

President's Report for the 2021 Annual Meeting

Welcome Everyone

Opening Song: [Wade in the Water](#)

Recognize the Board and Volunteers.

I would like to thank the board members, docents and volunteers that helped to make this year welcoming for our visitors this season, as we grapple with the pandemic. Hopefully, next season will be better/

Summary of the Year's Activities:

Board meetings took place 10 times in 2020. We meet the 3rd Thursday of each month except December due to the holiday. Our next meeting will be November 10 at 6:00 pm. We continue to meet via Zoom due to the pandemic.

The North Star Underground Railroad Museum opened this year on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from Memorial weekend through Columbus Day. To ensure the safety for everyone masks were required indoors. Masks and hand sanitizer was donated to the Association by United Way. In addition to providing information on the exhibits to visitors, docents were responsible for the cleanliness of the museum exhibit areas and the safety of our visitors. Our museum will need volunteers for the 2022 open season, as docents. Please consider signing up for the training that will be given in the spring. Although I've just asked for docent volunteers, our Board would be very interested in hiring a docent staff person, but that would require a capital fundraiser. This is just one of two fundraisers we need to do.

We received a sculpture from Leon Czaplinski. This exhibit is of a man that is missing parts of his body and his entitled *Germinal*, which depicts the moment in which injustice and oppression are rejected, and defiance becomes the only acceptable choice in man's struggle for freedom and equality. This sculpture is a tribute to the human spirit. Resistance means an uncertain and treacherous path forward—but that first step must be taken, at any cost. Many who took that first step traveled to freedom on the Underground Railroad here, in the Champlain Valley. Conductors then provided critical links and connections to an invisible and secret passageway to freedom in Canada.

The museum turned 10 years and a celebration to recognize the decade of stories on the Underground Railroad was held September 18.

We participated in the Champlain Valley Suffrage Centennial Auto Tour, which showcased women in the suffrage movement from this area to Glens Falls. The Suffrage movement was an outgrowth of the abolitionist movement. Our museum showcase

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people of color in the suffrage movement. Re-enactments of Portia Blackiston, Helen Appo Cook, and Ida B. Wells were portrayed by Robin Caudell, and Jackie Madison. Ida B. Wells also did a re-enactment at the Glens Falls celebration. As a result of this project, a booklet will be produced to showcase the programs across 10 sites.

A committee composed of Andrea Baer, Neal Burdick, Robin Caudell, Kathy LaVoie, John Mitchell, Helen Nerska, Ren Davidson Seward and myself has been working on revising Addie Shields book on John Townsend Addoms and the UGR. This book will provide information on the early history of the area, proprietors who came with slaves, abolitionists, and people of color from the late eighteenth century to the end of the Civil War. Neal Burdick, Helen Nerska and Ren Davidson Seward are descendants of Stephen Keese Smith, John Townsend Addoms, and John Haff, respectively.

The museum obtained grant funding to extend their technology capabilities from the Institute of Library and Museum Services. This grant was overseen by the Museum Association of New York, MANY. This is a two-year project which requires museums to do two digital projects, one per year. Robin Caudell and I are working on this grant. I did the story of the Quakers and the hiding place in the barn of the former home of Stephen Keese Smith in September. The second project by Robin will showcase the churches in Keeseville.

I did several virtual presentations to include Potsdam University, St. Lawrence University and Skidmore College.

Building – The museum will need to have some major work done on it soon. We had a contractor inspect our building and learn the following: the foundation for the entrance off the deck into the Northward to Freedom room and the bay window in the Church room needs to be strengthened, so they don't sink anymore. The windows need to be secured. Shelving is needed for the kitchen area. The building needs to have repairs to the stonework.

The highlight of my year was the Cleanup on the 2nd Floor, that board members, Andrea Baer, Robin Caudell, Jim Kloiber, Kathy Lavoie, Larry Mach, Connie Mandeville, Bobbi and Dick Perez, and myself did on November 6th. We are now able to have a work room for projects and a meeting area for smaller committees.

Committee Reports:

Governance Report with Jim Kloiber

Planning/Communications with John Mitchell

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Development Committee Report with Bobbi Perez

Finance Committee – Barbara Criss the Treasurer – our Treasurer works on the weekends. At this time, I can provide you with the balance of our savings and checking. A report of funds received and expenditures will be posted on our website with the annual report for 2021

Savings - 13,000.00

Checking - 29,782.38

Movie: Without a Whisper uncovers the hidden history of the profound influence indigenous women had on the beginnings of the women's rights movements in the United States. Enjoy the movie.

Nominations and Election of Board Trustees:

Members received a ballot and an envelope in the Annual meeting packet that went out in the mail. Please return it by December 1st. The results will be posted on the website. If you are interested or know of someone that would be a good candidate on the board, there is a write in line to provide a name.

Closing Comments:

After our closing song, I'm willing to have an open virtual discussion. With everything that has happened in our country, we wanted to offer our members and their guests an opportunity to have a discussion about any topic.

Have a great Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Closing Song:

Oh Freedom – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veiJLhXdwn8>