



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad community

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Free Press Survey: Community Ages With Few Young Newcomers More Underground Railroad Programs Than Ever but Public Awareness Remains Low

Visit urrfreepress.com/#survey to view full survey results for 2017 and before.

The 2017 *Free Press* survey of the international Underground Railroad community reveals growing numbers of people and programs but not many younger newcomers. Survey results show lower recognition than in past years of the eleven national Underground Railroad programs but this drop might be due to the influx of newcomers to the community since last year among new *Underground Railroad Free Press* subscribers.

Aging Out?

With survey respondents averaging 61 years of age and their most common decade of age now the seventies for the first time, the Underground Railroad community is not getting any younger. *Free Press* analyzed age of survey respondents versus how long they have been involved with Underground Railroad matters in the hope that the analysis would show newcomers as younger, thus bolstering community livelihood and long-term continuity. However, newcomers are no younger than those involved with the Underground Railroad for any other length of time. Corroborating the trend is that survey takers are mostly senior in their careers. These findings could be due to survey takers being older on the average than the community as a whole but there is no evidence of this.

Intrigued and Involved

Survey takers rate their Underground

Railroad knowledge as high and have been involved with the Underground Railroad for 15 years on the average. Three-fourths have visited an Underground Railroad site, and two in five are directly involved with a site, organization, or program. In the 2016 survey, more than half were involved. When asked how they became aware of the Underground Railroad, forty percent heard about it growing up, a third first learned of it in school, and most of the remainder encountered it in reading. What keyed their interest were the intrigue of the Underground Railroad (32%), its moral imperative (25%), and particular figures, stories or places (21%).

Growth in Dollars and Numbers

Most (62%) Underground Railroad organizations have no revenues. Of those that do, average revenues took a 14-percent upswing to \$41,534 from the previous year. Half again as many are experiencing revenue growth as decline. As more organizations such as libraries, museums, and universities launch Underground Railroad programs, the overall number of Underground Railroad-related entities is increasing. After the tally from the 2017 survey, the *Free Press* Lynx central registry of currently active Underground Railroad organizations now numbers 162, an all-time high.

National Organizations' Low Profile

In each survey, we ask respondents to rate their familiarity with and ef-

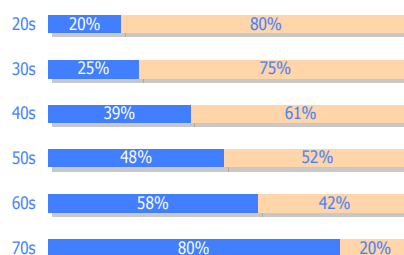
Please see Survey, page 3, column 1

Teaching of Underground Railroad Now Nearly Universal in Schools

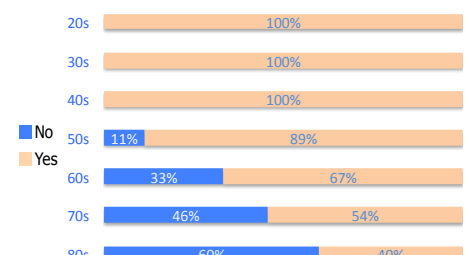
Free Press research has shown that it was individual teachers on their own who in the 1960s sparked a generation-long reawakening of the Underground Railroad in the national memory by inserting the Underground Railroad into their curricula.

Ten years ago, *Free Press* surveyed the Underground Railroad community on having ever re-

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2007 Free Press Survey



2017 Free Press Survey

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The 2017 *Free Press* survey reveals a mixed bag in the international Underground Railroad community.

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The 2017 survey shows virtually 100% of US students getting Underground Railroad education. (It happened in Canada long ago.)

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Trifecta: A museum awarded, a university redeemed, an Underground Railroad site saved

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A young reporter takes a look at her county's history of abolitionism and slavery.

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The time is now: Nominate someone or an Underground Railroad organization for one of the 2017 Free Press Prizes.

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Something on your mind? Drop us a line at info@urrfreepress.com any time.

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Three Wins: Tubman Museum Awarded, University of Virginia Lives Down Its Past, New York City Site Saved After Long Battle

It is far from where the Underground Railroad ever was and launched itself in the Deep South in 1981 when the Underground Railroad wasn't exactly a welcome topic there. Macon, Georgia's **Harriet Tubman Museum** has from its start compiled an exemplary record of public service, growth, and long-term stability.

The Museum got its start when Father Richard Keil made a downpayment on a dilapidated former warehouse in downtown Macon. Named for Harriet Tubman, the museum has grown over the years to become the largest institution of its kind and a key educational and cultural resource for the southeast region. When the museum outgrew its original 8,500-square-

foot building near Macon's Ocmulgee River waterfront, it embarked on an ambitious fundraising campaign and opened its new 49,000-square-foot museum in 2014.

Last month the museum announced that it was named a winner of a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation grant at the Knight Cities Challenge Winners Summit in Miami. The Tubman Museum was one of 33 grantees among more than 4,500 applicants. The museum's grant will fund the conversion of one of its parking lots into a downtown amphitheater that will include a 30-foot modular LED screen.

From its beginning in 1819 and until the

end of the Civil War, the **University of Virginia** benefitted financially from the stolen labor of an estimated 5,000 slaves used to construct and maintain it. Nearly 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson, his Monticello overseer, and ten slaves, marked out an abandoned farm for the university he planned.

The bricks that built Jefferson's vision of a place of enlightenment were dug from clay, shaped, and baked in kilns by enslaved people. The stone of the new university's elegant steps and architectural features was quarried and carved by the enslaved. Much of the construction of buildings was done by enslaved people, *Please see Three Wins, page 3, column 2*



In Macon, Georgia



University of Virginia Monument



Hopper-Gibbons House

A Young Reporter Looks at Slavery and Abolition in Her County

Finding Freedom: A Look at the History of Slavery and Abolition in Frederick County by Nancy Lavin

This article appeared in the June 17, 2017 edition of *The Frederick News-Post* of Frederick, Maryland. Reprinted with permission and edited lightly for space.

The Juneteenth holiday honors the historic events of June 19, 1865, when Union army troops arrived in Texas to enforce the executive order that abolished slavery elsewhere more than two years earlier. The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 brought freedom to slaves in ten Confederate states. Texans resisted the order until Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and declared "an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves." The celebration among those newly freed African-Americans was the oldest recorded

commemoration of abolition in the nation's history. More than a century and a half later, communities across the country, including Frederick County, Maryland, mark June 19 as the end of slavery.

But Frederick County has little connection to the moment in history the day honors. Maryland slaves, including those in Frederick, gained their freedom before those in Texas, and in some cases, even before the start of the Civil War.

Uncovering the history of slavery and emancipation in Frederick County has proved no easy task, despite the rich knowledge and ample research of the county's connection to that period as a whole. Most slaves never learned to read or write, which prevented them from

documenting their experiences in writing. Newspaper accounts, including archives of *The Frederick News-Post* and its predecessors, give a glimpse into some aspects of their lives: classified advertisements of sale or purchase of slaves, meeting notices for slaveholders' groups, and ransom offers for runaway slaves. One such ad, published in *The Frederick-Town Herald* in 1816, offered a \$100 reward for a "Negro" who ran away. Another notice, published in *The Valley Register* in 1859, described a slave of a local resident who hanged himself after his master refused to sell him, alongside his girlfriend, to another state.

The military kept detailed records of its members, including black soldiers who flooded its ranks by the end of the Civil War. *Please see Lavin, page 4, column 1*

Who Will They Be? It's Time to Nominate 2017 Prize Candidates

Past winners have included many dedicated Underground Railroad enthusiasts like you. Each year since 2008, *Underground Railroad Free Press* has awarded the three Free Press Prizes for Leadership, Preservation and Advancement of Knowledge in the international Underground Railroad community. In our September issue, we will announce the 2017 winners. Nominations will be open until September 1. Nominating is easy: just download a nomination form from our website, fill it in and email it to us.

Survey

fectiveness of the Underground Railroad organizations with a national reach. With the exception of three organizations, these ratings have been and remain very low, dropping further in 2017. The cause of the drop in familiarity could be the large influx of Underground Railroad newcomers to the *Free Press* subscriber database that was polled. The three organizations that perennially top both the familiarity and effectiveness lists are, in 2017 order, *Underground Railroad Free Press*, the National Park Service's Network to Freedom program, and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Their effectiveness rating on a ten-point scale are, respectively, 7.2, 6.1 and 5.0. The next highest rating was only 3.7, "low," by *National Geographic*.

Missing In Action

The new National Museum of African-American History and Culture wasn't included in the two rating questions since, inexplicably, it does not have an Underground Railroad display or program. When asked if the museum should tell the story of the Underground Railroad, 96 percent of 2017 survey takers said yes.

The Free Press Surveys

The annual *Underground Railroad Free Press* surveys are the only surveys of the international Underground Railroad community. Since 2007, the *Free Press* surveys have provided valuable information not available elsewhere on Underground Railroad knowledge, opinions, practices, economics, trends and specific topics. Each year, full survey results are made available to the community and to executives of the major American and Canadian Underground Railroad organizations. Results also help *Free Press* in shaping its future content and programs.

Universal

ceived instruction on the Underground Railroad through high school, results of which showed scant instruction until the 1960s. The first chart here shows the results: not until getting to people born in the 1950s (those in their fifties in 2007) did even half of a cohort receive any school instruction on the Underground Railroad.

Over the past decade, that has markedly changed. The 2017 *Free Press* survey surprised this question, revealing essentially universal Underground Railroad education among survey respondents aged 49 and under (born after 1967). What excellent news!

Three Wins

often "rented" from nearby enslavers.

Stemming from student efforts beginning a decade ago, and now part of the university's telling a more accurate story of its past, the school has planned a memorial commemorating the toil of the enslaved people who put forth most of the labor that for its first 46 years built and maintained the university founded by the author of the Declaration of Independence.

Last month, the Board of Visitors unanimously endorsed the memorial concept and the design presented by Boston design firm Höweler+Yoon. Fundraising for the \$6 million project has been launched with the memorial dedication planned for the university's bicentennial in 2019.

Höweler+Yoon has designed a circular memorial 80 feet in diameter with an outer wall of the same local granite used on nearby terraces and the university's famous rotunda. About 1,000 known names of those who worked as slaves will be inscribed with more added as they become known. An inner ring will serve as a shelf, and another further inside as a water feature. The memorial's grassy interior will be used as a gathering space.

Free Press has been following the drawn-out saga of New York City's **Hopper-Gibbons House** since our November, 2008 issue. In fact, this is the ninth issue in which we have updated the story. The home at 339 West 29th Street in Manhattan was used in the 1850s and 1860s by Isaac Hopper and his daughter, Abigail Gibbons, as an Underground Railroad safehouse and a meeting place for fellow abolitionists. In 2008, owner Tony Mamounas began adding a fifth story to the building and altering its façade, violating city building and preservation codes covering the Lamartine Place Historic District where Hopper-Gibbons is located. It was over the original roof that Hopper, Gibbons and others escaped to avoid an angry mob during the 1863 Draft Riots.

Despite rulings from the city's Board of Standards and Appeals and the state Supreme Court finding that Mamounas should not have erected the new story without Landmark Preservation Commission approval, scaffolding and the rooftop addition remain. Finally in May the Commission ruled "completely in favor of" demolition of the modifications to the building and invoked its legal authority to make its decision stick. The city ordered Mamounas to remove the fifth-floor addition and a three-story rear addi-

Underground Railroad Free Press® Independent Reporting on Today's Underground Railroad

Peter H. Michael, Publisher
info@urrfreepress.com
301 | 874 | 0235

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tion within 60 days. If he doesn't do so, the city will hire a contractor to remove the additions and bill Mamounas. If he doesn't pay, a lien will be placed on the building.

Nearby neighbors Fern Luskin and Julie Finch who have spearheaded the preservation battle from the beginning are still digesting the victory. Said Finch, "I'm ecstatic, but I'm a little bit in shock. I haven't absorbed it yet." Luskin echoed, "It's very hard to pull this kind of thing off. When moneyed people, developers, have a will to build, they will build, no matter what. That we were able to resist, because of the historical legacy of this building, is a triumph, it is a real triumph."

Luskin and Finch were the winners of the 2009 Underground Railroad Free Press Prize for Preservation.

Lavin

War. Military records include basic information about the black soldiers — where they came from, their occupation, and in some cases, whether they were enslaved or free. Those injured during service also had to provide detailed biographical testimony to qualify for a pension. The sources paint a broader picture of slave life in Frederick.

Frederick's agricultural industry did not include the cotton and tobacco crops that fueled the economies of states farther south. In that sense, slaves in Frederick might have benefited from a less-intensive labor experience. But that didn't mean they were exempt from cruelty. Frederick's proximity to the northern, more decidedly anti-slavery states had little bearing on how individual slave owners treated their slaves. An account by Washington County, Maryland, slave James W.C. Pennington, who escaped slavery before the Civil War and went on to become a well-known minister and abolitionist, described conditions of "cart-whip, starvation and nakedness."

Mary Harris, an Adamstown, Maryland, resident, spoke of the hardships faced by her maternal great-great-grandparents, who were slaves in Virginia. Stories were passed down orally by her mother, but written records have also confirmed parts of the stories, Harris said. In an interview, Harris shared details of the struggles faced by her slave ancestors Sarah Ellen and Fred Ambush. She spoke of how Sarah Ellen, charged with tending the farm's cattle, tried to warm her bare feet on frigid winter mornings by standing in the warm spots on the ground where the cows had lain overnight. When her mistress discovered that she ate a biscuit she was cooking for the family — Sarah Ellen was pregnant at the time — she was forced to eat the entire batch as punishment. Fewer stories were passed down about Fred Ambush but the scars that traversed his back, like "black snakes" when retold to Harris, indicated he was no stranger to brutal beatings.

For Frederick County slaves, freedom came at different times and in different forms. The Emancipation Proclamation is widely cited as the end of slavery, but Maryland was not among the states to which the actual 1863 proclamation issued by President Lincoln applied. Lincoln named only ten of the southern Confederate states in his order, strategically excluding the border states — including Maryland — in an effort to keep their loyalty to his cause. Some Maryland slaves gained freedom indirectly from Union efforts to recruit black soldiers following this order.

Slavery was abolished outright by the state

under its new constitution ratified on November 1, 1864, but the movement to end slavery in Frederick County started well before that. Slavery was never prevalent in the mid-Maryland area as in other parts of Maryland where cotton and tobacco reigned supreme, as the grain crops grown in Frederick didn't need as much slave labor.

In 1790 when the first United States decennial census was taken, slaves were 12 percent of Frederick County's 30,351 residents. There were also 213 free blacks at the time, 0.7 percent of the population. The number of slaves in Frederick County peaked in 1820 at 6,668, and fell off subsequently. At the same time, the number of free blacks increased, in 1860 surpassing the enslaved 4,967 to 3,243.

Many of those recorded as free secured their independence during one of several waves of manumission, in which owners freed their slaves, that occurred in that time period. Moral opposition to slavery might have fueled such manumissions but economics was also a driving factor, as the need for slave labor declined, and with it, their value as property. A story about a slave sale published in Frederick County's *The Valley Register* in April 1862 noted the declining value of slaves sold as part of an estate. Five slaves, whose owner had died, were sold for a total of \$400. Less than two years before, they would have brought \$2,500 the article stated.

For those who still owned slaves as of May 1863 when blacks were being recruited to the Union army, a \$300 compensation for letting their slaves enlist served as additional incentive. In order to collect the fee, slave owners had to file a deed of manumission relinquishing ownership of the slave. By the end of the Civil War, more than 8,700 African-Americans from Maryland had enlisted.

Other slaves took freedom into their own hands, escaping to safety in nearby Union states, as the chaos of the war in particular provided ample opportunities for those still enslaved to escape.

Harris' family history includes oral testament to abolitionist activity in Frederick County. Her great-grandfather, Richard Harris, recorded as a freed laborer in Frederick in the 1850 census, is said to have owned a black buggy with a secret compartment concealed in the floorboards. As she was told, Richard Harris used the hiding spot to take slaves to freedom at the Pennsylvania line. Though Mary Harris found no written evidence in her research of these details, she con-

firmed several pieces of potentially collaborating information. Richard Harris supposedly used the fastest thoroughbred horse in town to lead his buggy, and his wife lived on a horse farm according to census records. Also, Richard Harris was recorded in the census as "mulatto," indicating that his light-skinned appearance might have enabled him to pass for a white man, an advantage in efforts to transport black slaves to freedom, Harris said.

Frederick's African-American community held its first emancipation celebration in 1865, according to a story published in *The Frederick Examiner*. That August, more than 3,000 people gathered to mark their freedom with singing and prayer, the article stated. The annual event grew each subsequent year, featuring parades, speeches, picnics and entertainment with crowds of more than 8,000, including those outside Frederick, the newspaper reported.

Although she grew up immersed in her family's connections to the period, Harris admitted that she, too, made assumptions about slavery. "I had this image in my mind of what a slave looked like, a man in ill-fitting, tattered clothes, an image likely poached from some cartoon I'd seen," she said. It wasn't until she started her own research that she realized that images fail to capture nuances of individual slaves' experiences, as well as successes achieved by those who lived to see freedom. Her maternal ancestors, for example, purchased property in Frederick County. They raised families, and enrolled their children in the African-American school in the town of Point of Rocks. Harris put her continued efforts to document and share black history as a way to share her realizations with others, to erase from their minds similarly held misconceptions about slave life.

Although slavery is no longer a celebrated institution, examples of racism and discrimination persist. Newspaper headlines published in the 1890s and those published today often appear nearly identical. Harris points to education on black history and race relations as a key solution to modern racism. "The more you know, the less intolerant you'll be," she said. If nothing else, the enduring stain of slavery can act as cautionary tale, and documenting sordid details, an attempt to ensure it never happens again. "We need to recognize that we had a past that was not necessarily favorable to all," said David Key, a Frederick County resident who serves as president of the African American Resources, Cultural Heritage Society of Frederick County. "We need to at the same time not dwell on that history, but use it to move forward."