



THE NORTH COUNTRY LANTERN

Number 2

Fall 2005

North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association
P.O. Box 2413 - Plattsburgh, New York 12901 (518) 561-0277 -NCUGRHA@aol.com



Susan Tobias peers into tunnel opening into which Karen West has descended. Left to right: Peter Kivic; Susan; Carol Thompson; Mitchell Ray, S. Booker; Vivian and Don Papson. Photos ©Luke T. Bush

Tracking the Underground Railroad in Franklin County, New York

Adapted from an August 14, 2005 *Press Republican* article by Susan Tobias

A group of Underground Railroad enthusiasts recently visited sites in Franklin County that are believed to have harbored or assisted slaves seeking their freedom.

Starting the tour at the First Congregational Church, local historian Peter Kivic and the Rev. John Werley, pastor, explained how the first church on the site was torn down and replaced by a red brick, New England colonial type building with a hollow portico in 1853. A 10-by-25 foot room was housed under the portico, separated from the rest of the building by a false wall. A side door was located next to a tunnel, leading into the room. The second church was razed in 1883, and the present bluestone Normanesque structure was built incorporating the foundation, the front portico and hidden room.

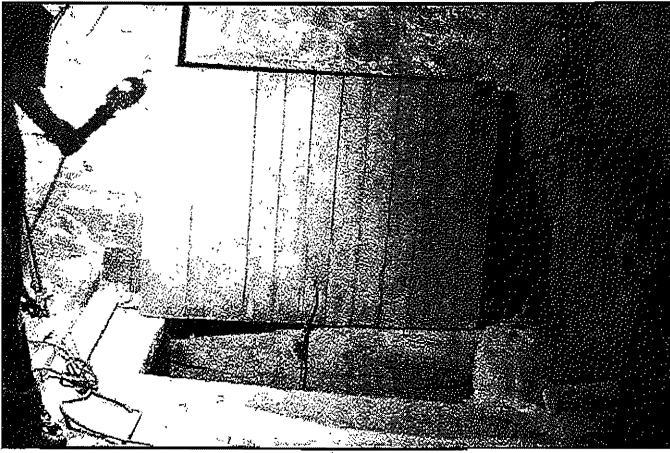
Kivic and Werley led the delegation into the deepest corners of the church cellar. A few of the tour participants stepped down into the floor openings to gaze at the cramped tunnel.

The entourage moved on to Webster Street. The town's

oldest cemetery is located here with the remains of many of the town's pioneers. Interred is the Rev. Ashbel Parmelee, who preached sound Puritanical theology, spoke out against slavery and was pastor of the Congregational Church for 36 years. A probable UGRR agent, Rev. Parmelee lived next door to the cemetery. Across the street is the home of Malone's founder, Richard Harison, who left town with two slaves as Rev. Parmelee was building his first home, a log cabin. Local legend has it that a later owner used the place as a hiding place for fugitive slaves.

Two blocks down Webster Street is the Franklin Academy Middle School parking lot that was excavated in the 1970s, revealing hidden underground rooms. Kivic pointed out that the southern end of Webster Street led to the old Port Kent Hopkinton Turnpike which connected Malone to Lake Champlain.

(Continued on next page)



Trap door at end of tunnel.

The next stop was on route 37 at Major John Dimick's home, now owned by Debra Manor. It has a fireplace with a hollow base, exposing a hidden room behind a small opening. Dimick was well known for transporting slaves in his lumber wagons under loose hay.

Kivic and the tour group continued on to Fort Covington to view the now decaying home that once belonged to Jabez Parkhurst, a prominent lawyer and ardent Underground Railroad operative who didn't keep his beliefs a secret. His middle of the night wagon journeys to Dundee, Quebec, just half a mile from his house, became well known in the area.

Traveling back east again, the group stopped at the Man homestead on Route 122 that belonged to Westville's founders and Parkhurst's mother-in-law. It is believed to have been an Underground Railroad stop.

The group next moved on to Constable, stopping at the grave of the black abolitionist and Free Will Baptist, Rev. Charles Bowles. Elder Bowles was a member of the Malone Anti-Slavery Society.

The final stop was back in Malone at the Morningside Cemetery gravesite of William Wheeler, an abolitionist orator, early Radical Republican organizer and Lincoln supporter. A benefactor of the Congregational church and a prominent Republican congressman, he was elected Vice President of the United States in 1876.

Evidence is heavy that abolitionists in Franklin County were in the thick of the challenge.

(Malone's First Congregational Church is a documented site on the New York Underground Railroad Heritage Trail. Susan's original article is available for \$2.95 through the *Press Republican*: <http://www.pressrepublican.com/search>. See: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/eh/lewisjw/lewisjw.html> for the electronic edition of the Rev. John W. Lewis' "The Life, Labors, and Travels of Elder Charles Bowles, of the Free Will Baptist Denomination."

RUMINATIONS AND LAGNIAPPE

by S. Booker

I first came to the North country nearly forty years ago, but until this past summer, I had never visited so many Underground Railroad related sites in one day. One or two sites per year have been my average, but six in one day were lagniappe! (An added gift; more than was expected.)

Several times this year, I've found myself ruminating as I rummaged in various graveyards (some ancient, some contemporary) where I was amongst the resting places of gallant ghosts who lived during what was probably one of our country's most heroic eras (i.e. those years leading up to our Civil War--a time immeasurably important to me, a black man.)

On a more recent day when historian Peter Kivic was conducting a tour of historic sites related to the Abolitionist Movement and the Underground Railroad, my rummaging took me on a pilgrimage up to Malone, NY, itself the ghost of a once bustling city just south of the Canadian border.

We started at the third incarnation of Rev. Ashbel Parmelee's old First Congregational Church which still harbor's an antiquated basement tunnel-- according to local legend, one of the last legs of a passageway to hope.

Our pilgrimage continued to several grave sites in several cemeteries where we paid homage to both humble and wealthy abolitionists and to their homesteads and the secret rooms where they sheltered and gave sustenance to the freedom seekers.

These Abolitionists are among my greatest heroes, for they also risked much through many trials and tribulations along this old, but unforgett'n northern route--all the way to Fort Covington and Canada and to freedom for many of my people!

As I ruminated, I asked myself: "What do you suppose this country would be like today, if there had never been an abolitionist movement or if the underground railroad had been as poorly managed as Amtrak?" Then, I said to those Noble Souls who recognized a moral obligation and acted upon it..."My Sincere Thanks, Thank You One and All."

Painter and graphic Artist, S. Booker, is a founding member of the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association. A Board member of Plattsburgh's North Country Cultural Center for the Arts, he has served with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Commission and the Black Poetry Day Committee which holds an annual public reading in honor of New York's first published black poet, Jupiter Hammon.

Correction. In the first issue of *The North Country Lantern*, we credited the Rev. Abram Haff as having been the first President of the Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society, when, in fact, Noadiah Moore was the first President. Rev. Haff was a member of the organization's Executive Committee.



LANTERN LIGHT ON FALL EVENTS--NCUGRHA President Don Papson to speak--

Thursday, October 13th 7 PM: "Mining and Mapping Our Underground Railroad History" Sherman Free Library 20 Church Street Port Henry, New York. UGRR documents discovered from New York to California.

Saturday, October 15th 7 PM: "The Churches of Peru and Keeseville: Antislavery and Social Conscience in the 19th Century" Followed by an Old Tyme Pie Social. \$5 Donation Ausable Valley Grange, 1749 Main Street, Keeseville. How slavery divided our churches. For more information, contact Don at 561-0277.

The Haynes Family
by Don Papson

Hidden in this advertisement is the story of a name.

George Haynes,
BARBER,
AND FASHIONABLE
HAIR DRESSER
Shop over E. Buck's Grocery

Gentlemen waited on at their dwellings.
YOUNG LADIES and Childrens Hair, dressed.
Razors honed and put in complete
order, on short notice.

Who, when the beard too long is grown,
Much longer to be let alone,
In shaving, so much skill hath shown
AS HAYNES ?

Who, when the blade was rough & bad,
And not a better to be had,
Gave it a keener edge ?—Egad,
T'WAS HAYNES !

Who bade the dullest razor go
Lightly as Taglioni's toe,
Or Paganani's feathery bow?
T'WAS HAYNES !

January, 1836

Facsimile of an ad which appeared in the January-March
issues of the 1836 *Plattsburgh Republican*.

Mr. Haynes full name was *Sir George Prevost Haynes*. Born a slave in Plattsburgh, New York, on December 28, 1814, George Haynes was the son of Mrs. Maria Haynes, a bondwoman of Colonel Melancton Smith. Her free born husband, Thomas Haynes, was a barber. Born barely four months after Commodore Macdonough's signal September 11th victory over the British fleet in the Battle of Plattsburgh, George was named in honor of the defeated British General who had commanded the King's occupation army. His master had commanded Ft. Moreau, the largest of Plattsburgh's four forts. General Prevost had made the Colonel's mansion British headquarters. Situated on the corner of Brinkerhoff and Margaret Streets, at the present site of Custom House Square and the Federal Building, it was the finest home in the village-- a 3 and 1/2 story mansion with basement slave quarters.

George's mother had been owned by the Colonel's father, Judge Melancton Smith, a veteran of the Revolution and New York politics. A merchant in New York City, Judge Smith died in 1798, the first victim of a yellow fever epidemic. Maria was then "transferred" to his son in Plattsburgh.

After George's birth, there was dismissive gossip. He was as "coal black" as his mother, and she had given the British commander "a compliment" which he could not "fully appreciate." How did her master feel about this compliment to the British General? Did he view it as an act of defiance? Had Maria Haynes prayed General Prevost would free her and her child? In 1884, a granddaughter of Judge Smith offered her opinion: Maria's husband, the "grandiloquent Tom" chose the boy's name.

On June 15, 1816, Mrs. Haynes gave birth to a daughter, Caroline. The Colonel recorded entitlement to George and his baby sister seven days later. When the Colonel suddenly died from malaria in 1818, his Quaker born widow freed Maria and her children.

Mrs. Haynes joined the Methodist Church where she was required to sit in the "Negro pew". She worked as a nursemaid and baked fine cakes for Plattsburgh's ladies while Caroline helped in the ladies' dressing room. The family lived in a small house on Bridge Street between the Fouquet Hotel and the Lake Champlain boat landing.

When Caroline died suddenly, black and white friends joined Mrs. Haynes and her son in the funeral procession as they made their way from their home through the dusty village streets towards Riverside Cemetery, the final resting place of their former master.

Like his father, George became a barber. He set up shop on Margaret Street over Buck's Grocery which shipped in all the latest goods from New York City. In 1836, at the age of 22, he advertised his business. In a witty poem, he cleverly compared his tonsorial skills to the incredible dancing of Maria Taglioni, the most famous ballerina of the day, and the virtuoso performances of violinist "Paganani" (i.e. Nicolo Paganini) who played so rapidly and accurately that it was said the strings on his bow would break one by one while he never missed a beat. In the spring of 1837, three days before "copperheads" mobbed abolitionists in Plattsburgh (forcing them to adjourn to Beekmantown where they formed the Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society) "George P. Hanes" announced the "removal" of his business to an upstairs location one door south of the Phoenix Hotel which offered "the best of Wines and Liquors" and the best table the market could "afford".

Many black barbers were abolitionists. Was George? Were his parents? In 1839, his mother "removed" to the Methodist Church in Keeseville where the anti-slavery movement was gaining momentum. The year of her death--1866--was noted in church records, but where was she buried? What became of George and his father? Do they have any living descendants? *Although we may never find answers to all of our questions about the Haynes family, George's recently discovered business ad suggests that there was more to the man than the story of his name.*

We welcome the following new members:

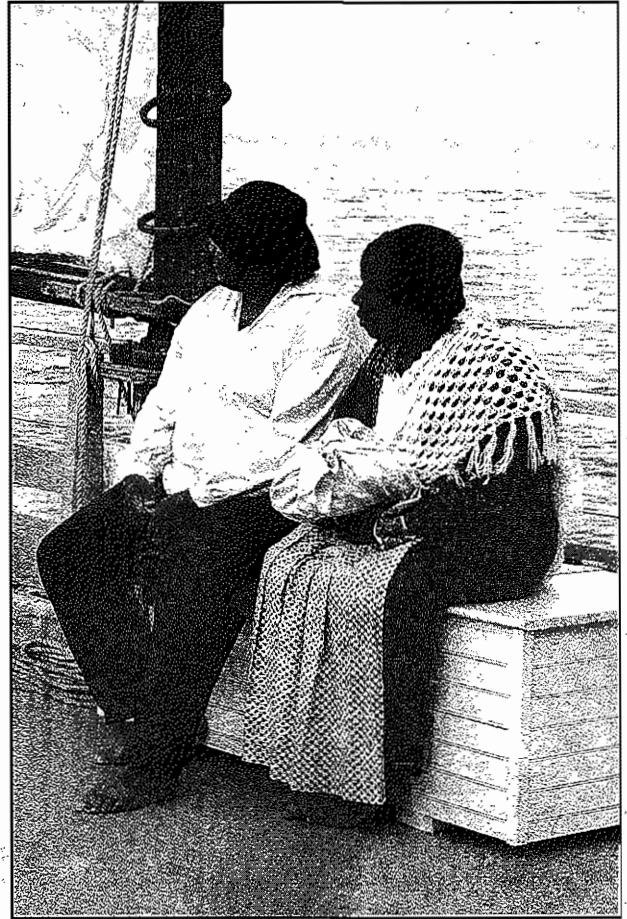
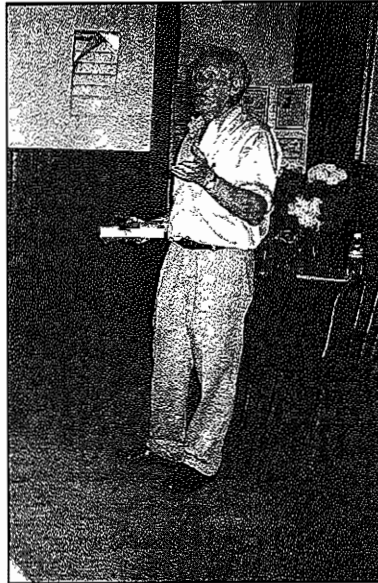
Dana Walker, Darrell & Elaine Leavitt, Dennis & Karen Dunmire, Dr. A.J. Williams-Myers, Ella M. Clark, George & Elizabeth Baker, Howard Lowe, Jacqueline Madison, Katherine Felty, Keybank Main Office Plattsburgh, Madeleine Robinson, Ms. Sharon D. Neel, Nick Muller, Paul & Mary Liz Stewart, Renee Moore, Rev. John A. Werley, Robert & Carole Harsh, Steven Engelhart & Karen M. Roy, Susan Mody, and Terry Smith.

Thank You! to the following individuals who are contributing to the success of the NCUGRHA as volunteer members of our Board and/or Planning Committee: Jim Bailey, S. Booker, Robin Caudell, Debi Craig, Steven Engelhardt, Marlene Fields, Margaret Gibbs, Peter Kivic, Kathy Lavoie, Marjorie Light, Jackie Madison, Jack Meyers, Brendan Mills, Renee Moore, Don Papson, Vivian Papson, Mitchell Ray, Addie Shields, Carol Thompson, and Dick Ward. A special thank you to Paul Frederick, our DVD reenactors, Shaun Heffernan for his reenactor photos, and Luke T. Bush for his photos of the Franklin County tour.

Needed: A donation of \$850 for the purchase of Past Perfect software so we can catalogue our growing research collection.

President's Report and Photo Essay

Satisfying sums up our summer. New members. A State Education Department charter. A packed house for *Bound for Canaan* author Fergus Bordewich. Robin Caudell's special Estes family feature for the *Press Republican*. (The Estes House at Ausable Chasm will be our future home.) Susan Tobias' article on Peter Kivic's terrific UGRR tour. Paul Frederick's powerful production of Marjorie Lights' "Northward to Freedom." A North Country NPR interview: (For online broadcast, go to: <http://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/archive.php?id=6135>). With great satisfaction and gratitude, we share: *Northward to Freedom* reenactor photos of John Mitchell and Marcia Dunn and Josh Blanks and Renee Meyers, courtesy of Shaun Heffernan; PSUNY summer students reading "From Slavery to Freedom"; Fergus Bordewich; and the moment when an ancestor's signature was found on an anti-slavery petition.



North Country
Underground Railroad
Historical Association
P.O. Box 2413
Plattsburgh, New York
12901

-Orders Now Being Taken-

- Our *moving* 11minute DVD
- "Northward to Freedom".....\$15
- Our DBQ
(Document Based Question)
Curriculum materials
- "Refugees from Slavery".....\$10

To Order, call 518-561-0277 or
Email NCUGRHA@aol.com