



Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Underground Railroad Sites Nominated for World Heritage

By Donald R. Murphy

Donald Murphy is President and Chief Executive Officer of The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The idea of creating an international movement for protecting heritage sites emerged after World War I. The 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage developed from the merger of two separate movements, one focusing on the preservation of cultural sites and the other dealing with the conservation of nature. In order to link the protection of cultural and natural heritage, the United States in 1965 initiated an international ef-

fort called the World Heritage Trust to conserve both historic/cultural sites and natural sites. Just seven years later, the protection of cultural and natural heritage sites – worldwide – was embodied in a resolution adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO.

In 2008 the United States developed a new Tentative List of sites that may qualify for nomination to the World Heritage list. Currently the United States has 20 World Heritage sites which include the Grand Canyon
Please see Murphy, page 3, column 1



Announcements

Take the Annual Survey

It is again time for the annual *Underground Railroad Free Press* survey of the international Underground Railroad community. Each year, we survey site owners, program operators, government officials, writers and policy makers, and publish results in *Free Press* and at our web site.

The more who take the survey, the better the results so please take five to ten minutes to take the 2009 survey now. **Just copy the survey link at the bottom of this page, paste it into your browser's address bar and go to the survey.** (Sorry, but we can't make the link live in a pdf.)

Past surveys provided the Underground Railroad community with important operational, opinion and demographic information which you and we have put to very good use. Thanks and look for results in our July issue.

Know Anyone Outstanding?

We thought so. There's still time to nominate individuals or an organization for one of the 2009 *Free Press* Prizes, the highest honor in the international Underground Railroad community.

The prizes will be awarded in September for leadership, preservation and the advancement of knowledge in the contemporary Underground Railroad. It's easy: just download an application form from our web site and email it in before June 30.

Heard of Jon Fairfield?

Mark Dunbar, an Underground Railroad researcher in Illinois, is looking for information on the
(continued on page two)

New Research: Most Site Claims Rely On Oral Tradition

Only four percent ever likely to be documented

Research by Professor Judith Wellman and *Underground Railroad Free Press* reveals that only one Underground Railroad site in 33 can claim documentation, with the other 97 percent of sites relying on varying degrees of oral tradition or circumstantial evidence.

Several years ago, Dr. Wellman developed the Wellman Scale under a grant from the Network to Freedom, a federal government Underground Railroad program. The Scale has become the most widely accepted method for rating the authenticity of Underground Railroad site claims.

Wellman applied the scale to 565 claimed Underground Railroad safe-houses and routes in New York state. In separate research, *Free Press* used the scale to rate 60 Maryland sites. As below, the analyses produced rating distributions very similar to each other.

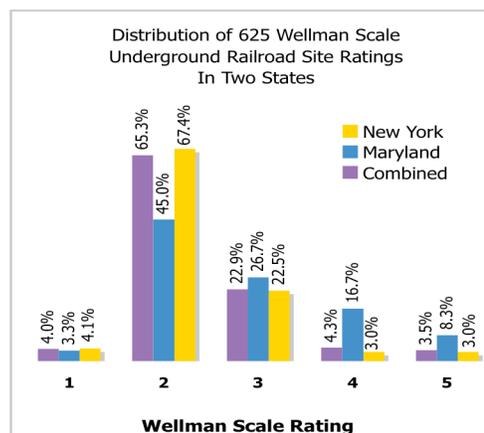
Because of the illegal clandestine nature of the Underground Railroad, it has long been understood that few safe-house operators or conductors dared keep records of their work which has resulted in the vast majority of Underground Railroad claims unable to be confirmed by documentation. The occasional arrest record or newspaper report helps but is present in only a small fraction of cases.

Following are abbreviated definitions of the five Wellman Scale ratings. Visit the *Free Press* web site for full definitions.

- 5- Conclusive evidence of involvement
- 4- Strong but inconclusive evidence
- 3- Some evidence beyond oral tradition
- 2- Oral tradition with no reason to doubt
- 1- Some reason to doubt the claim

As in the chart here, both research projects resulted in a Wellman Scale rating of Two, "Oral tradition with no reason to doubt", as the most frequent rating by far. About two-thirds of sites earned a Two rating, about a quarter had some or even strong but not conclusive evidence of Underground Railroad involvement, about one in 25 had some reason to doubt the claim, and only one in 33 is a documented Underground Railroad site.

Most Underground Railroad lists now include sites which can not offer conclusive documentation. MapMuse.com, the most complete Underground Railroad listing does, and lists of Kansas, New York and Ohio sites do. Now, Maryland is considering expanding its official listing process.



Paste the address here into your browser address bar to take the 2009 Survey of the International Underground Railroad Community.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Ulk0VOA6HccdqGwnQ24iKA_3d_3d

conductor Jon Fairfield who is mentioned in Levi Coffin's book and one or two other places but not much elsewhere. If you know of any information on Jon Fairfield, please contact Mr. Dunbar at mrk_dnbr@yahoo.com.

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Historian John Hope Franklin Dies



John Hope Franklin, national civil rights icon and legend in his own time, died March 25 of old age at 94 in Durham, North Carolina. Regarded as the pre-eminent historian of slavery and the African-American struggle, Franklin's life spanned the starkest of segregation to the election of a black president.

Son of a lawyer and a school teacher and grandson of slaves, Franklin grew up in small-town Oklahoma. At age six, he witnessed the Tulsa race riot, the nation's worst ever, which left 300 dead, 10,000 homeless and 35

Review: *The Underground Railroad In Western Illinois*

By Tom Calarco

Writer Tom Calarco, author of several *Underground Railroad* books, was winner of the 2008 *Free Press Prize for Advancement of Knowledge of the Underground Railroad*.

An excellent addition to the growing list of new *Underground Railroad* books is *The Underground Railroad in Western Illinois* by Owen Muelder, published by McFarland and Company in 2008.

Using primary sources that include the diary of Samuel G. Wright, a Lane Seminary gradu-

British Publisher Reissues Rare 1894 Book

Seeing the stories of the *Underground Railroad* fading away as more of those who had been involved passed on, Ohio abolitionist and former *Underground Railroad* agent H.U. Johnson began gathering escape accounts and in 1894 published his *From Dixie to Canada*. Long out of print and effectively forgotten, the book has now been republished by Pryor Publications, a British publishing house specializing in facsimile reproductions of out-of-print books.

Johnson was one of only a small handful of people who took the time to record the stories of *Underground Railroad* figures while they were still alive. By 1894, the *Underground Railroad* was nearly thirty years re-

city blocks burned to the ground.

Franklin's 1947 *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans*, a definitive history of the African-American experience, has sold more than three million copies and has been translated into a number of foreign languages. University of Chicago Nobel Prize economist Robert Fogel called it "a landmark in the interpretation of American civilization."

Franklin taught at some of the world's top universities including Berkeley, Cambridge, Chicago, Howard and Harvard where he received his Ph.D. at the age of 25 in 1941. He was an emeritus professor at Duke University when he died.

In 1995, Franklin was awarded the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2006 received the Library of Congress's Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanities, and was a Fulbright Scholar who lectured in Zimbabwe, Australia and China.

John Hope Franklin's first love was teaching. Said his former student, California Senator Barbara Boxer, "Students who were lucky enough to get into his class bragged about him from morning until night".

ate who participated in the *Underground Railroad* in northern Illinois from 1840 to 1860, and the Illinois letters in the Wilbur Siebert Collection, the book develops a compelling picture of the *Underground Railroad* from Quincy along the Mississippi River to Chicago on Lake Michigan.

The book's opening chapter is one of the best descriptions of the *Underground Railroad* in print and would be useful for anyone teaching a course that introduces students to the *Please see Calarco, page 3, column 2*

moved and most of its still-living freedom seekers, safe-house operators and conductors were well past the life expectancy of the time. In Johnson's words, "The years intervening since the abolition of slavery leave a majority of our people ignorant of its workings except as they are gleaned from the lips of those now grown old."

From Dixie to Canada tells the stories of thirteen freedom seekers whose flights north were successful and especially remarkable, and contains several engravings and photographs including a rare photo of an Atlanta slave pen taken during the Civil War while General Sherman's army held the city.

Please see Rediscovery, page 3, column 3

Murphy

and the Statue of Liberty. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center has taken on the role of advocating and nominating Underground Railroad sites to be included on the new World Heritage Tentative List.

The John P. Parker House and the John and Jean Rankin House, both in Ripley, Ohio, were proposed for the Tentative List. In its final decision, the U.S. National Park Service recommended that the Rankin and Parker houses be placed on a list for further consideration. This was done because the U.S. Committee on World Heritage believed that more sites should be considered and a further analysis was needed that would include international sites.

The Rankin and Parker houses were chosen because they meet the criteria of being National Historic Landmarks and their owners agree with the proposal. The two sites would qualify under the following UNESCO criteria.

(iii): “bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared”;

(vi): “be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.” (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.)

It has been the role of the Freedom Center to serve as the anchor for these sites by providing context, background, history and education; coordinating the nominations process; and attending World Heritage meetings to begin the lobbying process for the sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Benefits of World Heritage designation include immediate international recognition, increase in national and international tourism, attraction of international visitors to the Network to Freedom, potential increase in revenue for all Underground Railroad sites, and worldwide recognition of the struggle for freedom by enslaved Africans and sympathetic white citizens.

We need the help of all Underground Railroad sites in order to make this effort successful. In the coming weeks, the Freedom Center will begin work on bringing together the Underground Railroad community in a forum to develop a strategic plan for accomplishing the goal of having Underground Railroad sites first added to the new Tentative List. This will mean lobbying the National

Park Service and the U.S. Commission on World Heritage to reopen the nominations to those sites it placed on the list for further consideration. Concurrently we will need to revise the original nominations that included the John Rankin and John Parker houses and determine what additional sites should be nominated including international sites from Canada.

We hope that *Underground Railroad Free Press* will assist in this effort by serving as the communication link between all Underground Railroad sites and the Freedom Center.

It is important that the worldwide community recognizes and memorializes the outstanding universal value embodied in the history of the Underground Railroad.

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Calarco

history of the Underground Railroad.

Muelder also does an exceptionally good job describing the geography that contributed to make Western Illinois a heavily traveled section of the Underground Railroad. Noted for its prairies and tall prairie grass that grows as high as seven feet, the region provided natural hiding places for fugitive slaves. Also described were the many bodies of water that could be used to transport fugitive slaves in a northwesterly direction like the Rock River and the Illinois River, which meanders from the Mississippi River nearly all the way to Chicago, providing convenient means of transportation.

The book covers nineteen counties in the northern and western regions of Illinois which were part of the Illinois Military Tract, a land grant that was created for veterans of the War of 1812, and which were settled by individuals who were overwhelmingly evangelical Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Many of them came after the completion of the Erie Canal in New York in 1825 and were almost universally opposed to slavery. However, after 1832, a large emigration of proslavery individuals from southern states occurred in the southern section of the state. This conflict created a battleground between conductors on the Underground Railroad and slave catchers which was a microcosm of conditions that existed in the North and the South.

Three primary stops along the route were given detailed attention: Quincy, Galesburg, and Princeton.

Quincy was the home of the Mission Institute, a theological seminary, and of Underground Railroad conductors David Nelson and Richard Eels. Hundreds of fugitive slaves crossing the river there into

freedom were aided by them and others at the school. Most notable was the effort of three Mission students, James Burr, Alanson Work and George Thompson, that resulted in their arrest and imprisonment for violating the Fugitive Slave Law.

Galesburg, the home of Knox College, was founded by George Washington Cable, an evangelical minister from upstate New York, whose students there had included Charles Finney and Theodore Weld, two of the most influential voices during the early years of anti-slavery agitation. For a time, the radical Underground Railroad conductor John Cross lived nearby and organized a network of conductors that led from Iowa all the way to Michigan. Cross became famous for the advertisement of the Underground Railroad showing a train passing through a mountain. He created it for the abolitionist newspaper the *Western Citizen* while in jail on charges of aiding fugitive slaves.

In Princeton lived perhaps the state's most important Underground Railroad conductor, Owen Lovejoy, to whom Muelder devotes nearly an entire chapter. The brother of the anti-slavery martyr Elijah Lovejoy, Owen was with him when he was murdered by a mob in 1837.

Author Muelder is director of Knox College's Underground Railroad Freedom Center which has been designated as a program center in the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.

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Rediscovery

How Pryor Publications came to republish the book is a story in itself. Publisher Alan Pryor who knew little about the Underground Railroad found an original copy of *From Dixie to Canada* in a second-hand book shop in Kent, England. As Pryor told *Free Press*, “The subject was quite new to me [though] I thought I had a good grasp of American history”.

This little book makes a nice addition to any serious Underground Railroad collection. To purchase *From Dixie to Canada*, visit Pryor-Publications.co.uk.

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Did You Know?

. . . that Underground Railroad safe-houses and routes existed in the South? Not many but some have been well documented including a water route from Pensacola to the British Virgin Islands, and the Janney family and others in the Quaker village of Waterford, Virginia.