



THE CONDUCTOR

(Spring 2010 – No. 27)



NATIONAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

January 15, 2010

New NCR Members of the Network to Freedom

District of Columbia

Burial Sites of William Boyd and David A. Hall at Historic Congressional Cemetery – two newly documented Underground Railroad (UGRR) heroes William Boyd and David A. Hall are buried here.

Maryland

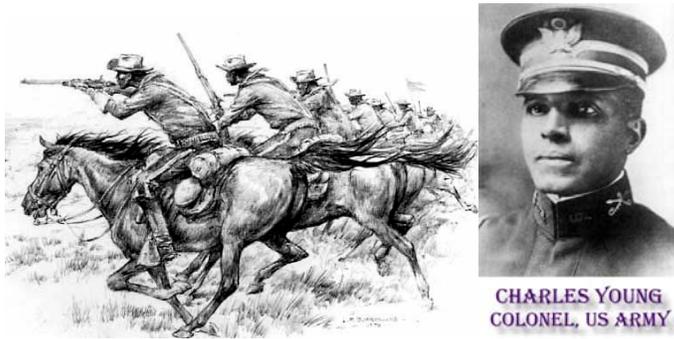
Darnall's Chance, Prince George's County – escapes from a tobacco plantation toward freedom in the early 19th century are documented.

WHAT ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN WEST VIRGINIA?

Help! So far only the West Virginia State Archives and Harpers Ferry National Historic Park (NHP) are listed on the Network to Freedom in West Virginia. Documentation from primary sources is desperately needed for West Virginia sites and programs. By legend there are sites and stories needing substantiation -- escapes from the Kanawha Salines (saltworks) and from plantations; transit through and interception of runaways on their way to Ohio and Pennsylvania; legal defense of freedom seekers; and adventures of refugees from slavery (including those in the Civil War camp at Harpers Ferry).

West Virginia, as the western part of Virginia until secession, borders on the Ohio River across from the free state of Ohio. Examples of flight to Ohio exist in the

narrative and obituary of Charley Garlick who fled in 1843, and in trial records in regard to claims for runaways. David Putnam, Jr., Underground Railroad (UGRR) leader in Marietta, Ohio, for example, was sued for a West Virginian's loss of nine freedom seekers. Lastly there is swashbuckling John Fairfield whose exploits in West Virginia were described by Levi Coffin, the famed conductor.



CHARLES YOUNG
COLONEL, US ARMY

NEW HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDIES PROPOSED

A new Historic Resource Study bill just introduced by Congressmen Jackie Speier, William Clay (a fan of NTF), John Lewis and others authorizes a study of the post-Civil War Buffalo Soldiers. Colonel Charles Young of the Buffalo Soldiers was the first administrator of what would become two national parks. Many African Americans who had fled slavery joined the US Colored Troops (USCT) and then made a career out of army service. They became those called “Buffalo Soldiers” by the Indians out West. The hope is to establish a Buffalo Soldiers National Trail. The soldiers left the Presidio in California in May and headed south along El Camino Real through San Mateo County, California. It was a thirteen day trip covering 280 miles from San Francisco to Yosemite. The trek to Sequoia spanned 320 miles and took 16 days. The story of the Buffalo Soldiers was made famous by Sheldon Johnson on the Ken Burns’ TV series on the National Parks.

There is a parallel initiative to commemorate USCT commander, Colonel Charles Young. The Charles Young Theme Study is an effort connected to the Young home in Xenia, Ohio. This National Historic Landmark is owned and preserved by the black fraternity Omega Psi Phi. Charles Young lived in the house as an adult when he worked at Wilberforce University. Young was a freedom seeker. His parents escaped from Mays Lick, Kentucky, to Ripley, Ohio, when Charles was a baby. John P. Parker, a freedom seeker and UGRR activist, was likely involved in their rescue since Parker served as Young's mentor during his youth.

SEMINAR AT HAMPTON NHS

Hampton Mansion, a National Park Service site in Towson, Maryland, is the site of one hundred years of slavery from the 1760s to the 1860s. Recently it has commemorated that history through a series of seminars. Hampton National Historic Site held the 4th annual symposium on African American History, "Sifting Through Slavery: Archeology and Interpretation of Agricultural and Industrial Slavery in the Mid Atlantic." Co-sponsors are Historic Hampton, Inc., and Goucher College. The symposium took place on March 25, 2010, at Goucher College. Dr. John Vlach of George Washington University was the keynote speaker. Dr. Vlach is the author of Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery and The Planters Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings. Dr. Vlach was joined by archeologists Dr. Robert Chidester and Dr. Jillian Galle and actor Michael E. Crutcher.

"SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES" GRANTS PROGRAM AT RISK?



Eleutherian College

Milton House

Cliveden

Hampton NHS

Freedmen's Cemetery

Ford Bell, president of the American Association of Museums, voiced disappointment that two cultural programs under the auspices of the National Park Service – *Save America's Treasures* and *Preserve America*, which direct money to protect historic treasures and other cultural resources -- are losing funding. David Barna, spokesman for the National Park Service, said to the *Washington Post* on February 2 that when the economy is in crisis, officials must target programs that do not fund "critical operations."

Many of the historic sites, monuments, artifacts and documents vital to documenting America's story are deteriorating. These treasures urgently require conservation and preservation to survive. To focus public attention on the importance of our national heritage and the need to save our treasures at risk, the White House Millennium Council teamed with the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1998 to establish *Save America's Treasures*. In the past, the following NTF members have been among those benefiting from the program's grants: Eleutherian College, Hampton NHS, Milton House, Harriet Tubman sites, Gadsby's Tavern, Cliveden, and Freedmen's Cemetery (Alexandria). If the grants are cut, more NTF members will lose the chance to receive much needed preservation funds.



BOOK CORNER

STEPHEN MARC, PASSAGE ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (University Press of Mississippi in conjunction with Stephen Marc, 2009) is a coffee table book with unique photo montages, many double-page, of UGRR sites, artifacts, and related people from all over the United States. Some of these photos were exhibited at the Tulsa State Fair at the NTF booth. It has taken a combination of artistic talent, imagination, and years of research and travel to produce this masterpiece.



BETTY DEREMUS, FREEDOM BY ANY MEANS (Simon & Schuster, 2010) is a new book from the author of Forbidden Fruit: Love Stories from the Underground Railroad. “In nearly every case, these 19th century black success stories—many of them freed or runaway slaves—followed the same pattern,” says Detroit journalist DeRamus. “They took what little they had and turned it into something valuable.” Her book includes Mary Ellen Pleasant (a program about her is a NTF member). Pleasant was a 19th black woman in California who led several lives, hiding runaway bondsmen, challenging discrimination, and making millions from investments. Also included is Nelson Gant, a freed Virginian caught and tried at the Loudoun County Courthouse (NTF member) for “stealing his wife.” Moving to Zanesville, OH where his homestead survives (NTF member), he later sold land, gained fame for his fruits and vegetables, and owned a coal mine.



(US Naval Historical Center)

The Maritime Museum has a USS *Monitor* Center. The *Monitor* was created in 1861 as part of the plan to blockade the southern coast during the Civil War. This photo includes African American sailors on deck while on the James River in 1862. They are probably refugee bondsmen, such as Siah Carter. Most black crewmen served as cooks (like one in the photo) or stewards. There were 18,000 black sailors in the war, but their story is barely known.

THE VIRGINIA FORUM

The Virginia Forum is dedicated to the promotion of Virginia history. The 2010 Virginia Forum is scheduled for April 15-17. The location will be Newport News, at Christopher Newport University and the adjacent Mariners' Museum. Program information is available on the conference website at www.virginiaforum.org.

The Mariners' Museum is the largest maritime museum in the US, and has an outstanding library. From its collection, Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas, with 8 essays and 160 color illustrations, was compiled. It was published in conjunction with a special exhibit.

There are concurrent sessions and a plenary session at the Mariners' Museum with a keynote speaker. Helen Rountree is an expert on Virginia Indians and, as key note speaker, will speak on John Smith's Chesapeake voyages. She began researching the Powhatan Indians in the late 1960s upon discovering that these Indians continued culturally. She is an anthropologist, a professor retired from Old Dominion University.

Of special interest will be a panel called, "Waterways to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in Eastern Virginia," with Tommy Bogger (Norfolk State), Cassandra Newby-Alexander (Norfolk State), and John Kneebone (Virginia Commonwealth).

HARRIET TUBMAN ARTIFACTS DONATED TO SMITHSONIAN

Harriet Tubman, the American hero born in Maryland, is famed for her rescue of many seeking freedom on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. On March 11, 2010, the U.S. House Administration Committee hosted an event to recognize the donation of Harriet Tubman artifacts by Charles L. Blockson, distinguished historian, collector, and curator emeritus at Temple University. The artifacts were given to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Items from the collection were unveiled at a ceremony on Capitol Hill coinciding with the anniversary of Tubman's death on March 10, 1913. The unveiling ceremony at the Longworth House Office Building was hosted by Rep. Robert A. Brady, (D-Pa.).

According to the Smithsonian press release, Blockson acquired and protected the significant 39-artifact collection which includes rare photographs, correspondence,

photo-post cards, manuscripts of speeches, and souvenir programs from dedication services. Family photographs and a lace shawl (circa 1897) given to her by England's Queen Victoria are clues to Tubman's public and private sides. A photograph from Tubman's funeral on March 11, 1913, shows her lying in state at A.M.E. Zion Church in Auburn, New York.

PLANTATION MEETING

Limited opportunities for communication among historic plantations gave birth to a chance to enhance networking. To delve into issues of education, commemorative events, and outreach at plantation sites, 50 interested people gathered at Riversdale House Museum, Prince George's County, Maryland, on January 20. Tellingly, participants valued the exchange at the meeting so much that they immediately requested a list of those attending the meeting to make follow up easier.

To avoid potential problems, sites at different stages in development of programs and research shared successes and failures. The participants focused on how to multiply limited resources through partnership. A useful device they discussed was teachers' workshops. Such workshops provide teachers with accurate information to share with their pupils and so multiply impact.

Public presentations on slavery are not easy. Group discussion brought up issues on presenting slavery to hostile public or docents. Docents often fear controversy. A participant advised not to tread lightly in interpretation of slavery. He has found people hungry for information and angry that they were never given it. Participants in the discussion concurred that it was best not to hold back uncomfortable evidence, but to create a two-way conversation treating visitors and the subject with respect.

CALL FOR PAPERS:

- The Association for Study of African American Life and History for its conference, "History of Black Economic Empowerment," September 29-October 4, 2010, Raleigh, NC. Deadline closes April 30. Submit proposals electronically to info@asalh.net.
- "Quakers and Slavery, 1657-1865: An International Interdisciplinary Conference," November 4-6, 2010, The McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Swarthmore and Haverford Colleges. Topics include Quaker abolitionists and roles in abolitionist societies. Visit the conference website at: <http://www.quakersandslavery.org> or email the organizers at contact@quakersandslavery.org

EVENTS

- Organization of American Historians, "American Culture, American Democracy," April 7-10, Hilton Washington, Washington, DC
Virginia Forum, April 15-17, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA

- Two-Day Workshop on Greenbelt Park's Connection to Slavery in Prince George's County, Maryland, April 22 and 23, 2010 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, the New Carrollton Public Library, located at 7414 Riverdale Rd., New Carrollton, Md. The workshop is free but space is limited. For reservations, call (301) 344-3948 or debbie_kirkley@nps.gov
- "Catching Lightning in a Bottle:" Documenting Science, Technology & Innovation Through Oral History," a conference sponsored by OHMAR (Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region) on Wednesday, April 28 and Thursday, April 29, at Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, 1201 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC.
- "Battleground for Freedom: The Underground Railroad on the Western Frontier, "2010 National Underground Railroad Conference," Network to Freedom, July 28-31, Capitol Plaza Hotel, Topeka, Kansas

OPPORTUNITIES

- For the following three National Trust for Historic Preservation Scholarships, contact Jacqueline_johnson@nthp.org about:
 - Diversity Scholarships to attend the next National Preservation Conference, Austin, TX, Oct. 27-30, 2010
 - Diversity Scholarships for Graduate Study in Historic Preservation
 - Washington Office Internships, June 7- August 13, 2010
- Call for Judges for Maryland History Day 2010, Saturday, April 24, 2010 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. To register to judge at Maryland History Day, visit <http://md.nhd.org/register>.
- Meetings of a new local history and genealogy research group focusing on the north central Potomac River watershed with particular interest in African American history will be held on the third Tuesday of each month in Berryville, VA, to share knowledge and enthusiasm. There will be guest speakers. Contact deborahalee@gmail.com.
- The Humanities Council of Washington, DC is now accepting applications for Historic Preservation Grants of up to \$2,000 for our annual Community Heritage Project. For more information, attend a free workshop: Wednesday April 4 6:30 to 7:30 pm @ DC Public Library SW Branch, 900 Wesley Place, SW. Applications are due Monday, May 3rd, 2010 by 3PM
- If you go to the Library of Congress (LC) catalog and navigate to the Prints and Photographs catalog be prepared for a surprise. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/The> catalog has a new face/interface much more in keeping with the rest of the LC site.

National Park Service website: www.nps.gov

National Park Service
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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 (UGRR) history and resource within the National Capital Region. It describes the activities of NTF.

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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National Park Service website: www.nps.gov