

The National Underground Railroad  
Network to Freedom Program  
National Capital Region

National Park Service  
US Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC



# THE CONDUCTOR

(Winter 2008-2009 – No. 24)



UNDERGROUND  
RAILROAD  
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

**NCR NOMINATIONS TO THE  
NETWORK TO FREEDOM**

**JANUARY 2009**

*District of Columbia*  
City Hall

*Maryland*  
Mount Calvert Historical and  
Archaeological Park

## **BRYAN PRINCE AUTHOR OF BOOK ON DC'S WEEMS FAMILY**

*A Shadow on the Household: One Family's Incredible Struggle for Freedom* by Bryan Prince was just published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart Press. As of January 2009, the book is available from Random House in the US. Bryan Prince is director of Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, Canada. He is the sixth generation descended from enslaved African Americans who went to Canada before the Civil War. Prince is an outstanding example of the Canadian researchers who have collaborated with US counterparts. He will be in DC for book talks and signings in late February. Network to Freedom will co-sponsor one book talk and signing at the Sumner School on February 18 at from 6-8:30 pm.

Ann Maria Weems is known from William Still's *The Underground Railroad* as the teenage freedom seeker who disguised herself as a boy in order to escape with the help of a physician driving to Philadelphia. Less known is the story of the rest of her family. The head of household, John, was a free man, unlike his wife and children. The owners of the Weems family sold his wife Arabella and the children for \$3,300. Only Ann Maria remained in

Montgomery County owned by a slave trader. As a result of Ann Maria's successful escape, Arabella Weems was inspired to reunite a child with an escaped mother in the North.

Buxton, Prince's home, was founded as the Elgin Settlement in 1849 as a haven for enslaved refugees and free blacks. The settlement became known as "Buxton", in honour of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (an advocate for social reform). Buxton has been described as the "most successful" planned black settlement in Canada. Its population declined during the Civil War because seventy young men went to the US to fight slavery. Two from Buxton, Drs. Anderson Abbott and Jerome Riley, were among those who in 1863 set up Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C.(DC) After the war, Buxton's population, which had reached well over 1,000, declined sharply as families returned to their former homes in the States and young people journeyed south to aid in Reconstruction. James T. Rapier, for instance, served in the U. S. Congress from Alabama from 1873 to 1875.

Still standing are the house where the Weems family lived in DC after the Civil War and the tavern in Montgomery County belonging to the slave trader Price from whom Ann Maria Weems escaped.



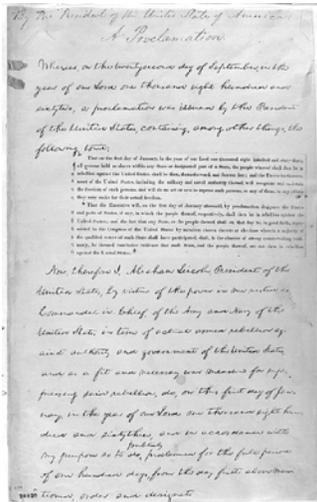
## **HARRIET TUBMAN PARK LEGISLATION AND SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY**

The Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study: Environmental Assessment (November 2008) was submitted to Congress. Back in 2000 Congress asked for an evaluation of possible commemoration of Harriet Tubman, through a Special Resource Study by National Park Service planners. The study emphasizes Tubman's entire life – before, during, and after the Civil War. She was an Underground Railroad conductor, army spy, nurse, and humanitarian. On January 13, 2009, Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara Mikulski (both D-MD), were joined by Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton (both D-NY), to re-introduce to Congress *The Harriet Tubman National Historical Park and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park Act* (S.227). For its progress, see <http://www.GovTrack.us/congress/bill>. The bill would establish a park in Maryland to trace Tubman's early life through landscapes on the Eastern Shore, and a park in Auburn, New York, to focus on structures and a cemetery connected to Tubman's later years. The Special Resource Study is the outcome of eight years of work on Tubman's life and on historic sites associated with her. The report is posted under "Special Resource Study" on <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/plans.cfm>.

## **ANNUAL ASALH LUNCHEON IN FEBRUARY**

Join the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) members and staff as they welcome the New Year, a new President, and hear keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, the author of April 4, 1968: Martin Luther, Jr.'s Death and How it Changed America. There will also be a "Featured Authors Event," 11-12:15 pm. The date is Saturday, February 21, 2009, Noon, Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street, NW,

Washington, DC. Remember, the next annual convention will be in Cincinnati, Ohio, September 30-October 4, 2009. The National Park Service sponsors an annual session at the convention (See [www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org)).



## CELEBRATE THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

The original Emancipation Proclamation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, will be on view, February 12-16, 2009, at the National Archives. You can also take the opportunity to visit the National Museum of American History's "America's New Birth of Freedom: Documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum," which includes a signed copy of the proclamation between January 16–March 22, 2009.

### GRANTS

- National Trust grants. Contact Southern Field Office (DC, MD, VA, WV), Regional Director: Robert Nieweg, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036-2117 (202-588-6107) or [robert\\_nieweg@nthp.org](mailto:robert_nieweg@nthp.org)
- Preservation Maryland grants for tangible cultural resources (including archeological) due Feb. 1. For more information contact Marilyn Benaderet, Director of Preservation Services at 410-685-2886 or [mabenaderet@preservationmaryland.org](mailto:mabenaderet@preservationmaryland.org).
- By Feb 2, 2009, Letters of Intent to apply are due for major DC Humanities grants. For Small/Planning grants, deadline is March 2. Grants assistance training at several sites in DC, Jan. 12-23. Contact Humanities Council of Washington, DC, at 925 U St NW, DC 2001. <http://nthpgrants.blogspot.com/>
- Institute of Museum and Library Services Grants: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals (March 15); Coming Up Taller (Jan. 30); Museum Assessment Program (Feb. 15); National Leadership Grants (Feb. 1). See <http://www.imls.gov/applicants/name.shtm>
- Maryland Heritage Area Authority FY10 Grants, Intent to Apply Letters for capital and non-capital projects to enhance Heritage Area goals, due Feb 20. See <http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net/hb-1.html>

### EVENTS/REMINDERS

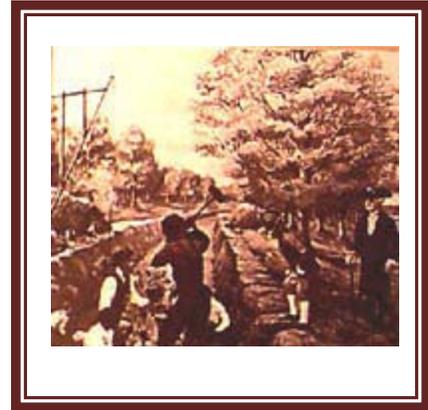
- Montgomery County History Volunteers Conference; Saturday January 24, 8:30am-4:00pm with talks on county and state history, oral collections management, volunteers and more. Montgomery College, Germantown Campus (Rte 118 & Observation Dr). Small charge, open to all. Contact [kylottes@montgomeryhistory.org](mailto:kylottes@montgomeryhistory.org).
- Dangerfield Newby Lecture, Old Manassas Courthouse, Manassas, Feb. 26, 2009. Contact 703-792-4754.



## OLD PATOWMACK CANAL (GREAT FALLS, VIRGINIA)

At Great Falls, on the Virginia side of the Potomac River, there is a Patowmack Canal Trail, following the canal that was built and active between 1785 and 1828. Thanks to Robert Kapfer's book The Potomac Canal: George Washington and the Waterway West (West University Press, 2007), and help from staff at Special Collections, Alexandria Library, we know about enslaved workers building the Patowmack Canal at Great Falls who escaped, seeking freedom. John Potts, manager of the forge, advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* for Jack, "a runaway from the Great Falls of Potomack." He offered \$10 for "delivering him to the manager of the Forge at the Great Falls, or for lodging him in any gaol and giving me notice thereof," (September 1796). William Herbert advertised in July 1790 in the same newspaper for Matt and

Matthew who ran from "the Patowmack Company's Works" at Great Falls. Intriguingly, company records state that builder Leonard Harbaugh was directed in 1797 to bring back William Magruder's bondman John who was locked up in Hagerstown as a runaway.



(NPS website)  
Potomac Canal Workers

## DOROTHY STERLING

Dorothy Sterling, aged 95, died on December 1, 2008. She was a historian and editor of collections of excerpts from 19<sup>th</sup> century blacks--Speak Out in Thunder and We Are Your sisters. She also wrote children's books on Harriet Tubman and Robert Smalls, and books on abolitionists Abby Kelley and Lucretia Mott. Sterling worked to counter the omission of African American history in school texts and to provide children with strong role models. A descendant of German Jews, Sterling encountered African American history through her political activities, and through reading W. E. D. Du Bois and Herbert Aptheker in the 1940s.

An example of a letter reprinted in We Are Your Sisters [pp 231-2] (WWW Norton, NY, 1984) was written by Mary Ann Elizabeth Shadd Williamson, a free woman in Delaware, to her niece Mary Ann Cary who was born free and emigrated to Canada with her family, becoming an editor of *The Provincial Freeman*. Dated November 2, 1858, she wrote: "I was struck panic on looking over the Standard of last Saturday to see it announced that I D Shadd [her nephew] had bin sent to Prison [in Canada]. It made me so sick and so bewildered that I could scairely attend to my duty. I am much afraid that Canada is not going to prove what it was crackd up to be....Canada will eventually bicombe hunting ground for the American Bloodhound and when the friends of the fugitive attempts to rescue them the Riott Act will [be] brought against you and Cram you into Prison....I want if you have time that you will inform me by letter how long him and his Companions will have to stay. This case of Isaac turning out as it has makes me begin to think I had better stay where I am than go from bad to worse [by emigrating to Canada]."

## DOES THE NETWORK HAVE AN IMPACT?

In reviewing the ten years of the Network to Freedom, members of the NCR public have been asked to comment on the “impact” of the program.

Bruce Hanafin, Division Chief of the Historic Preservation Division, Prince William County Government, wrote to the national program manager: “The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom effort has allowed Prince William County to begin to address a deficit in our historic interpretation. The inclusion of the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre to the Network to Freedom has significantly increased our ability to interpret the plight of enslaved African-Americans in the antebellum judicial system. The Network to Freedom program also serves as an important link between various historic sites, governmental agencies and not for profits in their interpretive efforts. “

## LECTURE ON DANGERFIELD NEWBY FAMILY

Dangerfield Newby, born in Fauquier County, was a recently freed bondsmen who was part of John Brown’s raiding party and was the first raider killed at Harpers Ferry in 1859. He was motivated to join Brown by his despair at his inability to redeem his family from slavery. Poignant

letters were found after his death. His wife begged him to buy her and their children before they were sold South: “Oh, Dear



1859 detail of photo,  
Library of Congress

Dangerfield, com this fall without fail, monny or no monney. I want to see you so much. That is one bright hope I have before me.” Historians have always said that the family disappeared afterwards. Descendants who recently shared their family history, however, can relate what happened to the family after 1859.

There will be a free lecture by historian Philip Schwarz on “Newby Family & Harpers Ferry,” Thursday, February 26, at 7 pm, at Old Manassas Courthouse, 9248 Lee Ave, Manassas. Contact Prince William County, Department of Public Works, Historic Preservation Division at 703-792-4754 for more information.

## “ARTIST IN THE PARK” AT FREDERICK DOUGLASS NHS

The Frederick Douglass NHS has a \$10,000 grant, awarded by the National Park Foundation, to fund an “Artist in the Park” series. The grant will enhance interpretation of Frederick Douglass by hosting a re-enactor. Previous work by veteran portrayer Kevin McIlvane brought Frederick Douglass “to life” as he delivered portions of Douglass’ famous speech “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” A professional actor, he will portray Douglass on five occasions between February and July 2009. This series should draw more visitors to the park and recently renovated Cedar Hill. The first performance in 2009 will be part of the Frederick Douglass Birthday Celebration, Saturday, February 14 at 10:00 a.m., at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.

## UPCOMING GATHERING FOR AREA LIBRARIANS AND ARCHIVISTS

In an effort to get local librarians together to discuss joint resources and potential cooperation, the Network to Freedom and the Fairfax Library will sponsor an Underground Railroad Gathering for Librarians and Archivists at Fairfax Library on March 11, at 10:30 am. The event is free and open to the public. The aim is to encourage libraries to share information about sources available to the public on slavery and the Underground Railroad in NCR. An anticipated outcome is a better public understanding of what maps, genealogies, newspapers on microfilm, period and government documents, and state and local records are locally available to document resistance to slavery through flight. NCR is lucky to have a wealth of institutions with valuable resources and knowledgeable caretakers.

## NETWORK TO FREEDOM APPEARS ON NPS INAUGURATION WEBSITE

As a new era began with the inauguration of President Barack Obama, NCR was involved in an unprecedented preparation for the historic event. Included not only were complex logistics, but also educational materials like a website, a rack card, a brochure, a Junior Ranger booklet, a special inaugural stamp for passport books, and a podcast. Included on the National Park Service 2009 Presidential Inauguration website (<http://www.nps.gov/inau/index.htm>) was:

*“President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 recognized the dreams of freedom held by enslaved African Americans in the United States. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution later abolished slavery in 1865. Until all enslaved Americans achieved freedom, however, there were always those whose ingenuity, courage, and resolve enabled them to resist slavery through flight. The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom facilitates efforts across the United States to document, preserve, and celebrate the history of freedom seekers and those of many religions, ethnic groups, and races who aided them until freedom was proclaimed nationally.”*

## USEFUL INFORMATION

- Emory University’s Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database  
<http://www.slavevoyages.org>
- Betty DeRamus, author of Forbidden Fruit: Love Stories from the Underground Railroad, has a new book out in February 2009, Freedom by Any Means: Con Games, Voodoo Schemes, True Love, and Lawsuits on the Underground Railroad, (Simon & Schuster).
- Henry Louis Gates’ genealogical article focused on a family line originating in Cumberland, MD. "Family Matters: When Science Clashes with Ancestral Lore" appeared in the December 1, 2008, issue of the *New Yorker*.

- Virginia Emigrants to Liberia Website (<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/liberia>) describes 3700 African American Virginians who migrated 1820-1865 to a colony in Africa (later Liberia) founded by the American Colonization Society.
- The Ohio Memory website <http://cdm267401.cdmhost.com/index.php> has some Siebert Papers, mostly Ohio-related.
- The VA Baptist Historical Society Library, Boatwright Library, University of Richmond, has excellent archives of Baptist history at PO Box 34 Richmond, VA 23218; (804) 289-8434. There is also a Baptist Historical Center, 10255 Old Columbia Road, Columbia, MD 21046-1716 (1-800-466-5290, ext. 234).
- Maryland Cultural Data Project streamlines applications for arts and cultural organizations. See <http://www.mdulturaldata.org/home.aspx>
- To see recent Virginia National Register nominations, visit [http://www.virginia.gov/registers/register\\_counties\\_cities.htm](http://www.virginia.gov/registers/register_counties_cities.htm).
- The MD Tourism Underground Railroad brochure is downloadable as a pdf from <http://www.visitmaryland.org>.
- George Nagel announces that the Afrolumens Project has been reorganized and is back online at: <http://www.afrolumens.org>. The focus has narrowed to pre-1865 Harrisburg area history, with the emphasis on slavery, anti-slavery, Underground Railroad and African American history. All of the old material (Negro Leagues, Midland Cemetery, Jazz-era leaders, etc) is still available at the same address.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Nominations for Most Endangered Places, until 5:00 PM, February 6, 2009. To download an application, or more information about DC Preservation League, visit [www.dcpreservation.org](http://www.dcpreservation.org).
- 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Black History Month Conference, "*Heralds of Freedom: John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and the End of Slavery*," Friday, February 6, 2009, Temple University, Main Campus, Philadelphia, PA.
- Preservation Leadership Training, for staff & volunteers, local and state preservation organizations. June 20-27, 2009, Deadwood, SD. Apply by March 31, 2009. Scholarships available. Center for Preservation Leadership, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, DC 20036 (202-588-6067) or [plt@nthp.org](mailto:plt@nthp.org).
- Virginia Genealogical Society, Spring Conference, Library of Virginia, Richmond. April 18, 2009. See <http://www.vgs.org>.
- Virginia Forum, Longwood University, Farmville, VA, April 24-25, 2009. More information at <http://www.Virginiaforum.org>.

National Park Service website: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

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US Department of the Interior

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The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) was created by Congress in 1998 to honor those who resisted slavery through flight. *The Conductor* was established to inform readers about Underground Railroad history and resource within the National Capital Region. It describes the activities of NTF.

[www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr)



NPS readers can find past issues of *The Conductor* at “The Conductor Archives”

<http://www.ncr.nps.gov/>



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