

THE CONDUCTOR

MARCH 2003

NCR PARKS ISSUE

THE POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

Between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands of western Pennsylvania, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail corridor includes numerous routes, sites and programs associated with the Underground Railroad. The Potomac River, both deep enough for boats to cross and shallow enough, in places, for crossing on horseback or by wagon, was a part of efforts by the enslaved to free themselves. In particular, the Trail corridor includes the path of *The Pearl*, the most popular and well-documented escape attempt from the Nation's capital. To encourage an understanding of the UGRR and associated places and programs, the Trail Office and Office of Communications, National Capital Region, have recently completed a two-page folder and are seeking funds for color publication and annual updates. For more information, contact the Trail Office (304-535-4014 or phnst@nps.gov).

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Interpretation of African-American themes has been an important component of public programs at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park during "Black History Month" and throughout the year. A walking tour of "Black Georgetown" has been offered regularly throughout the year. The tour focuses on the role of African Americans in the development of the community, and visits Underground Railroad Sites. "Once Upon a Time in Herring Hill" is another walking tour scheduled monthly which highlights a historically black neighborhood.

The recent inclusion of Ferry Hill Place into the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom has been a major factor in planning for that historic property located along the Potomac River near Sharpsburg, Maryland. Ongoing research includes investigations into the lives of enslaved individuals. The site is open to the public in season, a Cultural Landscape Report is in progress, and Historic Structures and Furnishings plans are anticipated. The site will provide the opportunity for the park to interpret slavery in western Maryland.

CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN PARK

From the late 1700's through the 1890's, trees were harvested from much of the land that

today comprises Catoctin Mountain Park. Many of these trees fueled the nearby Catoctin Iron Furnace where whites, free blacks and enslaved people worked side by side. The contributions of African-Americans were often overlooked in discussions about Catoctin Furnace and the local area. Since no history is complete until the story of everyone involved is told, Catoctin Mountain Park is incorporating information about local African-Americans in park interpretive programs.

A special winter Blacksmith Shop Demonstration on February 15 provided visitors with a unique opportunity to see a craft often practiced by enslaved workers and providing some with the means to purchase freedom. Volunteer Don Cornell, demonstrated basic blacksmithing techniques while Park Ranger Debbie Mills explained the role of the African-American blacksmith in 18th and 19th century communities. Cancelled due to a major snow storm, "African-American Influences", a program recognizing the contributions of African-Americans to the development of northern Frederick County, MD, will be presented as part of the series called "Catoctin's Roots, The Park Story" later this summer.

A bulletin board, to be displayed in front of the Visitor Center during spring and summer, will tell the story of Catoctin Furnace workers and the sole African-American businessman to operate a business in Thurmont after the Civil War and into the 20th century.

"The Blacksmith in Society," a series of 5 lesson plans geared toward 4th through 8th social studies, addresses African-American history, economics, geography and other topics using the blacksmith as a focal figure. The lesson plan entitled, "The Price of Freedom," demonstrates how enslaved blacksmiths might parlay their labors into freedom. The lesson plans are available in hard copy or at www.nps.gov/cato.

WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL PARK

Decatur House, Octagon House, the White House Historical Association, and WHPP co-sponsored a teachers' workshop to produce a travelling trunk on slavery and UGRR for a nationwide audience. Participants were 24 teachers from DC, VA, and MD, selected from 100 applicants. On January 11 teachers reviewed examples of travelling trunks, and on January 25 they worked on lesson plans. Will Thomas, an 8th grade teacher from Prince George's County, was the facilitator, and there is a team to aid with writing curriculum. Each teacher received a stipend of \$200, a packet of materials (including books), and professional credit. After participating teachers "test" what they have developed, WHPP will apply for a Parks as Classroom grant to continue the work.

FREEDOM STAR AWARD FOR ROCK CREEK

Rock Creek Park was the first national park to receive a Freedom Star Award for an

interpretive program relating to UGRR. "Night Sky to Freedom" is a planetarium program focusing on use of the North Star to navigate to freedom. It is estimated that over 10,000 people have seen the program in the past five years. Dwight Madison represented the park at the NPS session at the NAW, when the park's plaque was awarded. As part of the award, the park received \$500.

ARLINGTON HOUSE (GWMP)

January 21 was the premiere of the park's new web site, designed by a master's degree student from George Mason University. The expanded web site includes much historical information on enslavement. Since last year the park has a professional exhibit on slavery mounted in one of the slave quarters. Featured is a model of Freedmen's Village (once located just outside park boundaries), a refuge for enslaved people fleeing to Union protection. During February, the park offered African American history tours daily by reservation. The new Arlington Black History brochure was just celebrated with a kickoff, including the congressional delegation. Those wishing a copy of the brochure, contact Kathy Kinzey (karen_byrne@nps.gov). The park is so proud of its web site and slavery exhibit that the former will be nominated for an award from the Society for History in Federal Government, and the latter for an award from the Association for State and Local History.

HARPERS FERRY NHP

Usually, nineteenth century women were not proprietors of hotels, owners or renters of slaves, or instrumental in assisting slaves to escape. In Harpers Ferry Margaret Carrell was all of these. Her property, the United States Hotel, is no longer standing.

Margaret's husband Eli died in 1850 from cholera. They had been married 15 years, and had built a large hotel establishment in the downtown merchant district at the Point, an area that faced Maryland and the Potomac River. As the surviving business partner, Mrs. Carrell announced that she was ready for business through the local press: "The premises have undergone thorough painting and cleansing..". A local attorney, Isaac Fouke, was appointed to run Margaret's finances while she remained proprietress of the hotel.

In addition to her own eleven bondsmen, Margaret rented enslaved Robert Jackson, in November of 1853, from the Pendelton family in nearby Martinsburg. Mrs. Carrell hired an overseer to manage her slaves. The overseer objected to Jackson's behavior and attempted to beat him. Jackson resisted and in turn beat the overseer. The overseer reported Jackson's resistance to Mrs. Carrell and Jackson's owner.

In William Still's 1872 book, The Underground Railroad, Robert revealed what made him decide to runaway.

"Of Mrs. Carrell, he[Robert] speaks in very grateful terms, saying that she was kind to

him and all the servants, and promised them their freedom at her death. She excused herself for not giving them their freedom on the ground that her husband died insolvent, leaving her the responsibility of settling his debts. But while Mrs. Carroll was very kind to her servants, her manager was equally as cruel.”

The overseer was instructed that if Robert resisted punishment again,

“ the overseer was to put him [Robert] in prison and sell him. Whether he offended again or not, the following Christmas he was to be sold without fail. [Mrs Carrell] was kind enough to apprise him of the intention of his owner..., and told him [Robert] that if he could help himself he had better do so.” So from that time, Robert began to contemplate how he should escape the doom which had been planned for him.”

Robert ran away with several other slaves, the Mattersons. “... *One Saturday night , at twelve o'clock we set out for the North.*” The Mattersons were caught in Maryland, but Robert made his way to safety in Canada.

If Jackson were caught, he could have implicated Mrs. Carrell, saying she had aided his attempt to escape. Criminal charges would have been lodged against Margaret by Jackson's owner. Mrs. Carrell's willingness to coach an enslaved person who did not belong to her to run away jeopardized her personal freedom. It was extremely risky behavior on her part, and could have brought her world crashing down around her. Margaret Carrell stepped out of the 19th century norm for women and slave owners. Regardless of her motivation, she became a member of a select few and earned her place among 19th century humanitarians.

SMITHSONIAN UGRR CONFERENCE

Intrepid enthusiasts ignored the ill-timed snowstorm to enjoy this event. The conference, "Passages to Freedom," on February 27-March 1, was jointly sponsored by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Cincinnati), the Behring Center of the National Museum of American History (NMAH), and the Network to Freedom. The conference began with a welcome by NPS director Fran Mainella and a rousing speech by former NMAH director Spencer Crew (now director of the Freedom Center). Then there were two days of panels, and, for the general public, a "Community Tribute and Cultural Fair" with films, living history, music, quilting, and special activities for kids. The Smithsonian had sought out period musicians; interpreters of Nat Turner (Bus Howard), Frederick Douglass (Fred Morsell), and Sojourner Truth (Alice McGill); and the Show Choir from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. The conference offered the opportunity to hear respected academics like Judith Wellman, Carol Wilson, and John Vlach, as well as regional specialists on runaways in Florida and Canada like Jane Landers, Kevin Mulroy, and Jane Rhodes.

Grassroots UGRR organizations were given a voice in two sessions. They represented groups in Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Buxton, Canada.

D.C. got special attention. When a session featured antebellum black churches, it drew on examples in D.C. After a living history portrayal of Emily Edmonson (Gretchen McKinney) from the Pearl Affair, a panel with church historians included Janet Lee Ricks from Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Lonise Robinson from Asbury United Methodist Church, and Ambassador Horace Dawson, Jr., from Metropolitan A. M. E. Church.

INTERPRETERS' CORNER

Spotlight on Lance Hatten

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BOOK REVIEWS

Subversives: AntiSlavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2003) is a long awaited book by Stanley Harrold, professor of history at South Carolina State University. NPS's Network to Freedom sponsored a lecture by Harrold at the Summer School on February 11, highlighting important aspects of the new book. The book examines D. C.'s ongoing resistance to slavery involving biracial cooperation. The book well documents the stories of Ann Maria Weems, the Pearl Affair, Rev. Charles Torrey and Thomas Smallwood, and William Chaplin. Harrold is also author of The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861 and a book about the DC editor of an antislavery newspaper, Gamaliel Bailey and the Antislavery Union.

LOCAL RESEARCH FACILITIES

The Washingtoniana Room, Martin Luther King Library, 9th & G Sts., Washington, D.C. (Metro: Gallery Place, Red Line) This room is a unique source on the city of D. C. with relevant reference books, microfilms of newspapers, maps, photographs, special collections (including the Evening Star Collection), and city directories and other city records. The librarians are eager to help. The reference collection includes a copy of Hilary Russell's study on the UGRR in D.C., completed for NPS.

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE DESCENDED FROM AN UGRR PARTICIPANT?

The Network to Freedom is planning to conduct interviews with descendants of UGRR participants (runaways, conductors, station managers) at Famfest in Philadelphia, June 27-29. We are looking for individuals well versed in family or community oral traditions on resistance to slavery through flight. The interviews will be taped, transcribed, and deposited in a university library. If you know someone, contact Guy Washington (Guy_Washington@nps.gov).

DON'T MISS:

DECATUR HOUSE EXHIBIT, "Freedom: The History of US" -- through March 30, The display is timed to coincide with premiere of the PBS series "Freedom: A History of US." For information, contact the Education Department at (202) 842-0918.

DAR MUSEUM EXHIBIT, "Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Service in the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783"-- through August 2. For more details, call (202) 879-3241.

UPCOMING

- NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FAMILY REUNION FESTIVAL [Famfest], Philadelphia, PA, June 27-29, 2003. For more information, contact Eve Elder (513) 853-0297 or www.undergroundrr.com, clicking on the UGRR Family Reunion Festival link.

