



# THE NORTH COUNTRY LANTERN

Number 4

Spring 2006

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

## First Regional Planning Workshop Held

On March 25th, sixteen NCUGRHA members from five northeastern New York counties met in Plattsburgh for our first regional planning meeting. During the three hour Upstate History Alliance funded GET READY workshop, Alliance President Liselle Lafrance helped us reflect on our mission and take the first steps toward developing a strategic plan.

Liselle drove up from Albany where she is the Director of Historic Cherry Hill. On her way north, she stopped at Ausable Chasm. This natural wonder attracts thousands of visitors each year. Chasm Manager Tim Bressette gave Liselle a tour of our future home, the Estes House. A beautiful two story red sandstone structure, Estes House was once the fine home of Civil War veteran Herbert Estes. Mr. Estes was Superintendent of the Ausable Nail Factory which stood where the Chasm's entrance building is today.

Tim was upbeat. Lawyers were in the final stages of drafting an agreement to transfer ownership of the Estes House from the Chasm to the Town of Chesterfield. The Town has been awarded a \$280,000 federal grant which it will apply toward renovation costs which are estimated at \$400,000.

In a cooperative venture between the Chasm corporation, the Town of Chesterfield and NCUGRHA, the Estes House will be transformed into a visitor's center featuring our UGR exhibits. Our goal is to have the center operating by the summer of 2007.

Since we will be sharing the UGR history of the entire North Country, it was significant that representatives from five counties were present at the Plattsburgh meeting--Washington (Debi Craig); Saratoga (Renee Moore); Warren (Marilyn Van Dyke, Tom Johansen, Mary Jane Dower, Dr. Norman Enhoring, and Joan Aldous); Essex (Laura Sells Doyle); and Clinton (S. Booker, Carol Thompson, Kathy Lavoie, Marlene Fields, Mitchell Ray, Jacqueline Madison, Vivian and Don Papson).

We discovered that we have a common goal--we want to preserve and interpret our UGR past in ways which speak directly to the present.

A committee is now generating design ideas for displays, while a second committee is fine tuning our vision-mission statement in preparation for a full fledged fall strategic planning workshop.

## June 23-24 Black New England Conference

At the University of New Hampshire, Durham. Keynote Speaker: Dr. James O. Horton. Contact [jerrianne.boggis@unh.edu](mailto:jerrianne.boggis@unh.edu) or [david.watters@unh.edu](mailto:david.watters@unh.edu) CNEC 603.862.0353; [www.neculture.org](http://www.neculture.org)



Board Members Debi Craig and Renee Moore

## LANTERN LIGHT ON SUMMER EVENTS August 21-24 Going to the Promised Land Tour

On this Canadian Adventure to Underground Railroad Sites of the Niagara region, a Hayfield Quality Tour bus will stop at the Fort Erie UGR crossing, a former safe house, the St. Catherines British AME church which helped Harriet Tubman assist freedom seekers, and the burial site of Anthony Burns who was tried in Boston under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Contact Debi Craig at 518.692.9640 or [DCRAIG1@NYCAP.RR.COM](mailto:DCRAIG1@NYCAP.RR.COM)

## Rokeby Museum Ferrisburg, Vermont

This year's series, "Mothers and Others for Peace and Justice", highlights the role of women in 19th century reform. On Saturday, July 8th, actress Lynne McKenny Lydick performs her one-woman play, "Yours for Humanity, Abby," based on the letters and speeches of abolitionist-suffragist Abby Kelly Foster of Massachusetts. Tickets are \$10 adult, \$5 for 12 and younger. On September 10th, "Sister Societies" will be presented by historian Beth Salerno. Beth will share her extensive research on female anti-slavery societies of the 1830s to 1850s and show how women were the backbone of the movement. All events begin at 2 PM. For more information, contact Museum Director, Jane Williamson, at 802.877.3406 or [rokeby@adelphia.net](mailto:rokeby@adelphia.net)



# SOLOMON NORTHUP DAY

## A CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

### SATURDAY, JULY 15, 2006

### The Saratoga Visitor Center

(Corner of Congress and Broadway)  
Saratoga Springs, NY

**10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

An American History, Cultural and Educational Event

Solomon Northup was born a free man in Minerva, Essex County, NY, July 1808. While working at hotels as a cab driver and violinist in Saratoga Springs, he was abducted and sold into slavery in Louisiana for 12 years before regaining his freedom. A Canadian, Samuel Bass, and citizens of Saratoga and surrounding areas were instrumental in arranging for Solomon's release and return to his family. A historical marker at the corner of Congress and Broadway marks the spot where he was kidnapped, and an exhibit panel inside the Visitor Center commemorates his life. The story of Mr. Northup's ordeal can be read in his narrative *Twelve Years A Slave* or seen in Gordon Parks' film, **Half Slave, Half Free**. His father, Mintus, is buried in Hudson Falls' Baker Cemetery, and a fund has been established to restore his tombstone. Donations may be sent to NCUGRHA marked Mintus Northup Grave Restoration Fund. Contact Renee Moore at [themoor78@yahoo.com](mailto:themoor78@yahoo.com) or call 518.587.8978. Ms. Moore, founded Solomon Northup Day-- the first event to honor an African-American in the history of Saratoga Springs.

### Lavinia Bell Brought to Life

Based on an article by Dee Brown

This past March, in honor of Women's History Month, our multi-talented Board Secretary, Robin Caudell-- a published poet, essayist and journalist-- brought "Shades of Death: The Lavinia Bell Story" to North Country Community College's Saranac Lake Campus. Dressed in a period costume created by Vivian Papson, Robin appeared as the self emancipated Lavinia Bell, who was born free in Washington, D.C., kidnapped as an infant, and sold into slavery. Robin's monodrama, which she developed from primary sources, includes graphic descriptions of the indignities, pain and suffering Mrs. Bell endured. She was cruelly punished for repeatedly trying to regain her liberty. After years of repeated abuse, her spine was "as crooked as this walking stick," Robin said. Mrs. Bell followed the North Star from Texas to New York. When she arrived in Rouses Point in January of 1861, "a good Christian man" gave her train fare to Montreal.

"The powerful presentation brought harsh realities of that time in our history to light," said Innam Dajany, coordinator of Women's Month activities. "Furthermore, as our current history unfolds, her story empowers us all to realize the strength contained within each of us. This strength is not only to survive, but to strive for fairness and justice for those being misused and abused by others."

Following her presentation, Robin screened our DVD, *Northward to Freedom*, in which she appears as Mrs. Bell. After her Saranac Lake performance, Robin traveled to Washington D.C. where she performed "Shades of Death" at the 144th Anniversary District of Columbia Emancipation Celebration.



### Northward to Freedom Update

Our acclaimed UGR DVD, *Northward to Freedom*, was recently aired by Mountain Lake PBS. National broadcast rights are available from the Agency for Instructional Technology. AIT has developed an extensive Teachers Guide. See catalog: [www.ait.net/catalog/default.php?cPath=8\\_513](http://www.ait.net/catalog/default.php?cPath=8_513) and [www.ait.net/products/pdfs/northward\\_to\\_freedom](http://www.ait.net/products/pdfs/northward_to_freedom)

*Northward to Freedom* can be purchased directly from us for \$16.50 (this includes tax and postage). Copies are also available in Plattsburgh at the Cornerstone Bookshop and Borders. A rental copy is available at the Under One Roof Video store.

Upon request, a copy of our North Country Underground Railroad DBQ Questions will be sent to classroom teachers.



Dr. Carrie Harris (right) presents Vivian Papson with a Liberty Song broadside at the Richard Haynes, Jr. exhibit in February. Mr. Haynes' North Star quilt pattern print is in the background. To view all the prints in this extraordinary series, go to: <http://www.haynesimages.com/urr.htm>. Photo by Luke Bush.

## Poles Apart

Dr. Carrie Harris, retired professor of nutrition at Plattsburgh State, has gifted our Association with an original document of abolitionist "Liberty Songs". She spoke with Vivian Papson about their place within her extensive collection of African American memorabilia.

**Dr. Harris:** After the Civil War, the United States was flooded with demeaning stereotypes of the Negro. They appeared on postcards, advertisements, household items, sheet music and toys, all glorifying plantation life. The Liberty Songs of an earlier period had moved hearts at rallies and antislavery meetings by celebrating the humanity of the bondsman and the cause of his freedom. These two images of African Americans were poles apart, and in the century from 1830 to 1930, each had a powerful effect on the national consciousness.

**Vivian:** When did you become interested in these items and decide to collect them?

**Dr. Harris:** I acquired most of them in the 1950's. These were my years as a graduate student in Amherst, Massachusetts. I loved antiques, and the auctioneers in Amherst and Northfield learned of my interest and often put things aside for me. At that time, I had very little competition. Today, these items have appreciated greatly in value. As an African American, these images held special meaning. I was well acquainted with these very different faces in my personal experiences.

**Vivian:** What meaning do these images hold for Americans today?

**Dr. Harris:** Perhaps they will remind us that on the road to freedom we will encounter many illusions which will have to be overcome. Each of us has an opportunity to be vigilant in regard to the images we accept into our minds and hearts.

**Vivian:** Thank you, on behalf of the Association and those who will enjoy seeing and singing the "Liberty Songs" once more.

## FREEMEN AWAKE! TUNE-- "AMERICA."

1. SPIRIT of Freemen, wake;  
No truce with Slavery make,  
Thy deadly foe;  
In fair disguises dressed,  
Too long hast thou caress'd  
The serpent in thy brerst;  
Now lay him low.

2. Sons of the free! we call  
On you, in field and hall,  
To rise as one;  
Your heav'n-born rights maintain  
Nor let oppression's chain  
On human limbs remain;  
Speak, and 'tis done.

## A Letter to the Editor

Thank you for sending the abolition songs and going the extra, extra mile to do so.

Your workshop, Calls to the Struggle, was most informative and realistically presented (loved the dress).

Thank you for introducing me to NCUGRAH.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Stevens, Pioch, New York



Left to right: Don Papson (Thomas B. Watson), Vivian Papson (Sarah Parker Remond) and Rev. Fred Shaw (Rev. Henry Highland Garnet) in "Calls to the Struggle" at the fifth annual Capital Region UGR Conference

## July 15th Harriet Tubman Annual Retreat

The Harriet Tubman 13th Annual Retreat "Come to the Sacred Land of our Ancestor" --Queen Mother Harriet Tubman-- at her Auburn, New York, home. Guest speaker: Dr. Greg Kimathi Carr of Howard University. Contacts: Sister Debra Mut-Nefert Johnson at (716) 884.5436 or [htmlproject7@aol.com](mailto:htmlproject7@aol.com) and Brother L. Nathan Hare at (716) 881.5150 ext 4410 or [Inhare@caoe.org](mailto:Inhare@caoe.org)

Proceeds will go towards the Harriet Tubman Memorial Research Library.



## **Jefferson County UGR History Sought**

NCUGRHA member, Gary Leland Rhodes, of the town of Henderson, is seeking information on Underground Railroad activities in Jefferson County-- especially Henderson and the area northward to Cape Vincent. Gary is trying to locate documents to confirm a family legend that the Oliver Bates Home at Alexander Corners was an UGR stop. The house is presently the only site in the town of Henderson that is on the state and national register of Historic Sites. It has long been said that freedom seekers were kept in a small cave in the rear of the property or down in the cellar.

About 2 miles from the Bates Home is the Aspinwall House which was named as an UGR stop in a 1944 *Watertown Daily Times* article. The Aspinwall house received freedom seekers from Gerrit Smith and New Hartford. They were taken to John W. Little in Cape Vincent. (He was the

grandfather of Harriet Montague of Henderson.) Mr. Little then took the freedom seekers into Canada.

The Aspinwalls and Bates were linked in many ways. Briggs Alden helped make the bricks used in building the Aspinwall house. Mr. Aspinwall's son, David, married Briggs Alden's daughter. Briggs Alden married Lydia Harrington Bates, widow of Cyrus Bates, the son of Oliver Bates. A daughter of Cyrus Bates married into the Aspinwall family. When Cyrus Bates died in 1839, the Bates house and property were sold to Truman O. Whitney of Henderson. Whitney and the Aspinwalls were members of the Universalist Church of Henderson.

Anyone who has information on Jefferson County's UGR history is invited to contact Mr. Rhodes at [jnrhodes@bluefrognet.net](mailto:jnrhodes@bluefrognet.net) or Box 220 Belleville, New York 13611. Gary will pay for photocopies.

## **What is the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association (NCUGRHA)?**

When fifty delegates assembled for an Anti-Slavery Convention at the stone school-house in West Peru, Clinton Co., N.Y., on Tuesday, the 11th of April, 1837, they formed the first abolition society on the west side of Lake Champlain. Their objective was "the abolition of slavery throughout the world."

We are an echo of our ancestor's voices.

### **First Annual Meeting**

**June 10, 2006**

**4-6 PM**

Ausable Valley Grange Hall  
1749 Main Street  
Keeseville, NY

\*A walking tour of  
Anti-slavery Sites  
&  
\*A visit from one  
who was enslaved  
and freed~

**-MRS. MARIA HAYNES-**

Refreshments will be served

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