



Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Morrison, Hodges, Westmoreland Are 2010 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 2011 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 2010 Free Press Prize for Underground Railroad Preservation



Wilma Morrison

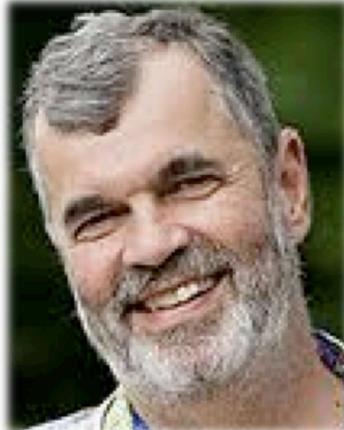
For her long devotion to promoting Underground Railroad and African-Canadian history of Canada, and specifically for her five decades of work preserving the Nathaniel Dett British Methodist Episcopal Chapel in Niagara Falls, Canada, Wilma Morrison has been awarded the 2010 Underground Railroad Free Press Prize for Preservation.

Built in 1836, the two-room church quickly became a destination of Underground Railroad freedom seekers fleeing north from the United States only a few miles away. Located on a modest side street in the border city, the church has been named a Canadian National Historic Site. Under Morrison's direction, the church established a library of 1,400 books, documents and photographs telling the history of the local black community. Morrison's encouragement of families to provide their stories and photographs resulted in a unique center of preserved family lore at the church.

Wilma Morrison was born in London, Ontario, 81 years ago, moved to Niagara Falls, Canada, about 1960, and became a

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The 2010 Hortense Simmons Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge



Graham Hodges

For his landmark biography, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*, the Free Press Prize Panel of Judges has awarded Graham Hodges the 2010 Hortense Simmons Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge.

Born free in 1810, David Ruggles had become the nation's first African American periodical publisher while still in his twenties with his abolitionist magazine, *Mirror of Liberty*, and in New York City operated the nation's first black bookstore until it was destroyed by a mob.

See Hodges, page 3, column 2

The Free Press Prize Panel of Judges has voted unanimously to rename the annual Free Press Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge in honor their fellow judge, Hortense Simmons, who has spent a giving career advancing knowledge as a multiple Fulbright Scholar and professor emerita of English literature and ethnic studies. *Free Press* is delighted by this permanent, worthy tribute to Dr. Simmons which takes effect with the awarding of the 2010 Hortense Simmons Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge.

The 2010 Free Press Prize for Leadership in the Underground Railroad Community



Carl Westmoreland

Carl Westmoreland has been named the 2010 Free Press Prize for Leadership laureate for his roles in helping to create the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and for his central and effective work there in reilluminating the Underground Railroad.

The Freedom Center, the foremost Underground Railroad museum, has become a leading voice in Underground Railroad education in large part through Westmoreland's work. As a result, respondents in the 2010 Free Press Survey of the International Underground Railroad Community ranked the Freedom Center as important as any Underground Railroad institution in building awareness of contemporary Underground Railroad matters.

Carl Westmoreland's 2010 Leadership Prize nomination maintained that there is no one in the United States who has done more to further understanding of the Underground Railroad and to preserve its vestiges than he. Beginning in the 1990s, as the concept of the Freedom Center began to take shape, West-

See Westmoreland, page 3, column 3

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Today's Underground Railroad

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Rare Photo Recovered In Attic

A very rare photograph of two young African American children who were either enslaved or recently emancipated at the time has been rediscovered in a Charlotte, North Carolina, moving sale. One child is identified as John, the other, unnamed. A companion document records the 1854 sale of John for \$1,150. The owner of the home where the two pieces were found was probably John's descendant.

New York collector Keya Morgan paid \$50,000 for the photo and bill of sale. Adding to the picture's value is that it was taken by famed Civil War photographer Matthew Brady whose portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee and these two boys much define their era.



Oklahoma's Creek African-Americans' Troubled Emigration

When the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole peoples were uprooted and force-marched in the 1830s across the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma by the Jackson administration, they took with them an estimated 5,000 enslaved African Americans.

Freed during the Civil War, they and their descendants became accepted by their Indian neighbors but longed for more hospitable lives. African Americans of the Creeks looked north for a new start and around 1900 began emigrating to the Great Plains of Canada but

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would not find the welcome mat out.

With the influx of whites during the Oklahoma land rushes, the lives of black tribe members deteriorated as they were squeezed out of relative security as Indians and pushed into Jim Crow, segregation and second-class citizenship. Business-as-usual for Blacks had arrived on the reservation, nowhere more so than among the Creeks.

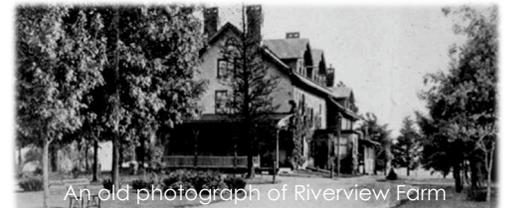
Many of the Creek-Negroes, as they were
See Creeks, page 3, column 1

Riverview Farm

One of an occasional series on Underground Railroad sites

Thomas Garrett, among the best known Underground Railroad agents, spent his first 33 years at his father's Riverview Farm in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, before moving to Wilmington, Delaware. During his 30 years of Underground Railroad work there, Garrett often sent freedom seekers on to his brothers Edward and Isaac who had inherited the farm and used it as a safe-house.

Thomas Garrett and his Quakers family helped more than 2,700 freedom seekers on their northward journeys. In 1848, at the age of 59, Garrett was prosecuted for aiding a fugitive, fined \$5,400, losing his home and business, and kept right on aiding fugitives through the Civil War. Shortly after his trial, the townspeople of Wilmington, black and white alike,



gave the family enough materials to build another home, and enough tools for Garrett to resume his blacksmithing. When he died in 1871, 1,500 Wilmingtonians, black and white alike, bore Garrett's coffin to his simple Quaker grave.

Riverview Farm is an Underground Railroad museum offering tours, presentations and education. Visit RiverviewFarm.org for more.

Morrison

member of the Nathaniel Dett Chapel at that time. In her early career, Morrison was thwarted in her goal of becoming a registered nurse at a time when black women weren't accepted into nursing programs. Instead, she was able to become a nursing assistant.

But Wilma Morrison's fortunes changed. Recognizing her lifetime's work in preserving the Nathaniel Dett Chapel and in rediscovering African-Canadian history, Brock University of St. Catherines, Ontario, awarded her an honorary doctorate of letters degree at a convocation held in June.

Morrison's Free Press Prize nominator wrote, "Mrs. Morrison has given untold hours to the development of the church and it's historic centre but now, she says, the old black families have for the most part moved away."

Thanks in large part to Morrison's efforts at the church since 1960, she has seen it become a well known tourist site, attracting many Americans who have learned of the building's importance in maintaining the spiritual life of Underground Railroad escapees, with many visitors arriving by the busload from as far away as Texas, Louisiana and the Carolinas. "We had 800 in June of 2010," she said in a *Free Press* interview, adding that it pays the bills, at least for now.

Wilma Morrison affirms her belief in providing people an opportunity to keep in touch with their history by adding, "Not just for black people, but also for those from the first nations, from Asia, from all over the world."

Creeks

called, were landholders able to realize good prices from sale of their farms due to rising land values in Oklahoma, providing them good grubstakes for a move.

Creek-Negro families who had relocated to the Canadian plains telling of affordable farm purchases and more or less good prospects there triggered a rush of Canadian immigration applications from those they had left behind. Resistance in Canada was soon official and strong.

Though a Canadian fact-finding mission sent to Oklahoma found that the Creek-Negroes "possessed wealth much greater than most of the white settlers of the state," its report tarred the would-be immigrants with a laundry-list of racial stereotypes, and openly urged both official and unofficial measures to deny immigration, even to the well qualified.

With the urging of whites, by the thousands still settling the Canadian plains,

Hodges

In 1835, he was a cofounder of the New York Committee of Vigilance and became very active as Underground Railroad conductor and safe-house operator, assisting more than 400 freedom seekers in their escapes. One who was helped was the young Marylander Frederick Douglass who, after sleeping hungry and homeless on the New York docks after his arrival, was first assisted by Ruggles.

Ruggles was one of the boldest of Underground Railroad agents, demanding arrest of slave-trading ship captains, defying enslavers and slave catchers in search of escapees, and frequently publishing daring pieces challenging slavery, its practitioners and others in New York who aided it.

Ruggles' harried life took its toll when he went blind at 28 and died from an intestinal disorder at 49 after he had become a physician in Massachusetts. As active and recognized as any abolitionist or Underground Railroad agent in his day, Ruggles all but slipped from the nation's memory. At the time, William Lloyd Garrison lamented Ruggles, plaintively noting that, "His biography is yet to be written." Now, 160 years after Ruggles' death, it has been and is a prize-winner.

Graham Hodges is the George Dorland Langdon, Jr. Professor of History and Africana Studies at Colgate University. Before spending the past decade researching his Ruggles biography, Hodges published *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863 and Slavery, Freedom & Culture Among Early American Workers*.

the Canadian Immigration Branch in Ottawa readily agreed, going as far as to hire an itinerant African American minister to preach against immigration to Canada among the Creek-Negroes.

Soon, local frenzy involving newspapers, trade organizations and town councils in the plains provinces was in full throat with Edmonton the center of anti-black sentiment. Using this as a pretext, the Immigration Branch submitted an outright ban only on blacks which was vetoed by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier who did not want to risk black votes in eastern Canada in pending elections.

Instead, unofficial means, mainly sham physical and "character" examinations, were used to exclude Creek-Negro applicants. Seven were admitted in 1910.

Canada's liberalized immigration in 1962 made it racially nondiscriminatory.

Free Press thanks a Canadian subscriber who suggested this article.

Westmoreland

moreland became one of the central figures in its development. Since the Center's opening along the Cincinnati waterfront in 2004, he has served as the institution's leading outreach coordinator, contacting grassroots Underground Railroad site owners, programs, researchers and scholars in the United States and Canada, helping to link them into a broad network, collecting information about their scattered activities, and being at the center of Freedom Center support for its many local initiatives, for example, the important Underground Railroad sites in Ripley, Ohio, and Madison, Indiana, to name just two.

Writes his nominator, Westmoreland's "many years of in-depth research into the history of the Underground Railroad have made him one of the best informed experts, if not *the* best, on the Underground Railroad in the United States. His research into the slave trade from Kentucky to Mississippi, which resulted in a permanent exhibit at the Freedom Center, was a masterful combination of scholarship, fieldwork and curatorial art. However, arguably his single greatest achievement, or at least the most visible, was his discovery and acquisition for the Freedom Center of the slave jail which is now the museum's centerpiece. Some might consider it the most important slavery-related building that survives in the United States."

Westmoreland was raised in Cincinnati's Wyoming-Lincoln Heights neighborhood by parents who were Shakespearean actors. His father, Guy Westmoreland, was a racial trailblazer as the first black accountant at General Electric. At Knoxville College in the 1950s, Westmoreland was a standout athlete and took part in one of the original lunch-counter sit-ins. His master's degree in urban sociology from the University of Cincinnati further honed his sensibilities and effectiveness as a community organizer.

Westmoreland has testified before Congress, lectured widely at home and abroad, been written about in *Smithsonian* magazine, and, in his early career, been honored as one of the outstanding young men of America by the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. In delivering the Freedom Center's growing list of education programs to the Underground Railroad community, Carl Westmoreland has drawn on his long stint of rough-and-tumble work from the 1960s into the 1980s as a community organizer and businessman in Cincinnati's Mount Auburn neighborhood where he served as president of the Mount Auburn Community Council.