



The Freedom Seeker

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Exploring the History of the Black Hudson River Schuylers (Pt.2)

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The elder Captain Schuyler died in 1841 or 1842. After his burial, or perhaps after their mother's burial in 1848, the younger Schuylers erected an imposing monument in the new Albany Rural Cemetery in Menands, established in



1844. The monument is a tapered, four-sided column resting on a plinth. It is significant that the column is engraved with a realistic bas relief anchor commemorating his sailing career and the three chain links denoting the fraternal organization Odd Fellows to which he apparently belonged. An inscription notes that the monument is dedicated to "OUR PARENTS." That Schuyler and his family were accepted in a

prominent location in the cemetery in spite of their African-American heritage is noteworthy because at the time the Albany Rural Cemetery had a separate section designated for African-American burials.

The younger Samuel Schuyler (1813-1894) and his brother Thomas (1811-1866) both began their careers in the sloop trade. Thomas began his career as a cabin boy in his father's sloop and progressed in skill and responsibility. Samuel attended the old Beverwyck School in Albany and began his apprenticeship aboard the sloop *Sarah Jane* at age 12. He became the master of the sloop *Favorite* and later the *Rip Van Winkle*. He then purchased the *Rip Van Winkle* and together with his brother Thomas bought the sloops *Anna Marie* and *Favorite*. Samuel Schuyler married Margaret M. Bradford

(1816-1881) and Thomas Schuyler married Ellen Bradford (1820-1900). The brothers appear to have bought their first steamboats, including the *Belle*, in 1845. The towboat enterprise was operating in the 1840s as the Schuyler Towboat Line and may have been incorporated in 1852. In that year the Schuylers

financed and built the *America*, the powerful and iconic flagship of their fleet. Samuel became the company's president and Thomas became the firm's treasurer. Both men were active in Albany business and charitable circles serving as officers of bank, stock and insurance companies, trade organizations and charitable endeavors. Their business interests extended beyond towing as evidenced by a \$10,000 investment in the West Shore Railroad built along the Hudson's west shore through Newburgh, Kingston, Catskill and Albany.

Schuyler's towboat business clearly prospered. In 1848, Samuel bought a relatively new but modest brick house at the corner of Trinity Place and Ashgrove Place in Albany's South End and greatly enlarged it. Among other changes, he added an imposing round and bracketed cupola at the roof, making the house one of the largest and most stylish in the neighborhood.



The house still stands. Thomas appears to have been a driving force in financing and building a new Methodist-Episcopal church nearby at Trinity Place and Westerlo St. in 1863. The Albany Hospital and the Groesbeckville Mission also benefitted from his philanthropy. Thomas died in 1866 and was buried alongside his father beneath a Gothic-style tombstone. His brother Samuel published a tribute to his brother which memorialized his many contributions to the Albany community.

An 1873 stock certificate indicates that the Schuyler's company was at that time doing business as Schuyler's Steam Tow Boat Line. The certificate proudly includes an engraving of the *America* and indicates that D.L. Babcock served as president, Thomas W. Olcott as secretary and Samuel Schuyler as treasurer. Thomas W. Olcott, a wealthy White banker prominent in Albany society was known to be sympathetic to African Americans, most notably having an elderly Black servant buried in the Olcott (cont'd on pg.4)

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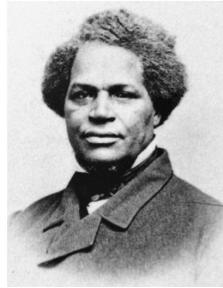
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The Freedom Seeker is a publication of Underground Railroad Education Center, a non-profit corporation dedicated to researching and preserving the local and national history of the Underground Railroad movement, its international connections, and its 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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Underground Railroad Activists



Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen (1813 -1872), often referred to as the 'king of the Underground Railroad', began his life enslaved in Tennessee. Self-emancipating in his early 20's, Loguen took himself to Canada West for a few years, deciding to return to the US in 1837. He eventually settled

in Syracuse with wife Caroline Storum and their six children, becoming an active and prominent UGRR activist.

To learn more about Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen, his narrative is titled *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman. A Narrative of Real Life*, originally published in 1859 in J. G. K. Truair & Co. Short biographical pieces are accessible via BlackPast.org, National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, and The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

An activist who, with others, changed the course of American history.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

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The time is always right to do what is right." - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Around the Residence

ARCHEOLOGY REQUIREMENTS HOLD UP IC CONSTRUCTION - Because the properties where the IC will be built are located in a sensitive archeological zone, UREC has been required by the State Historic Preservation Office to conduct archeological digs on each involved property. Plans to start construction by now have been postponed. Will keep you posted.

YALI is off and running afterschool for its 5th year at Albany High School. Diving deeply into American history, its relationship with contemporary times and the lives of the participating teens, written and spoken word and visual art will be used to create a mobile exhibit for community edification.

HOUSE PARTIES to support the IC - schedule yours by calling Mary Liz Stewart at 518-621-7793 or contacting her via the website [CONTACT US](#) page.

THURSDAYS WITH THE UGRR - Storyteller Paul Stewart has been hosting a series of Thursday evening presentations at The Myers Residence that focus on the myriad aspects of the UGRR. Join us from 6-7:30pm. See the UREC website calendar of events for more information.

NYSCA has awarded UREC a 2025 Support for Organizations grant that will allow UREC to conduct community arts project with community residents that will result in the production of two traveling exhibits. Thank you, NYSCA!

ORDER YOUR COPIES TODAY for holiday gift giving - available at Myers Mercantile at The Myers Residence and online at [SHOP](#) on the UREC website - **BIG JIM AND THE WHITE BOY**, and **THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY**, written by David Walker and illustrated by Marcus Anderson. Both books are recipients of the Eisner Award. Also available are the 2026 **BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE CALENDARS**.

OVER THE EDGE - an urban rappelling event! Stay tuned! Coming in spring 2025!

"I'm coming away with so much admiration on the way you approach this history – as a means of educating people about the past, engaging young people on what it means to "do history", and connecting this history to present-day movements for justice and democracy. Yours is a model I think so many other institutions can learn from!" (KW)

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 to 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.



IT'S NOT JUST A PRETTY BUILDING - Learn why by reading the Interpretive Center Case for Support at undergroundrailroadhistory.org/interpretive-center-lp/

Be a **TIMBER SPONSOR** - see how by visiting the Interpretive Center pages on the UREC website.



"There are two rules in life: Number 1, never quit! Number 2, never forget rule number one."
Duke Ellington (1899-1974)

Stevie Wants You to Know

December Dash is here, again!

Won't you join us as we then
Gather together, one and all,
Responding to this annual call
Through donations of time, talent, treasure,
And with pleasure

Demonstrate support for Underground Railroad Education Center.

Many have throughout 2024 donated generously to UREC, toward special programs, the Interpretive Center, regularly occurring programs, and general operations. To all of you we say a grand **THANK YOU!!!**

We have made it this far because of you and your willingness to walk with us. With the changes we anticipate facing us as we enter the new year, we ask you to consider digging deeper into your treasure this December Dash so as to ensure the sustainability of UREC's impactful work.

Let us move forward together with joy and forbearance as we work together today to ensure an equitable and just tomorrow.

DONATE TODAY at

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UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EDUCATION CENTER

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Exploring the History of the Black Hudson River Schuylers *(cont'd from p.1)*



family plot in the Albany Rural Cemetery.

By 1886, Howell & Tenney's encyclopedic History of the County of Albany has little to say about Schuyler other than a perfunctory sentence that he "now employs eighteen boats, used exclusively for towing canal-boats." Other Albany businessmen and industrialists are profiled at considerable length, but aside from a brief sentence about Schuyler and his very large business, nothing further is mentioned. Is it possible that his African American heritage, despite being half "mullato" from his mother, had now become a negative consideration in his social standing in the community?

Samuel Schuyler sold his large 1857 towboat *Syracuse* to the Cornell Steamboat Company in Kingston in 1893. He died in 1894 and was buried in Albany Rural Cemetery some distance away from his parents in a new but equally popular area of the cemetery. His burial plot is located near the "Cypress Fountain" where other prominent New Yorkers including the Cornings and U.S. President Chester Arthur are buried. Close at hand is the imposing monument dedicated to Revolutionary War Major General Philip Schuyler. Samuel's ponderous granite monument is designed in the popular Victorian style of the day and is a proportional expression of the family's wealth. Samuel and Margaret's children and possibly his grandchildren are buried alongside of him.

There are many unanswered questions about the Schuylers and their careers on the Hudson River and conflicting accounts that need resolution. It is hoped that this brief account may lead to new research that could shed light on this family, its social and business contributions and the ever evolving issues surrounding race in eighteenth and early nineteenth century New York.

SOURCES: Stefan Bielinski, The Colonial Albany Social History Project; The People of Colonial Albany, website hosted by the New York State Museum, exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov

- Howell & Tenney, History of the County of Albany, W.W. Munsell & Co., New York 1886.

- Abbott, Reverend W. Penn, Life and Character of Capt. Thomas Schuyler, Charles Van Benthuyssen & Sons, Albany, 1867.

- Albany County Hall of Records, Manumission Register