

# Our Vision/Mission Statement

The North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association inspires all people to rise above their differences and celebrate the importance of freedom to the survival of the human spirit. Our mission is to research, preserve, interpret, and promote the Underground Railroad history of northeastern New York's Waterways to Freedom and to celebrate the importance of that history and its relevance and significance to our own time.

We recognize the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad as northeastern New York's extension of the eastern seaboard route to Canada. We celebrate the lives of abolitionists and freedom seekers in the upper Hudson River-Champlain Canal-Lake Champlain corridor of New York's contiguous counties of Washington, Saratoga, Warren, Essex, Clinton and Franklin. We focus on the regional nature of our UGRR history, and we advance it as a movement of national and international importance.

## NCUGRHA Receives Award

On April 14th, Vivian and Don Papson accepted the New York African Studies Association's 2007 Community Service Award for the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association. In his prepared remarks, Don said,

"I accept this award in the name of The Ancestors....How long they have waited for us!... their lives have been locked in libraries, archives, census records, letters, newspapers, diaries and photographs for a very long time. The Ancestors want to breathe again! They help us find the scattered pieces of their lives and fit them together so they, and we, can be free. Only by discovering who they *were*, can we know who we *are*."

**NCUGRHA is making a difference. Join or Renew Your Membership today.**

### NCUGRHA

#### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Please check one:

Abolitionist	\$ 25	___
Organizer	\$ 50	___
Agent	\$ 100	___
Station Master	\$ 250	___
Conductor	\$ 500	___
Lantern Holder	\$ ___	___

You will receive our newsletter The North Country Lantern for one year. At \$100 or above, you will receive a copy of our DVD, Northward to Freedom.

This is a \_\_\_ New membership \_\_\_ Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Detach and send to NCUGRHA/ P.O. Box 2413  
Plattsburgh, New York 12901

NCUGRHA is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit tax exempt organization chartered by the Department of Education of the State of New York.

## A Letter

Thank you so very much for being a part of John Brown Day 2007. The information you shared, especially couched in your views on how important it is to go to the sources to authenticate whether something happened, was exhilarating to hear. Now, this morning, it's rewarding to read your newsletter.

I salute you--and thank you for the valuable work you are doing.  
Respectfully yours,

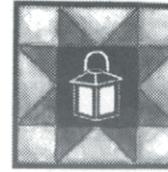
Martha (Swan)

"Celebrating the importance of freedom to the survival of the human spirit." **BRAVO**

### North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association

P.O. Box 2413  
Plattsburgh, New York 12901

"Lighting Freedom's Road"



# THE NORTH COUNTRY LANTERN

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

## An Eventful Summer

### Canal Splash! Made Waves



Reenactors (from left to right) Keenan Hunt-Stone, Lauren Grinberg-Funes, Keane McCullum, and Morgan DuBrey  
Photo by Luke Bush

"Great Event" and "Excellent Programs" are two of the terrific responses to our first Canal Splash!. NCUGRHA, the Essex County Historical Society, and the Champlain Valley Transportation Museum cosponsored the August 12th event. More than 125 people enjoyed learning about the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad in an enjoyable way--through songs and stories on a replica 1820 ferry boat, the Weatherwax. Several passengers were moved to spontaneously join in the singing of "Erie Canal Song," and "Amazing Grace."

### A Historic Homecoming

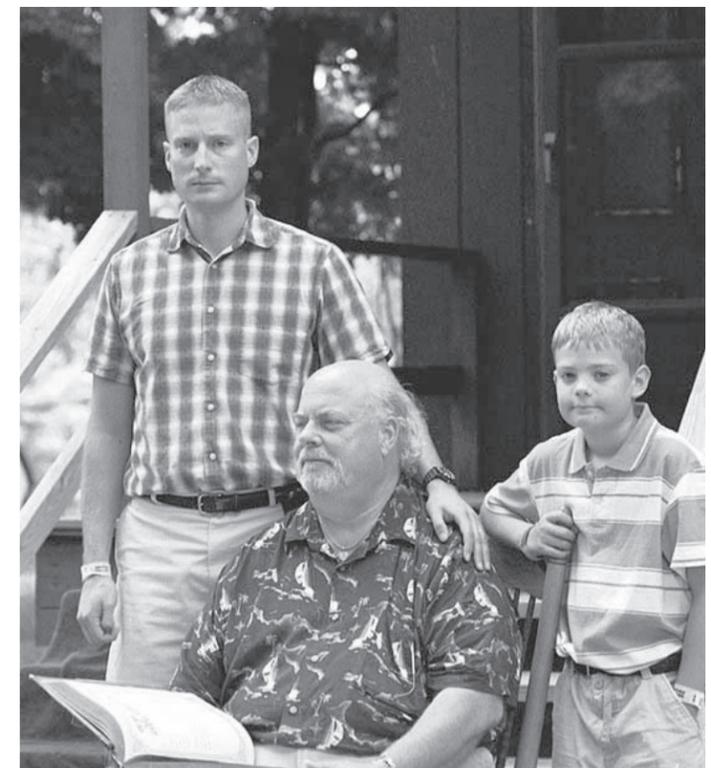
This summer a special reenactment was performed at the Estes House by three generations of the Estes family. On the front lawn of the empty two-story red sandstone house at Ausable Chasm where his great-grandfather, Herbert, once lived, retired Birmingham Ohio pastor David Estes, his son Philip, and his son, Nathaniel, relived a moment captured in a 1914 photograph taken inside the once fine home. A seated David held the family Bible on his lap just as his great-grandfather had each Sunday afternoon as he read to his grandsons, Harry and Ralph. This was the scene his descendants came to Ausable Chasm to relive.

From the left, Philip, David and Nathaniel Estes  
Photo by Luke Bush

Plattsburgh State University voice teacher, Sophie Bjerke, deftly directed our four talented young reenactors. The troupe told true stories: William Gilliland's enslaved man Ireland and an indentured servant escaped to Canada from Willsboro in 1771; Nathaniel Platt's enslaved man Diah escaped from Plattsburgh in 1794, and a Quebec judge declared him free; Moses Roper escaped from Georgia to New York and then to Vermont via Lake Champlain in 1834; Samuel R. Ward took the *Saltus* steamboat to Canada in 1851.

Following the last Weatherwax ride, Canal Splash! moved indoors to the Champlain Valley Transportation Museum. Local folk singer Lita Kelly presented "Slides and Songs of Underground Railroad Hiding Places" in Clinton County. Don Papson identified some of the abolitionists who were active on the Champlain line from Albany and Troy to St. Albans and Rouses Point.

Several people called to express disappointment. They had heard about Canal Splash! too late. The event was such a success, we just may make a few more waves next year.





John Brown/ Public Domain



Milo Durand/Courtesy Gail Durand



Phineas Norton/Courtesy Pat Galeski, Keene Valley Library Archivist

## John Brown Day 2007

Several years ago a singular woman named Martha Swan moved to the North Country. She began an activist organization called *John Brown Lives!* and revived the annual commemoration of John Brown's May 9th birthday. This year the martyr was honored on a crisp May 5th, and Martha invited NCUGRHA President Don Papson to say a few words at the North Elba farm where he is buried. Some historians and journalists believe Brown never sheltered fugitive slaves at his farm. Others contend it would have been out of character for him not to have. Don decided to warm up the debate.

In 1849, Brown removed his family from Springfield, Massachusetts to Essex County, New York. He rented the Flanders house until his son-in-law, Henry Thompson, built him a permanent home. Brown wanted to assist black settlers at a settlement he called Timbucto. But in 1850, Congress passed the second fugitive slave bill. The law terrified freedom seekers who had stayed in the north instead of going to Canada. Brown returned to Springfield and organized the League of the Gileadites so his friends there could defend themselves. Cyrus Thomas, a Florida fugitive who had come from Springfield to live with the Browns, followed Brown back to Massachusetts and joined the League. Brown advised his "colored friends" to "trust in God, and keep their powder dry."

John Brown's daughter, Ruth Thompson, said her father "never lost an opportunity to aid in every possible way those who were escaping from bondage." Lyman Epps Jr., the son of Timbucto settler Lyman Epps Sr., told journalist Mary Lee in 1929 that Brown once brought an escaped slave to his father's house. He said Brown returned the next day and took the man to the Canadian border. Epps' account was discredited as he was known to "embellish his recollections."

However, there is another newspaper account which needs serious consideration. On March 21, 1924, the *Essex County Republican* reported that Milo Durand of Elizabethtown, Phineas Norton of Keene, and John Brown of North Elba were prominent UGRR men and that they helped "scores" of fugitive slaves. The article reads,

...Milo Durand often carried negroes on over to Phineas Norton's in Keene and sometimes clear over to John Brown's farm in North Elba. The late Alembert J. Durand... often told the writer how when a boy he frequently went to bed alone and that when he awoke in the morning he found a negro boy in bed with him, the stranger (to him) having been put into the bed upon his arrival ... by Milo Durand, the "stationmaster."

This account and images of Durand, Norton and Brown illuminate and illustrate John Brown's involvement in the UGRR in the North Country.

After Don finished his remarks, the keynote speaker, Kevin Willmott, said he did not understand how historians could debate whether or not Brown hid fugitive slaves at his farm. He said he was an artist, and for him, it was a given that Brown hid fugitive slaves. Willmott had shown his satirical film, *The C.S.A. (The Confederate States of America)* the previous evening at the Essex County Court House. The *C.S.A.* treats "slavery in history and racism in modernity." A faux documentary, it takes a look at an America where the South won the Civil War. A film professor at the University of Kansas, Willmott teaches screenwriting and production management.



Screenwriter's have more freedom than historians. Historians must substantiate their interpretations, and sometimes they find documents which throw new light on a subject. In the case of John Brown and the question of whether or not he hid fugitive slaves at his North Elba farm, it is time for us to stop saying he did not and say there is evidence that he did

For more on "The C.S.A.", visit [www.csathemovie.com](http://www.csathemovie.com)

## Estes House Work Delayed

In the Winter/Spring 2007 *North Country Lantern*, we announced that the Estes House would soon be transformed into the Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center featuring our UGRR exhibits. However, legal delays have prevented the Town from starting renovations. We have been assured that every effort is being made to move the project forward.

## Past and Future Unveiled at Second Annual Membership Meeting



Rob Eccleston's maquette for "Arriving North" Monument

A good 25 members and friends attended our second annual meeting at the Ausable Valley Grange Hall in Keeseville on June 21st. After an opening song, "Freemen Awake!", Nancy Fink portrayed a voice from the past, Quaker minister, abolitionist and UGRR agent Catherine Robinson Keese.

Reports were then presented. Last year a grant from the Upstate History Alliance allowed our Steering Committee to work on short and long range planning. The Committee adopted a vision and a mission statement. Before the year is out, facilitator Anne Ackerson will assist the Committee as it reviews a proposed 5 year plan and identifies tasks for 2008.

The postponement of renovations to the Estes House was declared a blessing in disguise, as it has allowed us more time to complete research before creating our exhibits.

Membership Chairperson Nancy Fink is utilizing Past Perfect software to update our membership list and mail out renewal notices. Our first Annual Appeal was very successful. Treasurer Carol Thompson reported that our total revenue in 2006 of \$10,150.22 was derived from donations, grants, memberships and sales of our DVD. Expenses totaled \$5,741.87 with \$5,104.36 devoted to programs and \$637.51 for management costs. Our net assets for the year were \$4,408.35.

An election was held for members of the Board of Directors who will serve the following staggered terms: Jim Bailey, S. Book-

er, Debi Craig and Frank Peruse, one year; Nancy Fink, Mitchell Ray, Renee Moore, Carol Thompson, and Marilyn Van Dyke, two years; Margaret Gibbs, Jackie Madison. Don Papson, Vivian Papson, and Kathy Lavoie, three years. Executive Committee members were elected as follows: Don Papson, President, for the second year of an initial two year term; Margaret Gibbs, Vice President, for a second one year term; Kathy Lavoie, Secretary, for a one year term; Carol Thompson, Treasurer, for the balance of a two year term.

Lantern Light awardees, Clinton County Historian, Mrs. Addie L. Shields, and Journalist/Poet Robin M. Caudell were warmly recognized. Carol Blakeslee Collin presented an excerpt of a taped interview with Addie who was unable to attend the meeting. Jim Bailey offered heartfelt remembrances of how Addie welcomed him into her home when he was a young man and needed a place to stay. Jim also praised Addie's dedication to preserving the North Country's history. Robin was recognized for her contributions to NCUGHA as a researcher, writer and actress.

The high point of the meeting was the unveiling of "Arriving North," a clay maquette of a fugitive family sculpted by Robert Eccleston. His conception of a man and his wife holding their infant child was so striking, we were all speechless. S. Booker, Kathy Lavoie and Vivian Papson made personal donations to cover the cost of the maquette. Now we must explore ways of raising the funds needed to enable Rob to create a life size monument to be cast in bronze. "Arriving North" will honor the many seekers of freedom who came to the North Country. It will stand on the lawn of the the Estes House. The man's outstretched arm will point to a lantern in the window. Lanterns were sometimes used to indicate to fugitive slaves that they were approaching a "safe" house, and, of course, a lighted lantern is our logo.

NCUGRHA's second annual meeting was rewarding in many ways. We shared good feelings about what we have accomplished and expressed positive expectations for our future. The meeting was also financially rewarding: Kathy Lavoie's raffle netted us \$65!



Nancy Fink as Catherine R. Keese. Photo by Mitchell Ray