

# President's Report for the 2017 Annual Meeting

## **Summary of the Year's Activities:**

The Board along with Volunteers were the foundations of the museum's operations, as we did not have a manager. This dedicated group of individuals supported 5,732 visitors to our museum in 2017. Nearly 600 of those visitors were children.

There is a growing popularity of the bus tours and Ausable Chasm uses the museum as a resource when outdoor activities aren't available to their visitors.

The Exhibits Committee chaired by Don Papson has added new exhibits to the museum. They include the John Rogers clay stature of an escaped slave and three abolitionists, William Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher, John Greenleaf Whittier.

Board meetings took place six times in 2017 and we had a couple of special meetings to plan the operations of the museum without a manager. Our meetings are held every other month starting in January the third Saturdays at 4:00 pm. In 2017.

The Association participated in the Street Drive again this year and raised \$1165.18. We were fortunate enough to have volunteers at all 3 corners with the assistance of board, members and a few students from SUNY Plattsburgh.

This year we partnered with Kinetic Running to manage the Freedom Race on Ausable Chasm. The race and street drive took place on the same day, September 30. We made \$658.05 with the race. Adding the Street Drive donations, our organization raised over \$1800.00.

We have a light that shines on our flag, thanks to Mitchell Ray and former board member and docent.

We're seeking volunteers who may be interested in fund development, promoting education, and publicity. As with many non-profits, we are always seeking new talent and ideas. So, if you or someone you know is interested in helping us to promote our mission, please contact us.

Highlights from Finance this year included the following:

	2016	2017
Donation Box		9,254.55
Bus Tours		860.00
School Tours		601.00
Total Income		25,482.15
Total Expenses		20,111.14

Our Annual Appeal letters went out at the end of October. This Annual Appeal is seeking funds to expand our exhibit area.

Harold Bedoukian is chairing the Solomon Northrup program for 2018. On July 21, 2018 Cheryl Gaudet of the Whitney Plantation will speak on the life a slave, the daily routine and living conditions on a sugar plantation in Louisiana. The date was chosen to coincide with Solomon Northrop Day and with other activities that the Underground Railroad Museum will be organizing. Solomon Northrop was kidnaped and sold in to slavery, and shipped to work on a plantation in Louisiana.

The Whitney Plantation museum is devoted to slavery in the American South. It was opened as a museum in 2014.

The talk will be held at 7:00 pm at St. John's Episcopal Church in Essex, NY. There will be a wine and cheese reception at 6:00 in Persell Hall at St. John's.

**Presentation by Janet McFetridge entitled Journey through the Roxham Road.**

While we continued our mission of promoting freedom, the increase in immigrants coming through our area had us taking a glimpse into the past of the Underground Railroad.

Janet McFetridge, originally from Salem, Oregon, now lives in Champlain, NY where she is a trustee on the Village of Champlain Board. She is an active community member serving as president of Champlain Valley Habitat for Humanity, administrator for North Country RESPECT, and many other local organizations. She is co-owner of the Champlain Meeting House, a community center. Educated at Universite de Poitiers, Oregon State University (BA), and University of Oregon (MA), McFetridge taught French at public schools in Oregon and Northeastern Clinton in Champlain as well as SUNY Plattsburgh and Clinton Community College. In addition, she served as Assistant

Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at SUNY Plattsburgh. McFetridge received the New York Assembly 2017 Woman of Distinction Award.

### Journey through the Roxham Road

Thousands of refugees are currently passing through the North Country on their way to Canada seeking a safe place to live. Most of them are using a small road in rural Northern New York State. Here is the story of the Roxham Road.

### **Docent Recognition:**

While we have many volunteers to help our cause, for individuals that volunteer as Docents they are the foundation of our museum. That's because they are here to guide the visitors through our museum, answer questions about activities in the surrounding area and ensure that everyone has a pleasant experience even if it is only a bathroom stop. While they make sure that the facility is presentable and that the visitors are enjoying our museum, their most important role is to listen to the stories and experiences that our visitors bring and relay, many times after viewing the exhibits. Last year, docents' names were engraved on a plaque and they are displayed on the wall in this room. We've added 3 new names, Carol Hetfield, Bobbi Perez, and Mitchell Ray. This year some of the docents were reminiscing about one of our former docent, who is no longer with us, Charlie Crowningshield. To honor his memory, we've added recognition for him on our Docent Plaque. Visitors will see the plaque as they exit the room, which is usually the last room that visitors see in the museum. I must recognize Linda Welch, who has taken on the task of managing the docent's schedule. If you were a docent, please stand up. Let's give Linda and our docents this year a round of applause.

### **Presentation of Lantern Awards:**

#### **Tim Bressett – Lantern Award Winner**

Our first lantern winner for 2016 is Tim Bressett. Tim Bressett was destined for a career at Ausable Chasm, where he has served as general manager for 15 years. He grew up near the site of an old mill along the river in Keeseville and visited the chasm many times as a child. Bressett also had family employed there and even worked there himself the summer after he graduated from SUNY-ESF Ranger School in Wanakena. In 2002, his experiences in retail, forestry, restaurant management and as an Adirondack 46er several times over, helped secure his position as Ausable Chasm's general manager, a job as vast and varied as the terrain in his charge. In addition to the grounds, Bressett oversees a seasonal staff of 150, 10 of whom are year-round employees; a cafeteria; gift shop; motel; campground; river operations; events; human resources; and advertising. His mission, like that of his bosses, is to bring Ausable Chasm back, to make it relevant, while protecting the 900-acre property. Under Bressett's leadership, Ausable Chasm will

have hosted close to 100,000 visitors this year. Bresett lives with his wife, Aubrey, and their two children, Kylee and Carson, in Peru, N.Y.

### **Gil Liberty – Lantern Award Winner**

Our second lantern winner for 2016 is Gil Liberty. Gil is a lifelong resident of Keeseville. He has two children, Norma & Gil Jr. Gil retired from Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company, after many, many years of dedicated service. Needing something to keep him busy he applied for a bus driving position and has been driving the Senior Nutrition bus for the Town of Chesterfield since 2005. This is how we came to know Gil. The Town of Chesterfield allows our museum to use the Nutrition bus along with their driver for our weekend historic tours.

Gil is very community oriented, having been a member of the Keeseville Volunteer Fire Department for over 40 years and also serves as a member of the Essex County Fire Police. He is a member of the Keeseville Knights of Columbus and when he is not working Bingo, Gil can be seen playing bingo, which is one of his favorite past times.