



Last Call for Nominations

June 1 is the closing date for nominations for the 2008 Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes for Underground Railroad leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge. Nominations are easy to write up and submit. Just visit us at urrFreePress.org, download the form for the prize for which you want to submit a nomination and email it to us.



Editorial

Let's Follow Kansas's Lead

Free Press has previously editorialized on the importance of states and other locales to publish full Underground Railroad site lists which include sites known from oral tradition. Because of the illegal clandestine nature of the Underground Railroad, the vast majority of sites identifiable today are known only from oral tradition, and omitting those sites from lists distorts the history of the Underground Railroad.

The new Kansas listing of all of the state's known sites, based on documentation and oral tradition, sets the example which all site lists need to follow.

Others have composed similarly inclusive lists. William Switalla catalogues both documented and oral tradition sites, more than 600 in total, in his books on the Underground Railroad in six eastern states. Google's national Underground Railroad map at MapMuse.com does the same.

Providing even clearer renditions of the Underground Railroad, some lists are beginning to use site ratings according to the

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Kansas Underground Railroad Site List Sets New Standard

Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance, a historical group, has published what might well be the most comprehensive list yet of any state's Underground Railroad sites. Improving on the practice of some states which list only conclusively documented sites, the Kansas list comprises all identifiable Kansas sites including those known from oral tradition.

Of Kansas's 121 listings, 101 are Underground Railroad safe-houses or routes, the other 20 being museums, education programs and research facilities. Documentation revealed 83 sites with another 18 based on oral tradition.

Six Kansas sites are listed by the National

Park Service's Network to Freedom, the federal government's Underground Railroad program which lists only those sites with conclusive documentation.

The Alliance's Underground Railroad project was spearheaded by retired teacher Martha Parker who began collecting oral histories when nine towns including hers were flooded to create Clinton Lake. More than a few of the stories she heard involved the local Underground Railroad.

Four years in the making, a 17" by 22" brochure packed with Kansas Underground Railroad information will soon be available.

New International Underground Railroad Bicycle Route

Adding to its growing list of more than twenty mapped bicycle routes in North America, Adventure Cycling Association has inaugurated an Underground Railroad Bicycle Route from Mobile, Alabama, to Owen Sound, Ontario.



The tour's five legs, each about 400 miles in length, run from Mobile to Fulton, Mississippi, to Owensboro, Kentucky, to Erie, Pennsylvania, to Owen Sound, Ontario, a town founded

by freedom seekers in 1857. In addition, there is a spur route from Erie to Pittsburgh.

Adventure Cycling's Underground Railroad Bicycle Route Project sprang from a national survey of cyclists whose choice for a new national heritage cycling route was an Underground Railroad tour. To make the project and new route multiracial and reflective of the Underground Railroad, Adventure Cycling partnered with the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Minority Health.

After the seating of a project advisory group in 2006, the Mobile-to-Canada route was launched in 2007 by linking a freedom seeker escape route from Alabama and Mississippi to the Ohio River and then Underground Railroad sites north to Canada.

Adventure Cycling offers annotated maps of the 2,028-mile route at its web site, AdventureCycling.org.

Wellman Joins Free Press Prize Panel of Judges



Judith Wellman

The Underground Railroad Free Press Prize Panel of Judges presented in our January issue has elected Dr. Judith Wellman to join the Panel, now bringing the number of judges to eight.

Dr. Wellman serves as President of Historical New York Research Associates and is Professor Emerita of History at the State University of New York at Oswego. She has long written and researched on the rich concentration of Underground Railroad and women's movement history in upstate New York where she resides.

Dr. Wellman is very active in the discovery, restoration and promotion of Underground

Railroad sites and the homes of Underground Railroad figures in Auburn and Cayuga Counties of New York. Auburn County is where Harriet Tubman made her home after her escape from slavery.

Dr. Wellman is the developer of The Wellman Scale used to rate the authenticity of Underground Railroad sites. With so much of today's Underground Railroad site knowledge resting on oral traditions as opposed to hard documentation, the Wellman Scale, with its five ratings from confirmed to doubtful, is proving to be the key in rendering an accurate picture of what the Underground Railroad looked and felt like in its day.

We welcome Judith Wellman to the Free Press Prize Panel of Judges.

Wellman Scale which assigns one of five ratings from confirmed to doubtful to a site based on the likelihood of its authenticity. [See the article in this issue on Dr. Judith Wellman, developer of this scale.]

We recommend a long-term goal of an all-inclusive nationwide list of rated sites. Between New York and Maryland, more than 600 sites are already rated.

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Federal Underground Railroad Program Secures Funding

The 2008 Consolidated Natural Resources Act containing a significant boost in funding for the National Park Service's Network to Freedom program has been passed by the Senate and House of Representatives and signed into law by the president. *Free Press* has editorialized in the past for more adequate Network to Freedom budgets.

Network to Freedom funding for the fiscal year beginning October 1 was set at \$2.5 million, up from \$500,000 of recent years.

Sponsored by Senator Jeff Bingaman (Democrat, New Mexico), the funding bill passed the Senate 91-4 on April 10. Four unfriendly amendments by Senator Thomas Coburn (Republican, Oklahoma) were defeated.

Presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Barack Obama, all out on the

campaign trail, were among five senators not present for the Senate vote.

A reconciled bill which passed the House 291-117 – making it veto-proof – was signed into law by the president on May 8.

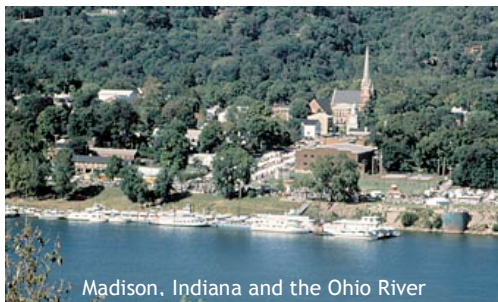
The Network to Freedom has struggled with funding since its inception, receiving annual budgets barely able to cover salaries of its six staff members who in some years needed to be seconded to other Park Service units to save money. Increased funding will permit dedicated full-time staffing and a strengthened grants program for Underground Railroad sites.

The Network to Freedom is one of two federal government programs on the Underground Railroad, the other hosted by the Smithsonian Institution.

Featured Underground Railroad Site: Madison, Indiana

One of an occasional series on Underground Railroad sites in the United States and Canada

Madison, Indiana was a nexus of well documented Underground Railroad activity. Madison's African-American Georgetown neighborhood, more than two-thirds intact from Underground Railroad days, still contains its African Methodist Episcopal Church and Walnut Street Methodist Church, both associated with the Underground Railroad, and homes of safe-house operators Elijah Anderson, William Anderson, David Lott and Archibald Taylor.



Madison, Indiana and the Ohio River

These and other Georgetown residents helped usher hundreds of freedom seekers north mainly from 1830 when the Georgetown neighborhood began to be settled until the passage of the second Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 after which slave catchers would frequently descend on the neighborhood and Underground Railroad traffic shifted to the outlying areas of Madison.

Lying on the Ohio River across from Kentucky, Madison was the first stop in free territory for freedom seekers on its route.

A picturesque town of 12,000 in the southern Indiana hill country, Madison boasts over 100 blocks of well-preserved eighteenth century feel recalling its days as an important river town. With its Underground Railroad history, period architecture, inns and gardens, Madison beckons the history buff for a relaxed stay. Go to VisitMadison.org for more.

Take the 2008 Survey

The 2008 *Underground Railroad Free Press* survey is now available for all interested in taking it. If you haven't taken the survey yet, visit urrFreePress.com and click "Take the 2008 Survey", or copy the web address below and paste it into your browser's address line.

Free Press sponsors annual international surveys to measure the knowledge, attitudes and practices of those involved in today's Underground Railroad. The 2007 survey, the first of its kind, resulted in a wealth of information and opinion, and is available for viewing or downloading at the *Free Press* web site.

Detailed results of the 2008 survey will be downloadable from our web site in June.

Copy and paste the following link.

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