



THE NORTH COUNTRY LANTERN

Celebrating the Importance of Freedom to the Survival of the Human Spirit

North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association and North Star Underground Railroad Museum
1131 Mace Chasm Rd., Ausable Chasm, N.Y. 12911-1704

WHY NOT?

- *Train as a Docent for the 2012 Season
- *Learn how to conduct Underground Railroad research
- *Sign up for Facebook and Web alerts
- *Check out upcoming events

TO CONTACT US:

- *Call 518-834-5180
- *www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com
- *ugr@frontier.com

DON'T MISS:

- *Freedom Festival of Music, Thurs, Aug. 2

NORTH STAR LIVING HISTORY

The North Star Underground Railroad Museum isn't just a snapshot in time; it is a gateway to living family history as well.

A number of visitors to the museum last summer were exploring their own direct connections with escaping slaves who traveled the Champlain Line, and their stories added personality and power to the exhibits.

Delores N. Fish, a retired PhD anthropology professor, brought one such story with her when she arrived at the museum. Cyrus Branch, her great-great-great grandfather, who escaped from Petersburg, Va., to NYC in 1840 and then up the Hudson River to Troy, made his way through Hoosick Falls to Manchester, Vt., a classic Champlain Corridor route. Branch reported that he was sold four times, ultimately to an "extremely cruel and inhuman"

owner, who drove him to escape, leaving a wife and four children, from whom he'd been separated. His true story has some of the same threads— separation of families via multi-

famous 1852 novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Eager to reconnect with his family after the Civil War, Branch dictated his narrative at the urging of friends to raise money for the journey back to Virginia.

Amazingly, he was able to find a long-lost daughter and ultimately returned to live out the last years of his life in the South, after nearly 30 years in Vermont.

"A Lost Family Found: An Authentic

Narrative of Cyrus Branch and his Family," (see page 2)



Dr. Fish and her husband Jefferson, in front of a North Star Museum panel featuring an Underground RR stop where her ancestor may have stayed.

ple slave sales—that Harriet Beecher Stowe wove into her

FIRST YEAR MUSEUM SUCCESSES

Close to 4,000 visitors, from as far away as Australia and as nearby as Ausable Chasm, flocked to the new North Star Underground Railroad Museum in 2011, marking an amazing opening year.

There were school buses from Keene and exchange students from Germany, 2d graders from Keeseville, and two busloads in

one day from Montreal.

Descendants of former slaves who escaped along the Champlain Corridor into Canada came to see exhibits detailing the long-distance struggle for freedom. And families living in houses they think may have been Underground RR stations came to learn what to look for, to test their theories.

The church room, graphically demonstrating the conflict over abolition that wracked local congregations right in the Keeseville-Peru-Plattsburgh area, opened many eyes, young and old.

Officially open from mid-May to Columbus Day, the museum was flooded with local families and groups during the first two

months of the season. Then came the summer tourists from all over, many of them coming to visit the Ausable Chasm next door.

Update: This year, more than 400 local students have already toured the museum. Also, college students from Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad came in March.

NORTH STAR LIVING HISTORY

(continued from page 1)

is now part of the ever-expanding collection at the North Star Museum. This collection is open to anyone wishing to research their own family history.

Dr. Fish studied at Harvard, taught at SUNY Stony Brook, and conducted research in the Amazon during her extensive anthropology career. She is continuing research on her family and its role in this crucial American story.

DOCENTS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

The successful 2011 North Star Museum season depended entirely upon the work of volunteer docents, who covered 49 hours a week, for 21 weeks, all season long, with administrator Helen Nerska graciously filling in for emergency absences from time to time. For some docents, this work was their first exposure to Underground Railroad history in our region, and their first time working at a museum.

Charlie Crowningshield, retired dock master for the Lake Champlain Transportation Co.'s Port Kent operations, was a museum rookie but took to the tasks like a real veteran. "I remember the man who said the museum reminded him of the time he escaped from Bosnia, during the war there. They shot his father and grandfather in the head, but he escaped. They threw him over a fence. He knew what this (North Star) story is all about," said Charlie, who logged an amazing number of hours every week.

Mitchell Ray of Peru, a retired Air Force aircraft mechanic, also filled a consistent number of shifts every week. He recalled an Eastern European immigrant, who with tears in his eyes, said the museum brought to mind his own family's flight for freedom.

2011 Docents: George Benson, Sandi Craig, Charles & Sue Crowningshield, Frank Kinnelly, Janet Kokoszka, Jack Myers, Vivian & Don Papson, Colleen Prescott, Mitchell Ray, Bill Sackett, Margaret Schwartz, Peter Slocum, Barbara Wass and Lois Wilson. Call 834-5180 to join.

NORTH STAR MUSEUM & TOWN WIN AWARD

The North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association and the Town of Chesterfield won a special partnership award from the Lakes to Locks Passage regional tourism organization. The award recognizes the joint effort by the Town and the Association to develop the new North Star Underground Railroad Museum and the Town Heritage Center at Ausable Chasm.

Jerry Morrow, Chesterfield Town Supervisor, and North Country Underground RR Historical Association president Don Papson accepted the award at ceremonies in Glens Falls, Sept. 30, 2011. "We greatly appreciate this recognition of the wonderful partnership we've forged with the Town, and are excited at the Museum's successful first year," said Papson.

Lakes to Locks Passage also launched a new interactive website, in collaboration with National Geographic, to highlight historic, natural, recreational, cultural and other attractions in the North Country, including the museum. See www.lakestolocks.org.

ASSOCIATION NEWS.

Two Lantern Light Awards were presented at the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association's annual meeting in May. Yolanda Kinnelly accepted the award on her late husband Frank's behalf (see story on page 3). The second award went to Dr. Dexter Criss, director of the Plattsburgh State Gospel Choir. Under Criss's direction, the community-university choir performs at a wide range of program and events, many involving the struggle for social justice. The choir sang at the annual meeting, and surprised the audience by making a donation of more than \$600 to the Association, with funds collected at a earlier concert.

In other news, the Association welcomed Suzanne Hand to the staff, through the Senior Community Service Employment Program. She is helping to manage the Museum & Heritage Center office, and assist the docents and other volunteers.

Also, volunteer Louise Patinelli has totally transformed the Center's collections and library, processing historical documents, filing and indexing materials, and displaying historical photographs of Underground Railroad stations. The goal is to make them an accessible research resource for interested persons to conduct their own investigations, whether personal or professional.

In a major outreach effort, Linda Richardson has upgraded the special educational traveling trunks to guide students and teachers through our regional Underground RR history. These were developed with local teachers, are being loaned to schools and are designed to meet curriculum needs.

North Country Lantern.

Published by the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Assn., a not for profit 501(c)3 educational organization with a mission to research, preserve, interpret and promote the Underground Railroad History of the Northeastern New York region's pathways to freedom; to celebrate, share and emphasize the importance of that history and its relevance and significance to the present and the future.

President, Don Papson
 First Vice President, Jackie Madison
 Second Vice President, Linda Richardson
 Treasurer, Sue Crowningshield
 Secretary, Kathy Lavoie
 Lantern Editor, Peter Slocum

THEY ALL WENT IN FOR AGITATIN'

The fight for emancipation and liberation in America created great leaders and international heroes. But enslaved African American women and unknown farmers in Northern New York and New England drove that struggle forward. That's the rich vein of American history explored by North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association-sponsored programs over the last year.

One talk focused on Abraham Lincoln's 'conversion' to the emancipation policy that history now celebrates in his name. Lincoln didn't start out that way, said Peru historian James Howard, and was driven to embrace freedom by the battlefield realities of the Civil War and the likes of abolitionists John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, as well as ministers, farmers and housewives here along the Champlain Corridor of the Underground Railroad.

Jane Williamson, director of the Rokeby Farm in Ferrisburg, Vt, and Bryan Thompson, historian of DeKalb, in St. Lawrence County, kicked off the 2012 season by detailing stories of abolitionists in their regions. "The War Before the War," was Williamson's take on the radical abolitionists who refused to sit still for the federal government's tilt toward the slave states before 1860. Thompson, offering a look at "Who's Under That Load of Hay?," explained that in St. Lawrence County, the anti-



Slavery Liberty Party actually outpolled the two major parties before the War.

Dr. Margaret Washington, activist, scholar and author, opened the pages of history on "Women's Activism in the Antebellum and Emancipation Era" at 2012 Juneteenth celebrations.

She is author of "Sojourner Truth's America," whose subject (left) liked to say, "I go in for agitatin'," as she pressed her audiences into action. Women led many battles.

Harriet Tubman, the diminutive, illiterate, determined escaped slave who led hundreds to freedom, needed no urging, explained Syracuse University professor Milton Sernett in a Fall 2011 talk. She was sometimes portrayed as an American Joan of Arc. Her home in Auburn, NY, is a candidate to become a National Historic Park next year.

W.E.B. Du Bois, a leading black intellectual who helped found the Niagara Movement and the NAACP, documented anti-slavery efforts and worked to popularize the post-abolition struggle for justice. Dr. MaryNell Morgan, singer and scholar, captivated a Black History Month audience at Plattsburgh State with her voice and vision.

All these programs continue the Association's effort to expand awareness about abolitionist and related social justice issues. The Williamson and Thompson talks were supported by a grant from the Arts Council for the Northern Adirondacks. The Tubman lecture was made possible by the NYS Council for the Humanities.

FRANK KINNELLY'S ENDURING LEGACY "A LIFETIME OF SERVICE"



Francis M. Kinnelly, who died on January 24, 2012, left behind an international legacy as a skilled diplomat and a local legacy as a champion of volunteer efforts, including the new North Star Underground Railroad Museum. Frank, as he was known to everyone, had retired with his wife Yolanda to Peru in 1993, after more than 30 years with the U.S. State Department.

"We come and we go; we are here to be of service," he told friends during his final illness, with his gentle, trademark smile even as they sought to comfort him.

"He offered tremendous service," said North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association President Don Papson, "taking on virtually any job that needed doing." He was a leader in the campaign to open the Museum in 2011. He recruited volunteers to paint the museum before it opened, won grants from the Stewarts Foundation and TD Bank, chaired the Finance and Membership Committees and served on the Program and Development Committees. Frank and Yolanda created the museum's beautiful flower beds.

The family asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Frank's name to the North Star Underground Railroad Museum. More than

\$1,400 was donated before the Museum opened for its second season. A special memorial is being planned in his honor.

Frank was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1935. Joining the U.S. Foreign Service in 1962, after a two-year stint as an enlisted man in the U.S. Army, he served in Italy, the Netherlands, the Philippines and Germany, specializing in economic affairs. Science and technology were his next concentration, and he was the Science Attaché at the embassy in Madrid, where he met Yolanda in 1981.



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Freedom Festival of Music

Roy Hurd
Lita Kelly
Towne Meeting
Split Rock

Thursday, Aug 2
5 to 9 pm

Ausable Chasm Pavilion

U P C O M I N G E V E N T S & P R O G R A M S

June 30 — “Celebrating Freedom.”

Enslaved New Yorkers didn't begin to get their freedom until half a century after the founders decreed, “all men are created equal.” Dr. Sherrill Wilson on how former slaves celebrated freedom after 1827. 2 p.m.

July 6 — "Abolitionism in the Adirondacks: A Search for the Truth." Don Pappson. Wilmington Community Center. 6 p.m.

July 22 — “From Here to Timbuctoo: The Social and Racial Construction of Wilderness.” The 19th Century elites defined wilderness as a romantic ideal, but obscured the struggles of others, including African Americans and Native Americans to survive in the Adirondack wilderness. Marianne Patinelli-Dubray, 5 p.m. Peru Free Library.

Aug. 2 — Freedom Festival of Music. Ausable Chasm Pavilion. 5 - 9 p.m. Adults \$7, children \$2.

Aug. 25- "Churches and Communities Divided" tour. An interactive tour of Underground Railroad Sites and community, with voices of historic figures. Starts at North Star Museum. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Bring walking shoes. \$40, and \$30 for members. Call 834-5180 to reserve a spot.

Two-Hour Mini Tours of Underground RR and Abolition Sites in Keeseville & Peru. Every Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. through Columbus Day. Reservations are a must: 834-5180. \$10; children \$5. Active duty military men and women are free.