



Editorial

Now is the opportunity to recognize someone doing good Underground Railroad work and tell us what should be included in the 2011 survey.

Call for Nominations for the 2011 Free Press Prizes

Each January, we ask our readers whom they believe deserves special recognition for Underground Railroad work. Each Fall, we then award the annual *Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes* for Leadership, Preservation and Advancement of Knowledge in the contemporary international Underground Railroad community.

If you know someone who has done good work in any of these three areas whom you would like to nominate for a prize, let us encourage you to do so. It's easy. Go to urrFreePress.com, click on Prizes, download a nomination form and email it to us. While you are there, enjoy having a look at past prize winners and their accomplishments.

What do you want asked in the 2011 Free Press survey?

Each year, *Underground Railroad Free Press* sponsors a survey of the international Underground Railroad community and shares the results with the community, public officials and others. The surveys include questions carried forward from year to year for trend tracking, new questions on new developments, and questions which our readers suggest.

Some of the most valuable lessons learned from these surveys since the first in 2007 came from reader-suggested questions. Let us know what you think would be good to ask in the 2011 survey which will be administered online

(continued on page two)

Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

urrfreepress.com

January, 2011

Volume 6, Issue 28

Josiah Henson and the First President of the United States

George Washington? No, Washington was actually first president of the *second* United States government which, as every American school child learns, began in 1789 with the Constitution. For eight years before that, the nation was governed by the original United States government chartered in 1781 by the Articles of Confederation.

The original government, named by the Articles as the United States in Congress Assembled, all too well understood its weakness and replaced itself through the Constitutional Convention. The original government had its presidents who were elected to one-year terms, the first of whom was Maryland's John Hanson, the actual first president of the United States, who served the 1781-1782 term.

In her work for the Ontario Heritage Trust in 2007 researching the Canadian Uncle Tom's Cabin, the Ontario home of famed Underground Railroad figure Josiah Henson, author Karolyn Smardz Frost, uncovered fascinating

Visualizing Slavery

By Susan Schulten

The 1860 census was the last time the federal government took a count of the South's vast slave population. Several months later, the United States Coast Survey — arguably the most important scientific agency in the nation at the time — issued two maps of slavery that drew on the Census data, the first of Virginia and the second of slave states as a whole. Though many Americans knew that dependence on slave labor varied throughout the South, these maps uniquely captured the complexity of the institution and struck a chord with a public hungry for information about the rebellion.

The map uses what was then a new technique Susan Schulten teaches history at the University of Denver. This article originally appeared in *The New York Times*. Reprinted with permission.

A Romance Novel Finds the Underground Railroad

Redfield Farm, Judith R. Coopey. Indi Publishing Group, 2010. \$14.95. ISBN 978-0-9789247-4-4

While there has never been much Underground Railroad fiction, it would be hard to outdo the first Underground Railroad novel. Technically fiction but based on actual figures and events, Harriet Beecher Stowe's blockbuster *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best-seller of its time, changed the course of history and is still regarded as the most influential book ever written by an American. Other than children's books, Underground Railroad

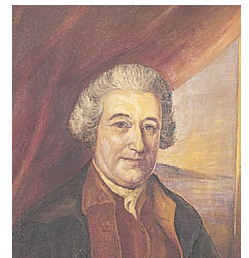
material tying Henson to the Hanson family and a possible blood relationship to President John Hanson.

Frost says Henson was born at Port Tobacco, Maryland, probably in 1795 or 1796, in the midst of many Hanson plantations and within a few miles of Mulberry Grove, John Hanson's birth place and home until 1769 when he moved to Frederick, Maryland, where he rose to national political prominence.

Please see *Henson/Hanson*, page 3, column 2



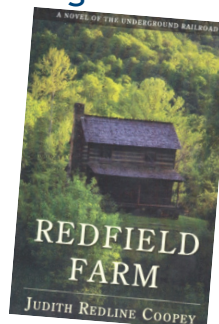
Josiah Henson in old age. Photo probably taken in the 1870s.



John Hanson's presidential portrait in Independence Hall's collection

in statistical cartography: each county not only displays its slave population numerically, but is shaded (the darker the shading, the higher the proportion of slaves) to visualize the concentration of slavery across the region. The counties along the Mississippi River and in coastal South Carolina are almost black, while Kentucky and the Appalachians are nearly white.

The map reaffirmed the belief of many in the Union that secession was driven not by a notion of "state rights," but by the defense of a labor system. A table at the lower edge of the map measured each state's slave population, and contemporaries would have immediately noticed that this corresponded closely to the order of secession. South Carolina, See Map, page 4, column 2. See page 5 for the map.



fiction had to wait until 2005 for David Durham's *Walk Through Darkness*, a page-turner reviewed here in May, 2007. Now comes *Redfield Farm*, Judith Coopey's romance novel cast in an Underground Railroad setting.

Coopey says that she See Farm, page 5, column 1

in May. You will be invited to participate in the survey. Survey results will be summarized in our July issue and, as every year, full results will be posted on our website.

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Click on Prizes at the Free Press website to learn more about these annual prizes or to download a nomination form.

Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent Reporting On
Today's Underground Railroad

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Hortense Eloise Simmons



Underground Railroad Free Press prize judge Hortense Simmons, who rose from migrant child-laborer field hand to multiple Fulbright Scholar, passed away on November 26 in Atlanta of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's disease. She was 69. Dr. Simmons was a founding judge of the international Panel of Judges who select annual winners of

Summer Underground Railroad Institute for School Teachers

Colgate University is offering a four-week program from June 26 to July 22 for teachers, graduate students and others involved in secondary education wishing to learn more about the Underground Railroad and abolitionism. The 25 selected for the program will receive \$3,300 stipends and designation as National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholars. Those electing to may reside on the Colgate campus for \$37 per day.

Colgate history professor Graham Hodges, director of the program, says that it emphasizes historical presentations by top Underground Railroad scholars, and includes visits to nearby Underground Railroad sites, Harriet Tubman's home and other venues. Free Press Prizes judges Judith Wellman and Fergus Bordewich head the lineup of this summer's program lecturers. Hodges notes that the Colgate campus and nearby Hamilton, New York, are especially pleasant in summer.

The program has no writing requirements. Participants may wish to develop Underground Railroad lesson plans with Professor Hodges' assistance. Those interested should search on Underground Railroad at Colgate.edu for information and an application form. The application deadline is March 1.

the *Free Press* advancement of knowledge, leadership and preservation prizes, the highest honors awarded in the international Underground Railroad community.

Hortense Eloise Simmons was born July 6, 1941, in Miami to Edna and Ira Simmons, Jr., a domestic worker and owner of a radio and television repair business. Three of her grandparents were Bahamian immigrants, the fourth, American Indian.

Wanting to experience the nation's capital, she enrolled at Howard University. To afford her freshman year, she had saved her earnings as a migrant farmhand working fields up and down the east coast during her high school summers, at first overstating her age to get hired. Still short of what she needed as her freshman fall semester approached, her brother Ira Simmons III gave his sister his entire earnings from working beside her picking crops that summer. Hortense Simmons received her B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English from Howard.

Dr. Simmons began her teaching career at Ohio State University where she founded the university's first courses in African-American literature. From 1973 until her retirement in 2005, she taught American literature and ethnic studies at California State University. Please see *Simmons Life*, page 3, column 1

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They're At It Again

Is someone in the New York City government getting paid off to ignore history? It looks like it.

Manhattan's Hopper-Gibbons House was an Underground Railroad safe-house and important center of abolitionism when owned by Isaac Hopper and his daughter Abigail Gibbons in the 1850s and 1860s.

Despite last year's designation by the city's Historic Preservation Commission of Hopper-Gibbons House as protected, major illegal alterations to the building continue. Though the city Building Department has issued stop-work orders, its inspectors have failed to halt the work. Many complaints from neighbors, a local historical group and *Free Press* have had no effect in prodding the City to action.

Neighbors Fern Luskin and Julie Finch were the 2009 Free Press Prize for Preservation laureates for their work in mobilizing action against the illegal modifications to Hopper-Gibbons House.

Visit nytimes.com/2011/01/06/arts/design/06saved.html?pagewanted=1&r=1 for the *New York Times* opinion.

Simmons Life

at Sacramento. In 1984, she was named as University Fellow by the 24-campus California State University system, the world's largest. Widely published, she often served as editor, journal referee or reviewer, sat on the board of the Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution, and served as a director of the California Literature Project.

Dr. Simmons was honored as a multiple Fulbright Scholar, the first time to Malaysia and then with several appointments to Ukraine where she became something of a celebrity. Her first Fulbright stint there led to her invited role as Observer in Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution election for which she was given the key to the city of Mykolayiv, Ukraine, where she had taught.

In recent years, she consulted to the United States Department of State where she sat on the Fulbright Scholar selection panel and trained American Fulbright Scholars before they took up their foreign assignments. Dr. Simmons also taught in Ghana, Greece, Haiti, Viet Nam and the Semester at Sea program.

Her first Fulbright assignment in Malaysia triggered a love of foreign travel which only grew as she took frequent assignments and vacations abroad. Her

last in February, 2010, was to Ukraine when she first noticed the affects of her disease. Her travels made her into a prolific collector with her home's walls and shelves full with deftly chosen art of many cultures.

Hortense Simmons was an inbuilt adventurer who once climbed Mount Fuji. A planned autobiography was to have been aptly entitled *Moving Target*. Condolences have poured in to her family from across the world.

Surviving are siblings Ira Simmons III of Venice Beach, California, Earl Simmons and Paulette Thweatt of Atlanta, Beverly Brown of Pompano Beach, Florida, and her nieces and nephews. A sister Edna Simmons died in 1972. Dr. Simmons was predeceased by her former husband, Al Thornton of Sacramento.

Ira Simmons, a nationally known Black power political figure from the 1970s, directs global relief organization One-world Works. He recalls that Hortense's, his and their siblings' favored migrant labor work as children was in the cool orchards of upstate New York.

Recalls *Free Press* Publisher Peter H. Michael, "This for me is a loss not just of an incisive and enthusiastic prize judge but of a wonderful close 25-year friend. Hortense lit up a room wherever she went. There were no dull moments. In her foreign assignments, no American could have been a better ambassador than was she. Her example and energy resonate, continuing to bless all whom she knew. Rest in peace, Good Friend."

Beginning in 2010, the Free Press Prize judges renamed one of the prizes the Hortense Simmons Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge in the Contemporary Underground Railroad.

Henson/Hanson

After escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad in 1829, Josiah Henson settled in Canada and became one of history's most prominent and articulate advocates for emancipation and human rights. Henson founded the town of Dawn, Ontario, where he established the first school for Underground Railroad freedom seekers.

In his 1849 autobiography, Henson's description of the mistreatment of his parents is as vivid as it gets in exposing the horrors of slavery.

In the words of the son, "I was born . . . on a farm belonging to Mr. Francis N[e]wman], about a mile from Port To-

bacco. My mother was the property of Dr. Josiah McP[herson], but was hired by Mr. N., to whom my father belonged. The only incident I can remember, which occurred while my mother continued on N.'s farm, was the appearance of my father one day, with his head bloody and his back lacerated. He was in a state of great excitement, and though it was all a mystery to me at the age of three or four years, it was explained at a later period, and I understood that he had been suffering the cruel penalty of the Maryland law for beating a white man. His right ear had been cut off close to his head, and he had received a hundred lashes on his back. He had beaten the overseer for a brutal assault on my mother, and this was his punishment. Furious at such treatment, my father became a different man, and was so morose, disobedient, and intractable, that Mr. N. determined to sell him. He accordingly parted with him, not long after, to his son, who lived in Alabama; and neither my mother nor I, ever heard of him again. He was naturally, as I understood afterwards from my mother and other persons, a man of amiable temper, and of considerable energy of character; but it is not strange that he should be essentially changed by such cruelty and injustice under the sanction of law."

Dr. Josias Hanson McPherson's grandfather, Samuel Hanson, was the first cousin of President John Hanson. Among four known marriages between the Hanson and McPherson families, all between 1754 and 1821, a daughter and a granddaughter of Samuel Hanson married McPherson men, Benedicta Hanson to Henry McPherson and Elizabeth Fendall Hanson to Thomas McPherson, respectively. The fifth of Benedicta and Henry's children was the Josias Hanson McPherson of interest here.

In his autobiography, Henson writes of his enslaver Josias Hanson McPherson, "As the first negro child ever born to him, I was his especial pet. He gave me his own Christian name, Josiah, and with that he also gave me my last name, Henson, after an uncle of his, who was an officer in the revolutionary war." The uncle was Major Samuel Hanson McPherson. That Josias Hanson McPherson would name his "first negro child" and "especial pet" Josiah Henson — or perhaps originally Josiah Hanson or Josias Hanson — gives rise to the suspicion that Josias Hanson McPherson fathered Josiah Henson, an all-too-frequent indignity in-

See *Henson/Hanson*, page 4, column 1

Henson/Hanson

flicted on slaves by their enslavers.

Henson's describing himself as McPherson's first negro child could be literal and gives rise to deeper speculation. In his biography, Henson ascribes his father as his mother's husband sold south, but also reveals that this man was kept on the plantation of his enslaver, Francis Newman, while his mother was the property of Josias Hanson McPherson. Though for some period Henson's mother was hired out by McPherson to Newman after Josiah Henson's birth, McPherson would have had access to the mother whenever he wanted before the birth. This combination of circumstances raises the possibility, perhaps likelihood, that Josiah Henson was actually a McPherson related to the Hansons through Josias Hanson McPherson.

Remaining unexplained is the one-letter difference in the spelling of the surnames Hanson and Henson. This might be attributed to Henson's London biographer John Lobb recording the name as he thought he heard his illiterate subject pronounce it. DNA comparison of a Henson descendant and a Hanson descendant would tell the story if Josiah Henson is related to the Hansons.

In 1805, Josiah Henson's mother was sold to Isaac Riley, a farmer in Montgomery County, Maryland. In the same auction, Josiah, then nine or ten years old, was sold to Adam Robb, a tavern keeper in Rockville near the Riley farm. After the boy fell ill, Josiah Henson was sold in either 1805 or 1806 by Robb to Isaac Riley and began living in the Riley household's slave cabin reunited with his mother. In an ironic twist of history, this cabin and the farm where it is located were later owned by President John Hanson's grandson, United States Senator Alexander Contee Hanson, Jr., sometime before 1819 when the Senator died. Riley's slaves were not included in the sale.

Josiah Henson was in significant part the basis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 landmark *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. At a time when a best-seller might sell ten thousand copies in the United States, Stowe's definitive exposé of slavery quickly sold a half million copies at home and, within a few years, as many abroad. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been translated into sixty languages, is still regarded as the most influential book ever written by an American and has never been out of print since its original publication.

In 2006, the Riley farmhouse where Josiah Henson had been enslaved was

rediscovered in Montgomery County and purchased as a public historic site by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. This, the actual site of Uncle Tom's Cabin, is now regarded by many as the single most spectacular re-discovery of the Underground Railroad. The farmhouse's attached cabin, initially accepted as the actual place of enslavement of Josiah Henson and therefore "the original Uncle Tom's Cabin" is now thought to have been the home's kitchen.

Josiah Henson died May 5, 1883, probably in his late eighties, revered in the United States, Canada and elsewhere. In 1909, his great-grandnephew, Matthew Henson, who accompanied Admiral Robert Peary on an expedition to the North Pole, became the first person to set foot at the Pole as he scouted ahead of Peary and the exploration party.

A full account of the relationship between Josiah Henson and John Hanson is included in the forthcoming *Remembering John Hanson*, a biography by Free Press publisher Peter Michael.

Map

which led the rebellion, was one of two states which enslaved a majority of its population, a fact starkly represented on the map.

Conversely, the map illustrated the degree to which entire regions — like eastern Tennessee and western Virginia — were virtually devoid of slavery, and thus potential sources of resistance to secession. Such a map might have reinforced President Abraham Lincoln's belief that secession was animated by a minority and could be reversed if southern Unionists were given sufficient time and support.

The map quickly caught the public's attention, and was reproduced throughout the war. Its banner headline, "For the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers," also became the slogan of the Union's most important home-front organization, the United States Sanitary Commission. The map gave a clear picture of what the Union was up against, and allowed Northerners to follow the progress of the war and the liberation of slave populations.

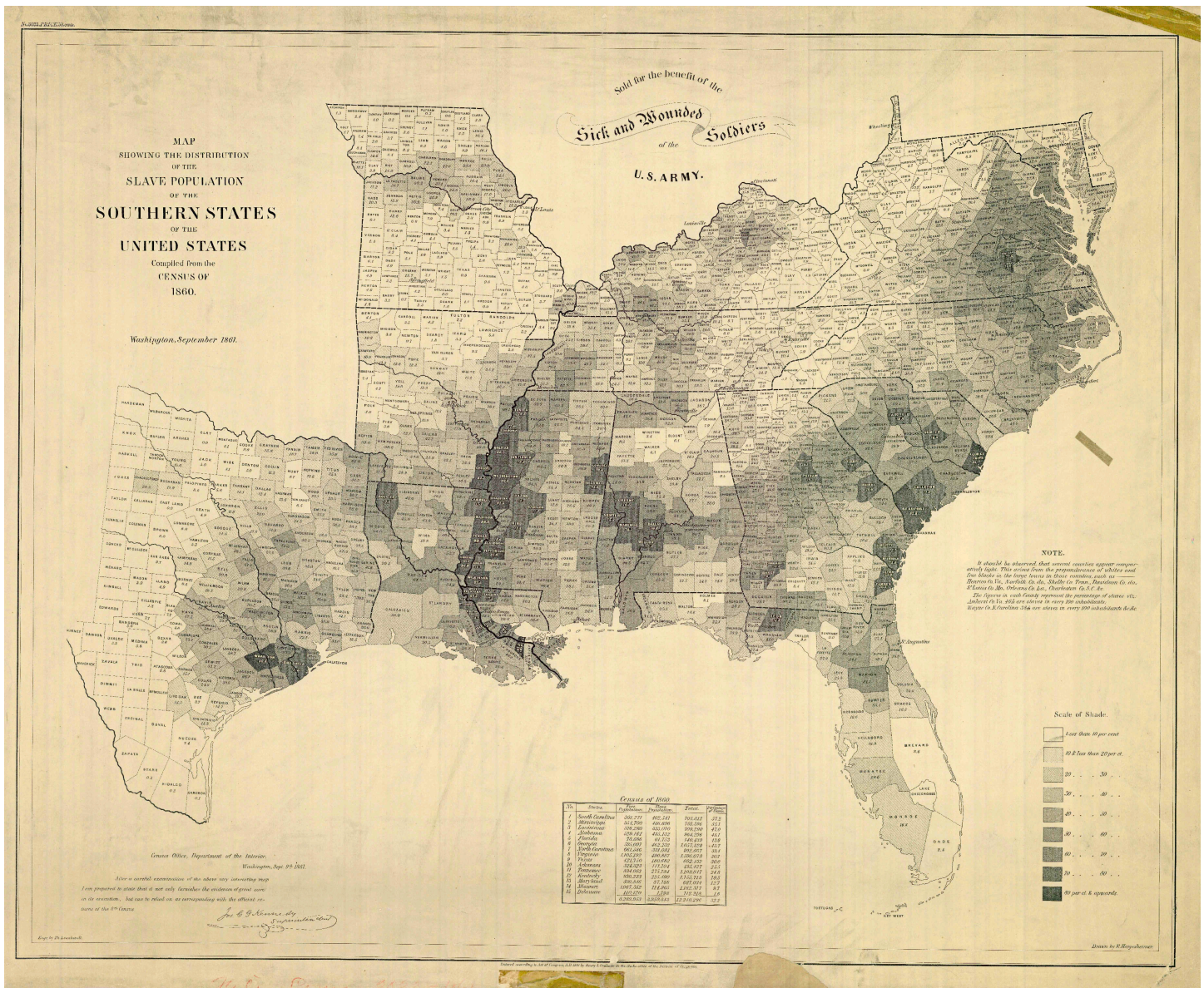
We don't know when Lincoln first encountered the Coast Survey's map of slavery. But he became so taken with it that Francis Bicknell Carpenter included it in the lower right corner of his painting, "President Lincoln Reading the Emancipation Proclamation to His Cabinet." Carpenter spent the first six

months of 1864 in the White House preparing the portrait, and on more than one occasion found Lincoln poring over the map. Though the president had abundant maps at his disposal, only this one allowed him to focus on the Confederacy's greatest asset: its labor system. After January 1, 1863 — when the Emancipation Proclamation became law — the president could use the map to follow Union troops as they liberated slaves and destabilized the rebellion. Lincoln was enthusiastic about Carpenter's finished portrait, and singled out the map as one of its most notable details.

Slavery also informed the painting in another way. Carpenter arranged the Cabinet according to his perception of their sentiment regarding emancipation: its two leading proponents, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase — standing — and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, are to Lincoln's right, while Secretary of State Seward sits in the foreground. To Lincoln's immediate left are the secretary of the navy, the secretary of the interior and the postmaster general standing to the rear, while Attorney General Edward Bates sits at the far right of the portrait. Lincoln sits at the center, as Carpenter wrote, "nearest that representing the radical, but the uniting point of both." A copy of the anti-slavery *New York Tribune* lies at Stanton's feet, while a portrait of Simon Cameron — the prior secretary of war who urged emancipation early in the conflict — is visible beyond Stanton's head. The map lying across the table behind Seward is the Coast Survey's 1863 "Map of the State of Virginia," which included population statistics and concentric rings around Richmond to guide Union strategy.

It may seem odd that the Coast Survey — originally responsible for detailing the nation's coastlines and rivers — produced a map of slavery in the south. Yet over the preceding two decades its superintendent, Alexander Dallas Bache, had skillfully widened the Survey's work and made it a hub of mapmaking innovation. The Survey experimented with several new methods of cartographic representation, including the use of shading to represent the human population. As early as 1858 Bache had directed the Survey to produce maps of the rivers and coasts of the South, in anticipation of a conflict. But the 1861 map was in a class by itself: a landmark cartographic achievement, a popular propaganda tool, and an eminently practical instrument of military policy. No wonder Lincoln liked it.

See the map on the following page.



Map courtesy of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. For an interactive version of this map with Susan Schulten's detailed descriptions, visit http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/10/opinion/20101210_Disunion_SlaveryMap.html.

Farm

based much of the book's story line and setting on her own Quaker family's Underground Railroad involvement in western Pennsylvania. One finds *Redfield Farm's* towns of Bedford, Alum Bank and Osterburg on today's map, Quaker country still, where Coopey's ancestors worked as safe-house operators and conductors. She was inspired to write *Redfield Farm* while restoring her ancestor's 1799 cabin which tradition holds was used by the family as a safe-house.

The young teen Ann Redfield's suspicions that her brother Jesse is secretly harboring fugitive slaves prove true when Jesse needs Ann to deflect slave catchers' attention away from him by taking a group of escapees north. Cooperation is gained from local Quakers, but other neighbors

keep a close eye on the Redfield family in hope of claiming runaway rewards.

One night, Jesse arrives with Josiah, a runaway from Virginia, both racked with fever. Through the winter, Ann nurses them back to health, teaching Josiah to read and write. Proximity leads to trust and intimacy. After Josiah reaches safety in Canada that Spring, a child is born unknown to him and as shock to Ann's gentle widowed father, Amos.

In the midst of a well-researched slavery and Underground Railroad narrative, a sharply drawn but altogether believable story of love denied unfolds, rivaling romance novels of today. The other woman who appears, father and son reunited, and the shamed woman who does right and ends up marrying well unfold amidst

a roiling and idealistic race motif.

Coopey's story line is effectively developed by use of years as chapter titles, beginning with 1903 and Jesse's passing at age 77, winding back to his and Ann's childhood in 1837, then moving through to 1866 after the passing of the Underground Railroad.

Redfield Farm is strong in both plot and character development. In the first few pages, antagonist Pru Hartley makes her appearance, ever prowling for ways to expose the Redfields in key reappearances which move the story. An unexplained gap is the lack of development of family patriarch Amos Redfield, a bare cipher who would be expected to have had much more influence in an 1850s Quaker family than Coopey allots him.