



# Underground Railroad Free Press®

News and views on today's Underground Railroad

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## Editorial

### Major Underground Railroad Organizations Underfunded

Underfunding of all four national Underground Railroad organizations is badly curtailing identification and preservation of remaining Underground Railroad sites and the ability to promote the Underground Railroad's heritage.

The federal government's Network to Freedom program does its best to serve its nationwide constituency with an annual budget barely sufficient to pay its staff and constantly the target of budget cutters.

The Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati's much lauded museum launched in 2004, finds itself more a local than national attraction and needs better funding to sustain it in reaching national audiences. See our article on the Freedom Center in this issue.

Friends of the Underground Railroad, the national private organization established in 2004 which identifies and promotes preservation of Underground Railroad sites and supports others' programs, gets by with the barest of budgets, relying on the energies of a small handful of volunteers.

The Menare Foundation, oldest of the national Underground Railroad organizations, relies almost entirely on the long-standing devotion of founder Anthony Cohen.

Causes of underfunding of these important efforts range from unsustainable start-up plans to policy mistakes to lack of organization to sheer newness and weak economies of scale.

Underfunding and difficulty in carrying out missions of these organizations, all less than ten years old,

(continued on page two)

### New National Underground Railroad Map Unveiled

MapMuse, an interactive internet mapping site operated by Google, now features a national map of Underground Railroad sites. This appears to be the most comprehensive map of Underground Railroad sites yet available.

As of September 15, 2006, nearly 250 sites around the nation had been listed, with more being added every month. Most of the nation's better known Underground Railroad sites are listed by MapMuse but so also are many lesser known sites not often recognized.

Listing on MapMuse's Underground Railroad map is made on the basis of either oral tradition or site documentation. The

policy of listing sites based on oral tradition prevents the arbitrary exclusion of the majority of actual Underground Railroad sites from the map and yields a more accurate historical rendering.

Underground Railroad safe-houses or routes not yet listed at MapMuse may be entered there by using a link on the Underground Railroad map's home page and entering the requested information. To visit the new MapMuse map, go to [http://find.mapmuse.com/re1/brand.php?brandID=UNDERGROUND\\_RR](http://find.mapmuse.com/re1/brand.php?brandID=UNDERGROUND_RR).

Google Maps also maintains a list of organizations involved in the Underground Railroad.

### Original Uncle Tom's Cabin Saved From Developers

On January 15, 2006, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission purchased the Montgomery County, Maryland property on which still stands the cabin where prominent Underground Railroad figure Josiah Henson had been enslaved. Henson was the model for the title figure of Harriet Beecher Stowe's epic 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and it is the saved cabin shown here from which the book took its name.



Until the recent purchase, very few including Underground Railroad experts knew that the cabin still existed. The cabin's previous owner, Hildegard Mal-

let-Prevost, made no secret of the cabin's existence but did not widely discuss it either. Ms. Mallet-Prevost, who died in 2005 at the age of 100, had provided excellent care to the property. The site's home dates to the late 1700s.

After his escaping enslavement in 1830, Henson traveled the Underground Railroad to Canada where he founded the town of Dawn, Ontario, started the first school for freedom seekers, wrote his autobiography in 1849 and began lecturing widely on abolitionist topics.

Within nine months of publication, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold 500,000 copies in the United States, an unprecedented number, and within two years sold another 500,000 abroad becoming the first international best-seller. Heavily researched and documented by Stowe, the book was the definitive exposé of the horrors of American slavery and became one of the direct causes of the Civil War eight years after its publication.

The Henson cabin's address is 11420 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, Maryland.

partly stem from these causes, but, in our view, the absence of meaningful review and corrective action plays the central role. All four of these programs need turnarounds if they are to fulfill their missions realistically or perhaps even survive. Only the Freedom Center is retooling itself with a new plan.

The time-tested correction needed by the Network to Freedom, Friends of the Underground Railroad and the Menare Foundation is adoption of the square-one management principles of true critical evaluation and definitive corrective action. Those who oversee these three vitally important programs need to bring in well-qualified outside evaluation and then implement their advisors' findings.

For its part, *Underground Railroad Free Press* believes that these four programs, unique and complementary in their missions, deserve to be bolstered. Much of how the nation ultimately embraces its Underground Railroad heritage is riding on the continued existence and improved performance of these four organizations. Time is of the essence with all of them.

#### ***Underground Railroad Free Press®*** *On Today's Underground Railroad*

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## Friends of the Underground Railroad Intervenes to Protect Brooklyn's Threatened Duffield Street Sites

Friends of the Underground Railroad, a national private organization, issued a statement of support for those trying to prevent a developer's demolition of Brooklyn, New York's Duffield Street, a neighborhood which had been active in the Underground Railroad and abolitionism. The resolution also called for New York City authorities to protect the Duffield Street sites.

In the June, 2006 issue of *Underground*

*Railroad Free Press*, we reported that community leader Joy Chatel had forced a postponement of the City's condemnation hearing and had enlisted the support of New York City Councilmember and Congressional candidate David Yassky to help preserve the threatened Underground Railroad historic sites.

The outcome for the Duffield Street sites hangs in the balance pending a new report correcting earlier research.

## Cincinnati's National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Names Pepper to Lead Major Overhaul



The future looked secure in 2004 when the Underground Railroad Freedom Center opened in Cincinnati, but, despite averaging nearly 1,000 visitors daily, the Center has accumulated a \$5.5 million budget deficit in its first 18 months of operation, \$10,000 a day.

Acting on the need for a turnaround, the museum's board brought in John Pepper, recently retired chairman of Proctor & Gamble, as CEO. Pepper and the board have laid out a turnaround plan which

enhances existing earned income sales, plans new offerings, cuts costs and seeks higher levels of public and private donations.

Said Pepper, "We started out in August 2004 with a Grand Opening that captured national and international attention, and since then has garnered highly positive visitor reactions. What we have to do now is apply the learning we've gained in our first year to further improve and grow." Pepper launched a \$10 million capital campaign in January, 2006, which had \$4 million in hand by April.

## Switala Authors Third State Underground Railroad Guide

William Switala's latest book, *Underground Railroad in New York and New Jersey*, published in 2006, follows his two similarly titled books on the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania and in Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia. His latest lists 47 safe-houses in New

Jersey and 164 in New York. The two other books list in excess of 200 safe-houses. With routes he has identified, Professor Switala has now listed nearly 500 sites in the six states which appears to be the most comprehensive listing yet made for any region of the country.

## Readers Comment on *Underground Railroad Free Press*

We were gratified at the positive response which our readers expressed at *Underground Railroad Free Press's* first issue. This is the second. We appreciate your wishes for success and especially the many of you who saw fit to forward the first issue to others.

As would be expected, we did receive notices that the newsletter was not deliverable to some email addresses, but this amounted to less than five percent

of our mailing list, a good mark today.

One reader wanted to know who is on our mailing list of over 800. We email to Underground Railroad site owners, program operators, enthusiasts, experts and historians, Congressional leaders and their staff, and federal and state officials. Do let us know who else should receive *Underground Railroad Free Press*. Just send their email addresses to us at [publisher@urrfreepress.com](mailto:publisher@urrfreepress.com).