Memorial Fund Early Career Photography Award** are Laura Kordowski, Jahniah Kum, and Nico Roschko. Congratulations to these visual storytellers who are using their talents to be agents of change toward an equitable and just society!



**Young Abolitionist Leadership Institute** - teens in the Spring 2021-2022 afterschool program, generously supported by a grant from the Carl E. Touhey Foundation, have been busy learning how to be entrepreneurs, and busy researching the story of the Philip Schuyler statue that stands in front of Albany, NY City Hall in order to make evidence based recommendations on what to do with the statue representing a man who was a member of the largest enslaving family in Albany.

Teens preparing for participation in the Summer 2022

**The Interpretive Center** - UREC has received grant funds that have allowed it to hire an architect whose goal is to design the Interpretive Center that has been only a dream for the last eighteen years. A dream is becoming a reality!



**Underground Railroad Consortium of NYS** - visit [URCNYS.org](http://URCNYS.org) to learn about the efforts of this collaboration of NYS UGRR sites to preserve and promote NYS's UGRR history.

## News and Notes

### UREC MISSION STATEMENT

Underground Railroad Education Center researches and preserves the local and national history of the Underground Railroad movement, its international connections, and its legacy for today's social justice issues, thereby empowering people of all ages to be agents of change toward an equitable and just society.

**Leave a Legacy with UREC** - Maximize your tax deductions through charitable giving by leveraging one of many planned giving opportunities. For more information call Mary Liz Stewart at 518-621-7793.



**Please accept our apologies for taking so long to get the Vol. 19 No. 1 issue to you** - By now we should be sending you the second issue of *The Freedom Seeker* newsletter for 2022. However, 2022 has proven to be an unusual and unusually busy year! Every effort will be made to get a second and third issue to you before 2022 ends. Thank you for your patience and understanding.



## Stevie Wants You



**WELCOME and THANK YOU to NEW and RENEWING MEMBERS AND DONORS:** Andrea Hyary, Angela Neal, Ann Kistler, Ann Pfau, AnnMarie Hess, Barbara Counterman, Barbara Smith, Benita Law-Diao, Bob & Mary Beth Blackmon, Brea Barthel, Cathy Bucci, Christina Cummings, Claire Nolan, Claire Stahler, Connie & Ed Carter/Brazee, David & Rev. Janice McClary Rowell, David Hochfelder, Deborah LaFond, Dee & Frank Wind, Deirdre Sintott, Diane Houslanger, Dominick Calsolaro, Donald Eberle, Donza Poole, Dorothy Willsey, Dr. MaryNell Morgan, Eileen Kawola, Elizabeth Richards, Ethel Walker, Fred Bohrer, Gary Dinnebeil, Gertrude Thun, Glens Falls Conkling Center, Holly Cameron, Isabel Mills, Jane E. Murphy, Jean Stern, Jean-Marc Superville-Sovak, Jenifer Yezzi, John Staugaitis, Judith Wing, Julia Holcomb, Kai Marion, Karen Chamis, Karen Lipson, Karl Barbir, Katherine Walsh, Kathleen Watson, Kirsten Keefe, Kris Carter, Leo & Martha Levy, Lewis Greenstein & Irene Kassel, Lynn MacGowan, Lynn Nabb, Maia Boswell-Penc, Mark Barth, Mark Mishler, Markly Wilson, Mary Ellen Lee, Maryrita Dobiel, Matt George, Meg Walter, Michael F. Connors II, Michael Rhodes-Devey, Michelle Rogers, Nichola Dutre, Olivia Brazee, Patricia Oldham, Peter Bunten, Ralph Pennington, Jr., Regina Keenan, Robert Ward, Robyn Kearns, Ron Gardner, Samuel Fein, Sara & Michael McDarby, Saul Rigberg, Senga Fittz, Sharon Cassell, Sharon Robinson, Shawn Hamlin, Sheila Daley, Stefanie Perez, Steven & Diane O'Connor, Suzanne Isaksen, Sylvia Barnard, Thomas Ellis, Timothy Garrity, Virgia Phoenix, Willie Terry, Yolanda Caldwell, Zelda Holcomb

## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EDUCATION CENTER

194 Livingston Avenue  
Albany, New York 12210

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### Hudson Valley Abolitionists *(cont'd from p.1)*

beliefs.” Since the UGRR relied upon trusted connections, often with family members or within faith communities, who were among the supporters helping people reach the Greens?

Teresa Vega has some ideas on that. Vega has a degree in Anthropology and Asian Studies and has researched her mixed-race ancestral roots for more than two decades. She publishes her finding in her Radiant Roots blog, where she wrote, “Free Black communities in Greenwich and Westchester County played a critical, unsung, role in the success of the UGRR.”

Vega believes that Hawley Green’s two cousins — John Allen and George Green, the latter who was her 2nd great grandfather — might have been among those helpers.

These two brothers lived in Westchester communities during the mid-1800s. George lived in Yorktown and John Allen lived with Lazarus Heady, Jr., a free African American and the owner of a 100-acre farm near Ossining who was also an African Methodist Episcopal minister.

Heady was a descendant of Westchester’s oldest free Black family. His grandfather was Thomas Hadden, a Scarsdale resident, who acknowledged, freed, and made provisions for his female servant and their seven mixed-race children in his 1761 will.

Vega said she believes these local intersecting families, along with others she has identified, may have assisted freedom seekers to reach Peekskill’s safehouses and that active UGRR community. She noted, “It was said that, if a self-emancipating man made it to Hawley’s House, the next stop was Canada.” *(to be continued in Vol.19 No. 2)*



*Hawley and Harriet Green House  
(Photo by Sherrie Dulworth)*



Sherrie Dulworth is a freelance writer based in the lower Hudson Valley, whose stories range across healthcare, careers, literature, regional news, and human interest. More of her work can be found at: [www.sherriedulworth.com](http://www.sherriedulworth.com). Part 2 of ‘Hudson Valley Abolitionists’ will appear in Vol.19 No.2 of *The Freedom Seeker*.