



# The Freedom Seeker

Volume XIX, No.2

Autumn 2022

## Hudson Valley Abolitionists - Along the Freedom Movement from Queens to Albany (Pt.2)

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. (Part 2 begins below)

### Dutchess: An Education in Activism

Envision a classroom of elementary and middle-school-aged boys and girls, reading or studying math together. That’s nothing extraordinary here today, but when the Nine Partners School opened as a co-ed day and boarding school in 1796, it was the first of its kind in New York.

It was more than its co-ed status that led to the legacy of the Millbrook school; Nine Partners also became a site for education in activism.

As part of their education, students were taught about the evils of slavery. More than a century later Bordewich described the school, which had been founded by a group of local Quakers, as “the most important single abolitionist institution in the valley—and one of the most important in the country,” adding, “it may have served as a sort of command center for the underground in the entire region.”

<i>Inside this issue</i>	
<i>Interpretive Center</i>	P. 2
<i>Introductions</i>	P. 3
<i>Donors &amp; Members WE THANK YOU!</i>	P. 3

Among its more famous alumni, Lucretia Cotton (Mott) attended as an early student and then became a teacher. Mott went on to become a leading activist for women’s suffrage and abolitionism.

Eliza Bowne and Hannah Sutton were among the early pupils. Even though Bowne was

from Flushing, some 90 miles from Nine Partners, and Sutton was from Pleasantville, the two young women were the same age. Did they overlap as students, get to know one another, or perhaps become friends?

Biographer Dorothee von Huene Greenberg

wrote in *The Westchester Historian*, “the education Hannah received would have influenced her and her family and laid a foundation for her children’s commitment to social equality and abolition. It would also have supplied links to a Quaker network that assisted runaways.”

As adults, family members of both women had covert UGRR roles, and conceivably they did too. Bowne lived with anti-slavery activists and Sutton later married Joseph Pierce, an ardent Pleasantville abolitionist, and was mother to UGRR stationmaster Moses Pierce.

It’s easy to imagine the milieu of Nine Partners in the early 1800s and the impression it could have made upon Bowne, Sutton, and a host of others, and influence on the freedom movement.

### Capital Region: Agents of Change

Fast forward about two centuries to Paul and Mary Liz Stewart, an Albany-based husband-and-wife team whose journey of discovery has spanned about two decades.

Mary Liz explained, “I was looking to bring tangible examples into my fifth-grade classroom to help my 10-year-olds understand that the Underground Railroad was not about subways or trains. In that desire for documented accounts of local people, Paul and I found very quickly that we could not find a lot.”

*(Cont’d on page 4)*



Nine Pins Boarding School courtesy of Dutchess County Historical Society

 **UREC Board of Directors**

**Paul Stewart**, Co-founder  
with **Mary Liz Stewart**, Executive Director

- |  |                           |                         |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Ron Gardner</b><br><i>President</i>           | <b>Yvonne Abunaw</b>      | <b>AnnMarie Hess</b>    |
| <b>David Hochfelder</b><br><i>Vice-President</i> | <b>Sara E. Anderson</b>   | <b>Taknika Mickey</b>   |
| <b>Matt Kirk</b><br><i>Treasurer</i>             | <b>Brittany Beyus</b>     | <b>Steve O'Connor</b>   |
| <b>Kai Marion</b><br><i>Secretary</i>            | <b>Jennifer Burns</b>     | <b>Latisha Owens</b>    |
|  | <b>Yolanda Caldwell</b>   | <b>Darius Shahinfar</b> |
|  | <b>Lisbeth Calandrino</b> | <b>Brenda Twiggs</b>    |
|  | <b>Sam Fein</b>           | <b>Ethel Walker</b>     |

**Freedom Seeker Corner**

**Levi Carroll** was seen by the Vigilance Committee of the Underground Railroad when he passed through Albany in the 1840s. The Vigilance committee was a group of volunteers who saw to it that those escaping from enslavement had food, shelter, clothing, medical care and legal help if needed. Levi ultimately made his way to Canada, settling in the area called Canada West (1841—1867), earlier known as Upper Canada (1791—1841), which today we know as the province of Ontario. He settled in the Queen's Bush area and worked as a farmer, farm hand, and shingle maker.

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.

This newsletter is printed by Modern Press  
www.modernpress.com



Thank you to Encyclopedia Britannica for the use of its map.

Levi, we remember you as one of the people of courage, people of hope, seekers of justice.

**The Interpretive Center - From dream to reality!**

UREC has received grant funds through the support of our local Assembly members that have allowed it to hire an architect whose goal is to design the Interpretive Center (IC) that has been only a dream for the last eighteen years. Working with architect Shawn Hamlin of Hamlin Design Group, a small team has been holding extensive conversations that are turning a concept into computerized drawings. UREC is looking to design interior spaces so that visitors on the inside of the IC will be able to relate to the world outside the IC. Glass panels and walls and tall open spaces will contribute to this feature. Offices, children's space, exhibit space, conference room, library, commercial kitchen with café, plus two studio apartments, gift shop, and media production/screening room, and of course all the ancillary support spaces that go with such a structure are on the drawing board. Off street parking and outdoor patio space will be there too. Additionally, solar and geothermal elements will be included in the design along with a desire to achieve LEED certification. The Abraham Johnson and Shade Garden will remain. How to handle the Dr. Thomas Elkins Garden is under discussion.

And to top it all off, a pre-revolutionary war timber frame will be the centerpiece of the IC design. Working with Tim Rau of New World Barn Company UREC is raising funds to purchase the timber frame from a farmer in Fort Plain, New York. Timber frames are hand hewn structures using wooden joints that hold pieces together, no metal materials are allowed. The timber frame now standing in Fort Plain will be disassembled, washed, repaired, and stored until actual construction begins on the IC. When will this happen, you ask? Well, when UREC can gather together about \$5 million.

A reach, to be sure, but one worth striving for, because the IC will allow UREC to expand exponentially its programming opportunities, it will have space to hold community events, it will have space for the Museum Studies workforce development program that is in the works, it will have space for revolving exhibits thematically related to the focus of UREC, it will have space to hold family and youth programming that have been dreamed about for years, its library will be accessible to the community and provide research opportunities for community members and academics alike, and, as our teens often say with excitement, it will have indoor bathrooms! And it means UREC will be able to employ neighbors needing jobs.

Of course, donations toward the building of the Interpretive Center are most welcome. Cash, stocks, bonds, other securities, bequests, all are possibilities. We will be developing a naming opportunities plan for donors, so please stay tuned. We look forward to your walking with us as we work together towards an equitable and just society as we learn the past, be the present and create the future!

# Looking Backward and Looking Forward with UREC

**Self-Guided Tours** - National Park Service Network to Freedom has awarded UREC a small grant to support the development of self-guided tours of The Myers Residence. UREC will work with STQRY, a digital storytelling platform company. Stay tuned for the launch.

**Seven Guitars** - produced by Callaloo Theater and performed Oct. 1,2, 8,9 at 2pm at The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. Seven Guitars showcases the experiences, challenges and responses of seven Black characters in 1940's Pittsburgh. Info at [www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org/events](http://www.undergroundrailroadhistory.org/events).



**Daniel Stewart Memorial Photography Award** - submission deadline is 9/30. Info- [undergroundrailroadhistory.org/award](http://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/award)

**Induction of Stephen Myers into National Abolition Hall of Fame** - Oct. 21-23. Call UREC at 518-621-7793 for details.

**Introducing -**



**Marcus Anderson, Deputy Director** - Marcus brings his curatorial, illustrator, designer and educator background to UREC to help expand program offerings, coordinate the Young Abolitionist Leadership Institute, and expand the horizons of UREC.

**Colleen Dore, Administrative Assistant** - Colleen brings her professional business management skills to UREC to manage donor and member communication, record keeping, and visitor interface.



**Nicasio Williams, Groundskeeper** - Nico, a high school participant in the very first Young Abolitionists Club back in 2009 has returned to UREC as grounds manager of the almost one acre of property under the stewardship of UREC.



**December Dash** - is coming! Can we beat last year's record? The challenge is before us!

## 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.



## Stevie Wants You

**WELCOME and THANK YOU to NEW and RENEWING MEMBERS AND DONORS:** Angela Neal, Anita Thayer, AnnMarie Hess, Arlene Nock, Barbara DiTommaso, Claire Nolan/Schou, Colleen Davis, Darn Good Yarn, David Goodrich, David Hochfelder, Desiree Arthurton, Diane Houslanger, Donza Poole, Eric & Roslyn Dahl, Francis O'Connor, Gwen Rudnick, James Cochran, Jennifer Burns, Jenny Anderson, Judith Wing, Kathryn Yezzi, Kathy & Dennis Ray Gaffney, Leonora E. Mims, Leroy & Brenda Twiggs, Lisbeth Calandrino, Liz Lytle Isaac, Lois Webb, Lynn Kohler, Marcus Anderson, Melanie Pores, Michael Goldston, Saul Rigberg, Senga N. Fittz, Sharon Cassell, Steven & Mary Elliott, Susan Dubois, Yvonne Abunaw



*"I believe race is too heavy a burden to carry into the 21st century. It's time to lay it down. We all came here in different ships, but now we're all in the same boat."*

*Former Congressman John Lewis (1940—2020)*



## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EDUCATION CENTER

194 Livingston Avenue  
Albany, New York 12210

Phone: (518) 621-7793

Contact us at: [undergroundrailroadhistory.org/contact/](http://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/contact/)



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

ON THE WEB AT

[UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG](http://UNDERGROUNDRAILROADHISTORY.ORG)

Follow us on Facebook  Twitter  Instagram 

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

Using numerous research sources and ingenuity, the Stewarts began to unearth significant local history, adding to the knowledge about Stephen and Harriet Myers and their pivotal UGRR freedom work.

Stephen Myers was born a slave about 1800, then later freed at 18. When he was 42, with the help of his wife Harriet, he started a newspaper, the Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate.

Along with running the newspaper, the couple operated what became a regional command center for UGRR activity. Estimates are that they helped hundreds of enslaved people escape to freedom.

The Myers collaborated with other known leaders in the anti-slavery movement, including John Jay II and his son William Jay II of Katonah. Historical letters written between the Myers and the Jays can be viewed on the John Jay Homestead website.

Among the Stewarts' discoveries were contributions by Harriett's brother, sloop captain John Johnson. He purchased the lot where the Myers' UGRR safe house was built. Paul noted, "John Johnson carried goods and people on his sloop from New York City to Albany."

Paul and Mary Liz Stewart co-founded the Underground Railroad Education Center. In 2004, the Center purchased the building – now officially The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence – with a mission of preservation and education. Mary Liz reminds visitors, "We are walking where the freedom seekers and abolitionists walked." Paul said, "Identifying these places of sanctuary allows us to be in the place where not only history happened but where social justice — a freedom fight — occurred. People chose to leave conditions of enslavement. They risked their own personal security and that of their friends and family, who might be punished or interrogated, but they made a choice for freedom instead of continued enslavement."

Mary Liz explained that the stories Underground Railroad are still unfolding. She added, "Our commitment is to use what we have to empower others to be agents of change for equity and justice."



Sherrie Dullworth 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 1 of 'Hudson Valley Abolitionists' appeared in Vol.19 No.1 of *The Freedom Seeker* newsletter .