



Editorial

Whither State Underground Railroad Programs?

Our last issue featured a well-established statewide Underground Railroad program in announcing the 2011 Free Press Prize for Leadership to Indiana's Jeannie Regan-Dinius.

Regan-Dinius says the keys to viable state Underground Railroad programs are solid interest by state government, gathering private- and public-sector partners, and setting a workable division of labor among them.

Asked the best approach in launching or strengthening Underground Railroad programs, Regan-Dinius emphasizes having a dedicated champion of the effort, identifying Underground Railroad enthusiasts, putting the emphasis on organizing, and avoiding turf battles and sour personalities.

What has worked for Indiana makes sense to us and we wonder why more states have not founded Underground Railroad programs and why those that have too often founder.

Kansas' private-sector program is well conceived and has official encouragement but does not seem to have gained much traction.

New York's Underground Railroad Heritage Trail has been defunded by the state but there is a growing effort by private Underground Railroad sites and programs to coordinate efforts statewide.

The Ohio Underground Railroad Association just held its 14th annual meeting but its unupdated website speaks of lack of attention.

Since 2002 Pennsylvania has operated its Underground Railroad Colloquium under the auspices of a tourism program. A correspondent reports that the Colloquium is effective in networking, convening meetings, and providing resources, but that its status is vague since its champion was transferred last year.

Maryland's successful private-sector Maryland Underground Railroad Coalition relies on an energetic founder. A controversial State effort has gotten lost among tourism programs and

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Rescued Safe-house on the Move

If you saw a large old Quaker meetinghouse trundling across a road near Farmington, New York, last week, there was no need for alarm as congratulations were the order of the day. Local citizens halted demolition of the 1816 building after windstorm damage in 2006, purchased it, organized a vigorous nationwide private-public fund drive, restored the meetinghouse and last week moved it to a parcel which the group acquired across the road from where it had stood for 195 years.

The Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse was active as a safe-house and nexus of activity in the Underground Railroad, and a national crucible for major nineteenth-century reform movements for the rights of African Americans, Native Americans and women.

The 1816 Farmington Quaker Museum, Inc.,



has gotten the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, federal and state Underground lists and the National Collaborative of Women's History Sites, and is seeking National Historic Landmark status.

The Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse is at 160 County Road 8 near Macedon, New York.

Rhode Island Underground Railroad Home Threatened

Neighbors see the importance of preserving Charles Perry House but heirs of the property have mixed opinions.

Charles Perry House at 4 Margin Street along the Pawcatuck River in Westerly, Rhode Island, was an Underground Railroad stop on the Blackstone Valley route from Connecticut to Massachusetts. In 1943, Mary Agnes Best wrote of Perry spiriting fugitives to his brother Harvey's home in Connecticut. Harvey's cellar had "a well-concealed black hole" used as a hideout when an alarm was sounded. Another station-keeper in this town "so ingeniously arranged his woodpile that it served as a safe retreat for fugitives when danger threatened." Another account records a route beginning in Westerly and going through Rhode Island to the home of Effingham Capron in Uxbridge, Massachusetts.



The attractive old home was in the Kelley family several generations before the owners died in 2010. It sits on five acres among mixed zoning, a choice site for condominiums. One of the five heirs of the property has put it up for sale though without a realtor but a sibling seeks to preserve the property.

Sacramento Honors Far-West Underground Railroad

Sparsely represented there at the time but, contrary to some assumptions today, the Underground Railroad extended all the way to the west coast. Archy Lee's is a case in point.

Brought by his Mississippi enslaver Charles Stovall to Sacramento in 1857, the 18-year-old Lee learned that in California Stovall had no legal claim to him. Lee fled and was hidden in the black-owned Hotel Hackett.

Sacramento's black community took up Lee's cause upon his arrest. Edwin Crocker and Joseph Winans defended Lee who was freed in January 1858 when the court ruled that slavery was illegal in California. Pending the decision, blacks and whites had mobilized to spring Lee from jail if necessary.

Last month, the County Board of Supervisors set October as Underground Railroad Awareness Month in recognition of the city's and California's roles in the abolitionist movement. The board also recognized Sacramento churches, boarding houses and homes where freedom seekers were sheltered.

"A lot of people came to California because it was a safe haven - 300 slaves came to work in the gold mines," said researcher Yolette Merritt. "Because California was not a slave state, people who brought slaves called them 'servants' because they didn't want to be known as slave owners."

Los Angeles, San Diego and Santa Clara have also honored California abolitionists.

continues to label places of enslavement as Underground Railroad sites.

So: two programs functioning well, two downgraded, two stumbling and one so-so, a spotty record for only seven state.

Email us about what your state is doing and how you think state programs can be established and function well.

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Publisher Leads in Underground Railroad Titles

McFarland & Company Publishers of Jefferson, North Carolina, has 14 Underground Railroad books in print and is looking for more.

McFarland has 5,000 titles published to date, including over 3,000 in print, and publishes nearly 400 new titles a year for the worldwide market. McFarland is particularly recognized for its books in pop culture, film, sports and automotive history.

The publisher's Underground Railroad offerings probably exceed those of any other publishing house and include Tom Calarco's award-winning *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region* and Blaine Hudson's *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad*, McFarland's Underground Railroad bestseller which was named a New York Public Library Outstanding Reference Book in 2006.

McFarland's first Underground Railroad title was Pamela Peters' *The Underground Railroad in Indiana* published in 2001 and is still in print.

Other titles concentrate on sites and people of the Underground Railroad, in particular locales including Missouri, Michigan western Illinois, the Appalachian country of eastern Ohio, Canada, the Kentucky borderland, the western frontier and one Indiana county.

Says McFarland's Adam Phillips, "The Underground Railroad is a subject that's consistently sold above average, and our books on the subject have received top reviews." On how McFarland grew to what he appears to be the top Underground Railroad publisher, Phillips says, "We'll receive a strong proposal from a good author, like the subject and publish it. If the first few titles on that subject are well-received, we'll develop a reputation for publishing on a particular subject. There's a snowball effect that allows us to receive more strong proposals from good authors."

Click on Underground Railroad under History at mcfarlandpub.com/index.html for a full list of Underground Railroad offerings.

Senator Mikulski in Underground Railroad Lifetime Award

The African American Tourism Council of Maryland has announced that its 2012 Harriet Ross Tubman Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to United States Senator Barbara Mikulski for her long support of Tubman and Underground Railroad initiatives in the Senate and Maryland.

The Council's announcement of the award states that, "Senator Mikulski's selection is based on her many dedicated years of public service as an effective, trusted and beloved member of the United States Senate, and for her outstanding efforts in supporting and providing resources including funding for Harriet Ross Tubman initiatives."

For several years, Mikulski, Maryland Senator Benjamin Cardin and the two senators from New York have authored bills to fund two national parks, one in each state, honoring Tubman. Maryland's would be on the state's



Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay where Tubman was born, escaped slavery and led others to freedom. New York's park would be near Auburn where Tubman settled. Due to federal budget con-

straints, the bills have not become law but the four Senators plan on reintroducing the bills each year.

The award will be presented by Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley at the State Capitol on March 10, 2012, the 99th anniversary of Tubman's passing.

Before election to the Senate in 1986, Barbara Mikulski served in the House of Representatives for 10 years. Her early career was as a social worker and community activist.

Gates, Michael Honored by African Diaspora Tourism

Harvard professor and African-Americana expert Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and *Underground Railroad Free Press* publisher Peter H. Michael were recently honored by African Diaspora Tourism as VIPs, a standing feature of its *Explorer* e-newsletter.

Gates, the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. from Cambridge University, has enjoyed a highly distinguished academic career. Among a very long list of honors, Gates was named one of *Time* magazine's 25 most influential Americans, and has been awarded 51 honorary degrees, a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Award," and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's highest award.

Gates' most recent work is *Black in Latin*



Gates



Michael

America, a four-part series shown on the Public Broadcasting System last spring. The series may be viewed on computers and most other video devices at pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america. The series is based on Gates' book of the same name.