

# THE CONDUCTOR

JUNE 2002

## NATIONAL SCENE

### **Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study Underway**

On November 13, 2000, Congress requested NPS to look at options for protecting nationally significant resources related to Harriet Tubman. The Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study Team, headed by Barbara Mackey, a planner from the Boston Support Office, has begun collecting information on historic and archeological sites and landscapes significant to the history of Harriet Tubman. Of immediate consideration will be sites in the county where she was born, Dorchester County, and in Auburn, New York, where she lived for more than 40 years before she died in 1913. Subsequently, the team will investigate other sites associated with Tubman. Documenting Harriet Tubman's exploits is a challenge since she was illiterate, and careful to avoid capture during her trips back to Maryland to rescue bondspeople. Focus includes Tubman's entire life, including the Civil War when she was a spy and afterward when she advocated education for black children. Anyone interested in the study or in providing information about sites associated with Tubman should write to [Barbara\\_Mackey@nps.gov](mailto:Barbara_Mackey@nps.gov).

### What does the Network to Freedom Mean by Partnerships?

In addition to building a national network, the coordinators of the National UGRR Network to Freedom are dedicated to creating new park constituencies by reaching out to groups unaccustomed to cooperating with the National Park Service. This outreach requires fruitful exchange between new "partners" and NPS -- exchange of skills, knowledge, effort, and creativity, as well as of money. The Federal Government, on the one hand, will never provide enough grants to protect and document all the significant UGRR resources in the country. On the other hand, NPS sees partners as more than fundraising entities. The Network welcomes participants in our program and partners with our program in order to save limited resources by taking advantage of NPS know-how, research, and existing programs. A major thrust of UGRR Gatherings and regional organizations is to avoid duplication of effort through cooperation and coordination. We aim to develop a "seamless" web of public and private, for-profit and non-profit organizations and individuals identifying, documenting, and protecting Underground Railroad resources.

*NETWORK APPLICATIONS DUE BY JULY 15*

Round Four applications for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom are due to regional coordinators by July 15. Please do not forget to include letters of support from program or property owners or managers, and detailed bibliographies. The statement of significance should be an essay which does not assume that the reader has any local knowledge. Maps are helpful.

### **FIRST NETWORK TO FREEDOM GRANT APPLICATIONS DUE May 31**

Programs, facilities, and historical sites which are current members of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom were eligible to apply for the first Network community grants. The applications for a total \$250,000 of grants were due May 31. In the NCR region, the Catoctin Center for Regional Studies, Maryland State Archives, and President Street Station (Baltimore) applied for funds. Decisions will be made later in the month.

### **Fort Donelson Celebrates Underground Railroad History**

Fort Donelson NB (FODO), TN, is a new member of the National UGGR Network to Freedom. In early 1862, Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant captured Forts Henry, Heiman, and Donelson. While Americans were overjoyed and national newspapers proclaimed the capture of these forts as a strategic military victory, many ignored the other victors of these battles. While the nation focused on details of the battles and what Grant's next move might be, thousands of enslaved African Americans were quietly abandoning slave masters and seeking refuge and freedom at the Union forts.

FODO commemorates the battle that gave the North its first major victory of the Civil War. Here in February 1862 Ulysses S. Grant catapulted into national prominence when he demanded and received the "unconditional and immediate surrender" of 13,000 Confederate soldiers under the command of General Simon B. Buckner. This Union victory opened the heartland of the South for Federal invasion. Relevant to the Underground Railroad, the military post was used by runaways as a refuge from slave masters (1862-1865). Assistance came from Union soldiers and religious and charitable organizations.

Funds from the Robert M. Utley Research Grant enabled park staff to conduct research for "The African-American Story at Forts Henry and Donelson" at the National Archives and Records Administration in D.C. This research revealed valuable information about the plight of enslaved peoples seeking freedom, the conditions of fugitive slaves in the Union Camps, and the recruitment of African-American men to the 16th U.S.C.T. at Fort Donelson in 1863. In conjunction with the Stewart County Library and Friends of the Library, FODO is launching a "hands-on" history program for county children from June 25 on, called "A Journey on the Underground Railroad," using reproduction Civil War items, period music, and videos. In preparation, Dr. Betty Joe Wallace, Austin Peay State University, will talk to students about

UGRR in TN.

## Florida UGRR Interest Mounts

Showing what can be done, Kristopher Smith organized a group, the Florida UGRR Project (FURP), in a remarkably short period. Approximately 15 to 20 people attended a meeting on April 12. After the SER coordinator made a presentation, Smith impressed upon the group that he would like FURP to first direct its attention toward submitting an application to the Network. The application would come once FURP concentrates on designing educational programs to enlighten students and the public on UGRR operations in Florida. Meanwhile, Smith is designing a strategic plan that will include gatherings throughout the state, and then a major statewide summit. He would like to get the organization in full operation by fall 2002.

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## NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

### DC and Mid-Maryland Underground Railroad Gatherings

The Mid-Maryland Underground Railroad (UGRR) Workshop on April 19 at Frederick Community College, co-sponsored by the National Park Service and the Catoctin Center for Regional Studies, was a rousing success. Over 60 individuals participated in the half-day session, the first of its kind in Washington and Frederick Counties. The workshop attained its goals to encourage cooperation and networking. A television reporter from Channel 25 taped footage. Success was only possible with the efforts of Dean Herrin of the Catoctin Center, who will continue to lead area efforts to research UGRR history and compile a database.

Dean Herrin and Cheryl LaRoche (doctoral student, U of MD) provided historical context on the UGRR. Participants were given the chance to view part of Chris Haugh's video, *Up From the Meadows*. Although there were no large numbers of bondspeople in the two counties, there were freedom seekers. Runaways and patrollers from outside the counties took advantage of area water and land routes connecting Frederick's border with PA. As well as oral traditions, written records survive -- for example, James W. C. Pennington's The Fugitive Blacksmith and court cases relating to "slave stealers" and the negligence of the North Central Railroad in facilitating escape.

The workshop included panels on research, funding, and tourism. Speakers highlighted grants available from the Maryland Historical Trust (SHPO) and the state Humanities Council; brochures were distributed from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Documentation is possible both locally, for example, at the Washington County Historical Society Library, and regionally, at the Maryland State Archives. In fact, the speaker from the Washington County library, at first thinking she had little to offer, was surprised to discover how many resources

the library contained of use to someone researching local resistance to slavery. Heritage tourism is coordinated from the local to state to national levels, as discussed by Marci Ross, from the Maryland Office of Tourism, Liz Shatto of the Historic Sites Consortium of Frederick, Bill Lee of AARCH, and Erika Martin Seibert from the National Register of Historic Places.

DC held its own gathering for over 50 people at Sumner School on Monday, May 20. Hilary Russell, formerly senior historian for ParksCanada, spoke on her DC UGRR research for the National Park Service in her usual witty and meticulous fashion. Not only did she illustrate her talk with maps, images, and graphs she had discovered, but she also discussed relevant places in DC with and without surviving structures with integrity. She asked, what do visitors expect when they tour sites -- to be able to SEE something or just to imagine what once was there? For those interested in seeing a copy of Hilary Russell's study, check libraries in parks, the Washingtoniana Room, Peabody Room (Georgetown), George Washington University, Moorland-Spingarn at Howard, and the Historical Society of Washington.

At the DC Gathering, three funding agencies were represented: National Endowment for the Humanities, DC Preservation Office, and DC Humanities Council. The panel on tourism included Mary Kay Ricks of DCTours, Susan Schreiber of the Historical Society of Washington (and formerly with the National Trust), and Marya McQuirta representing the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition, who is conducting a survey of African American sites in DC. Emphasis was placed on the need for public education, especially in order to involve youth, and on sharing and centralizing UGRR research. Contact Dr. Nancy Kassner about DC Historic Preservation Office grants to identify and document sites. One innovative program at Moton Elementary School was having children draw comics about neighborhood history.

### **New Members of National Network to Freedom Include 3 Parks**

In the latest round (January 15), three NCR parks applied to the Network as historical sites and were accepted: Arlington House, Ferry Hill (C&O Canal), and Harpers Ferry. Arlington House and Ferry Hill were the first historical sites of enslavement to apply to the Network. In addition to NER and SER, NCR is one of three NPS regions to date with park members in the Network. The 1998 National UGRR Network legislation clearly calls for NPS to identify sites and programs eligible for the Network to Freedom. Next, let's see some NCR park programs on the Underground Railroad apply!

### **Charlottesville Oral History Workshop**

Before electronic mail or postal delivery, people used oral tradition to share stories, historical accounts, and community information. While no one is alive today who experienced the Underground Railroad, many oral traditions have been passed from generation to generation. Research on the Underground Railroad must include such traditions.

The two-day Oral History Workshop sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, held on June 20 at the Foundation's Charlottesville headquarters, attracted more participants than could be accommodated. The idea for the workshop came from the number of grant requests to the Foundation for African American oral history projects. As a result, speakers were recruited from as far away as University of North Carolina's Southern Oral History Program. Topics on the first day ranged from equipment needs, to digital archiving (VA Center for Digital History), to local examples (including one from Arlington County), to keynote talks, "The Oral Tradition in African-American Culture," by Dr. Daryl Dance, University of Richmond, and, "Why Oral History?" by Dr. Dianne Swan-Wright of Monticello. The second day was oriented toward educators and use of oral history in schools. Under the leadership of Foundation folklorist Jon Lohman, the Virginia Foundation plans to hold similar future workshops across Virginia.

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## INTERPRETERS' CORNER

On May 9, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the staff at Oatlands Plantation, Leesburg, VA, co-hosted a workshop on interpretation of slavery and UGRR with the NPS Network to Freedom Program. Keynote speaker was Dr. Dianne Swann-Wright, Director of Special Programs at Monticello. Following her talk there were two panels: "Interpretation from the Point of View of the Interpreters," and "Interpretation from the Point of View of African American Constituencies." Those attending were by no means all interpreters, and were drawn from DC, MD, and VA, even from as far as Omaha, NE (MWR), St. Mary's County, MD (Sotterley Plantation), and Richmond, VA (Maggie Walker NHS). The National Trust was enthusiastic enough to offer to host another such workshop next winter, possibly at Decatur House in January.

The goal of the workshop was to address successful and unsuccessful strategies currently used to interpret the Civil War, plantations, other sites of enslavement, and places or landscapes associated with escapes from slavery. The panelists were selected to provide a diversity of perspectives to encourage coordination and exchange of ideas across NCR and to encourage museums and parks to learn from constituencies not usually consulted about interpretation of slavery and UGRR. Discussion raised some important issues: encouraging the public to distinguish between types of enslavement over time, space, and occupation; engaging youth who see history as boring and irrelevant; and, recruiting more African American interpreters.

Although there were more questions raised than answered, participants offered some useful interpretive strategies. Particularize, using names and information from those who lived and worked at the property, whenever possible. Appeal to pride in what enslaved workers

accomplished. Speak honestly, and do not avoid topics such as violence. Take care with terminology used at programs in order to reinforce the imposition of slavery as an institution on unwilling participants.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Harriet Tubman is a major heroine of the Underground Railroad, especially in Maryland where she was born, and to which she returned to rescue friends and family. General Harriet Tubman by Earl Conrad is not new (1943), but is the major biography of Harriet Tubman, in addition to Sarah Bradford's Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People (1886) [reprinted by Applewood Books, Bedford, Mass, 1993]. Although several new biographies are in the works, the Conrad biography is currently the definitive one of Harriet Tubman. The Bradford book is based on a collection of essays, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, compiled by the author in 1869. Strangely enough, many more books for children than adults have been written on Harriet Tubman.

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THANKS ARE DUE: Sean Tull (our webmaster); Dean Herrin (for making possible the Frederick Workshop); Belinda Thomas (for hosting the Oatlands Workshop); Tina Short, Eric Harris, and Brigitte Keels of NACE for providing necessary assistance with the DC Gathering; and to Nancy Kassner for co-hosting the DC Gathering.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Make this newsletter a forum by directing your comments and contributions to:*  
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