

President's Report for the 2025 Annual Meeting

Summary of the Year's Activities:

Members and the public are welcomed to our Board meetings which occur the 2nd Tuesday of each month except December due to the holidays. We meet on the second floor of the Plattsburgh Library at 6:00 pm, January thru October. In November we meet prior to our annual meeting in the conference room upstairs in the North Star Underground Railroad Museum.

The North Star Underground Railroad Museum opened again this year on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from Memorial weekend through Indigenous/Columbia Day. We had 1,612 visitors and 281 under 18 this open season. Visitors came from around the nation and internationally. They included the following states: Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Washington DC, Michigan, Florida, Ohio, New Jersey, California, Washington, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Oregon, Tennessee, Nevada, Colorado, Wisconsin, West Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, Indiana, Idaho, Arizona, Virginia, South Carolina, Missouri, Illinois, Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Arkansas, South Dakota, and Kansas. Internationally, visitors came from several provinces in Canada, Ukraine, Taiwan, United Kingdom, Cayman Islands, Russia, and Germany. Our numbers are down and that may be due to the political environment that we reside in today.

Special tours this season included ninth graders from Tuxedo Park School near New York City, cadets from West Point, a student from Washington, D.C. who was seeking ideas for her thesis, students from SUNY Plattsburgh's history department, seniors from Lake Forest Retirement Community, students from Wells Village School in Wells, Vermont and homeschoolers from the New Hampshire/Massachusetts border. We had several private tours, as well.

Our museum continues to need volunteers for the open season, as docents. After the pandemic, we try to have at least 2 volunteers at the museum as docents. It's to protect our visitors as well as the docents. If you're interested especially in meeting and interacting with visitors, I would encourage you to sign up by emailing us at ugr@frontier.com. Training is provided as a group session in the spring and one on one with a docent during your time at the museum. We are not expecting anyone to be able to know a lot about our history. We have materials docents can use and the exhibits give clues to information to provide.

We are always seeking volunteers in other capacities such as board or committee members, grant writers and other opportunities. If you have a skill or expertise that you would like to share with our organization, please consider signing up. I would be very interested in someone that can take on the Secretarial position. While board members

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will step up to temporarily fill a position, it would be good to have a person fill the role for their board term. If you would like to take on this position, please see me after this meeting.

I'm continuing as a community member on the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Advisory Committee which is an initiative of SUNY Plattsburgh's joint Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work. I'm an Advisory board member for AARCH and PBS and the President of the MLK committee, as well as the Women's Rights Alliance of New York State.

I attended Women's History month celebration at the Governor's home in Albany with Allison Heard, Janet McFetridge, and Helen Nerska. I presented at the Museum Association of New York State in April.

We've received a grant from Essex for the Colors of Freedom Juneteenth program in the amount of \$850. Robin Caudell received a grant of \$1000 from Cloud Splitter for the documentary she is doing entitled Witness Tree at Union Road. Grant funding through federal and some state programs have come to a halt. This change had limited impact on our organization as we never received federal grants.

The following programs were produced this year; Colors of Freedom in the North Country for Juneteenth holiday and Women's Equal Rights Program. The Colors of Freedom was a collaboration with Essex County Arts Council, Clinton County Historical Association, John Brown Lives, John Brown Farm, New York State Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, SUNY Plattsburgh Arts Museum, DEI and TRHT Departments, Elizabethtown and Adirondack Museum, Paul Smith's College. Women's Equality Day was a collaboration with Clinton County Historical Association. In preparation for the 250th celebration of the Revolutionary War, we partnered with Clinton County Historical Association

I presented at SUNY Plattsburgh for Dr. Wendy Gordon's class, Dr. Connie Shemo's class, Strand as part of Juneteenth, the Saratoga Quaker Meeting House, John Brown Farm, the Clinton Community College, Dr. Eric Holmlund's class from Paul Smith's College. I will give a presentation at Dr. Connie Shemo's class on Tuesday. I did a re-enactment of Jacqueline Archer for Delta Kappa Gamma's tea and participated in World Water Day. I attended the City of Plattsburgh Mayor's Reception for the Battle of Plattsburgh celebration and Dr. Alice Green reparation's discussion. I continue to assist at the Peru Historian's office and acquire documentation for our archives.

The image of the brook near the former home of John Thomas has replaced the image of what many believed was Timbuctoo in the John Thomas Room. That image was not of

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Timbuctoo but an outdoor scene in South Carolina because the pine trees in it did not grow in this area.

The Association has received Stephen Keese Smith's writing desk. It is not on display along with some additional items that we received from descendants. We need to expand the building but repairs must be made on it first. We are in the process of replacing our HVAC system because the air conditioner hasn't worked for about 3 years and we've had repairs done to the heating unit, also. We're anticipating that the new system will be in place for the opening season of 2026

The John Thomas room has an issue with the projector. You can still use the audio and the object theater experience works but the video doesn't play on the screen. We will need to get a new projector.

Quote - The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.' – Saint Augustine. This adapts to inspiring immigration quotes by celebrating the broadening experiences of migrants.