



## Editorial

### *International Underground Railroad a Modern Necessity*

The Underground Railroad and Civil War ended most but not all slavery in the United States. An estimated 27 million people live in slavery today, 40,000 of them in the United States, mainly in agriculture, sweatshops and prostitution.

This modern horror has prison slaves in China producing goods at zero labor cost for world markets, Saharan children "bonded" into slavery at birth because their parents are slaves, Indian bridal slaves, Brazilian charcoal slaves, Pakistani carpet weavers, 1.4 million sex slaves, and 8.4 million enslaved children.

*Free Press* was invited to host a recent international antislavery conference but deferred when the White House Historical Association offered to host at Decatur House in Washington, DC. On November 14 a televised debate, *Slavery: A 21st Century Evil*, was held with panelists Kevin Bales, president of Free the Slaves; David Batstone, president of Not for Sale; Luis C. d'Baca, US State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons; and Joy Ezeilo, UN Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons.

The remainder of this editorial is adapted from Bales' conference article, "Slavery: Standing on the edge of extinction?" available at [aljazeera.com](http://aljazeera.com). Kevin Bales is president of Free the Slaves, professor of sociology at London's Roehampton University, and Pulitzer Prize nominee for his 1999 book *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*.

The public often believes slavery ended with 19th-century cam-

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# Underground Railroad Free Press®

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## McGill Slave Cabin Overnight Stays Propel Restoration

As one travels through the countryside of the South, the dwindling number of plantations remaining from a time gone by now more strongly beckon tourists, writers, archeologists and the curious for the hidden stories they tell. Generations of African-Americans found these places unpleasant and seldom visited but now that is changing with a rising age group far enough removed from slavery, Jim Crow and segregation to be increasingly inquisitive about the actual locales where American slavery was concentrated.

As old plantations become more open to the public, visitors see first hand the contrast between enslaver and enslaved. Portraying the

difference vividly are the stark dissimilarities between a plantation's "big house" and its slave cabins if the latter still exist at all.



*Please see McGill, page 3, column 1*

## New Underground Railroad Museum Draws Thousands

*By Peter Slocum, North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association*

Old hidden stories of courage and conflict — tales of the Underground Railroad in far northern New York state — came to life in May 2011 at a new museum in Ausable Chasm, New York, near the shores of Lake Champlain. In its first six months, the North Star Underground Railroad Museum attracted thousands of visitors from around the country and abroad.

A joint project of the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association and the Town of Chesterfield, the museum is perched on a hill above the Ausable Chasm, a well-known scenic tourist destination. The Museum also partners with nearby John Brown Farm where the famous abolitionist is buried.

"Lake Champlain: Gateway to Freedom" is the unifying theme of the museum's exhibits

which feature stories of runaways who escaped to Canada on the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad. The moving saga of Maryland fugitive John Thomas who prospered after settling in the Adirondacks is highlighted. One room in the museum is devoted to the conflict that wracked local churches when "radical" abolitionists demanded resolutions to abolish slavery. Museum president Don Papson says, "The amazing stories we are sharing here are life-altering. People are discovering family and community links they never knew existed."

In addition to drawing nearly 4,000 visitors since it opened last May, the Museum is attracting a steady stream of local community members to programs that focus on regional anti-slavery history and the Civil War. The Museum's bus tours spotlighting Underground Railroad sites in nearby towns sell out almost every Saturday they are offered.

## Readers Invited: 2012 Free Press Prizes and Annual Survey

Each January, we ask our readers whom they believe deserves special recognition for Underground Railroad work. Each fall, we then award the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prizes for Leadership, Preservation and Advancement of Knowledge in the international Underground Railroad community.

If you know someone who has done good work in any of these three areas whom you would like to nominate, let us encourage you to do so. It's easy. Go to [urrfreepress.com](http://urrfreepress.com), click on Prizes, download a nomination form and email it to us. While you are there, enjoy having a look at past prize winners and their accomplishments.

Each year, *Underground Railroad Free Press*

also sponsors a survey of the international Underground Railroad community and shares results with the community, public officials and others. The surveys include some questions carried forward each year to track trends, new questions on recent developments, and questions which readers suggest.

Some of the most valuable lessons learned from these surveys since the first in 2007 came from reader-suggested questions. Let us know what you think would be good to ask in the 2011 survey which will be administered online in May. You will be invited to participate. Survey results will be summarized in our July issue and full results will be posted on our website.

paings that brought an end to legal slavery but nothing could be further from the truth. The new slavery that emerged after 1945 is crucially different since slaves are cheaper today than at any time in history. While slaves were major capital purchases in the 19th century, today their ac-

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## Waterford, Virginia

### One of an occasional series on Underground Railroad sites

It might be in the South, but the Quaker-founded village of Waterford, Virginia, has a proud heritage of abolitionism, the Underground Railroad and Confederate defiance in the Civil War.

Founded in 1733 by the Quaker Amos Janney, Waterford today is a small spot on the map reached from one direction by an unpaved road. Eight miles from the Potomac River and Union territory, the Quaker village was well known during Underground Railroad times for aiding freedom seekers and as the main seat of abolitionist activity in Loudoun County, Virginia. The Quaker Church of America had banned slavery in 1754.

In 1850, Samuel Janney, grandson of Amos, was tried and acquitted for harboring and guiding freedom seekers. In 1857, Waterford's Quaker mail carrier Yardley Taylor was accused of being "chief of the abolition clan in Loudoun" and harboring runaways. The area was contested and held by both armies numerous times during the Civil War.

## Expelled 1840s Student Abolitionist Now Honored

On the Colgate University campus from which he was expelled in 1847, George Ritchie was honored this October 22 by being inducted into the National Abolition Hall of Fame.

Editor of the first student newspaper at Colgate, Ritchie was expelled for his editorial criticizing New York state churches and voters for tepid support of stronger voting rights for black men in the election of 1846. While leading to his brief life in ardent support of abolitionism, Ritchie suffered immediate public repudiation and humiliation by the faculty of Colgate (at the time Madison College). Barred from the college, Ritchie continued publication of his paper in nearby Hamilton as *The Hamilton Student and Christian Reformer* which until his early death was

The Loudoun Rangers were a Union Army unit mustered by Loudoun County residents. The unit was led by Captain Samuel Means, a prominent Waterford businessman personally recruited by Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. The Loudoun Rangers were the prime means of protection for freedom seekers traveling through Virginia across the nearby fords of the Potomac River into Maryland. For acting on their anti-slavery convictions, members of the Loudoun Rangers had their property confiscated by the Confederacy and were imprisoned if caught.

Forgotten by time, Waterford moldered for decades until preservation efforts began in the 1940s. Nearly all of the homes and other buildings in today's village date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it is practically impossible to find one that is not well kept. The Waterford Fair held the first weekend in October draws thousands who enjoy stepping back in time to glimpse just what freedom seekers passed through as they were ushered north.

central New York state's voice of abolition and reform.

Before the Scottish immigrant Ritchie died at 33, he published continuously on slavery and abolition, preached antislavery from many pulpits, and served on local, state, and national anti-slavery committees.

Ritchie was nominated to the National Abolition Hall of Fame by publishers Nellie and William Edmonston of Hamilton. Nellie Edmonston wrote the first biographical article on George Ritchie in 1994 and contributed a Ritchie entry in the 1995 *Hamilton Bicentennial* book. Through publication of the Civil War papers of David F. Ritchie, son of George Ritchie, the Edmonstons came to know the Ritchie family.

## Washington, Jefferson and the Underground Railroad

Prime examples of the United States' torn soul on slavery are found among the early presidents. The ultimately conflicted Thomas Jefferson, he of the common-law mixed-race wife Sally Hemings and their slave children, came within a single vote of abolishing slavery in the nation's first government in 1784.

At the time, the largest enslaver in Fairfax County, Virginia, enslaving 188 souls, was George Washington.

Some count as the first written reference to what became known as the Underground Railroad Washington's letter of April 12, 1786, to William Morris of Philadelphia recounting Quaker assistance to a freedom seeker escaped from Washington's friend, Mr. Dalby of Alexandria, Virginia.

"In another letter, written to William Drayton on November 20, 1786, Washington complains that he had apprehended one of Drayton's runaway slaves, but when he sent the slave under guard to Baltimore to be reunited with Drayton, the slave escaped and was aided in this by some sort of escape network."

The source for both of Washington's letters is *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, John C. Fitzpatrick, United States Government Printing Office, volume 28.

The man later to be called father of his country, not only an enslaver but a slave catcher, would ask that his wife free his slaves after his death and the comforts he had derived from them. Jefferson did the same.



## McGill

While preservation efforts at plantations have concentrated on the plantation house, gardens and certain kinds of out-buildings, slave quarters have not always been the object of attention. In many cases, these humblest of structures are long gone, prey to the illusion that their removal could somehow soften the nation's grimmest chapter of history. As example, all that remains of Monticello's slave quarters is their site beside a garden which Thomas Jefferson's slaves used to tend.

Just by walking inside, extant slave quarters such as Sotterley Plantation's well restored cabin shown here convey much of their stories. The dirt floor, the sleeping loft, the small windows, the walk-in fireplace tell of lives sacrificed for the comforts of people of another race looking down from Sotterley's big house. The aura in a cabin like this is still palpable nearly 150 years after Maryland rewrote her constitution abolishing slavery.



While a growing number of writers and researchers are now busily uncovering the lives and roles of the nation's few remaining slave quarters, probably no one is delving more deeply than Joseph McGill, Jr., a program officer at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Based in Charleston not far from where he grew up in Kingstree, South Carolina, one of McGill's assignments took him to Boone Hall Plantation in nearby Mount Pleasant to assist in the restoration of a slave cabin. There in 2010 an idea was born: McGill launched the Slave Dwelling Project to identify and spend the night in as many slave quarters as he could find in order to draw attention to the need to identify and restore the nation's remaining slave dwellings.

On Mothers' Day 2010, McGill completed his first overnight stay at Boone Hall and since then has bedded down in twenty-five more slave dwellings in eight states. His 2012 itinerary includes twelve more

in South Carolina, Georgia, Connecticut, Mississippi and Virginia. He uses a sleeping bag on his stays. Most slave dwellings where McGill stays are tiny. Only one cabin was in such poor condition that McGill could not stay in it, sleeping instead on the plantation house porch where slaves were sometimes lodged. McGill points out that not all slave dwellings are the country cabins most people think of and that some of his stayovers have involved more substantial urban slave quarters.

McGill relates touching experiences from his stays. During a Texas stayover, he met a slave descendant and a slave owner descendant who themselves were meeting for the first time in the very cabin which one ancestor had owned and in which the other ancestor had lived. At Sotterley, McGill dined at the home of board president Jan Briscoe, great-granddaughter of the last slave owner at the plantation, and was presented with an oil painting of the cabin there where McGill had spent the night. McGill has also seen the controversial side of his project, as some feel that slave dwellings should be leveled in a mistaken attempt to leave the nation's experiment with slavery in the past.

"In saving these places it gives us an opportunity to bring the stories of African Americans off the back pages. We as African Americans are byproducts of those who endured. In telling their stories we are honoring them," McGill says. "You get inside these walls and you think about that time of slavery and wonder what went through these people's minds because within these walls was probably the easiest time of their lives. We know that beyond those walls there was a lot of hard work and toil."

In addition to his role with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Joseph McGill, Jr. serves as Commissioner of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission, founder of the South Carolina African American Historical Alliance, member of the South Carolina Humanities Council, and on the board of the International African American Museum. Prior to coming to the National Trust, McGill served as Executive Director of the African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa, and Director of History and Culture at Penn Center, St. Helena Island, South Carolina, the state's first school built for the education of freed slaves.

## Abolition

quisition is so inexpensive as to be throwaways. In the American South in 1850, an average slave cost about \$1,000, equivalent to \$40,000 today, a major investment. Modern slaves are either costless or inexpensively bought by their enslavers and therefore disposable.

Tripling of world population since 1945, globalization, war, environmental destruction and urbanization have driven Third World people into cities and desperation, a bumper crop of potential slaves. Turning the vulnerable into slaves happens only with government corruption or sheer indifference.

Slaves today are found in agriculture, brickmaking, mining, quarrying, textiles, leather working, prostitution, gem working, jewelry making, weaving, carpet making, domestic work, clearing forests, making charcoal and working in shops. Most of their work ends up for local sale, but slave-made goods make their way through the global economy. Slave origins of carpets, cotton, shrimp, fish, sugar and jewelry are clear. Slave-produced cocoa from the Ivory Coast, and rugs made by slave children in India, Pakistan and Nepal are mainly exported to Europe and the United States.

But there is hope. Today's 27 million slaves are the smallest fraction of world population ever to live in slavery, and the \$40 billion they generate as profits for enslavers is the smallest proportion of the global economy ever represented by slavery, so small that no national economy or industry would suffer if slavery were ended. With universal agreement on the human right of freedom and slavery now illegal in every country, the stage is set for complete eradication.

Today we know how to get people out of slavery. The cost of liberation for all of the world's slaves is estimated at \$11 billion over 25 to 30 years, the cost of the bridge Hong Kong is building across the Pearl River or what the city of Seattle has budgeted for its light-rail system.

What is now spent by governments on eradication of slavery ranges from pathetic to insulting, nowhere near what is spent on less serious crimes. The United States spends more on prosecuting recreational marijuana use than on eradication of slavery. We stand at a moment in history when economies, governments, understanding, moral beliefs and hearts are aligned to bring slavery to an end.