



# Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

urrfreepress.com

November, 2007  
Volume 2, Issue 6



## Editorial

### Good Deeds Should Go Rewarded

Fifteen years ago, it would have been hard to identify many individuals or organizations of that day deserving of an Underground Railroad prize. Ten years ago, the number of worthy recipients could have been counted on a hand or two, but the last decade has seen a major rekindling of Underground Railroad interest with energy and good deeds now aplenty. It is time to begin honoring those who have brought back this defining pillar to our national consciousness.

Examples abound. Good books on the Underground Railroad have flourished in the last five years. Since 1998, the Network to Freedom, the Freedom Center and Friends of the Underground Railroad were all launched. Most visibly, many people in many places gained new interest in identifying, preserving and promoting a rapidly growing list of Underground Railroad sites many of which had nearly been lost to time. And as *Free Press's* 2007 *Underground Railroad Survey* showed, teachers, for the most part on their own starting about 40 years ago, began adding the Underground Railroad into their courses. Many school districts followed suit and today over 80 percent of US students are awakened to the topic before graduating from high school.

And so today, there are many people and organizations to give thanks to for reviving the noble heritage that is the Underground Railroad. All merit our thanks and the most industrious and effective of these champions now deserve special recognition by the international Underground Railroad community for their

## Free Press Announces Underground Railroad Prizes

*Underground Railroad Free Press* has inaugurated three annual prizes for outstanding contributions to contemporary Underground Railroad work and will first award the prizes in 2008 in the fields of leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge.

Panels of judges are being seated and detailed criteria for each prize established. A call for nominations for the prizes will go out in early 2008. Winners will be announced by *Underground Railroad Free Press* later in 2008 and the winners' awards and achievements publicized to the American and Canadian press.

**The *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for Leadership in the Underground Railroad Community** will recognize outstanding individual leadership of a contemporary Underground Railroad entity or cause, or leadership within the Underground Railroad community as a whole.

**The *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for Preservation** will be awarded to an individual, group or entity which has caused a significant restoration of an Underground Railroad safe-house or route, newly identified an important Underground Railroad site or sites, significantly promoted site preservation or advanced the methods of Underground Railroad site preservation.

**The *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for the Advancement of Underground Railroad Knowledge** will be awarded to an individual, group or entity which has produced a significant addition to the store of Underground Railroad knowledge and may be awarded for a single contribution such as a landmark publication, a body of work, the arts, or creating or advancing a collection.

*Free Press* will keep its subscribers and the Underground Railroad community apprised of progress on this new undertaking.

## Latest Harris Underground Railroad Album Boosts Curricula

Veteran Underground Railroad musicians Kim and Reggie Harris have released their latest album, *Get On Board! Underground Railroad and Civil Rights Freedom Songs*. The duo, well known for their 1984 *Music and the Underground Railroad* and 1997 *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*, bill *Get On Board* as a presentation of newly discovered Underground Railroad songs.

Accompanying the Harris on *Get On Board* are Danny Glover narrating Frederick Douglass writings, Sweet Honey In the Rock founder Bernice Reagon, Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary fame, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee's son Guy Davis, Baby Jay and others.

The Harris and Appleseed Recordings which issued *Get On Board* plan to offer lesson and activity plans in conjunction with the album

for the use of teachers, parents and others in teaching the Underground Railroad and its music. These scholastic aids may be downloaded from the Harris' web site at [kiman-dreggie.com](http://kiman-dreggie.com) when available in 2008.



Kim and Reggie Harris

## New Park Service Group Appoints Officers

The new Friends of the Network to Freedom Association, Inc., reported on in the last issue of *Free Press*, has appointed interim officers pending regular election of officers at the group's first official annual meeting to be held in Philadelphia in September, 2008. The interim officers are:

**President-** Alicestyne Adams, Director, Underground Railroad Institute, Georgetown College

**Vice President-** Dona Stokes-Lucas, Cochair, Indiana Freedom Trails

**Treasurer-** Robert Bryant, Professor of Sociology, Georgetown College

**Secretary-** Daniel Smith, Professor of History, University of Kentucky.

The Association is the private-sector arm of the National Park Service's Network to Freedom program. Also newly created is Underground Railroad Network Foundation, Inc., a fundraising entity for the Association and Network to Freedom. Both organizations are nonprofit corporations to which donors may make tax-exempt donations.

rapid and substantial body of achievement.

It is to issue these thanks that *Underground Railroad Free Press* has inaugurated its three annual prizes for outstanding contributions to contemporary Underground Railroad work. We are indebted to Dr. Judith Wellman of Historical Society of New York Research Associates who planted the seed of this idea with us several years ago.

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### Underground Railroad Free Press®

News On Today's Underground Railroad

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## South's Swamps Spawned Underground Railroad Communities

Freedom seekers from the deep south faced long odds trying to make it safely to free states, but some found new lives closer by deep in the large swamps of the Carolinas.

The Great Dismal Swamp, the nation's largest, harbored maroon communities – remote, hard-to-find settlements of escaped slaves – as did South Carolina's Congaree Swamp and other seldom-visited places. As far back as 1728, surveyor William Byrd noted that, "It is certain that many Slaves shelter themselves in this Obscure Part of the World, nor will any of their righteous neighbors discover them." Historians John Hope Franklin and Herbert Aptheker estimate the Great Dismal Swamp's peak maroon population at several thousand.

In his 1784 *A Tour of the United States*, John F. Smith, wrote of Great Dismal Swamp that, "Run-away negroes have resided in these places for twelve, twenty, or thirty years and upwards, subsisting themselves on corn, hogs, and fowls, that they raised on some of the spots not perpetually under water."

In 1817, Samuel Huntington Perkins reported the discovery of a woman and her six children living in a remote part of the swamp, but by

1853 Frederick Law Olmstead, designer of New York's Central Park, noted that, the Dismal Swamp was "formerly peopled . . . much more than at present; a systematic hunting of them with dogs and guns having been made by individuals who took it up as a business about ten years ago."

After the Civil War, many maroon communities vanished as their people sought better lives but some lived on. Maryland's Hall Town, near where *Free Press* is published, lasted until at least 1900, and there are still towns in the more remote mountains of Jamaica peopled by the descendants of maroons.

The Great Dismal Swamp also served as a route for runaways headed for Virginia ports [the swamp extends into Virginia], and on its fringes as a place where enslaved and free blacks made a living by timber harvesting. The US Fish & Wildlife Service, custodian of the Great Dismal Swamp, states that there are still many areas of the swamp thought never to have been traversed by man.

Visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp> for a bibliography on the Underground Railroad in the Great Dismal Swamp.

## Gettysburg to Virginia Underground Railroad Tour Guide

*Underground Railroad Free Press* has published a free guide of three tours of Underground Railroad sites along the 60-mile route from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, through Maryland to Waterford, Virginia. The area encompasses nearly 60 confirmed or believed Underground Railroad sites.

Another tour includes Underground Railroad sites midway along the route in history-rich Frederick, Maryland. The third tour consists of several rural Underground Railroad safe-houses and routes and historic African-American villages along Frederick County, Maryland's Potomac-to-Doubs Underground Railroad Route, designated by Scenic America

as especially deserving of preservation.

*Free Press's* Gettysburg to Virginia Underground Railroad Tour Guide may be downloaded at our web site at no charge.

These tours lie within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground [jthg.org], a new National Heritage Area, recognized as holding more American history than any comparably sized area in the country and home to significant and unique historical, cultural, scenic and natural legacies. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground corridor follows US Route 15 on a particularly beautiful 175-mile course from Gettysburg to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home near Charlottesville, Virginia.

## Abolition Hall of Fame Taps Latest Inductees

Nineteenth century abolitionists John Brown, Lydia Maria Child, Wendell Phillips and Sojourner Truth were enshrined by the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum at an installation ceremony October 20 at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York.

John Brown led an insurgency against Kansas enslavers and the 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, one of the most direct causes of the Civil War.

Sojourner Truth, who when enslaved had 11 of her 13 children sold away, after being freed became a spellbinding minister who life long preached for better treatment of African-Americans and women.

Called the greatest antislavery orator, Har-

vard-educated Wendell Phillips quit his law practice and tirelessly fought for emancipation, and after the Civil War for women's rights, universal suffrage, the labor movement and especially Native American rights.

Lydia Maria Child, said to have been the first white person to write a book urging emancipation, was long the editor of the American Anti-Slavery Society's *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and later, like Phillips, an advocate for Native American rights.

The National Abolition Hall of Fame taps new honorees biennially. The first crop, inducted in 2005, included Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott, Gerrit Smith and Harriet Tubman.