



Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Luskin, Finch, Frost, Smithfield Are 2009 Free Press Prize Winners

The Prizes

The *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prizes are awarded each September by *Underground Railroad Free Press* in the fields of leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge in the contemporary international Underground Railroad community. Judging is conducted by an expertly qualified international panel of impartial judges from various disciplines. To submit a 2010 nomination, download a nomination form from the *Free Press* web site, complete it and email it to publisher@urrfreepress.com.

The Free Press Prize Panel of Judges

Authors Karolyn Smardz Frost and Fergus Bordewich, journalists Lawrence Hall and Wayne Young, and Professors Hortense Simmons and Judith Wellman comprise the Panel of Judges. Canadians Frost and Hall make the panel international.

The 2009 Free Press Prize for Underground Railroad Preservation



Julie Finch, Fern Luskin and Hopper-Gibbons House (left)

For their unflagging work heading the effort to save Hopper-Gibbons House, a nationally important Underground Railroad safe-house and center of abolitionism in New York City, Fern Luskin and Julie Finch have been awarded the 2009 Free Press Prize for Preservation.

In 2008 when Luskin and Finch, neighbors active in the preservation of midtown Manhattan's historic Chelsea neighborhood, began questioning the addition of another story to the nineteenth century home at 339 West 29th Street in Manhattan, they learned that the new story was going up in violation of building codes and that the home had belonged to prominent Underground Railroad figures.

During the mid-nineteenth century, the 1847 home was owned by Isaac Hopper, a Quaker from Philadelphia who had been an Underground Railroad organizer there earlier in the century.

Hopper's daughter, Abigail Gibbons, and her family engaged deeply in abolitionism and other reform movements before and after the Civil War. Hopper-Gibbons House became an intellectual center of abolitionism as prominent abolitionists

Please see safe-house, page 3, column 1

The 2009 Free Press Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge



Karolyn Smardz Frost

For her award-winning book, *I've Got a Home In Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*, her archaeological work on Canadian Underground Railroad sites over the last 25 years, and her public lecturing, the Free Press Panel of Judges has named Karolyn Smardz Frost as winner of the 2009 Free Press Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge.

I've Got a Home In Glory Land was awarded the 2007 Governor General's Literary Award for Nonfiction, Canada's highest book award and the equivalent of a Pulitzer Prize in the United States.

Of her book the 2007 awarding jury said, "*I've Got a Home in Glory Land* is a triumphant blend of archaeological and historical research with literary storytelling. Karolyn Smardz Frost uses the flight of Thornton and Lucie Blackburn from slavery in Kentucky to freedom in Toronto to bring the Underground Railroad and its passengers to life in remarkably rich detail. Moving and informative in the best sense, the book will become an instant classic."

The book also won the Heritage Toronto Award of Merit, and honorable mention for the 2008 Albert Corey Prize awarded

Please see Frost on page 3, column 2

The 2009 Free Press Prize for Leadership in the Underground Railroad Community



Smithfield Community Association

For the example it has set over many years in entrepreneurship, organizing, managing and promoting the significant Underground Railroad and abolitionist sites and history around Peterboro, New York, the Smithfield Community Association has been named the 2009 Free Press Prize for Leadership laureate.

The Association's achievements since its founding 17 years ago include launching the National Abolition Hall of Fame, and preservation of historic properties in Peterboro, most notably the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark and the Smithfield Community Center. The saved buildings are direct links to the time when Peterboro played a major role in the Underground Railroad and in the social and political changes that shaped the nation in the mid- and late 1800s.

This small upstate New York community was at the forefront in fights for abolition of slavery, the equality of all people regardless of race, and the equality of women including the right to vote.

Peterboro was a busy Underground Railroad destination for freedom seekers and the 1820 church in which the Association is headquartered was the site of the first meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835.

Please see Smithfield, page 3, column 3

And the Winners Are . . .

In our last issue, we held a contest to name a creek which runs beside a subscriber's Underground Railroad safe-house. The safe-house owners thank the many *Free Press* readers who submitted entries.

The winning entry, North Star Creek, was separately submitted by subscribers Beverly Buckman and Alexandra Stone. How fitting as the creek flows into Freedom Creek, so again the North Star leads to Freedom.

Honorable mention goes to Ron Ellis of Sacramento, California, for his six entries.

How to Subscribe

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Free Press Prize Nominations

Visit urrfreepress.com to learn more about these top honors in the international Underground Railroad community and to download a nomination form.

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Today's Underground Railroad

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Freedom Center Leads In Underground Railroad Education

Cincinnati's National Underground Railroad Freedom Center has launched a dozen far-reaching educational initiatives at the rate of about one per quarter and is now pushing to promote their availability.

States Freedom Center CEO Donald Murphy, "We are now in hundreds of school districts and thousands of schools with our e-learning material. We conduct literally hundreds of teacher workshops during the year. We now have a college-level course in conjunction with the University of Cincinnati."

Ernest Perry, Freedom Center Chief Innovation Officer, says that the current challenge

Ontario Inaugurates Emancipation Day

The Canadian province of Ontario has passed legislation setting each August 1 as Emancipation Day. Passed December 4, 2008, the Emancipation Day official observance came after ten years of petitioning and advocacy, and 175 years to the day after Great Britain's Slavery Abolition Act of August 1, 1834, which abolished slavery in nearly all parts of the British Commonwealth.

Canada began opposing slavery forty years earlier when Canadian Lieutenant Governor John Simcoe sponsored the Act Against Slav-

Underground Railroad Pioneer Gara Honored

At its May 10 commencement, Ohio's Wilmington College honored Professor of History Emeritus and acclaimed Underground Railroad author Larry Gara with an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

In honoring Gara, now 86, college president Daniel A. DiBiasio cited Gara's lifelong work in race relations, peace activism and social justice causes.

Gara's landmark 1961 book *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* recast the Underground Railroad story into the perspective of the freedom seeker and did much to promote use of documentation to authenticate Underground Railroad history.

More Underground Railroad Cycling Routes

Earlier in *Free Press*, we wrote of Adventure Cycling Association's unprecedented 2000-mile Underground Railroad bicycle route from Mobile, Alabama, to Owen Sound, Ontario. Now, Adventure Cycling offers three shorter Underground Railroad cycling tours, some with camping and catered meals along the way.

For the one-day cyclist, there are the three new Day Trips in and around Ripley, Ohio, famed for the John Parker home and John and Jeanne Rankin home, both very active safe-houses. The loops are nine, ten and eighteen miles in length, and easy rides for nearly all.

The seven-day Heart of the Underground Railroad Tour runs from the Freedom Center in Cincinnati to Oberlin, Ohio, with its Heritage

is making the programs' three nationwide markets — students, teachers and the general public — more aware of the Center's educational resources.

Organized into educator resources, youth development and public programs, offerings include video lessons at Apple's online iTunes University, several other online e-learning resources, detailed downloadable lesson plans, summer camps, an in-house lecture series, the Teacher Resource Center and more.

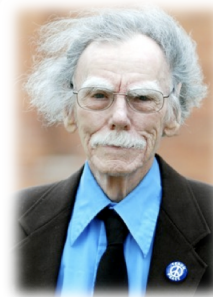
The Freedom Center has not only sprung into a lengthy lead as the Underground Railroad *Please see Freedom Center, page 3, column 3*

ery which became law July 9, 1793. Simcoe was not able to get the outright abolition he sought but the 1793 act did set the wheels in motion for abolition in Canada.

In her prize-winning *I've Got a Home In Glory Land*, 2009 Free Press Prize laureate Carolyn Frost points out that, even before outright abolition, Canada was refusing to extradite freedom seekers to the United States.

For many years, August 1 has been an Emancipation Day holiday in several Caribbean nations and Guyana, former British colonies.

Much of the work before Gara's portrayed the Underground Railroad through the eyes of safe-house operators and conductors. Gara's book was a major influence in the rekindling of the nation's memory of the Underground Railroad beginning in the 1960s.



The Friends of the Network to Freedom Association will also honor Gara at its annual conference September 16 through 19 when he participates in a panel discussion.

Center, numerous safe-houses, and Oberlin College, the first to admit African-American students. Along the way, the tour visits the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center at Wilberforce University, one of the first historically Black colleges.

The Association's month-long Freedom Trail North Tour begins at the Freedom Center with stops at Harriet Beecher Stowe's home, monuments, museums, safe houses, cemeteries, heritage sites and other important historic locations, and ends at Owen Sound.

As of this issue's publication, space is still available on the 2009 Freedom Trail North Tour and on the Day Trips. For more, visit adventurecycling.org/ugrr.

Safe-house

including Horace Greeley, William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown visited often, exchanging ideas with the Hoppers, Gibbonses and each other around the dining table. Greeley's relative, Samuel Sinclair, publisher of the *New York Tribune*, lived a few doors down.

Because of the family's abolitionist views, a mob plundered Hopper-Gibbons House during the New York Draft Riots of July, 1863, involving the residence in a pivotal event that shaped both New York City's and America's history.

Though Hopper-Gibbons House's provenance makes it hard to understate its historical importance, New York City has been slow to protect it and other Underground Railroad sites in the city. One historian states that no major city with Underground Railroad sites has done less to protect them than New York City.

In another case reported here (January, 2008), only relentless intervention by a Brooklyn community group and elected officials in New York City halted destruction of the Harriet and Thomas Truesdell safe-house which a developer had coveted as the site of a parking deck.

As in the Brooklyn group's effort, Luskin and Finch's work has run into Kafkaesque bureaucratic obstacles and apparent disdain from city government. Despite the pair's success in getting building permits rescinded or revoked and stop-work orders issued, the building's owners have been able to mysteriously obtain re-authorized permits, and construction has continued off and on.

State Assemblyman Richard Gotfried intervened on behalf of the preservationists, and the city's Landmark Preservation Commission plans to protect Hopper-Gibbons House with landmark status this Fall. In the meantime, construction, legal or not, has progressed so far that the next challenge appears to be to require its removal. *Free Press* will keep readers up to date on the evolving fight.

Fern Luskin, Professor of Art History at LaGuardia Community College, and her neighbor Julie Finch, a chef, live a few doors down from Hopper-Gibbons House.

Visit MindfulWalker.com for more.

Correction

In the May, 2009, issue of *Underground Railroad Free Press*, a chart in the article entitled "New Research: Most Site Claims Rely On Oral Tradition" was displayed incorrectly. Frequencies of Wellman Scale ratings in the chart were inadvertently shown in the reverse order by rating. This led to a few minor misinterpretations in the article. *Free Press* regrets the error. The corrected issue now appears on our web site under Archives and the correct chart is provided here.

Frost

jointly by the American Historical Association and the Canadian Historical Association for the best book on Canadian-American relations or on the history of both countries. *I've Got a Home In Glory Land* rose to number four on the Canadian best-seller list, was favorably reviewed in *The New York Times* and has sold well in the United States.

Karolyn Smardz Frost is a Toronto-born archaeologist and historian whose 1985 excavation of the Thornton and Lucie Blackburn home site in Toronto made history. *I've Got a Home in Glory Land* is the fruit of more than twenty years of historical detective work into this fugitive slave couple's dramatic escape from Kentucky to Canada via the Underground Railroad and Canada's precedent-setting refusals to extradite the two freedom seekers to the United States.

Dr. Frost holds a doctorate in archeology and has taught at Toronto's York University and at Nova Scotia's Dalhousie University. While she wrote *I've Got a Home In Glory Land*, she served as Executive Director of the Ontario Historical Society. With Adrienne Shadd and Afua Cooper, Dr. Frost earlier wrote *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Toronto!*, and with Frederick Armstrong, Hilary Bates Neary and Bryan Walls, *Ontario's African-Canadian Heritage: Collected Writings of Fred Landon, 1918-1967*.

She is current writing *Steal Away Home: Letters to a Fugitive Slave*, to be published by Harper Collins, an account of the correspondence between a slave's mistress in Louisville and her runaway maid in Toronto, "an amazing tale and all entirely true" in the author's words.

Karolyn Frost resides with her family in Toronto and on the Nova Scotia coast.

Visit HomeInGloryland.com for more.

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Editor's Note: Dr. Frost is a member of the Free Press Panel of Judges. Free Press prize procedures allow judges to be eligible for nomination for a Free Press prize but require judge nominees to recuse themselves from all deliberation on the awarding of that prize in the year nominated.

Smithfield

After incorporating in 1992, the Smithfield Community Association raised funds to restore the church and the nearby Gerrit Smith estate, and then placed them both on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

One of America's wealthiest men and leading abolitionists, Gerrit Smith was a financial backer of John Brown, a vocal advocate for women's suffrage, three times the Liberty Party's candidate for president and twice ran for governor of New York. In several cases, Smith used his own money to provide legal defense for freedom seekers.

In 2005, the Smithfield Community Association incorporated the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum. On October 22, 2005, 170 years to the day since the New York State Anti-Slavery Society first met in the old church where the Association meets, the National Abolition Hall of Fame inducted Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott, Harriet Tubman and Gerrit Smith.

Visit scaPeterboro.org for more.

Freedom Center

community's foremost educator but continues to be its leading fundraiser. Perry notes that several donors have worked closely with new Freedom Center education programs. Apple assigned staff who assisted in developing software, hardware, programs, project management and the Freedom Center presence on iTunes University.

Other donors involved with the new education programs include the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Knowledge Works and the General Mills Foundation.

Visit FreedomCenter.org and click on the For Educators button for full details.

