



Editorial

Welcome to a New Free Press Prize Judge

Underground Railroad Free Press awards the annual Free Press Prizes for Leadership, Preservation and the Advancement of Knowledge in the international Underground Railroad community. Since first being awarded in 2008, the prizes have come to be regarded as the highest honors in the community.

The carefully chosen Free Press Prize Panel of Judges, a group of American and Canadian Underground Railroad experts, chooses the winners of the Free Press Prizes. Visit our website to get acquainted with the judges and past prize winners.

Recently elected to the Panel is accomplished Underground Railroad program executive and author Bryan Prince.



A descendant of Underground Railroad freedom seekers, Prince has long served as Director of the Buxton Museum and National Historic Site in Buxton, Ontario, Canada, and has been called the pre-eminent historian of 19th-century African Canada.

Prince is a Free Press Prize laureate himself, having won the Leadership Prize in 2010.

The Panel of Judges lost two of
(continued on page two)

Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

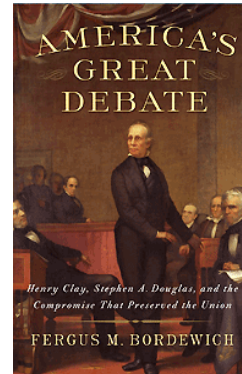
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Latest Bordewich Book Gaining Wide Acclaim

In his accustomed style, Fergus Bordewich's *America's Great Debate*, his third book on the long American moral crusade against slavery, is his latest tremendously informative, assiduously researched and engagingly written *tour de force* on the subject. *America's Great Debate* was released last month. Bordewich also authored *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* in 2005, and *Washington: The Making of the American Capital* in 2008. Not intended as a trilogy, the three books nevertheless are a unified reminder of the defining American conundrum over race which continues today.

America's Great Debate vividly brings to light and to life an utterly pivotal episode which many Americans allow to slip from memory not too long after their last American history course. The now often overlooked Great De-



bate of 1850 should appear on any short-list of defining national pivot points.

Says Richard Baker, U.S. Senate Historian Emeritus, "In this brilliantly constructed work, Bordewich offers a spellbinding account of an act of 'collaborative statecraft.' In Bordewich's

skillful telling, Congress at its inherent worst, in response to the volcanic stresses of that era, for the moment, became Congress at its potential best."

Bound for Canaan, *Washington* and now
Please see Bordewich, page 3, column 1

The Underground Railroad Now on Radio

Underground Railroad author Tom Calarco has launched "From Slavery to Freedom," believed to be the first regularly broadcast Underground Railroad radio program.

Calarco's weekly program, carried by WebTalkRadio.net, debuted in April. Says Calarco of the program, "From Slavery to Freedom explores the mysteries of the Underground Railroad and the legacies of the Civil War. During a time when our personal freedoms are eroding, the lengths to which human beings will go to restrict the freedom of others and the remarkable stories of those who struggled against overwhelming odds to gain their freedom can inspire us."

Calarco's half-hour conversations with Underground Railroad site owners, program executives, preservationists, writers, officials and others are archived at the WebTalkRadio website as podcasts and may be listened to or

downloaded any time there or at iTunes.

Tom Calarco is the author of five books on the Underground Railroad including *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region* for which in 2008 he became the first winner of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge.

Calarco has written for numerous publications on a breadth of topics including music, health, disabilities, antiques, business and law enforcement. He is currently working on two Underground Railroad writing projects, one on the Underground Railroad history of New York City, the other on the validity of early Underground Railroad accounts.

If your organization would like to cosponsor From Slavery to Freedom, contact Mary Lou Davidson at marylou@matrixmediainc.com or at 941.379.1440.

Reader Opportunities

Enter a Prize Nomination

The nomination period for the three 2012 Free Press Prizes remains open through June 30. The leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge prizes will be announced in *Free Press's* September issue. Click Prizes at the *Free Press* website.

Participate in the 2012 Free Press Survey

Subscribers will soon receive an email invitation with a link to the 2012 Free Press survey of the international Underground Railroad community. These annual surveys have pro-

vided a wealth of information to the community since the first in 2007. Results will be provided in our July issue. Click Surveys at the website for reports on past surveys.

Publish Your Book

As announced in our March issue, *Free Press* now publishes books on the Underground Railroad and related topics. Free Press Books authors receive better royalties and significant publicity for their books through *Underground Railroad Free Press* at no cost. Click Publish at the website.

its members over the past 18 months when Hortense Simmons died and Karolyn Frost took up a fellowship at Yale University. We sorely miss them both, congratulate Karolyn, and greatly value the care which the two put into their work as judges.

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Visit urrfreepress.com to learn more about these annual prizes and to download a nomination form.

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Story of Indiana Freedom Seeker Brought to Light

New Albany, Indiana's Carnegie Center for Art and History has mounted a new permanent exhibit, *Remembered: The Life of Lucy Higgs Nichols*. The exhibit becomes a part of the Center's award-winning permanent display, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage: Men and Women of the Underground Railroad*.

As the Civil War approached, New Albany became a hotbed of Underground Railroad activity and abolitionist sentiment. The town sits on the Ohio River at the edge of what were the northern free states, and looks directly across at Louisville, Kentucky, the beginning of slave territory.

Lucy Higgs Nichols is brought to life in this new exhibit which details her escape from slavery in 1862, her Civil War service with the 23rd Volunteer Indiana Regiment, and her post-war life in freedom as an admired New Albany citizen.

Born in slavery in Tennessee in 1838, Lucy Higgs escaped with her husband and young

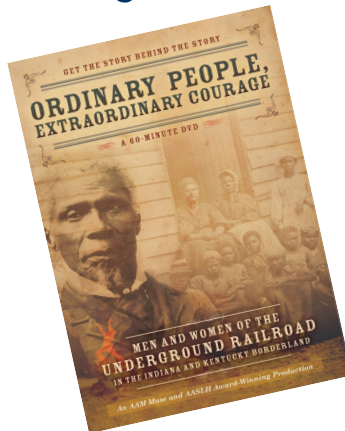
daughter Mona in 1862 by dashing to a Union Army encampment near Bolivar, Tennessee. There the 23rd Indiana Volunteer Regiment took the family in and employed her as a nurse in the Regiment's hospital unit for the rest of the war. Nichols suffered dual tragedy when Mona died at the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and her husband disappeared.

Please see Remembered, page 3, column 2



Lucy Higgs Nichols and the 23rd Indiana Regiment at a post-war reunion

New Underground Railroad Documentary in Multiple Awards



On April 15, New Albany, Indiana's Carnegie Center for Art and History released the DVD documentary *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage: Men and Women of the Underground Railroad* with its premiere showing on Kentucky Educational Television, a Public Broadcasting System affiliate.

Mainly through the vividly told stories of individual figures, the documentary portrays Underground Railroad history of the borderland where Indiana and Kentucky meet.

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage has received awards from the National Park Service. *Please see Documentary, page 3, column 3*

New Albany, Indiana

One of an occasional series on Underground Railroad sites

Founded in 1813 by three brothers from Albany, New York, New Albany was the largest and one of the most prosperous towns in Indiana well into the nineteenth century.

The shipbuilding industry at the town's docks along the Ohio River spawned a surfeit of Victorian architecture which today is a hallmark of New Albany, population 36,000. Some of the town's old mansions are now operated as bed and breakfast inns.

Jon B. Ford's New Albany Glass Works, predecessor of the Libby-Owens-Ford Glass Works in Pittsburgh, produced the first plate glass windows in the United States.

Education has always been important in New Albany which opened the state's first high



Clock Church shown here is New Albany's best known Underground Railroad safehouse.

New Albany is only an hour's drive from Madison, Indiana, another picturesque riverside town which was especially active in the Underground Railroad and featured in the May 2008 issue of *Free Press*.

school and is the seat of a University of Indiana campus.

As in the articles above, New Albany's active Underground Railroad involvement has been well documented and is proudly celebrated by the town. The Town

Bordewich

America's Great Debate comprise an admirable, enlightening body of work and guide path on the nation's central moral struggle over slavery and race, together, in Bordewich's words, the war for the soul of America.

In contrast to *Bound for Canaan* - the definitive history of the Underground Railroad and how increasing numbers of individual Americans decided to combat slavery - Bordewich's latest book tells of the successful temporizing by the nation's highest officialdom to grapple with slavery when national differences of opinion on it came to a head ten years before the Civil War.

When California applied for statehood, the crisis between free and slave states was finally on since their equal numbers and senatorial parity would be upset disfavoring the South. At the same time, Texas's designs on forcefully annexing New Mexico, northerners' insistence on outlawing the slave trade in the nation's capital, and the South's demand for the draconian second Fugitive Slave Act all worked into the mix of the Great Debate of 1850.

Bordewich brings vividly to life senatorial giants Henry Clay, Stephen Douglas, William Seward, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun and Thomas Hart Benton who were mainly responsible for arguing the Compromise of 1850, especially Clay whose catch-all omnibus bill dealing with the full panoply of slavery issues nearly succeeded, and Douglas whose piecemeal approach was what finally ended up working.

Bordewich's careful analysis demonstrates that the Compromise of 1850 bought the union an extra decade permitting the coming on of Lincoln and Grant, and the North to grow far enough past the South in economic development to give the North military superiority in the Civil War. Had southern secession occurred and succeeded in 1850, which it would have without the Great Compromise, history could have turned out much differently, quite possibly paving the way for further fracturing of the nation.

Reading *America's Great Debate*, one cannot escape the parallels with the frozen Congress of today. The complaints of Presidents Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore in 1850 resonate today with the nation's 91-percent disapproval rating of

the deadlocked Congress of 2012 and President Obama's and the nation's frustration with it. Bordewich describes the Compromise of 1850 as the best example in the nation's history of the Congress rising above its own divisions to accomplish the cooperation demanded of it by a populace which had lost patience with the body.

Enthralling and dramatic, *America's Great Debate* brilliantly recreates a critical moment when America mended its fracture if only temporarily. Today's Congress could take a lesson.



Fergus Bordewich

Fergus Bordewich is a member of the *Underground Railroad Free Press Prize Panel of Judges*. *America's Great Debate* is now available online or may be ordered anywhere books are sold.

Remembered

Seeking a new start at the end of the war, Higgs returned with her regiment to New Albany where it had been mustered into service in 1861. She spent the rest of her life in New Albany, married John Nichols there, and became an admired citizen.

Lucy Higgs Nichols long fought for the veteran's pension which she was due but was repeatedly denied by the loophole that her regiment, which was constantly on the move during the war, had not recorded her hiring. Finally in 1898, the survivors of the 23rd Indiana Volunteer Regiment petitioned Congress which awarded Nichols her pension by a special act of Congress that year. News of her pension finally being awarded was reported in newspapers across the country including *The New York Times*.

Nichols was designated an honorary member of the William Sanderson Post of the Grand Army of the Republic which

took charge of her funeral arrangements when she died in 1915 at age 77. Lucy Higgs Nichols was buried in New Albany with full military honors beside her husband John Nichols.

Documentary

vice, the American Association for State and Local History, and the State of Indiana for its deeply researched and vivid recounting of the Underground Railroad story in one locale.

Kentucky Educational Television says that the work, "Draws the national phenomenon of the Underground Railroad into sharp focus by revealing the contributions of ordinary people, both free and enslaved, whose courageous acts on both sides of the Ohio River helped overthrow the institution of slavery."

In awarding the documentary its Muse Award, the American Association of Museums calls it, "A beautiful and moving presentation that heightens understanding of the Underground Railroad."

The documentary is based on the 2001 book *The Underground Railroad in Floyd County, Indiana* by Pamela Peters. Production of the documentary was supported by a grant from the Paul Ogle Foundation.

The DVD may be purchased by contacting the Carnegie Center at 812.944.7336 or www.carnegiecenter.org.

Did You Know . . .

While free people were assisting freedom seekers as far back as the 1500s at the Spanish colony of St. Augustine, Florida, they did not begin to connect with each other and work together in networks until about the 1780s.

As churches began opposing slavery and abolitionists societies got underway at about that time, assistance to freedom seekers became increasingly better coordinated and vocal.

As reported by Stanley Harold of South Carolina State University in the March 2010 issue of *Free Press*, the first known written use of the term Underground Railroad was Thomas Smallwood's November 19, 1842, letter to the editor of *The Tocsin of Liberty*.

"Did You Know" is an occasional series intended as a quick educational feature. Readers are encouraged to submit their own interesting Underground Railroad factoids for "Did You Know." Just email them to us at Editor@urrFreePress.com.