



## Editorial

### Now Is The Time to Tell Them

Most of what we know today about the Underground Railroad comes from stories passed down over the past 150 years or more: grandparent telling grandchild stories heard long ago of their family's freedom seeker, safe-house operator or conductor, the property owner passing on to the new buyer the Underground Railroad history of a site, the researcher or casual reader coming across an old newspaper article or arrest record.

Careful research shows that only about three percent of Underground Railroad sites known today can be identified by documentation and that the other 97 percent we know about through passed down stories, oral tradition as it is called. There is no way to know how many Underground Railroad stories never got told or how many others died out along the way.

Those that were passed down for a time but stopped being told got lost because the last person to hear the story failed to pass it on. As overwhelmingly reliant as the Underground Railroad is on oral tradition, it is vital then to keep these stories alive.

So, let us urge you to be sure to pass along your Underground Railroad stories no matter how faint they might be. About two-thirds of all Underground Railroad stories are only that: just the story with little or no corroboration but no reason to doubt the story. These stand-alone stories are the very heart of what we know today about the Underground Railroad.

Write down what you know, distribute widely what you write, (continued on page two)

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Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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## Undergraduate on CNN With Her Underground Railroad Book

Noni Carter, an eighteen-year-old Harvard University student from Fayetteville, Georgia, has published her first book, *Good Fortune*, Underground Railroad historical fiction inspired by the life of her ancestor, Rose Caldwell.

*Good Fortune* tells of Ayanna Bahati's kidnapping on the African coast, travails in plantation slavery, working her way up from the fields to the big house, and escape on the Underground Railroad. This is a vivid telling of the life and aspirations of an untypical slave woman.

In a *Free Press* interview, Carter said of her main character, "Despite the time period, Ayanna has the traits of a strong woman — compassionate but not compromising, self-driven, able to withstand the hardships she is faced with. Through her pursuit of education evident in the entire story, Ayanna exposes her inner drive to my readers, one



that allows her to stay dedicated to a goal until that dream is realized."

Carter wrote *Good Fortune* between the ages of twelve and fifteen while still in high school. CNN will feature Carter and her book on its What Matters program in March.

Noni Carter is a freshman studying anthropology, history, literature and music, and aspires to write more historical fiction and continue performing as a classical pianist after graduation.

*Good Fortune* is published by Simon & Schuster and may be purchased through online booksellers or ordered through bookstores.

For more on Noni Carter and *Good Fortune*, visit [NoniCarter.com](http://NoniCarter.com).

## Hard Work Pays Off in Preserving Two Sites

Two Underground Railroad safe-houses are winning their preservation struggles.

The Lamartine Place neighborhood which includes Hopper-Gibbons House was awarded historical landmark status by the city council of New York City on January 26. Hopper-Gibbons House, on 29<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, was operated as a safe-house by abolitionist Isaac Hopper and daughter Abigail Gibbons.

The landmark award followed a winning battle by neighbors to reverse illegal modifications to Hopper-Gibbons House. See *Free Press* issues of September and November,

2009, at our website archives for more. *Free Press* supported the landmark application.

With several grants and hard work of local groups, Farmington's Quaker Meeting House in upstate New York is undergoing a miraculous restoration. The building, long active in the Underground Railroad, Women's Movement and Native American struggles, had become derelict and slated for demolition.

Shown here are photos of the meeting house from about 1900, 2006 and 2010. Restoration is expected to be completed in 2011. Visit [FarmingtonMeetingHouse.org](http://FarmingtonMeetingHouse.org) for more.



## 2010 Free Press Prize Nominations Open

Is there someone you admire for his or her Underground Railroad work? Is there an organization whose Underground Railroad work you feel deserves recognition? Yes? Then nominate the person or group for a Free Press Prize, the top honor in the international Underground Railroad community.

Nominations for the 2010 Free Press Prizes

are being accepted through June 30. Three prizes are awarded annually for contemporary Underground Railroad leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge.

Nomination is easy. Nomination forms and information about the prizes and the international Panel of Judges who select prize winners are available at [urFreePress.com](http://urFreePress.com).

tell your story far and wide, and encourage the young people in your family to be sure to do the same when their time comes.

△

Listen to an interview of *Free Press* publisher Peter Michael on the Underground Railroad in Maryland on WYPR, Baltimore's National Public Radio station. Visit WYPR's Maryland Morning site at [mdmorn.wordpress.com/2010/02/22/223102](http://mdmorn.wordpress.com/2010/02/22/223102) for the interview.

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#### Free Press Prize Nominations

Visit our website to learn more about these annual prizes and to download a nomination form.

#### Link Your Web Site or View Lynx

Visit our website to view Lynx, the central registry of Underground Railroad organizations. To add a link, email its web address to [publisher@urrfreepress.com](mailto:publisher@urrfreepress.com).

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## Earliest Use of the Term Underground Railroad

Ever since *Underground Railroad Free Press* was launched in 2006, our readers have asked us many interesting questions on the Underground Railroad. Most have involved history including an intriguing one posed recently by a reader. We can answer most of your questions but didn't know the answer to this one so we asked you.

In our last issue, we asked *Free Press* readers to help find an answer to subscriber Charles Lenhart's question as to the earliest use of the term Underground Railroad. Mr. Lenhart had turned up a December 17, 1844, article in *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* stating that a St. Louis newspaper had used the term on November 11 of that year.

Donald Papson, President of the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association in Plattsburg, New York, reports the term used in an article entitled "The Albany Forwarding Trade" in the April 20, 1843, issue of *The Emancipator and Free American*.

Stanley Harold of South Carolina State University tells of Thomas Smallwood, who with Charles T. Torrey had organized an escape network around Washington, DC, referring to

"our new underground railroad" in Smallwood's November 19, 1842, letter to the editor of *The Tocsin of Liberty*.

An anonymous reader refers to the well-known story from 1831 of the enslaver of Tice Davids remarking that Davids "must have gone on some underground road" when the enslaver could not find Davids after pursuing him across the Ohio River at Maysville, Kentucky. Our reader did not report when this incident might have first appeared in print. If what has been reported is correct, the use of "underground road" rather than Underground Railroad is most likely accurate as the nation's first rail line was not laid down until 1831. The full story of this account is available at [roundaboutmadison.com](http://roundaboutmadison.com).

We thank the *Free Press* readers who offered these early uses of the term Underground Railroad. We leave this query open and welcome further information from readers on early uses. For the time being, it is fair to use November 19, 1842, as the earliest reported use of the term Underground Railroad in print and 1831 as the earliest reported use of the term underground in oral tradition.

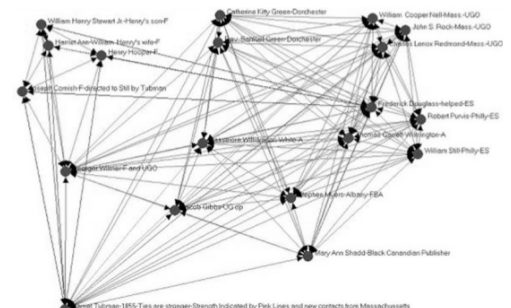
## Science Looks at the Underground Railroad

Speaking of Underground Railroad questions, some could be better illuminated by the application of one branch of science or another. For example, only a broad range of estimates has been possible to the frequent question of how many freedom seekers there might ever have been. If there is to be a well-reasoned estimate for this, it is likely to be based on demographic analysis, probability and a statistical tool called expected value.

A new avenue of inquiry deals with how Underground Railroad networks operated once they formed in the 1700s. Four authors have used network analysis, a management science tool, to analyze how networks of conductors and safe-house operators used by several Underground Railroad figures worked.

In their article "Even Superheroes Need a Network", authors Nicholas Young, Binod Sundararajan and Mary Liz and Paul Stewart used historical data to analyze how Harriet Tubman built networks to free her family and friends. The authors' analysis shows that her

success was due in part to relying on embedded network contacts who allowed her to increase network reliability by bridging network structural gaps to link to new contacts. Tubman's network as it expanded from New York to Massachusetts is depicted here.



The article appears in the December, 2009, issue of *Du Bois Review*. Dr. Young is an emeritus professor of mechanical engineering, Dr. Sundararajan teaches business at Dalhousie University, and Mr. and Ms. Stewart were the 2008 Free Press Prize laureates in Underground Railroad Preservation.

## More Underground Railroad Stamps Than We Thought

When *Free Press* reported in its last issue on plans to issue a postage stamp honoring safe-house operators Thomas Garrett and William Still, we said that the only other Underground Railroad stamp we were aware of is Canada's honoring Josiah Henson.

We could have been more aware. Several readers emailed us pointing out six other United States and Canadian stamps honoring Underground Railroad figures. Canada has also

honored Abraham Shadd. The United States has honored Harriet Tubman twice, Frederick Douglass, Josiah Henson and Sojourner Truth. Apparently there is no stamp yet honoring the Underground Railroad itself.

Menare Foundation president Anthony Cohen mentioned all of these stamps. Cohen began a predecessor to the Menare Foundation in 1995 as one of the first modern national Underground Railroad organizations.