



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad community

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Free Press Joins Calls for Resumption of Underground Railroad Civil Resistance

Frightened, hungry, cold fugitives, they were moved before dawn to they knew not where. The national government passed laws officially vilifying them as sub-human non-citizens and authorized hunting them down. They were ostracized by many whites as dark-skinned, or as heathens, or as just "unlike." They lived in constant fear.

But they were pitied, accepted, and helped by growing numbers of other whites. Both groups of whites used religious arguments to justify their polar opposite treatment of the fugitives. Because the bravest and most moral of whites risked arrest and ostracism for aiding the fugitives, they rendered their aid in secret. The further northeast they got, the more sympathetic attitudes were toward them, in Canada, more helpful yet.

The United States in Underground Railroad times? Yes.

Also, again now for American Muslims, Hispanics, and Arab migrants to the United States, and to the growing network daring to help them. Aside from those needing to avoid being hunted down, we also witness since the 2016 election the surge in desecration of Jewish cemeteries and threats to synagogues and American Jews.

Mr. Trump, in the two months since you seized the White House, your pinched notion of humanity has given birth to a new North American

Underground Railroad. The blank check for rough treatment you've winked to your black-shirted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) thugs is being willfully countered by people of good will who recognize, as did their Underground Railroad forerunners, that moral law outshines ill-willed executive orders.

The New York Times, rawstory.com, the *Frederick News-Post* and other news outlets are reporting a rapidly growing number of sanctuary cities, places of worship, civic organizations and individuals taking direct action to thwart the Trump roundup. As of December, governing bodies of five states, 39 cities, and 364 counties had declared themselves formally or *de facto* as immigrant sanctuaries, a place which doesn't pursue undocumented immigrants.

If They Come to Take You

Don't open the door if ICE knocks. If taken, tell them your name and nothing more. Don't sign anything.

The *Times* reports 450 identifiable churches around the country which have "step[ped] up to act as a kind of underground railroad for undocumented immigrants", but the true number is larger, perhaps much larger, since many churches would not want their sanctuary roles known.

Ostensibly, ICE agents are supposed to acknowledge hospitals, schools
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Debuts: Maryland Slave Cabin Dedication and New York State Tour

Historic Sotterley Plantation, a National Historic Landmark in St. Mary's County, Maryland, will open its new Slave Cabin Exhibit on April 21. The public is invited.

The new exhibit is being dedicated to the memory of Sotterley Trustee Emerita Agnes Kane Callum who passed away in 2015. Ms. Callum spent her life tirelessly researching her enslaved ancestors' history at

Sotterley. Says Nancy Easterling, Executive Director of Historic Sotterley Plantation, "We cannot wait to share this exhibit and to celebrate the life, passion and work of Agnes Kane Callum, who was dedicated and committed to telling the story of Sotterley for its preservation and relevance to

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The Sotterley Cabin Before and After Restoration

Tubman Park & Federal Underground Railroad Center Under Water?

The new headquarters of the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program dedicated on March 11 is already threatened with inundation by rising sea levels. The following article by Scott Dance originally appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*. Reprinted with permission.

The view from the observation deck over a meadow of brown marsh grasses would make a nice postcard. Eagles roost on tall pines, muskrats burrow in mounds of mud and straw, and black ducks splash in a pond. But on a cold and drizzly day, Matt Whitbeck surveys the landscape with concern.

Beyond the marsh is what the Fish and Wildlife Service biologist calls "Lake Blackwater."

"It's this beautiful body of open water," he says. "When you really start to think about why this is here, it's disturbing." The area was once an uninterrupted prairie

of aquatic grasses. But waters have risen more than a foot over the past century, drowning the native plants and converting nearly eight square miles of marsh into open water.

Models suggest most of the unique ecosystem will disappear by 2100.

Across the water, conservationists are aiming to at least delay that fate. Their plan: literally raising the marsh.

Mud pumped from the bottom of the Blackwater River splattered across 40 acres of marsh like an oil geyser, raising its elevation inch by inch.

After the 26,000 cubic yards of the sediment settles and hay-like salt meadow cordgrass sprouts through it, Whitbeck hopes the wetland draws saltmarsh sparrows back to nest in significant numbers for the first time in years.

Conservationists say the effort should

protect against the monthly flooding that overwhelms the marsh. But their ambitions are grander: In the long run, they think the boost will help the marsh to flourish and build itself up, so it can keep pace with rising sea levels for at least a few more decades. It is the first large-scale effort of its kind to combat sea level rise in the Chesapeake Bay.

"We want to keep these marshes around for the biodiversity and fisheries and their value as a storm-surge buffer," said David Curson, director of bird conservation for Audubon Maryland-DC.

The federal government established the Blackwater refuge in 1933 as a stopover point for migrating blue-winged teals, ospreys, black ducks and Canada geese.

It has become an important Eastern Shore resource, drawing more than 180,000 tourists each year. Its marshes protect

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French Underground Railroad Circa 2017

On a recent sunny Sunday, about a dozen young men, women and children sat around a wooden table belonging to Cédric Herrou, a 37-year-old farmer, laughing about who would cook that night. It could have been any family-like gathering in the pastoral setting high in the French Alps, just above the border with Italy. But it was not.

A local hero to some, a scofflaw to others, Mr. Herrou, who was arrested in August, had helped his guests — all migrants from Africa — to cross the border into France illegally. He planned to sneak them to a train station so they could continue their journey. Some might stay in France, but most wanted to get to Britain or Germany.

Early the next morning, cool and foggy in the mountains, Mr. Herrou and some volunteers in his underground railroad traded tips on which Riviera train station would be best to slip through.

Antibes? Cannes? "Have you ever seen the cops at that one?" he asked an assistant. "There are cops at all the tollgates,"

another piped up. Still, they had to try.

"O.K., we go," Mr. Herrou said finally. Off they went.

For all the ways Europe has tried to keep migrants out — whether intercepting them at sea, tightening asylum rules or suspending its system of open borders — they keep coming. The frontier between Italy and France, where the police now intermittently patrol key tollgates and train stations, demonstrates in many ways how those policies keep failing.

Despite a rancorous debate over migration as presidential elections approach next year, France has not settled on a policy: Should it keep the migrants who trickle across the border from Italy, expel them, deal with them humanely or treat them harshly?

The ambiguity of that muddled response is playing out in the unlikely setting of one of the world's most glittering playgrounds for the rich, the Riviera, and in its craggy Alpine hinterland.



Cedric Herrou

Just miles below Mr. Herrou's self-styled safe haven, citizen collaborators tip off the French police, who have rounded up thousands of migrants over the last year.

Young African men, some little more than boys, are routinely pulled off trains, in scenes with ugly echoes of the French persecution of Jews during World War II.

On the other hand, people like Mr. Herrou, who has become the de facto leader of a low-key network of citizen smugglers, are countering police efforts in a quasi-clandestine resistance, angered by what they see as the French government's inhumane response to the crisis.

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Free Press Now Offers Underground Railroad Site Validation

Underground Railroad Free Press now offers **evaluation of Underground Railroad sites and oral traditions**. Visit the "Get your site or story validated" link at our website. See the Wellman Scale on page 6 here that we use in evaluations.

Free Press Prizes- Nominations are now open for the 2017 Free Press Prizes in leadership, preservation, and advancement of knowledge. To nominate yourself or someone else deserving, download a nomination form at our website.

The 2017 Survey- In May, you'll be invited by email to take part in Free Press's annual survey of the Underground Railroad community.

Free Press Books- Looking for a publisher? Visit the Publish page at our website, then get in touch with us.

Debuts

the education of future generations." For more on the exhibit opening, visit Sotterley.org.

Founded in 1699 by James Bowles, Sotterley Plantation in the early 19th century was occupied by George Plater, sixth state governor of Maryland, and for several generations extending into the 20th century by the Briscoe family. Judge John Hanson Briscoe (1934-2014) served as Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, mentoring current United States Senator Benjamin Cardin and House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer. Briscoe's Daughter, Janice Briscoe Baldwin, long chaired the board of trustees of Historic Sotterley Plantation Foundation, the nonprofit that owns Sotterley.

On a private tour given to *Free Press* publisher Peter H. Michael by his relative, Judge Briscoe, the cabin was in the midst of restoration and its grounds were being landscaped. Mr. Briscoe told of how the long dreamed of project would one day be opened to the public. That day is upon us.

Restoration of the cabin and funding for its permanent exhibit were made possible through grants from the Maryland Heritage Area Authority and the U.S. Federation of Friends of Museums.



The Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State has announced its inaugural annual bus tour to be conducted March 24 and 25 of some of the state's major Underground Railroad and abolition historic sites.

Starting from the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, the tour will go on to the 1816 Quaker Meetinghouse in Farmington, the Harriet Tubman home, and the home and Underground Railroad safehouse of New York Governor William Seward, both in Auburn, the "Freedom Bound" Underground Railroad exhibit of the Onondaga Historical Association in Syracuse, the Matilda Joselyn Gage Foundation Museum in Fayetteville, and the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum in Peterboro.

The tour will conclude at the 16th annual Underground Railroad History Convention at Schenectady County Community College in Albany. See Datebook at the Free Press website for signup details on the tour and the convention.

Drowned

communities from flooding and erosion, and they provide vital habitat for young broods of commercially valuable fish such as menhaden and flounder.

But since 1938, the 29,000-acre preserve has lost about 5,000 acres of marshland, according to an analysis of satellite data by a team at Salisbury University in 2009.

The changes started with Swiss cheese-like gaps in the marsh, as floods gradually overwhelmed the flowering bulrush, cordgrass (more commonly known as salt marsh hay) and other grasses.

Those grass varieties evolved to handle the monthly high tides that come with every full moon, but they can't survive for long if their roots are waterlogged. The flooding stunts the growth of their roots and limits the buildup of peat — soil-like gunk made of decaying plants — that forms the marsh floor.

Curson said the changes are obvious even before marshland gives way to open water. On annual bird-counting surveys, he has grown used to taking a step through marsh grass only to suddenly find himself waist-deep in mud.

During the 2015 count, he said, it happened something like five times more often than in the past. "I could feel that the root mats had disintegrated that much more," he said.

As waters rise — as a result of climate change, and also because the Eastern Shore has been slowly sinking since the last ice age ended 10,000 years ago — new marsh areas are developing where forests once stood.

They are marked by isolated dead tree trunks known as snags, which can be dangerous for small marsh creatures, because they serve as perches for bald and golden eagles.

The rising water has added about 3,000 acres of wetlands to offset the losses, but conservationists say the new marshes aren't the same. They're often invaded by phragmites, upland tall grasses with less extensive root systems than native plants.

Phragmites can't support diverse ecosystem of native species because they don't have the flowers, seeds and roots that support marsh birds, fish and rodents.

The changes are blamed for drastic declines in the populations of birds such as the saltmarsh sparrow and black rail.

The latter, a tiny bird known for its secre-

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

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Underground Railroad Free Press serves as the nexus of the international Underground Railroad community, maintains its central registry, calendar and surveys, and publishes its free eponymous newsletter at Underground Railroad Free Press, 2455 Ballenger Creek Pike, Adamstown, Maryland, 21710.

Free Press is distributed by email. Send new subscriber email addresses and changes to the email address above. Back issues are available free at our web site.

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tive nature, has declined 85 percent since the early 1990s, according to Audubon. It's been on Maryland's endangered species list for more than a decade.

The new marshland "doesn't preserve the quality of habitat for the wildlife that depend on it," Whitbeck said. "If you're a black rail or a saltmarsh sparrow, there's no home for you in a Phragmites-dominated marsh."

As Blackwater officials and wildlife advocates began to analyze conditions over the past several years, they realized they were not going to be able to restore the landscape to its pre-Colonial state or reverse the impact of rising seas.

"There was little we could do to halt that," said Erik Meyers, vice president for climate and water sustainability for the Conservation Fund. But "there was a lot we could do in terms of slowing down the pace in strategically selected areas."

They have shifted their goals to focus on how to best adapt to the changes that have already occurred, and those to come. They're looking first to preserve what they can.

The area was once an uninterrupted prairie of aquatic grasses. But waters have risen more than a foot over the past century, drowning the native plants and converting nearly eight square miles of marsh into open water. Models suggest most of the unique ecosystem will disappear by 2100.

France

"They are rounding up blacks in the train stations," Mr. Herrou said in an interview, sitting on the remains of a packing crate in his mountain refuge. "They are taking children, and they are sending them back."

"Either I close my eyes, or I don't," he said. "These are people with no papers at all. That means they have no protection. I don't see how we can be inert."

Flouting the law, Mr. Herrou, who lives in an old olive grower's shack, makes regular swoops down the winding mountain road, across the unmanned border to Ventimiglia, the last Italian city before France. There, the authorities have herded some 800 migrant men into a Red Cross camp in a bleak no man's land by the railroad tracks outside town.

Women, children and families are kept at Ventimiglia's starkly modernist church of Sant'Antonio da Padova, in the shadow of a highway overpass.

To fetch them, Mr. Herrou often uses the same dilapidated sky-blue van from which he delivers eggs, laid by his flock of cacophonous chickens, to the sinuous streets of the valley's medieval villages.

He takes the migrants to his property, where he has set up two small campers at the back so they can sleep and hide among the silvery olive trees of the Roya Valley. They wander his property with a rare sense of security.

Mr. Herrou estimates that he has helped more than 200 migrants this way. His accomplices in the loose network he informally leads have helped dozens more, sometimes picking up migrants as they straggle up the steep mountain railroad tracks from Italy to France, flattening themselves against the walls of the dark tunnels as the trains pass.

Heaps of clothing and discarded flip-flops testify to their transient presence in these forbidding spots. They have no maps or guides, can speak no European language and often wander inadvertently back across the border into Italy.

On this day, after hugs for Mr. Herrou's Sudanese translator, who stayed behind, Mr. Herrou's group of 14 trudged down the mountain for the next leg of their journey.

His geese cackled loudly. Some of the migrants were laughing. It was just one more passage for them, and not the most difficult one. Most had already made the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean,

then struggled up the length of the Italian peninsula.

At the bottom of the hill below Mr. Herrou's place, the migrants hid behind his van as cars sped by on the highway, fearing that a passing motorist might report them to the police. Then they set off on a mad highway dash down the mountain and across the Riviera, ducking their heads each time they passed the police on the road.

Mr. Herrou made an intermediate stop at the house of a fellow smuggler, Hubert Jourdan, who works out of a tiny office behind the train station in Nice.

"Lots of people have become mobilized. And lots of people call the police," Mr. Jourdan said, describing the divisions among the local population. "It is an astonishing atmosphere."

One of the migrants, a girl, became ill, and paramedics were called. Mr. Herrou eventually decided that 14 were too many to put on a train at once. So he shaved the group to nine, and left.

Later, the five who remained behind, all women, were arrested and sent back to Italy after the paramedics turned them in.

For those who left with Mr. Herrou, it would take all day to find a train station they could slip through to continue the journey north.

At Cannes, railway workers called the police. Finally, in the next administrative region over, the Var, the conductor agreed to look the other way, allowing three migrants to board at a time, as the trains went through.

"We negotiated with the conductor," Mr. Herrou said. "There's a kind of laissez-faire," he explained later. "One day it is yes, the next day no."

"I don't have a global solution," he said at another point. "But the state is not managing this properly. I think it's my duty. And I don't think it's normal that children have to go through this."

But what he does is not without risk. Dozens of smugglers have been arrested in the region for profiting from the traffic. Mr. Herrou does not profit, but on Aug. 13 the French police arrested him nonetheless.

They followed him back to his mountain retreat, pointed guns at his head and at those of the Eritrean migrants he had just picked up, and jailed him. The migrants

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were hustled back to Italy.

After 48 hours, the prosecutor in Nice decided not to pursue charges, having concluded that Mr. Herrou was acting for humanitarian reasons, his lawyer said.

In another demonstration of France's jumbled approach to migrants, the police know exactly where Mr. Herrou is and what he is doing. Yet they mostly leave him alone.

In Breil-sur-Roya, an old French-Italian village of ocher houses in the valley by a quiet lake, Mr. Herrou is something of a celebrity. At the Friday night local council meeting, townspeople clapped him on the back, greeting him warmly. That afternoon he had shared a beer with the town's Socialist mayor in the main square.

"Yes, of course, we know," the mayor, André Ipert, said in an interview. "Yes, of course, he is outside the law. This happens in France."

That very day, three Sudanese migrants had straggled into Breil's tiny town hall. The mayor did not turn them over to the police.

Others agreed with the assessment, and have done the same.

"We think we are doing what we should do, as citizens," said Françoise Cotta, a well-known Paris lawyer who lives part time in Breil. She is part of the smugglers' network. "Down there I am a citizen, and what I do is illegal," she said. "And I help them."

In fact, the migrants' odds are vastly improved if they have the good fortune to stumble on Mr. Herrou and his allies.

In the town of Menton, a scene plays out daily that is a counterpoint to all of the ef-

Continued on next page

forts of Mr. Herrou, whose farm is just 20 miles away.

It went like this on a recent Sunday evening: The 6:16 from Ventimiglia glided into the tidy suburban station of Menton-Garavan, the first on the French side of the border.

Immediately, French riot police officers took up positions on the platform. They boarded the little suburban train and found what they were looking for: three African teenagers trying to sneak into France from Italy.

The ragged boys were ordered off, marched down the platform and commanded to empty their battered backpacks, while smartly dressed passengers averted their gazes. Soon the return train to Italy arrived, and the boys were put on it.

The officers say they don't like rounding up the migrants and pulling them off trains. "These are just minors, totally helpless," one said, grimacing.

Many train conductors don't like it, either, but neither do they protest. "There are women and children," the conductor, watching the operation, muttered. "It's horrible."

Resistance

and churches as places all but off limits where they are not to pursue people unless with special permission. This respectful approach appears to have been aggressively abandoned. *Underground Railroad Free Press* has received credible nearby tips recently that ICE agents swept up people leaving their church after Sunday service and in another case people leaving a homeless shelter.

The Sanctuary Movement, an American religious and political campaign begun in the 1980s to provide safe haven for Central American refugees fleeing civil conflict, is in the forefront of organized resistance to the sudden official swell of ethnic and racial persecution. The Movement's Rev. Alison Harrington, pastor of a Presbyterian church in Arizona, recently told a workshop for volunteers that it's uncertain whether churches will remain off limits under Trump. "We can't assume that churches and houses of worship will remain safe locations," she said.

It isn't only blue states and populous liberal enclaves that are declaring sanctuary,

but some smaller places in the heart of red-state, Trump country as well.

Frederick, Maryland, population 56,000, seat of the county where *Free Press* operates, went for Trump in 2016. Now, Frederick's Board of Aldermen is considering declaring the town an immigrant sanctuary. The town police department already practices "don't ask-don't tell" regarding immigrants. Said Alderman Michael O'Connor, a church administrator, "For me, it's a statement of support for the residents of our community who work, live, go to school and pay taxes in the city. The reality is, people in our community who are here, regardless of their documentation, should not have to live in fear."

The town's Trinity United Methodist Church is discussing becoming a sanctuary where undocumented immigrants can receive refuge and get connected to lawyers and civil rights organizations.

The State of Maryland could become the fifth state, after California, Colorado, Connecticut and New Mexico, to become a full statewide sanctuary. A bill introduced by State Senator Victor Ramirez would prohibit local governments from aiding federal immigration sweeps, and protect against enforcement at public schools, hospitals, and courthouses.

The massive welling up of sanctuary cities, Americans opening their homes and payrolls to people being hunted, the 1.2-million-strong Women's March on Washington, the full-throated howls at Congressional town hall gatherings not to drop anyone's medical care are a close mirror-image reprise of 1850s America when moral differences over slavery got into ever clearer contrast, coming to a head with nation-saving morality of the Underground Railroad leading the way.

Then as now, we had a confused fool in the White House in James Buchanan who sat on his hands when he could have put down the insurrection that brought on the Civil War. Then as now, an utterly divided Congress could get nothing done to help its own nation.

Now as then, mass moral indignation rises, a public streak of knowing what is right that is something to be proud of. Sustain it, make it work again, and take the broom to official Washington. Along the way, support brave souls of the 21st-century Underground Railroad.

Underground Railroad Myths

Myth: If it isn't documented, it wasn't on the Underground Railroad.

Fact: Documenting illegal activity was too dangerous, so fewer than 4 percent of site claims today have solid documentation. Knowledge rests on stories handed down by families and property owners.

Myth: Slaves hung coded quilts at windows or on fences to alert fugitives to local conditions.

Fact: This myth was entirely made up, then embellished by an anthropologist in the 1990s who later recanted it.

Myth: The Underground Railroad was a subterranean mechanical conveyance.

Fact: The term "underground railroad" is a figure of speech which first appeared in print in an 1842 St. Louis newspaper article. It is surprising how many American adults even today take the term literally.

Myth: The Underground Railroad was run by white abolitionists and Quakers.

Fact: They were involved and sincerely so but most escapes were unaided, and most of those who did provide aid were black, either free or enslaved.

Myth: The Underground Railroad operated throughout the South.

Fact: Risk was far too great for all but a smattering of coordinated help until one reached northern-most Virginia or Kentucky.

Myth: Most fugitives found sanctuary along the way in secret rooms in attics, cellars or tunnels.

Fact: This fond image did happen but most fugitives travelled out of doors or, if sheltered at all, more likely were hidden in barns or other out-buildings.

Myth: The Underground Railroad enabled hundreds of thousands of people to escape bondage.

Fact: There are no convincing means of estimating the number of freedom seekers, successful or not. Best guesses of the former are in the very low six figures.

Myth: Entire families commonly escaped together.

Fact: This happened but seldom because of trouble that children had on escapes. The most common freedom seeker was a young unmarried man going alone.

Free Press thanks Henry Louis Gates for some of the myths above.

Have Free Press Validate Your Underground Railroad Site, Person or Story

Getting Your Underground Railroad Site, Person or Story Validated

1. Email your site's, person's, or oral tradition's story and its corroboration in as much detail as you have to *Underground Railroad Free Press* at info@urrfreepress.com for a formal evaluation. At the same time, mail your check for \$250 made to *Underground Railroad Free Press* to the address following. If you prefer, mail your information instead to *Underground Railroad Free Press*, 2455 Ballenger Creek Pike, Adamstown, Maryland, 21710. If you use mail, please include your email address.
2. We will evaluate your materials and provide you a frameable certificate of Wellman Scale rating with a detailed analysis of how the rating was reached.
3. Then use your *Free Press* Underground Railroad validation as you like for display, corroboration, publicity or other purposes.
4. With your permission, we will list your site at Lynx, the central international registry of Underground Railroad sites and programs, and on MapMuse.com's Underground Railroad site map.

Use of the Wellman Scale in *Free Press* Underground Railroad Validations

The Wellman Scale is the definitive means for rating the corroboration of a site claiming Underground Railroad involvement, and may also be used in rating Underground Railroad stories, personages and groups. The Wellman Scale uses five ratings from "doubtful" to "conclusive" to evaluate the degree of a site's Underground Railroad corroboration. Below are definitions of the five Wellman Scale ratings. The ratings' frequency distribution (4.0%, 65.3%, etc.) shown was developed by Professor Wellman on 564 Underground Railroad sites in upstate New York and by *Underground Railroad Free Press* on 61 sites in Maryland. The resulting distributions of ratings were statistically indistinguishable and are combined in the distribution below.

For more on the Wellman Scale, visit <http://urrfreepress.com/#Scale>.

The Five-Point Wellman Scale

Note that the most likely rating by far is 2, "Story with no reason to doubt, but scant or no documentation," reflecting the mysteriousness of the Underground Railroad then and now. Nearly two-thirds of all Underground Railroad sites are in this category.

Level 1	Story probably not true
4.0%	Reason to doubt: a local oral tradition about the Underground Railroad with reason to believe that it is probably not true. Story assumed not true until shown otherwise.
Level 2	Story probably true
65.3%	No reason to doubt but little or no evidence so far. Rating for sites and people linked to local stories about involvement with the Underground Railroad that sound reasonable yet lack corroborating evidence. Likely candidates include, for example, adult African-Americans born in northern states and known members of abolitionist churches.
Level 3	Good chance the story is true
22.9%	Abolitionist sympathies, abolitionism or African-American background but no direct evidence of Underground Railroad activity. Potential Underground Railroad affiliation backed by oral tradition and/or some evidence of abolitionist activity, e.g., antislavery society membership, signatures on antislavery petitions, antislavery church membership. African-American birth in the South or Canada suggests involvement.
Level 4	Story almost certainly true, with considerable indication of involvement
4.3%	Oral traditions related to specific sources or to groups known to be sympathetic to freedom seekers or evidence of direct involvement with the Underground Railroad. High probability of Underground Railroad involvement but lacking direct primary source evidence. Strong written evidence from others coupled with a strong oral tradition make a compelling case for Underground Railroad involvement.
Level 5	Story true, with conclusive evidence of involvement
3.5%	Persons or sites identified through oral histories or written sources corroborated specifically by at least one reliable primary source. Strong primary source evidence of Underground Railroad activity: stories about the Underground Railroad that are supported by a primary source recorded by someone who was actually involved. An obituary written by someone who knew the person may qualify as compelling evidence.