

President's Annual Report for 2011

- The North Star Underground Railroad Museum's first year was an overwhelming success.
- Last year, we elected three new Board members, and they hit the ground running. Sue Crowningshield became our Treasurer. Sue has done an incredible job keeping track of our money. And, to boot, she has organized our files! Charlie Crowningshield joined the Planning Committee and became a docent. He spent so much time docenting, I told him we needed to buy him a cot so he could stay overnight. Peter Slocum, not only drove all the way from Keene Valley to docent, he gave Frank Kinnelly and me a big sigh of relief when he took charge of two important committees: Public Relations and Programs.
- When we lost Frank, I was worried. I needn't have been. Frank had invited Linda Richardson to join our Board, and Linda honored one of his final wishes, "Don't let anything happen to the Museum." Although Linda already had a huge job as our Education Chair, she said she would complete Frank's Vice-Presidential term. Today, Linda is ready to be elected to the office for the next three years
- What were we going to do without Frank recruiting new members and getting people to renew? No problem: Sue took over the job. And what about Chairmanship of the Financial Oversight Committee? Frank did that, too. Again: no problem. Mitchell Ray took that job.
- Jackie Madison worked so hard to establish a structure for the Development Committee, the committee's description in our Bylaws didn't match what the committee was doing. Today, you have a chance to vote on an appropriate amendment.
- Mitch, who also serves as our Collections Committee Chair, wisely gave our Archivist, Louise Patinelli, full reign. Louise cataloged the Calarco Collection so well, she discovered things Tom had forgotten he collected!
- Glenn Erb, Bill Umbreit and Andy Black literally took the S.K. Smith Barn Restoration project to other levels — both above and below ground.
- And our Assistant to the President, Helen Nerska, was everywhere. Helen not only set up a profit making gift shop, she recruited and trained a dedicated team of docents, and served on many of our committees.
- Five of our Board members attended a National Trust for Historic Places Training in Albany with representatives from four like-minded New York groups. I am pleased that we came very close to achieving all of our goals: 1) We increased our membership from 100 to 140 people, just 10 short of our 150 target 2) Jackie wrote a general Board Member Job Description; 3) Jackie and I interviewed each Board member and developed individual Job Descriptions with them 3) Kathy Lavoie arranged for professional workshop trainer Sue Catana to lead us in a one day, free Strategic Planning retreat. Now we have a revised mission statement. And we are in the process of developing a new Five Year Strategic Plan.
- The New York State Education Department extended our Provisional Charter for five years.
- We made our Nominations Committee Chair, Margaret Gibbs' job easy: talented people want to join our Board. Today, Dick Ward and Julius Archibald are up for reelection, and Colleen Prescott is ready to become a member.

Helen's time with the SCSEP program has been extended until July. Then she becomes our Museum Manager and our first employee. We recently welcomed Suzanne Hand from the SCSEP program. Our committees are working, exploring grant, exhibit and landscaping possibilities. We are left with one major committee to activate: historic sites.

When the North Star Museum closed last fall after a triumphal first season, Julius Archibald ended a Board meeting by saying that he wanted this year to be even better. I think it already is.

Submitted by:
Don Papson
President
North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association