



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting for today's Underground Railroad community

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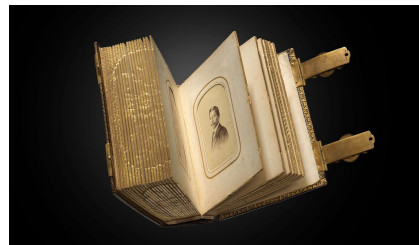
Earliest Tubman Photo Now on Permanent Display

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture has put on permanent display the recently discovered photograph of Harriet Tubman showing her as rather stylish and younger than in other Tubman photos which show her considerably later in life.

The photo was discovered during the auction of an album first owned by Tubman's Auburn, New York, friend and neighbor, Emily Howland. Howland in turn had received the album as a New Year's gift from her close friend Carrie Nichols in 1864. As was Tubman, Howland and Nichols were abolitionists.

The album consists entirely of portraits of abolitionists, a including the only known photo of John Menard, the first African American elected to Congress after passage of the 15th amendment. The album also contains pictures of some of Howland's African-American students, who later became teachers. She and Nichols both taught at the Camp Todd School on Robert E. Lee's Arlington Estate, now the Arlington National Cemetery.

For more, visit bit.ly/2OHgPPm.



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Underground Railroad Free Press welcomes guest articles, Lynx database entries of Underground Railroad sites and organizations, notices of forthcoming events for Datebook, and display advertising. Visit us at urfreepress.com for information on these programs. We make it easy.

Network to Freedom Retools: Conferences Out, Training and YouTube In

The National Park Service's Network to Freedom program has announced that it is shifting its annual public gathering from old-style presentation of academic papers to practical hands-on training.

The first training session, dubbed "Crossings: Bridging the Authentic Underground Railroad Past to Present," will run for four days from September 11 in Niagara Falls, New York.

The training is being co-hosted by the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.



Training sessions will break new ground for the Network to Freedom by closer attention to grass-roots Underground Railroad organizations and site operators through training on "turning 19th century inspiration into 21st century action."

The new training program now has its own National Park Service web page at nps.gov/orgs/1205/professional-development.htm. Those who would like to be involved as trainers may apply at bit.ly/2LxRXjP before May 21.

Reach the Network to Freedom website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/index.htm>.

The Network to Freedom is also broadening its outreach with its own newly minted YouTube channel where the NTF posts videos that it and its affiliates produce. Search on Network to Freedom at youtube.com.

Launched in December of last year, the channel now boasts 31 videos, the most watched of which is "Fighting for Freedom: Lewis Hayden and the Underground Railroad," intended introduce new audiences to the Underground Railroad. The well done video tells the story of Lewis Hayden's escape to Massachusetts and the Underground Railroad aid that assisted him.

Masur Book Casts Light on Sites in and Around Nation's Capital

Anthropologist Jenny Masur, long-time National Capital Regional Manager of the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, has had her new book, *Heroes of the Underground Railroad Around Washington, D.C.*, published.

For 17 years, Dr. Masur discovered, tracked, profiled and publicized Underground Railroad safehouses and routes in Washington, DC, where she was based, and in the nearby counties of Maryland and Virginia. Along the way, she became probably the leading expert on the area's freedom seekers, "conductors" and safe house operators, and uniquely qualified to write her book.

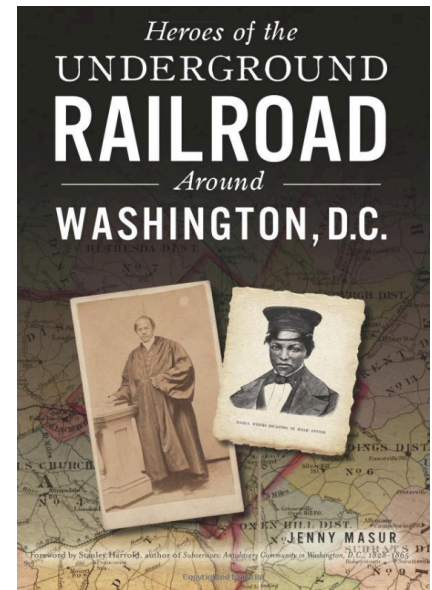
Heroes of the Underground Railroad Around Washington, D.C. joins a growing shelf of similar works on particular Underground Railroad locales including the Adirondacks, south-central Ohio, the New York Finger Lakes,

Delaware, southern Ontario, and western Maryland.

While the number of personal profiles in Masur's book is limited and could have been readily expanded, those presented are especially deeply researched.

Underground Railroad travel northward from Virginia tended to be funneled up the fifty-mile-wide swath between Washington and the Appalachian foothills, as east of Washington were southern sympathies and westward, rugged terrain. Masur makes good use of research in profiling Yardley Taylor, a Quaker cartographer of Loudoun County, Virginia, amidst this swath two counties west of Washington, who lobbied to abolish slavery.

Heroes of the Underground Railroad Around Washington, D.C. is generously endowed with maps, period illustrations and photographs.



Correspondent Questions US Network to Freedom Premises

Free Press welcomes letters to the editor. The following was received from a British subscriber, an attorney who questions the premises asserted by the United States Congress when it legislated the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom into existence.

Dear Underground Railroad Free Press,

Since the formation of the National Park Service's Network to Freedom program there has been a resurgence of scholarly as well as general interest in the history of slavery in the United States, and, in particular, anti-slavery resistance and the people and places associated with the Underground Railroad. Dozens of anti-slavery books and research articles have been published, some of them honoured in *Underground Railroad Free Press*.

Let us take a moment to step back and look at the claims made in the Congressional act that kick-started the Network to Freedom program. Sections 2(a)(1) and (2) of the 1998 Act state: "The Underground Railroad . . . was one of the most significant expressions of the American civil rights movement during its evolution over more than three centuries"; and "The Underground Railroad bridged the divides of race, religion, sectional differences, and nationality; spanned State lines and international borders; and joined the American ideals of liberty and freedom expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to the extraordinary actions of the ordinary men and women working in common purpose to free a people".

I found these claims astounding, and here is why. Firstly, they failed to mention the

crucial role of the Constitution in *legitimising* slavery. Secondly, they made no reference to the Fugitive Slave Acts and the then-illegality of the Underground Railroad's activities. Thirdly, they failed to mention that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was declared *unconstitutional* in 1883 by the United States Supreme Court. That judgment opened the door to decades of legitimised racial segregation, oppression, public lynchings and other forms of outright racist terrorism, much of which went unpunished. Furthermore, the acceptance and promotion of so-called "scientific racism" in the country's respected academic institutions went on to influence some of the most appalling human rights abuses of the 20th century, a seldom-seen skeleton in the United States' historical cupboard.

Finally, the claims also failed to mention United States attempts to obstruct the inclusion of human rights – which include a commitment to achieving racial equality – in the United Nations Charter and, later, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. This latter document went unsigned by the United States until reassured that the Declaration would have no legal force. Therefore, the claim about the civil rights movement's "evolution over three centuries," as though in an unbroken continuum, is not only deeply misleading, but also serves to obscure the horrors of American slavery's own evolution over three centuries, overlaying that grim history with a mantle of "goodness" personified by the people of the Underground Railroad.

I do not for a moment doubt the courage and tenacity of the people of the Under-

ground Railroad and their anti-slavery allies. Thousands of people, black and white, enslaved and free, took tremendous risks to assist enslaved people who had taken that crucial first step of *self-liberation*. In doing so, they faced social censure, libellous slander, expulsion from their churches, vandalism of their homes and other premises, physical injury, imprisonment, torture and even death. Participants of the Underground Railroad were branded – sometimes literally – as *criminals*: they willingly broke federal law to do what we now regard as heroic. However, most abolitionists sought to *change* the law, not break it, and the vast majority of Americans took no part whatsoever in the struggle to end slavery.

Those enslaved people who did manage to escape their bondage were indeed exceptional. But there is no mention in the National Park Service's claims of the extraordinary courage and resilience of those millions of enslaved people who could *not* escape their bondage. There is no acknowledgement in these claims of the millions of enslaved men and women who struggled to maintain their dignity as human beings in the face of every conceivable indignity, day after day, year after year, generation after generation. It is exactly *this* kind of uncelebrated, unsung but enduring courage which sustained, and which continues to sustain, the hopes and dreams of freedom for oppressed peoples everywhere.

With best wishes,

Faith Marchal, LL.D.

Broomfield, Chelmsford, United Kingdom