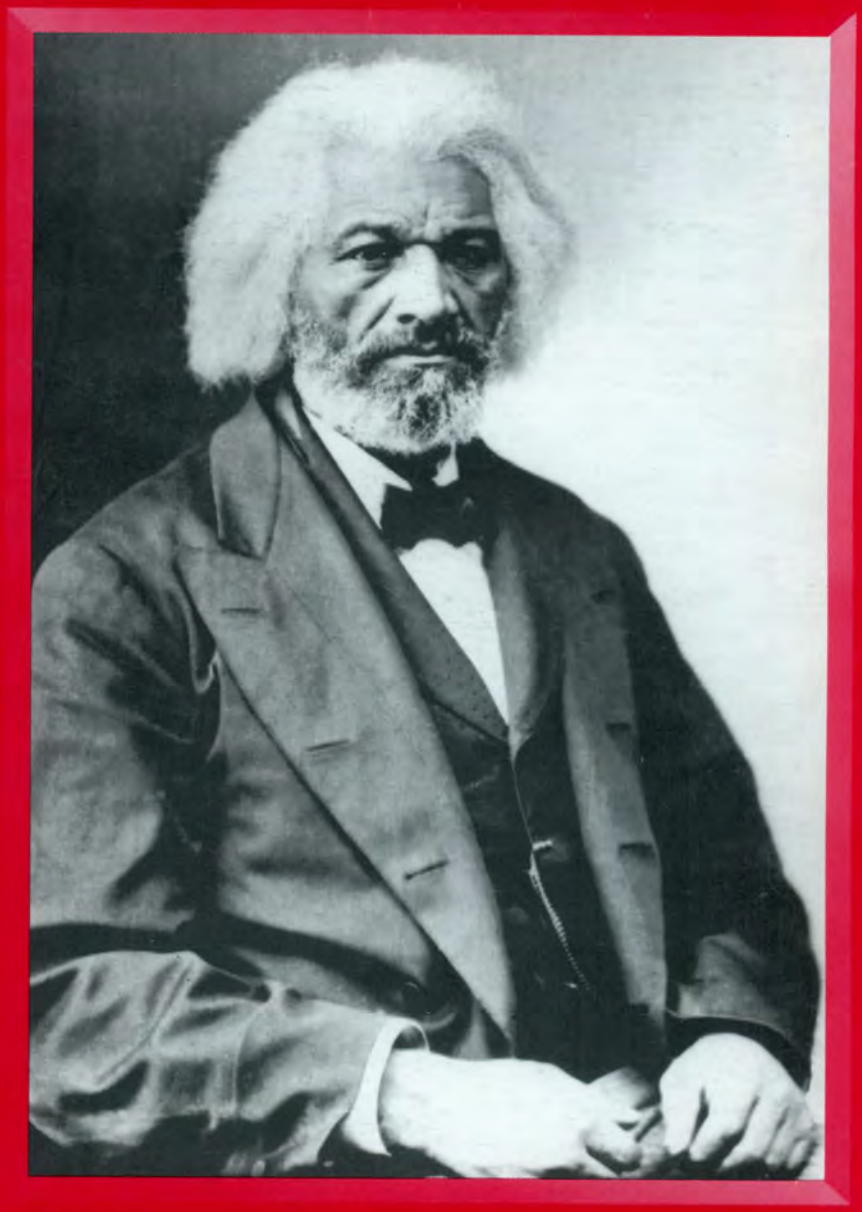
CRM

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Information for Parks, Federal Agencies, Indian Tribes, States, Local Governments, and the Private Sector

VOLUME 21 NO. 4 1998

Slavery and Resistance



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service
Cultural Resources

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

To promote and maintain high standards for preserving and managing cultural resources

DIRECTOR
Robert Stanton

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS
Katherine H. Stevenson

EDITOR
Ronald M. Greenberg

GUEST EDITORS
Frank Faragasso
Doug Stover

ADVISORS
David Andrews
Editor, NPS
Joan Bacharach
Museum Registrar, NPS
Randall J. Biallas
Historical Architect, NPS
Susan Buggey
Director, Historical Services Branch
Parks Canada
John A. Burns
Architect, NPS
Harry A. Butowsky
Historian, NPS
Pratt Cassity
Executive Director,
National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
Muriel Crespi
Cultural Anthropologist, NPS
Mark R. Edwards
Director, Historic Preservation Division,
State Historic Preservation Officer, Georgia
Roger E. Kelly
Archeologist, NPS
Antoinette J. Lee
Historian, NPS

ASSISTANT
Denise M. Mayo

CONSULTANTS
Wm. H. Freeman
Design, Imaging, Production–Freeman Publishing Services
Janice C. McCoy
Editing–Editorial Notes

An electronic version of this issue of *CRM* can be accessed through the *CRM* homepage at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm>.

Contents

VOLUME 21 NO. 4 1998
ISSN 1068-4999

Slavery and Resistance

Foreword 3
Robert Stanton

Slavery and Resistance—Expanding Our Horizon 4
Frank Faragasso and Doug Stover

Revisiting the Underground Railroad 7
Gary Collison

The UGRR and Local History 11
Carol Kammen

Confronting Slavery and Revealing the "Lost Cause" 14
James Oliver Horton

Changing Interpretation at Gettysburg NMP 17
Eric Foner and John A. Latschar

The Remarkable Legacy of Selina Gray 20
Karen Byrne

Frederick Douglass in Toronto 23
Hilary Russell

Local Pasts in National Programs 28
Muriel Crespi

The Natchez Court Records Project 30
Ronald L. F. Davis

The Educational Value of Quindaro Townsite in the 21st Century 34
Michael M. Swann

NPS Study to Preserve and Interpret the UGRR 39
John C. Paige

The UGRR on the Rio Grande 41
Aaron Mahr Yáñez

NPS Aids Pathways to Freedom Group 45
Vincent deForest

The UGRR Archeology Initiative 46
Tara Morrison

The *Amistad* Research Center 48
Frank J. J. Miele

BOOKS 50

Cover: Frederick Douglass. Photo courtesy Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.

Statements of fact and views are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect an opinion or endorsement on the part of the editors, the *CRM* advisors and consultants, or the National Park Service. Send articles and correspondence to the Editor, *CRM*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, 1849 C Street, NW, Suite 350NC, Washington, DC 20240; 202-343-3395, fax 202-343-5260; email: <ron_greenberg@nps.gov>.

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this third annual thematic issue of *CRM* devoted entirely to African-American history. This year we have dedicated the issue of *CRM* to articles on slavery and the underground railroad, topics that are receiving considerable attention in the National Park Service.

Since beginning my career with the National Park Service as a seasonal park ranger at Grand Teton National Park, I have witnessed many changes in the scope and direction of the Service and its historic preservation programs. In 1962, the year I joined the Service, we had only a few parks devoted to the preservation and interpretation of sites related to African-American history. Today there are 26 parks with a multitude of other programs and services devoted to this history.

In 1966, I moved to Washington, DC, and became acquainted with the rich diversity of African-American history sites in the immediate area of our nation's capital including the Frederick Douglass NHS. Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in 1818 and lived to become one of the most famous Americans of his day by the time of his death just before the turn of the century.

In a speech given in Rochester, New York, on Independence Day in 1852, Douglass pointed out how differently blacks and whites viewed the day's celebrations: "What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all the other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.... To him your celebration is a sham ... a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States." The sufferings of the hunted fugitive slaves reminded Douglass that freedom for his people would not come easily.

The memory and contributions of Frederick Douglass and other great Americans are preserved and interpreted through the medium of our great national park system. However important we may find Frederick Douglass, his history preserves only one small portion of the fabric of our story. In recent years, the Martin Luther King, Jr., NHS, Brown v. Board of Education NHS, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, Nicodemus NHS, and many other sites have been added to the national park system to tell this story.

I am pleased to see all aspects of American history and culture, including such topics as slavery and the underground railroad, discussed and interpreted by our many historic sites and national parks. The depth and breath of this history is the subject of this thematic issue of *CRM*.

As you read these articles, you will learn about our past and of the history and events that commemorate our journey through the centuries as a free and sovereign nation. I hope you will rediscover the resources and people that form one part of the mosaic that is the United States of America.

Robert Stanton
Director, National Park Service
Washington, DC

Frank Faragasso and Doug Stover

Slavery and Resistance
Expanding Our Horizon

When asked to serve as guest editors of this issue of *CRM*, devoted to the distinct but related topics of slavery and the underground railroad, we knew we had an enormous task on our hands. North American slavery extended over hundreds of years, involved millions of lives, and included practices and sentiments that are alien to us today. Great passion surrounds this aspect of our history. The underground railroad operations, extending over a similar time period, are shrouded in secrecy with few identifiable locations and even fewer artifacts. The underground railroad might be described as part of the larger history of the worldwide resistance to enslavement. In this way, it is possible to include in the description other forms of resistance which grew naturally out of the human spirit and opposed the oppression of one person by another. In this sense, the story of the underground railroad has more to do with morality, ethics, and how competing principles contend for authority in men's minds and less to do with actual physical locations.

One cannot tell the story of slavery without including the history of its resistance. The underground railroad is a large part of the story of that resistance. In the Americas, resistance sometimes came in the form of armed rebellions such as the Haitian uprising, the Stono uprising in North Carolina in 1739, and Nat Turner's revolt in Southhampton County, Virginia, in 1831. While infrequent, armed rebellion, when it occurred, sent shock waves throughout the old South.

Long before there was an underground railroad, slaves were escaping and organizing themselves in groups called Maroons. Sometimes slaves resisted in ways that were less dramatic such as work slowdowns and covert destruction of property. Learning how to read, which was usually a punishable offense, was another form of resistance.

Much of the history of slavery and of the underground railroad remains to be written due to the existence of meager sources and the lack of written records. Nonetheless, despite these obstacles, work is proceeding and surprising gains are being made. Indeed, more effort than ever before is currently being devoted to the capture of that past.

Everywhere it seems people are studying, writing about, and telling stories of slavery and the underground railroad. National Park Service employees are expanding site interpretation and launching new initiatives pertinent to the issues. There is a need for good information and the exchange of ideas.

The *CRM*'s call for articles on slavery and the underground railroad resulted in an overwhelming response. The large number of articles that were received testifies to the attractiveness of the underground railroad as a topic of keen interest. There seems to be an irrepressible optimism that, despite limited resources, information will emerge and advances in our understanding will be made. While the study of slavery is one of relentless oppression, the story of the underground railroad engenders hope and inspiration and provides examples of whites and blacks working together for a common cause despite overwhelming obstacles.

Having put some time between the period of slavery and the upheaval of the Civil War and having come through the Civil Rights movement and the efforts to instill ethnic and racial pride, we are at a point in our national history where it is possible to look at the horrors of the past and decide that if we do not act now, much of that history will be lost. The historian Carter G. Woodson aptly explains that the alternative to historical truth is myth presented to suit the needs of the teller. Woodson was convinced that historical research was necessary to document the contributions of African Americans in a society that did not want to recognize those accomplishments.

This is the appropriate time to deal with these subjects—the same time that the National Park Service is officially expanding the categories of historical interpretation. The "new history," which has been taking shape for many years, is being adopted in interpretation. As our society becomes more inclusive and multicultural, the National Park Service acquires new properties that tell the stories of individuals and groups previously absent from the official record. Not only is there an imperative to develop new interpretations, tours, exhibits, and the like at new sites, such as the Bethune Council House in Washington, DC, but efforts are being made to reinterpret older sites, such as the Frederick Douglass NHS, with a new

perspective. The process has been accelerated by the launching of a series of NPS initiatives on women's history and the underground railroad. These initiatives promote research, the dissemination of information, and networking; and they offer policy recommendations to upper management.

In some cases, certain individuals have been advocates for a particular topic, such as Vincent deForest's indefatigable efforts to promote an understanding of the underground railroad. NPS Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley must be given credit for widening the historical concerns by promoting the new thematic framework for the interpretation of history. Finally, the task rests on the interpretive rangers who breathe life into the information that is compiled here and make it possible for the public to benefit from this research.

So, the windows and doors are thrown open to let in some fresh air. This is not to say that what was done in the past is any less important. It is simply time to seriously expand our horizons. In fact, it is well past the time.

Frank Faragasso is the historian for National Capital Parks-East, which includes the Frederick Douglass NHS and the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS. He writes and speaks frequently on the life and times of Frederick Douglass.

Doug Stover is Chief, Cultural Resources, C & O Canal NHP, which includes Ferry Hill plantation, Sharpsburg, MD. He was the former curator of the Frederick Douglass NHS and the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS.

NPS Sites Associated with African-American History

African-American Discovery Trail, DC
Booker T. Washington National Monument, VA
Boston African American National Historic Site, MA
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, KS
Cane River Creole National Historical Park, LA
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, MD
Colonial National Historical Park (Jamestown), VA
Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, OH
Fort Davis National Historic Site, TX
Fort Scott National Historic Site, KS
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, DC
George Washington Carver National Monument, MO
Gulf Islands National Seashore (Fort Massachusetts), MS
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, WV
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park (Chalmette), LA
Lincoln Memorial, DC
Lincoln Park, DC
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, VA
Martin Luther King Jr., National Historic Site, GA
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, DC
New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, LA
Nicodemus National Historic Site, KS
Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, OH
Petersburg National Battlefield, VA
Port Chicago Naval Magazine Memorial, CA
Richmond National Battlefield, VA
Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, AL
Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve (Kingsley Plantation), FL
Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, AL
Virgin Islands National Park, VI

Niagara Movement meeting. Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Photo courtesy Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Underground Railroad National Historic Landmarks Theme Study

As a part of Public Law 101-628, directing the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the underground railroad, the National Park Service has undertaken a National Historic Landmarks Theme Study on the underground railroad. To date, nine National Historic Landmarks have been designated as a result of this theme study:

Fort Mose Site, St. Johns County, FL
Owen Lovejoy House, Princeton, IL
Eleutherian College Chapel and Classroom Building, Lancaster, IN
Wilson Bruce Evans House. Oberlin, OH
John P. Parker House, Ripley, OH
John Rankin House, Ripley, OH
Johnson House, Philadelphia, PA
F. Julius Lemoyne House, Washington, PA
Rokeby (Rowland T. Robinson House), Ferrisburgh, VT

Eight other properties are under active consideration with a nomination either being prepared or in review. Some of these nominations have been independently prepared, but the majority have been done through contracts with the State Historic Preservation Offices. The National Historic Landmarks Survey will also be producing a cover document for the theme study which gives a context for the underground railroad in addition to property types and registration requirements for future nominations for NHL designation or listing in the National Register of Historic Places. For more information on the theme study, the properties listed above, or to suggest additional properties for consideration, contact Patty Henry, National Historic Landmarks Survey, NRHE, NPS, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240; 202-343-8163 or at Patty_Henry@NPS.gov.

Above, Johnson House, Philadelphia, PA. Right, from top, Rokeby, Ferrisburgh, Vermont; Parker House, Ripley Ohio; Eleutherian College Classroom and Chapel Building, Lancaster, Indiana.

Gary Collison

Revisiting the Underground Railroad

The underground railroad, with neither capital nor revenue, has matched or exceeded the spectacular stock market performance of overground railroads in recent years. Interest in this elusive railway network has never been higher. Dozens of web sites describe its history and chart its lines. Booksellers on the web list over a hundred "underground railroad" or "fugitive slave" titles, many of them recent books for children. Chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus are actively promoting underground railroad tourism. There are motor coach tours in southern Ontario and the U.S., including the Rosa Parks Institute's "Pathways to Freedom" tour, and home-grown museums have sprung up in Canada and the U.S. Bibliophile and amateur historian Charles Blockson is leading a drive to identify and give historical status to "stations." As part of a new mandate, the National Park Service is making a concerted effort to develop the underground railroad component of as many of its sites as possible. A pamphlet guide to the underground railroad has already been produced and a guidebook is promised for 1998. When a proposed $80 million dollar underground railroad museum opens in Cincinnati early in the next century, the nation will have a major museum devoted to the topic and to slavery in general. Many would say that it is about time. But time for what? And why the current interest in the underground railroad?

The second question is easier to answer than the first. America is searching for ways to recognize and celebrate its multicultural heritage, and no experience of the American past is quite as attractive for this purpose as the underground railroad. It is a wonderfully hopeful story of interracial cooperation coming from a time when most Americans accepted, or at least were neutral toward, the great injustices of slavery and racial prejudice. The underground railroad put meaning back into the words "liberty" and "equality," words that had echoed hollowly ever since the Constitution had recognized slavery. The underground railroad was America's best early effort at multiculturalism. It brought black and white together and momentarily spanned the yawning racial divide that rendered African Americans an outcast and despised race. Underground railroad sites are naturally a source of local, regional, and national pride. They offer a hopeful vision of American experience as well as partial absolution for our nation's sins.

The last surge of interest in the underground railroad took place in the decades following the Civil War, when the anti-slavery army was growing gray and settling into retirement. Like the present era, it was a period when America was struggling, often unsuccessfully, with its legacy of racism. A host of rambling reminiscences as well as several solid works told of blacks and whites working together to save the brave members of a derided and exploited race. The two most notable and useful 19th-century productions are William Still's enormous compilation, based on records he kept for the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee in the mid-1850s, and Wilbur Siebert's end-of-the century attempt at a comprehensive account. Still was the only one to truly understand that the real story was the story of the fugitives, not of their helpers.

THEATRE ROYAL.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

FUGITIVE SLAVES.

BUTLER'S

REAL ETHIOPIAN SERENADERS,

FROM PHILADELPHIA,

Consisting of Five Colored Men,

RETURN their sincere thanks to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Montreal, for the very liberal patronage bestowed on them during their short stay, and beg to announce that they will give their FAREWELL CONCERT, at the abeve place of Entertainment, for the Benefit of Messrs. SHADRACK, WILLIAMS, JOHNSON, TYBOLD and SCOTT—five Fugitive Slaves—(who have lately escaped from bondage, and are now in this city, destitute of the means of subsistence,) THIS EVENING, (Thursday,) the 13th March, when they trust that a generous public will sustain them in this effort to relieve their unfortunate Fellow-Countrymen.

SHADRACK will appear in the course of the evening, and relate the circumstances of his wonderful Escape from Boston, and other incidents in his life.

Admission:—Boxes, 2s. 6d.; Pit, 1s. 3d.; Gallery, 7½d. Doors open at SEVEN o'clock; Concert to commence at EIGHT o'clock.

Tickets may be procured at all the principal Hotels, Book and Music Stores.

March 13. 136

Advertisement for a benefit concert for "five Fugitive Slaves," March, 1851, one of the few pieces of evidence that fugitive slaves were arriving in Montreal in the early 1850s. Courtesy National Archives of Canada.

In his volume, he not only gave names, origins, and dates (the year of flight, at least) of hundreds of fugitive slaves, but provided brief biographies of many of them. Siebert's was the only 19th-century attempt at a comprehensive account. Drawing on correspondence with hundreds of aging anti-slavery activists, surviving family members, newspaper accounts, and documents, he created maps of "lines" and compiled a directory of "station masters."

Unfortunately, only William Still's work is based on extensive records created during the fugitive slave era. Almost all other works are seriously flawed in several respects. Created without benefit of contemporary records and documents and set down 20, 30, 40, or more years after the actual events, dozens of these recollections drew on memories which had grown faulty or fanciful. Underground railroad memoirs generally lack specific names, dates, or corroboration. They also throw little light on African-American assistants or the fugitive slaves themselves.

Historian Larry Gara tried to set matters straight in regard to these memoirs in his 1961 *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*. "There is probably at least a germ of truth in most of the stories," Gara concluded, but "unprovable assertions and questionable data" made it impossible in many instances to separate truth from fiction, especially at this distance in time. Acknowledging that romanticized accounts populated with secret passageways, narrow escapes, disguises, secret signals, and the like were so widespread that there was little hope that "any amount of critical scholarship will modify the legend in the popular mind," Gara set out to explore the myth-making process. "Perhaps the legend itself reveals something of the American character and aspirations, and as such is worthy of its own history," he wrote.

In my own research into the life of Shadrach Minkins, a Norfolk, Virginia, fugitive slave rescued from the Boston Court House in 1851, again and again I encountered the intertwining fact and fiction, legend and exaggeration, that Gara uncovered. The story of Minkins' rescue by African-American Bostonians and of his flight to Canada existed in dozens of versions, some of them quite contradictory. Although Minkins' escape from Boston through the Massachusetts towns of Cambridge, Watertown, Concord, and Leominster was documented, this factual itinerary had become the nucleus for the fanciful and the fantastic. One story claimed that during his flight, Minkins attended an anti-slavery meeting disguised in women's clothes. Another recounted how neighbors flocked to share bread and water with him, transparently grafting the story of the Last Supper onto the actual events of Minkins' escape. His publicized 1851 arrival in Montreal, Canada, helped create the city's reputation as a major terminus of the underground railroad (which Harriet Beecher Stowe assisted by giving her fictional family of fugitives, George, Eliza, and Harry Harris, a Montreal home at the end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Yet the Canadian census and other records debunked the legend: fewer than 100 U.S.-born African-American adults lived in Montreal at any time before 1880.

As an underground railroad story, the story of Minkins and of Montreal's other African-American refugees proved to be a flop. Clearly, the underground railroad had assisted Shadrach Minkins to reach Montreal. Presumably other African Americans arrived in Montreal through its assistance, yet it is impossible to confirm this. Research revealed nothing but vague surmises about the routes by which African Americans traveled from the Massachusetts border northward to the city. No "stations" or "station masters" emerged from research in Montreal records either. In fact, only a handful of Montreal's African Americans could be clearly identified as fugitive slaves. Some African Americans had been born free in the North, and at least one family had arrived from the South (Annapolis, Maryland) carrying free papers.

SALES THIS DAY.

PURSUANT to an advertisement affixed to the door of the Court House of the city of Norfolk,

WILL BE SOLD,

At Public Auction, before the Court House, at 12 o'clock, on MONDAY, the 23d inst.,

Negro Man Shadrach and Negro Woman Hester and her children Jim and Imogene, by virtue of a writ of fieri facias against the goods and chattels of Martha Hutchings and Edward DeCormis, at suit of Joseph Cowperthwaite, assignee of the President, Directors & Co. of the Bank of the United States.

jy 18—tds WM. B. LAMB, Serg't.

(Beacon copy.)

1849

Spring Stock.

SMITH & MERWIN would inform the people of Virginia and North Carolina, tha hey have just received a large and extensive assor ment of

Boots and Shoes,

which makes their assortment complete One of the firm having visited all of the principal cities and manufacturing de pots at the North, has selected, with a good deal of care and attention, a large and extensive assortment of Boots and Shoes, bought expressly for the Virginia and Carolina

Norfolk, Virginia, sale notice for Shadrach Minkins, 1849. He was to escape to Boston within a year. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Fugitive slaves William and Ellen Craft, of Macon, Georgia. They escaped on their own by rail, she disguised as a white master, with WIlliam Craft playing her loyal servant. (Still, Underground Railroad*).*

ELLEN CRAFT.

WILLIAM CRAFT.

The history of Montreal's African-American refugees may not make a neat underground railroad tale, but it certainly makes an important story of African-American independence, determination, resourcefulness, and perseverance. Montreal records revealed that African-American refugees, some of them married to African-American wives who accompanied them but most of them single young men, found security and work in the city. Many of the small group of men took up semi-skilled and small entrepreneurial occupations such as barbering, the most common male occupation. The economic and social benefits of barbering made barbers the most stable group as well. By the time the Civil War broke out, many of the unmarried men had married and had children. The signatures of fellow refugees on marriage, birth, and burial records revealed a developing pattern of friendships and shared responsibilities. In 1860, the group even petitioned to form an all-black militia company and began commemorating the August 1, 1834 emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies. Given this evidence of community and acculturation, it is hardly surprising to find that after the Civil War ended, many refused to return "home" but remained to become the foundation of Montreal's modern African-American community.

The story of Montreal's African-American refugees revealed to me that the history of the underground railroad must be multifaceted and open and, often, tentative, and it must be connected in every possible way to the larger fabric of African-American life. This means understanding the underground railroad as part of the story of African-American migrations in the 19th century. To tell that story fully, many questions about the fugitives who traveled north and their black and white assistants need to be reconsidered. Where did the fugitives and free migrants come from and where did they settle? What conditions did they encounter and how did they fare? What successes did they have, and what failures?

Unfortunately, these abiding questions are the very questions that have tended to be pushed aside by earlier works that have attempted to tell the story of the underground railroad. Many of these works inevitably threw the spotlight on white assistants, while black assistants and fugitives themselves often remained in a shadowy limbo. Fugitive slaves who followed their own homemade underground railroad to freedom in the North, and free blacks who left the South in search of equality, disappeared entirely. Even Wilbur Siebert, the professional historian among the early chroniclers, failed to search vigorously for the stories of both fugitive African Americans and their free African-American counterparts and assistants.

The mistakes of Wilbur Siebert and other 19th-century writers need not be repeated endlessly, but proper care has to be taken. This means maintaining a healthy skepticism toward early underground railroad accounts as well as pursuing the broader story simultaneously on many fronts. First and foremost, African-American testimony and evidence need to be examined thoroughly, and new leads need to be followed. Secondly, the fugitives themselves, as well as free black migrants, need to be identified and tracked in the census and vital records of births, deaths, and marriages. They may have to remain faceless, but there is no need for them to remain nameless. Census records for both the northern U.S. and Canada identify household members by race and birthplace at 10-year intervals, making it possible to track patterns of

movement and settlement and to begin to document the lives of African-American free and fugitive migrants and their communities. From these records, the rich history of fugitive slaves and free African Americans in thousands of towns and cities of the North and in Buxton, Sandwich, St. Catharines, Niagara, Coburg, Toronto, Montreal, and a host of other Canadian havens can emerge.

Some help is already coming, generally from the social-history revolution in the historical profession and specifically from the genealogical revolution spurred by Alex Haley's *Roots*. The wealth of information that African-American genealogists have been discovering in the census and other public records contains invaluable pieces of a complex puzzle that, as yet, exists mostly as isolated fragments. Added to other materials, these family histories may not illuminate much of the underground railroad directly, but they will certainly help to map the African-American experience in slavery and freedom, and thus indirectly aid efforts to understand the underground railroad. Examples include a current Historical Society of York County (Pennsylvania) exhibit chronicling the "chain migration" of African-American families from Bamberg, South Carolina, to York, and back. The exhibit begins to explain the motivations of the Bambergers, including a desire for freedom and the allure of jobs, that led them from the deep South to York. It illustrates the welcome transfusion of multiculturalism into local historical societies and local history. In this case, the exhibit includes a tantalizing but unsupported reference to the role played by the underground railroad in this improbable connection between two cities, one North and one South.

The answer to the first question posed at the beginning of this article, "Time for what?" is complicated by the varied character and limited reliability of the 19th-century accounts that represent the main body of underground railroad materials. Clearly, the underground railroad and its sites should be preserved and honored. To let them disappear would be to turn our back on a precious part of our collective heritage. As a nation we need them more than ever. Yet, tending the memory of the underground railroad is hazardous. The underground railroad can be reduced to a network of shrines and a cluster of romantic stories if museums and historical societies and sites do not approach the topic armed with the historian's skepticism of source materials. Warnings such as "according to local legend," need to be employed liberally when describing many sites and actual sources named whenever they exist. What is not known needs to be explained as clearly—maybe more clearly—than what is known.

Moreover, by focussing too narrowly on underground railroad sites, too much of African-American experience can be diminished or lost entirely. But by noting local homes in which slaves lived or worked before and after the Revolution, by identifying black refugees from the South and exploring the condition of local blacks in the decades before the Civil War, and by identifying the spots on which fugitives were betrayed, seized, beaten, or murdered, the significance of an underground railroad site and the underground railroad as a whole will be enlarged. The goal should be to tell the rich African-American story by forging a multidimensional African-American history rooted in local settings and individual as well as collective experiences. Only then will the true story of the underground railroad and its part in African-American history and life finally be told.

Selected Bibliography

Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970).

Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961).

Stanley Harrold, "Freeing the Weems Family: A New Look at the Underground Railroad," *Civil War History*, v.42, no 4. (Dec 1996), pp. 289-306.

Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1898).

Stuart Seely Sprague, ed., *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, etc.* (1872; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1968).

Gary Collison is Associate Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University. His most recent work is Shadrack Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen. *Presently he is working on a book concerning fugitive slave cases after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.*

Carol Kammen

The UGRR and Local History

There is probably no subject more troublesome to local historians than the underground railroad. Conceived in secrecy, conducted in silence, it has few records to tell its story—and probably far too many places credited as being associated with it.

Sources are the main problem—the lack of them and the responsible use of those that do exist. "I had a diary giving the names, dates, and circumstances of all the slaves I had helped run away," wrote John Parker, himself an escaped slave and thereafter an aide to runaways who came through Ripley, Ohio. Parker explains, however, that as a family man, a property owner, and the proprietor of a business, he had a great deal to lose if his record book were discovered. So "as a matter of safety I threw this diary into the iron furnace, for fear it might fall into other hands."[1]

This caution was shared. Parker explains that after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 "everyone engaged in the work destroyed all existing evidence of his connection with it." The work of aiding fugitives, however, continued apace. "In fact," he writes, it was, "more aggressively than ever [pursued] which speaks well for the conscience and courage" of those involved.[2]

Under the circumstances, it is easy to see that the sources of study of the underground railroad are difficult to come by and why those that have survived are especially to be treasured. It is also easy to understand why local enthusiasts, eager to find evidence of abolition activity, have expanded upon those sources with folklore and fiction, suspending critical analysis at the very time when they need to take the most care.

Yet, precisely because reliable information is scarce, the local historian needs to be even more vigilant regarding the subject. A casual collection of the oral and the supposed, the romantic and the impossible, bring doubt down around the entire topic—which is exactly the opposite of the desired result.

About no other local topic, except possibly the weather, are there more legends, more hearsay, or more dubious claims; about no other topic is there more to question. Yet footnotes, when they appear, tend to recite earlier works that contained no notes or ones that are dubious. In a field where much information has been gathered orally, it is important that the reason why an informant needs to be believed should be given. In one article on the underground railroad the author cites an undocumented and untrustworthy church history, a pamphlet written without footnotes, and repeats stories heard from a variety of people—some of whom had reason to have valuable information while others did not.

Throughout New York there is the frequently heard assertion that there were tunnels. There was once a tunnel, "they say" from a farm road to a local temperance tavern through which escaped slaves moved on their way to the lake and a boat ride to the North. The stretch of land through which the tunnel was supposed to exist is one-and-a-half miles long. The terrain in that part of the state, from which this legend was collected, is glacial deposit; the soil is sometimes 13 inches or less deep and it rests upon shale. The critical mind should note that today when the New York State Department of Transportation improves a local road it brings in an assortment of yellow work trucks that include dozers and bucket-loaders and jack hammers and sometimes even dynamite. If that is what happens in the 1990s in order to dig out side ditches and improve the road bed or to create a new road altogether, it seems logical to conclude that in the 1850s a farmer with nothing but a shovel and ax is unlikely to have dug a mile-and-a-half-long tunnel for escaping slaves. Nonetheless, tunnel myths abound![3]

A disbelief in this tunneling does not diminish the fact that there was underground railroad activity in the area. To separate fact from fiction is the historian's job and it can be done knowing full well that the genuine accounts present us a thrilling enough story without needing embellishment.

There are good sources, of course, in addition to Parker's diary, or the notes kept by William Still and others. From Troy, New York, there is a particularly helpful and illuminating reference from the local newspaper in which a meeting of the Vigilant Committee reported that 57 persons had passed through their care in the previous year at a cost to the society of $125.40.

In Ithaca there was a lawyer named Ben Johnson. A local historian, interviewing an African-American resident—"colored" he would have called himself—regarding Johnson, heard of the attorney's efforts to aid slaves to freedom. Johnson would say that he was a Christian, and member of the church, and a lawyer, and a Democrat and therefore a law abiding citizen: that he could not consistently assist in depriving men of their property. "No," he insisted, "he could not do such an

unlawful act." But Johnson also commented as he turned over a five or ten dollar note, "take it and buy tickets, and send the runaway slaves back to their masters." He knew, and others knew, that the money for tickets would be used to send the runaways further on their way, usually by steamboat on "toward the North Star." Thus, saying one thing and meaning another was Johnson's way of abiding by the law and breaking it at the same time.[5]

That there was abolition and underground activity in the area is something on which we can all agree. The extent of that aid is another thing altogether and it demands that we be cautious. And especially important, in any discussion of the underground railroad, is the fact that those who aided fugitives did so in a climate of hostile views by many of their townspeople. John Parker noted that in Ripley, Ohio, where there was considerable underground activity, "the town itself was proslavery as well as the country around it." And this antagonism, either in the form of strikes against underground activity, or in the form of a lack of willingness to aid or to participate, is very much a part of the story to be told.[6]

The interesting question to ask is why so much interest in underground railroad history should be erupting at just this time. There are many possible answers. The Sanctuary movement conducted by some Americans to aid and shelter Central Americans who have fled to this country for refuge might have spurred interest in the older activity. This modern movement echoes many of the problems faced by those involved in the earlier effort.

There has been some recent popular fiction that addresses the topic, too, such as David Bradley's complex novel, *The Chaneysville Incident*, and Miriam Grace Monfredo's *North Star Conspiracy*, in which her Seneca Falls librarian-detective Glynis Tryon solves a mystery that originated with the underground railroad.[7] In addition, underground railroad activities have been featured on television shows and the underground railroad is an active destination on the Internet. Tony Cohen, a Maryland historian, has popularized an interest in the railroad by walking one of the supposed routes and posting notices online along the way. Newspapers, too, have cited underground railroad sites as tourist attractions.[8]

Most importantly, local historians have also turned to the subject in their search for understanding and illuminating African-American local history, which until recently has been long neglected in the local canon and difficult to research because of the lack of many of the traditional sorts of records.

These are symptoms of current interest in the subject. The most overriding reason for a revival of history of underground activity is surely that in this nation where race has been identified as a pressing national concern, tales of the underground railroad soothe misgivings about the nature of that conflict. They stress interracial cooperation, giving some people a way of asserting moral correctness about the position they think they would have—or that their communities did take. This is because actions of those involved in the underground railroad rested on clear moral choices that seem to us today to be supportable or unsupportable. Underground railroad activity becomes a clear symbol of positive behavior in our long national anguish over race. It is a way of saying that all white people were not guilty, that black and white together aided the fugitive to escape an unjust situation.

But desiring to claim the moral high road and finding evidence to do so are two very different things. And while the public is often willing to suspend critical thinking regarding the underground railroad, and while local publicists and local color writers are touting cultural tourism and actively incorporating every shred of fiction into the local story, it is clearly up to the local historian to proceed with caution.[9]

I have found that the local historians are doing just that. In the face of casual disregard of the facts and a desire to find links that make a community or group or individual look good on this topic, it is the local historians I have encountered who are saying, "Wait! let's look at this and see what the facts really tell us, what we can honestly assert." The problem, however, is that school teachers, in particular, and others in general, are so eager for any information that whatever is available—especially in print—is likely to be believed and used.

This does not mean that we should abandon any interest or research into the story of the underground railroad. It does mean that fact needs to be separated from folklore—every root cellar was not a hidey-hole and sure evidence of abolitionist activity, not every Quaker household participated in aiding the fugitive, although many did—that we must judge the evidence carefully and put the story of the underground railroad into its context. This means we must admit that locally there were many people, often the majority of the population as Parker suggests, who were unwilling to aid the fugitives and even anxious to turn them—and those who helped them—over to the authorities.[10]

The story of the underground railroad is more complicated and interesting than simply one of escaped slaves and those, black and white, who aided their progress north. The story is really one of community conflict, of moral decision-making, of the law abiding—who therefore were those who

did not aid fugitives, even if they might have wanted to—and of those courageous people who took risks in order to lend a needed hand. The story is also of communities known as safe and those that were decidedly unsafe. It is the story of a shifting network of routes that changed with time and local attitudes, one particular route used on one day, a different way on another. It is the story of churches that split apart over this issue and of ministers finding ways of justifying the return of slaves because they were under the aegis of the laws of Caesar, not the laws of God.[11]

All of this makes the underground railroad even more interesting and important because in context it becomes an episode in courage and moral character. It is and will always remain a story of helpers of both races willing to risk their own safety to aid those in need.

We need to relate what can be verified within a local context. We need to stress the *ad hoc*, unsystematic nature of the passage of fugitives from the South. We need to acknowledge the risky nature of giving aid and the unwillingness of good people to do so. And we need to celebrate the genuine heroes of the era. John P. Parker of Ripley, Ohio was certainly one of them.

Notes

1 See *His Promised Land*, edited by Stuart Seely Sprague (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 99-100.

2 Ibid., p. 127. And see pp. 72 and 126.

3 In 1996 there was a discussion of the underground railroad tunnels in the state on New York history net (Nyhistory-1@unix.nysed.gov) during the late fall of 1966. Tales of tunnels were identified in a number of localities.

4 *Troy Daily Times*, October 6, 1857. I am indebted to Lorraine Weiss of the Rensselaer County (N.Y.) Historical Society for this citation.

5 Thomas W. Burns, *Initial ithacans: Sketches and Portraits of the forty-Four presidents of the Village of Ithaca* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1904), p. 14.

6 *His Promised Land*, p. 99.

7 David Bradley, *The Chaneysville Incident* (New York, 1981) is in paper as a Monfredo's Mystery (New York, 1993).

8 See Owen A. Thomas, *Niagara's Freedom Trail: A Guide to African-Canadian History on the Niagara Peninsula* (Published by the Region Niagara tourist council, 11995), Evanarie Hardin, *Syracuse and the Underground Railroad* (Pamphlet published by the Erie Canal museum, Syracuse, 1998), and see *New York Times* June 28, 1992, pp 8-9 "Ontario's Lode of Black History."

9 For overly inclusive use of references to the underground railroad see Emerson Klees, *Underground Railroad Tales: With Routes Through the Finger Lakes Region* (Rochester, 1997). This book, which is very handsomely illustrated and engagingly written provides a prime example of historical sources in the hands of a local colorist or publicist. Kless includes everything, many items base upon very tentative or bogus information. He seems to function on the principle that anything in print is true so that his book rests upon long ago discarded tales and shaky evidence. The large and attractive map that was issued by Kless' illustrator, Dru Wheelin is equally troublesome. While the map is handsome and the illustrations attractive, it misleads by the very presence of charted routes across the state much as one would find on a AAA triptick in addition to several features "stops" that are strongly disputed by historians who have researched the subject. It is particularly unfortunate that such attractive material is not to be trusted for the general public has no way of making a critical assessment.

10 See Marvis Vinovskis, ed., *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays* (New York, 1990). And see, too, Larry Gara, *Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (reprint edition 1996, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).

11 Dividing church congregations in Cortland County are in Curtis D. Johnson's *Islands of Holiness: Rural Religion in Upstate New York 1790-1860* (Ithaca, 1989) especially Chapter 10 and see page 130. This can be found elsewhere in the area as well. See Carol Kammen, *The Peopling of Tompkins County: A Social History* (Interlaken, N.Y: 1985) p. 134 especially. Local ministers sometimes had ways of justifying slavery. A notable example would be William Wisner, *Elements of Civil Liberty, or The Way to Maintain Free Institutions* (Ithaca, 1844) in which Wismer argues that slavery fell under the rules of the state, not under the aegis of God, and therefore, as "both these kingdoms are ordained and recognized by the Almighty" they must co-exist in the same state. He also argues that the Sunday church service was no place in which to discuss political subjects given as it was a time to attend to spiritual matters.

Carol Kammen is the author of On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why and What it Means *(Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1996), several books of local history, and the editorials in "History News." She teaches local history at Cornell University and has written a number of dramas based upon historical themes. One drama, "Flight to the North," is about the underground railroad.*

James Oliver Horton

Confronting Slavery and Revealing the "Lost Cause"

National Park Service Civil War sites draw millions of visitors each year. Manassas National Battlefield attracts more than a million and Gettysburg National Battlefield attracts almost two million. Clearly, these are important places for Americans. American heritage is bound up in the history told at these sites and visitors often have very definite ideas about the story they expect and want to hear. One of the most sensitive and controversial issues that any Civil War site interpreter will confront is the role of slavery in the South's decision to secede from and take up arms against the United States. Although an argument that slavery played an important role in the coming of the Civil War would raise few eyebrows among academic scholars, for public historians faced with a popular audience unfamiliar with the latest scholarship on the subject such an assertion can be very controversial. Whenever I speak to groups of Civil War re-enactors, to Civil War Round Tables or at public gatherings about the Civil War, I am reminded that slavery and the war are often separated in the public mind. The Sons of the Confederate Veterans have argued that the Ken Burns PBS series on the Civil War had too much material on slavery. Indeed, in Gettysburg's permanent exhibition, neither slavery nor slaves are mentioned in regard to the war. After the *Civil War News* published a portion of a lecture given by John Latschar, the superintendent at Gettysburg, that suggested that the war may have been fought over slavery, the Southern Heritage Coalition condemned his words and 1,100 post cards calling for his immediate removal flooded the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

Obviously, most would not be moved to this response, nor are the majority of visitors to Civil War battlefields so acutely sensitive on this issue. Yet, there is no doubt that Latschar's comments struck a nerve among many who wished to minimize or deny the connection between slavery and the Civil War. As historian James McPherson explained in a recent article, it is especially difficult for southern whites "to admit—that the noble Cause for which their ancestors fought might have included the defense of slavery." Yet, the best historical scholars over the last generation or more have argued convincingly for the centrality of slavery among the causes of the Civil War.[1] The evidence for such arguments provided in the letters, speeches, and articles written by those who established and supported the Confederacy is overwhelming and difficult to deny. While slavery was not the only cause for which the South fought during the Civil War, the testimony of Confederate leaders and their supporters makes it very clear that slavery was central to the motivation for secession and war. When southern whites in the 19th century spoke of the "southern way of life" for which they fought, they referred to a way of life founded on white supremacy and supported by the institution of slavery. Even a cursory exploration of the primary sources they left makes this point.[2]

In mid-January of 1861, delegates gathered in Milledgeville in central Georgia to consider a course of action in response to the recent election of a Republican President. For more than a decade political debate had raged throughout the South about the threat posed by what Joseph E. Brown, "the ploughboy" governor from Northern Georgia, termed, the northern "fanatical abolitionist sentiment." To Brown, the election was not simply about a new President taking office. It was about something far more threatening to the future of the South's fundamental economic institution that had shaped southern culture and the social relations in that region for more than 200 years. In the *Federal Union*, a Milledgeville weekly, Brown argued that Lincoln was "the mere instrument of a great triumphant party, the principles of which are deadly hostile to the institution of slavery."[3] The convention vote went convincingly for secession (208 to 89 with six delegates refusing to sign the secession ordinance), and the decision turned on the need to protect slavery. One Georgia editor confirmed what most white Georgians and most white southerners believed when he wrote in 1862, "[N]egro slavery is the South, and the South is [N]egro slavery."[4]

Georgia was not the first slaveholding state to secede from the United States in the wake of Lincoln's election. South Carolina had led the way almost a month before when its Charleston convention, held just before Christmas in 1860, declared that the "Union heretofore existing between the State of South Carolina and the other States of North America is dissolved..." The reason for this

drastic action, South Carolina delegates explained in their "Declaration of the Causes which Induced the Secession of South Carolina," was what they termed a broken compact between the federal government and "the slaveholding states." It was the actions of what delegates referred to as "the non-slaveholding states" who refused to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 that was the specific example used as evidence for this argument. "In many of these States the fugitive [slave] is discharged from the service of labor claimed...[and] In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied...." The delegation made clear that the election of Abraham Lincoln in the fall of 1860 as "President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to Slavery" was the final straw. In the South Carolinian mind the coming of Republican political power signaled, in the words of the convention, "that a war [would] be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States."[5]

The editors at the *Charleston Mercury* agreed. They had anticipated the threat that a Republican victory would pose when in early November they warned South Carolinians and the entire South that "[t]he issue before the country is the extinction of slavery." "No man of common sense, who has observed the progress of events, and is not prepared to surrender the institution," they charged, "can doubt that the time for action has come—now or never." The newspaper editors, like most southerners saw Lincoln's election as lifting abolitionists to power, and like most southerners they understood, as they plainly stated, that "[t]he existence of slavery is at stake."[6] They called for a convention to consider secession because they saw such action as the only way to protect slavery. When the South Carolina convention did meet little more than a month later, it dealt almost entirely with issues related directly to slavery. It did not complain about tariff rates, competing economic systems or mistreatment at the hands of northern industrialists. The South was not leaving the United States because of the power of northern economic elites who in reality, as historian Bruce Levine observed, "feared alienating the slave owners more than they disliked slavery."[7] The secession of South Carolina, approved by the convention 169 votes to none, was about the preservation of slavery.

At the time of secession virtually everyone understood that slavery was the major factor in the coming hostilities. Alabama's Robert Hardy Smith, elected to the Provisional Confederate States Congress, understood this only too well and said so publicly. The *Mobile Daily Register* printed the speech he gave at Temperance Hall in March of 1861. "The question of [N]egro slavery has been the apple of discord in the government of the United States since its foundation," he told his audience. Slavery remained the central divisive issue, he believed, the issue over which the Union had been broken. "We have dissolved the late Union," he argued, "chiefly because of the [N]egro quarrel."[8]

Alexander Stevens of Georgia also understood what the South was fighting for. A decade before secession, in reaction to the debate over the Compromise of 1850, he wrote to his brother Linton citing "the great question of the permanence of slavery in the Southern States" as crucial for maintaining the union. "[T]he crisis of that question," he predicted, "is not far ahead."[9] After the war he would become more equivocal, but in the heat of the secession debate in the spring of 1861 Stevens spoke as directly as he had in 1850. On March 21, 1861 in Savannah, Stevens, then Vice President of the Confederacy, drew applause when he proclaimed that "our new government" was founded on slavery, "its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the [N]egro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—submission to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth."[10]

Mississippi's Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, was more cautious about declaring slavery as the pivotal issue. When he did address the issue, he generally did so within the context of constitutional guarantees of property rights. Yet, there was not doubt that the property rights he sought most to guarantee in 1861 protected slavery. He was sure that under Republican rule "property in slaves [would become] so insecure as to be comparatively worthless..."[11] A large slaveholder, Davis was concerned about the economics of abolition, but as an experienced politician he also worried that an overtly pro-slavery stand might alienate potential European allies and split the southern population. After all, by 1861 only about one third of southern families in the 11 seceding states held slaves and the non-slaveholders always posed a potential problem for Confederate unity. Even some historians who see slavery as the major cause of southern secession are not completely convinced that the one million southern men who fought for the Confederacy, the vast majority of whom had never owned even one slave, would have been willing to die for slavery.[12] Significantly, secession sentiment was strongest in states, and in regions within states, where slaveholding was concentrated. Conversely, union loyalty was strongest in Piedmont regions and other areas of the South where non-slaveholders held sway. The *Charleston*

Mercury charged that the upper South, less dependent on slave labor, was suspect on the question of slavery because "with them [the upper South states] slavery, or its abolition, is a question of mere expediency.... To us the institution is vital and indispensable. We must maintain ourselves in this struggle or be utterly destroyed."[13]

Many slaveholders were equally skeptical that non-slaveholders would support slaveholding with their lives. Thus, secessionists mounted a formidable campaign to convince non-slaveholders that they had a critical stake in the slave system. Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, secessionist from Alabama who served in the Confederate Congress and helped to draft the Confederate Constitution, spoke directly to the non-slaveholding majority in the South when he argued that those who contended that "non-slaveholders are not interested in the institution of slavery," were absolutely wrong. "No greater or more mischievous mistake could be made," he claimed and then set about to prove his point by arguing that slavery encouraged a society that privileged all white people, non-slaveholders and slaveholders alike. Indeed, he argued that abolition would place poor whites at the bottom of southern society, on a level with black southerners. Under these circumstances Curry believed "the poor whites of the South are more interested in the institution than any other portion of the community."[14]

The *Kentucky Statesman* in Lexington warned its readers about the dangers of allowing a split between slaveholders and non-slaveholders that the newspaper contended was "[t]he great lever by which abolitionists hoped to extirpate slavery in the States...." Southerners must be careful not to fall victim to propaganda that sought to raise suspicions that non-slaveholders would not stand for slavery, for as the newspaper argued, "[t]he strongest pro-slavery men in this State are those who do not own one dollar of slave property." Doubters were urged to travel to the mountainous regions of the state where, the newspaper argued, they would find "thousands of as true Southern men as tread the soil of the cotton States, yet comparatively few own slaves." Significantly, "pro-slavery men" were equated with "true Southern men," for slavery was the essence of the southern society and the newspaper contended that slaveowners and non-slaveowners alike "believe that slavery to be right and socially beneficial." "The interest felt by the non-slaveholders of the South in this question is not prompted by dollars and cents, but by a loyalty to the foundation of the southern way of life."[15]

A special edition of the *Louisville Daily Courier* was more detailed and more direct in its message to non-slaveholders. The abolition of slavery would raise African Americans to "the level of the white race," and the poorest whites would be closest to the former slaves in both social and physical distance. Then came the most penetrating questions that cut to the core of racial fears. "Do they wish to send their children to schools in which the [N]egro children of the vicinity are taught? Do they wish to give the [N]egro the right to appear in the witness box to testify against them?" Then the article moved to the final and most emotionally-charged question of all. Would the non-slaveholders of the South be content to live with what the writer contended was the ultimate end of abolition, to "AMALGAMATE TOGETHER THE TWO RACES IN VIOLATION OF GOD'S WILL." The conclusion was inevitable the article argued; non-slaveholders had much at stake in the maintenance of slavery and everything to lose by its abolition. African-American slavery was the only thing that stood between poor whites and the bottom of southern society where they would be forced to compete with and live among black people.[16]

These arguments were extremely effective as even the poorest white southerners got the message. Their interest in slavery was far more important than simple economics. As one southern prisoner explained to his Wisconsin-born guard "you Yanks want us to marry our daughters to niggers."[17] This fear of a loss of racial status was common. A poor white farmer from North Carolina explained that he would never stop fighting because what he considered to be an abolitionist federal government was "trying to force us to live as the colored race." Although he had grown tired of the war, a Confederate artilleryman from Louisiana agreed that he must continue to fight. An end to slavery would bring what he considered horrific consequences, for he would "never want to see the day when a [N]egro is put on an equality with a white person." These non-slaveholders surely recognized their stake in the institution of slavery and thus in the war. Most Confederates would have agreed with the assessment of the southern cause set forth by a U.S. soldier in 1863, shortly after the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation. "I know enough about the southern spirit," he said, "that I think they will fight for the institution of slavery even to extermination."[18]

James McPherson's study of letters and diaries written by Civil War soldiers provides many examples of white yeoman farmers turned soldiers who were determined to fight rather than "see the day when a [N]egro is put on an equality with a white person." Although McPherson found that most Confederate soldiers wrote little about slavery, he argued that the defense of slavery was a

Continued on p. 18

Changing Interpretation at Gettysburg NMP

Last summer, with my wife and daughter, I visited the Gettysburg National Military Park. We spent only one afternoon there, so I do not claim to have absorbed the full Gettysburg experience. Nonetheless, my visit persuaded me that some of the premises of National Park Service historical presentations need to be re-examined.

Too often, I believe, the NPS adheres with excessive rigidity to the principle that its presentations of history must be "site-specific"—that is, that events at the site itself must be emphasized rather than broad historical forces originating elsewhere. On one level, this makes perfect sense: visitors come to a site like Gettysburg to encounter the actual terrain where a pivotal event of our history took place. Gettysburg is a battlefield, not a history museum. But the current presentation at Gettysburg, perhaps the country's premier Civil War site, also exposes the problems of a "site-specific" approach.

Not surprisingly, history at Gettysburg focuses on the battle, the greatest in the history of the Western Hemisphere. What is lacking is the historical context without which the battle is incomprehensible. A great deal of attention is lavished on the maneuvers of armies, but there is no mention of what brought soldiers to Gettysburg in the first place, what, that is, they were fighting for.

Never that day did I hear the words "slave" or "slavery" spoken. Never was there a discussion of the causes of the Civil War, or the way the war's purposes had, by July 1863, been transformed by the Emancipation Proclamation. There was no mention of the black presence at Gettysburg and in the surrounding vicinity. To be sure, no black troops fought at Gettysburg, but hundreds, perhaps thousands, of black laborers—teamsters, cooks, personal servants—accompanied the two armies. Free blacks played a major role in the hasty construction of fortifications at nearby Harrisburg.

But none of this is evident in the NPS presentation.

I do not raise these issues to criticize the current managers of the Gettysburg site. More significant is how the presentation of history at Gettysburg perpetuates a series of misconceptions concerning the Civil War, long abandoned by scholars but still quite pervasive among the public at large. One is that the war was, essentially, a family quarrel among white Americans. Blacks were significant as a cause of dissension, not historical actors in their own right. Indeed, over the years, Gettysburg has become less a shrine to the Civil War than a memorial to (white) reunion—a situation sealed by the commemoration held in 1913 on the battle's 50th anniversary, which formed the emotional centerpiece of the final episode of Ken Burns' celebrated television series. In this view, the meaning of Gettysburg lies in the shared valor of the soldiers, not the issues that divided them.

The major flaw of Gettysburg, as I have indicated, lies in the failure to place the battle in any kind of historical context. Surely, without creating a comprehensive museum of Civil War history, it would be possible to include material on the war's causes, conduct, and consequences. Surely, slavery—which, as Lincoln noted in his Second Inaugural, was understood to be the war's cause by everyone who lived through the period—deserves some examination. Indeed, not only are events before the battle ignored, but so too is the Gettysburg Address itself, delivered a few months later. Lincoln's address, and the concept of the war as a "new birth of freedom" for the nation, could introduce now-neglected historical issues without sacrificing the "site-specific" imperative.

Eric Foner
DeWitt Clinton Professor of History
Columbia University

Dr. Foner is exactly on target with his observations about Gettysburg National Military Park. We have a tendency to emphasize the personal valor and sacrifice of the soldiers on both sides, without taking much time or effort to ask ourselves (or the public) why they were here. It's a traditional NPS way of being non-controversial.

There is hope for the future, however. Our new Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goal for interpretation is [to assure that] "the public understands and respects the significant events associated with the Gettysburg Campaign and their impact upon the development of the nation." We know that we have to put our interpretation of both the battle and the Gettysburg Campaign back into the context of "the causes and consequences of the Civil War." One of those causes indisputably was the institution of slavery. Reintroducing the cause, however, can be dicey (see Jim Horton's article).

Gettysburg NMP is in the midst of a planning process to build a new visitor center and museum, with completion possibly in 2003. Because of this, we will not be investing any funds in changing the current exhibits in the near term, but we will provide this context in the new museum. We will be inviting historians and educators to advise us on the interpretative design of the new museum to make sure we get it right. In the short term, we are happy to note that the Organization of American Historians will be visiting Gettysburg this spring to evaluate the park's exhibits and programs and help guide us toward our goal.

John A. Latschar
Superintendent
Gettysburg National Military Park

 CRM № 4—1998

major part of their motivation. After a close analysis of hundreds of letters he concluded that virtually all southern soldiers "took slavery for granted as part of the southern way of life for which they fought and did not feel compelled to discuss it." Apparently, Jefferson Davis had little to worry about, at least in the early years of the war. White southerners at all economic levels saw their fight as for their own liberty and place in southern society and for slavery "one and inseparable." As one infantryman put it, "[w]e are fighting for our liberty, against the North...who are determined to destroy slavery." Fears of the consequences of abolition fostered white solidarity, forming the load-bearing pillar in the foundation of Confederate nationhood.[19]

Although the defense of slavery was central to the Confederacy, the abolition of slavery was not initially the official goal of the United States or the primary concern of most of the American people. As the most respected historians of our generation have shown, Lincoln and the vast majority of Republicans sought only to limit the expansion of slavery. Most who supported this "free soil" program that would maintain the western territories for free labor, did so out of self-interest. To urban or farm workers or to northern small farmer owners, Republicans offered the possibility of cheap land devoid of competition from slave labor or even from free blacks, who faced restriction in western settlement. "Vote yourself a Farm," was the not-so-subtle Republican message to white laboring men with the understanding that the western territories, having undergone Indian removal in the 1830s and 1840s, would be racially homogeneous.[20]

Abolitionists, black and white, sincerely sought the end to slavery and accepted its geographical limitation as a step toward its inevitable demise. But although most whites in the North wanted to restrict slavery's spread, they would not have gone to war in 1861 to end it. President Lincoln understood his constituency very well and his statements on slavery were calculated to reassure white northerners as well as southern slaveholders that the U.S. government had, in his words, "no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists."[21] Indeed, Lincoln even reluctantly agreed to accept an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would have protected slavery in those states where it existed. Ohio, Maryland, and Illinois actually ratified this measure that, ironically, would have been the 13th Amendment.[22] Although this may have played well among northerners who were willing to concede protection to slavery so long as it remained in the South, slaveholders understood only too well it was not that simple.

Since most Americans saw the West as the place that would provide the vitality of national progress, to deny slaveholders access to that territory was to deny them access to America's future. Southerners took such restrictions as a direct affront to their regional honor and a threat to their social and economic survival. Georgia secessionist Robert Toombs put it succinctly: "we must expand or perish."[23] Lincoln did not have to explain that slavery had no place in the nation's future, the South was well aware that in order to save their institution of bondage they must leave the United States and that is precisely what their secession movement was calculated to do.

Thus, while northerners claimed that they meant only to restrict slavery's expansion, southerners were convinced that to restrict slavery was to constrict its life blood. This war was not about tariffs or differences in economic systems or even about state's rights, except for the right of southern states to protect slavery. Had the South been truly committed to the doctrine of state's rights they could never have supported the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. This federal law invalidated state Personal Liberty Laws in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere in the North that prohibited state officials or property from being used in the capture and return of a fugitive slave. Clearly the South was selective in its state's rights advocacy. It was not willing to stand for state's rights except to preserve its institution of slavery where it existed and where it must expand. Some southerners had argued in the 1850s for the annexation of Cuba, one of only two other remaining slave societies in the western hemisphere, as one plan for slavery's expansion. Others looked to Mexico and Latin America, but always it was about saving and inflating slavery. And while the U.S. government may not have gone to war to abolish slavery in the South, it did go to war to save the union from what it increasingly came to believe was a "slave power conspiracy" to restrict citizen liberties and finally to destroy the United States to protect slavery. U.S. determination to contain slavery in the South and to prevent its spread into the western territories was a part of the effort to preserve civil rights and free labor in the nation's future. The South was willing to destroy the union to protect slavery. It could not allow slavery's containment for, from the slaveholder's point of view, to disallow slavery's expansion was to ultimately bring about its extinction.

Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 transformed the war into a holy crusade, but there was always disagreement among U.S. troops about outright abolition. Yet, increasingly after 1863, "pro-emancipation conviction did predominate among the leaders and fight-

ing soldiers of the Union Army."[24] Regardless of whether U.S. troops fought to limit or to abolish it, however, slavery was the issue that focused their fight, just as it did for the Confederacy. A half-century after serving the Confederate cause, John Singleton Mosby, legendary leader of Mosby's Rangers, offered no apologies for his southern loyalties. He was quite candid about his reason for fighting. "The South went to war on account of slavery," he said. "South Carolina went to war—as she said in her secession proclamation—because slavery w[oul]d not be secure under Lincoln." Then he added as if to dispel all doubt, "South Carolina ought to know what was the cause of her seceding."[25]

Of course, Mosby was right. South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and the other states that seceded from the United States did know the reason for their action and they stated it clearly, time and time again. They named the preservation of slavery as foremost among their motivations. When such a wide variety of southerners—from private citizens, to top governmental officials, from low ranking enlisted men to Confederate military leaders at the highest levels, from local politicians to regional newspaper editors—all agree, what more evidence do we need? The question for Americans at the end of the 20th century is, "when will we accept their explanation?"

Notes

1 James McPherson, "The Heart of the Matter," *New York Review of Books*, (October 23, 1997), 35-36, 46-47. In addition to the books reviewed by McPherson, see Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) and David Blight, "They Knew What Time It Was," in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., *Why the Civil War Came* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 51-77.

2 The interesting question for the serious scholar of American social and cultural history is why, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, some Americans continue to believe that slavery was not an important cause of the war.

3 "Joseph E. Brown's Secessionist Public Letter, December 7, from Milledgeville," William W. Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., *Secession Debated: Georgia's Showdown in 1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 147. Reprinted from, *(The Milledgeville Weekly) Federal Union*, December 11, 1860.

4 Quoted in Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 60.

5 "Declaration of the Causes Which Induced the Secession of South Carolina," reprinted in Edwin C. Rozwenc and Wanye A. Frederick, *Slavery and the Breakdown of the American Consensus* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1964), 42-47.

6 "What Shall the South Carolina Legislature Do?," *The Charleston Mercury*, November 3, 1860.

7 Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free*, 229.

8 "An Address to the Citizens of Alabama, on the Constitution and Laws of the Confederate States of America,...at Temperance Hall, on the 30th of March, 1861," *Mobile Daily Register*, 1861, reprinted in Jon L. Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 207-209.

9 William L. Barney, *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 121.

10 *Augusta Daily Constitutionalist*, March 30, 1861, in the Gilder Lehrman Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, NY.

11 Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist; His Letters, Papers and Speeches* 10 Vols, (Jackson, Miss.: Little & Ives Company, 1923), IV, 357.

12 William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996). William Davis is convinced that slavery was the cause of secession but was not the thing for which Confederates fought.

13 Barney, *The Road to Secession*, 185.

14 Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets, Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry*, "The Perils and Duty of the South" Speech Delivered in Talladega, Alabama, November 26, 1860,44.

15 *The Kentucky Statesman*, October 5, 1869.

16 *Louisville Daily Courier*, July 27, 1861, in the Gilder Lehrman Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, NY.

17 quoted in James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994) 53.

18 quoted in James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought In The Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 108-109. This study provides overwhelming testimony from Confederate soldiers who cited the preservation of slavery as a primary concern of their service to the South.

19 McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 54; 51.

20 See for example, Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), or James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and*

Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

21 quoted in James McPherson, *Drawn With the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1996), 62.

22 This amendment was passed in the U.S. Congress. Events of March 1861 had moved too far and were advancing too fast for such an amendment to move to completion.

23 Speech delivered by Robert Toombs, November 13, 1860, Milledgeville, Georgia, reprinted in Freehling and Simpson, eds., *Secession Debate*, 40.

24 McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 64

25 "John Singleton Mosby to Samuel Chapman," Washington, D.C., June 20, 1907 (Gilder Lehrman Collection, New York, New York).

James Oliver Horton is the Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies at George Washington University and Director of the African American Communities Project of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian. He is the chair of the National Park Service Advisory Board.

I would like to thank David Blight, James McPherson, and John Latschar for reading and commenting on this article; Denise Meringolo and Michele Gates-Moresi for their assistance in its preparation; and Paul Romaine and Sandra Trenholm of the Gilder Lehrman Collection for their archival guidance.

Karen Byrne

The Remarkable Legacy of Selina Gray

Emma Gray Syphax, left and Sarah Gray Wilson, Selina Gray's daughters, assisted the U.S. Army with the restoration of Arlington House.

Among early preservationists, Selina Gray stands out as a unique and remarkable individual; yet, her name is nowhere to be found in the annals of the historic preservation movement. That Selina did not fit the prototype of the early stewards of the nation's past in no way diminishes the importance of her contributions. In fact, it is her very dissimilarity from traditional 19th-century preservationists that makes Selina's story so compelling.

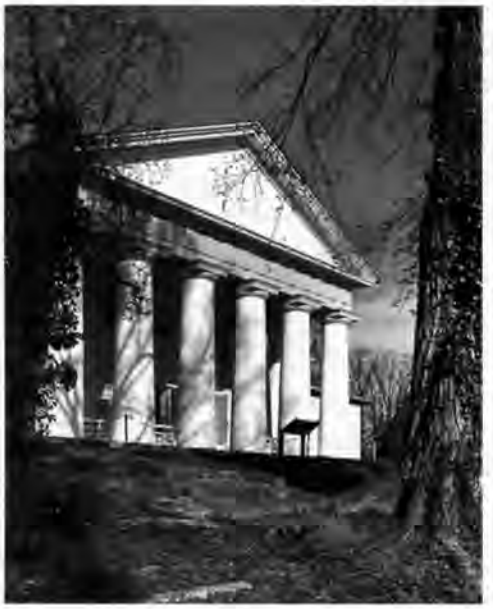
Selina Gray was one of the many slaves owned by George Washington Parke Custis. Raised at Mount Vernon, Custis was Martha Washington's grandson and the adopted son of George Washington. When Washington died in 1799, Custis inherited and purchased many of the President's possessions. After he left Mount Vernon, Custis needed a proper place to exhibit his "Washington treasury." In 1802, he finished the first wing of his new home, Arlington House.

Construction continued for another 16 years. Custis intended the house to be far more than a private home for his family. The building served as a shrine to George Washington, which made Arlington House one of the nation's earliest memorials. On display was the "Washington treasury," which included portraits, china, furniture, and even the President's war tents. Custis welcomed all visitors who wanted to view his collection of memorabilia, and thus Arlington also functioned as an early American museum.

Much of the day-to-day care of Custis' "treasury" fell to his slaves. The first generation of Arlington slaves belonged to Martha Washington and had come from Mount Vernon. They remembered and took pride in their service to and affiliation with the Washingtons. This heritage, as well as the daily responsibility for the upkeep of the Washington relics, made a significant impression on the succeeding generation of slaves, particularly Selina Gray.

The daughter of Sally and Leonard Norris, Selina was born and raised on the Arlington estate. She, as well as the other slaves, received a rudimentary education from the Custis family. From the time she was old enough to work, Selina probably trained as a house servant. Thus, from an early age, Selina was steeped in Washington apotheosis.

At least some of Custis' slaves attended one of the most important events ever to occur at Arlington. In 1831, Custis' only child, Mary Anna Randolph Custis, married Robert E. Lee, a young army lieutenant. Although no one knew it at the time, Lee's connection to the family would one day cost them their ancestral home as well as the Washington treasury.



Arlington House. Photo by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, NPS.

Over the next three decades, the lives of Mary Lee and Selina Gray became increasingly entwined. Selina eventually became Mrs. Lee's personal maid. Even before her children began to arrive, Mary Lee developed a reputation for personal untidiness, lack of punctuality, and haphazard housekeeping. She increasingly relied on Selina to maintain order within the household.

As the years passed, the two women developed a mutual respect and genuine affection for each other. When Selina married Thorton Gray, Mrs. Lee arranged to have the service performed by an Episcopal clergyman in the same room where she herself had exchanged vows with her husband. Both women presided over large families: Mary Lee gave birth to seven children and Selina bore eight. The joys and frustrations of motherhood served as another common bond between the two women.

The advent of the Civil War forever altered life at Arlington. On April 19, 1861, after more than 30 years' service in the United States Army, Robert E. Lee resigned his commission. He left Arlington shortly thereafter, and traveled to Richmond to assume command of Virginia's military forces. Lee's resignation and his service in the Confederate army caused many to view him as a traitor. His decision ultimately cost Mary Lee her family home and threatened the future of the Washington collection.

Mount Vernon bookcase from the "Washington Treasury" on display at Arlington House.

Mrs. Lee soon realized that she and her children would be forced to abandon Arlington. The house simply sat too close to the United States' capital. The family understood that the Union army would eventually occupy the 1,100-acre estate in order to help defend Washington. Few events in her lifetime grieved Mary Lee more than the loss of the place she valued "dearer than life." After she resigned herself to the inevitable, Mary Lee devised a defensive plan for her household.

Of utmost concern was the safety of the Washington artifacts. The most treasured items, such as family portraits, the President's letters and papers, as well as some of his personal effects, were packed and shipped away for safekeeping. Many of the original Mount Vernon pieces such as artwork, the Cincinnati china, knife boxes, and tea table remained at Arlington locked in the cellar, garret, and closets.

Once she had secured her treasured family heirlooms and prepared to leave, Mrs. Lee summoned Selina Gray. As she entrusted the household keys to her slave, Mrs. Lee explained to Selina that henceforth she would serve as the head of the household. Thus the responsibility for the house and all its venerable contents passed from owner to slave.

The enormity of this event cannot be overemphasized. Mary Lee's decision to place Selina in charge testified to her supreme confidence and trust in the woman's abilities. Well aware of the national significance of the vast collection that had been left in her care, Selina understood the importance of her new role. Not only did she assume the stewardship of the Lees' revered possessions, she also became the guardian of their heritage, and, in a broader sense, the heritage of the entire nation.

Both women understood the emotional ramifications of their arrangement. Selina had been a companion to Mrs. Lee for many years. Undoubtedly, Selina's company would have greatly comforted Mary Lee during her involuntary exile from her beloved home. Such a request, however, would have required Selina to abandon her husband and children. Mrs. Lee refused to ask such a sacrifice. For her part, Selina was well aware of the rumors that slaves might experience rough treatment at the hands of Federal soldiers. Yet she put aside her concerns for her own personal safety, as well as that of her family, so that she might carry out her new responsibilities.

Around May 15, 1861, the Lees left Arlington for what they hoped would be a temporary exile. Removal from her home proved most painful for Mary Lee. She had grown up at Arlington, married in one of its rooms, and given birth to six of her children in another. Both of her parents had passed away in the house. Yet, as painful as the separation was, she could draw comfort from the knowledge that her home possessed a capable and vigilant guardian. Just several weeks after the Lees' departure from Arlington, an acquaintance commented on how cheerful Mary appeared, despite having left many of her valuables behind. Such peace of mind was possible only because of

Martha Washington's knife boxes; dinner plate, Cincinnati service; and globe from the "Washington Treasury."

Selina's presence at Arlington.

For a brief time, the daily routine continued as usual on the estate. The slaves, by then the sole occupants, went about their activities under Selina Gray's supervision. Then on May 23, 1861, thousands of Federal troops marched out of Washington and into Virginia. By the end of the month, Arlington had become headquarters for the commander of the Department of Northern Virginia, Brigadier General Irwin McDowell.

The presence of the large numbers of soldiers who occupied Arlington House and its grounds proved a constant source of anxiety for Selina Gray. There was little she could do about the damage to the property. Union soldiers had constructed roads and forts and cleared most of the large forest at Arlington. Instead, Selina concentrated her efforts on the sacred possessions inside the house for which she was responsible.

For the next six months, Selina successfully executed her duties as the guardian of the family heirlooms. In December, however, she discovered that various items had disappeared from the house. Selina's daughters later recalled an incident in which their mother had witnessed looting in progress; she personally confronted the individuals and demanded that they stop their pillaging. This incident reveals several crucial characteristics about Selina: a deep-rooted sense of responsibility; her confidence and pride in her authority; and her personal courage.

After her initial discovery, Selina made a thorough investigation. To her horror, she found that the secured areas of the house had been broken into, and some of the Washington relics had been stolen. Selina, who had grown up with an appreciation for the national significance of the collection, immediately took decisive action. She informed General McDowell of the situation and impressed upon him the importance of protecting the collection from further theft.

After Selina and the other slaves identified the possessions that constituted the "Washington treasury," McDowell assumed responsibility for the collection. He arranged to have the relics transported to the Patent Office in Washington for safekeeping. They remained the property of the Federal government until 1901, when the Lee family finally regained their prized heirlooms. When Selina Gray surrendered the household keys to General McDowell, she symbolically surrendered her authority. Yet, because of her actions, the Washington artifacts have survived for posterity, some of which may still be seen at Arlington House.

Selina's accomplishments are all the more remarkable when juxtaposed with the work of other 19th-century preservationists. In the early period of the American preservation movement, the effort to save artifacts of the nation's past was carried out almost exclusively by wealthy white women. The most notable example is Ann Pamela Cunningham and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. The MVLA's success in saving Washington's home is indeed a seminal event in the history of preservation. Yet, no less important are Selina Gray's contributions to the preservation of the Washington heritage. That she succeeded on the basis of her personal convictions, in the midst of war, without the benefits of wealth or rank makes her legacy all the more compelling.

For too long Selina Gray's legacy has been overlooked. Often portrayed as merely an example of a "loyal and faithful servant" of the Lee family, Selina's slave status has obscured the true meaning of her achievements. Little is known about her life after the war. She received her freedom in 1862, and continued to live at Arlington for a number of years. Selina died in 1907, but her legacy remained alive in her daughters, who assisted the U.S. Army with restoration plans when Arlington House was designated a national memorial to Robert E. Lee. For her crucial role in the preservation of the nation's past, Selina Gray deserves a place in history.

Karen Byrne is the park historian at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial, Arlington, Virginia.

Except where noted, photos are courtesy Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial.

Hilary Russell

Frederick Douglass in Toronto

Notwithstanding his international stature and importance, very little attention has been paid to the topic of Frederick Douglass in Canada. Otherwise comprehensive and brilliant biographical treatments of Douglass contain few or no indexed references to Canada; on this side of the border, scant mention of Douglass is found in works on 19th-century African-Canadian history.

One such reference in Robin Winks' seminal *The Blacks in Canada: A History* leaves the impression that the subject is a non-starter: "Even so astute a Negro as Frederick Douglass thought that Canada was where 'the wild goose and the swan repaired at the end of winter' and not 'the home of man'." *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Volume II Canada 1830-1865* offers a slightly wider perspective on Douglass' knowledge and experiences of Canada, but this is gained only by piecing together scattered information from indexed entries; the editors attempt no overview. *The Light of Nature and the Law of God: Antislavery in Ontario 1833-1877* by Allen P. Stouffer details Douglass' first public appearance at St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto in 1851, but does not say much about his subsequent speeches in the town or the province, nor that he became entangled in Canadian controversies.

This article focuses on Douglass' visits to Toronto and his speeches in St. Lawrence Hall, a magnificent 1849 public building that has been a national historic site since 1967. These are used as a window to a broader understanding of the workings in Canada West (now Ontario) of the abolitionist movement and the underground railroad.

Drawing of St. Lawrence Hall published in the Toronto newspaper, Daily Colonist, in 1855. During the decade, the building was one of the main sites of anti-slavery activism in Toronto. Drawing courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library.

St. Lawrence Hall, King Street, Toronto, constructed in 1850 and restored to its original splendour in 1967. Frederick Douglass gave two addresses here during the 1850s, at the invitation of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada. Photo by J. P. Jerome, Parks Canada.

The First Speech: the Context

By the time Frederick Douglass addressed a large anti-slavery audience in Toronto on April 3, 1851, he was the most famous African American in the abolition movement. He had authored the most widely read and acclaimed personal memoir of American slavery, he was a sensation on the lecture circuit (especially in Great Britain), and he was the publisher and editor of an important weekly newspaper. Even so, Douglass was not the star of a week-long series of abolitionist lectures, the first and the most ambitious public events hosted by the nascent Anti-Slavery Society of Canada (ASC), formed only about six weeks earlier.

The speaker who inaugurated the series was British Garrisonian and Member of Parliament George Thompson, an international celebrity whose public record as an abolitionist was lengthier than Douglass' and who had crossed the Atlantic the previous fall to embark upon a hectic eight-month speaking tour. In his April 1 speech, in the grand ballroom of St. Lawrence Hall, Thompson recognized those ASC activists who had been his colleagues in earlier British campaigns against West Indian slavery. Among them was the Society's President, the Reverend Dr. Michael Willis, Principal of Knox Theological College, who had relocated to Toronto in 1847 from Scotland, where he, like Douglass, had vigorously opposed the Free Church's fellowship and transactions with the churches of southern slaveholders.

Thompson and Douglass were also very well known to one another. They had first shared a lecture platform in Scotland in 1846, and had done so again in upstate New York in February and March, just prior to coming to Toronto. An apparently warm and admiring relationship between the two activists would begin to erode by the following month, when Douglass openly broke with Garrisonian doctrine on the U.S. Constitution. Perhaps a hint of the later enmity between them became evident during closed-door discussions that Douglass reported as "brisk on both sides and at times warm," which served to enlighten leaders of the new Toronto organization about the perilous course that it needed to steer between the fierce animosities of the major U.S. anti-slavery organizations. Though the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law meant the need for cross-border cooperation had never been more acute, it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.

The third out-of-town abolitionist to appear with Douglass and Thompson at St. Lawrence Hall somehow managed to side-step the prevailing internecine strife. Though he was much less of a celebrity, Samuel J. May Jr., a Boston-born and Harvard-educated Unitarian clergyman stationed in Syracuse, had been an indefatigable opponent of slavery since the 1830s. Like Douglass, he was a champion of women's rights and a stalwart of the underground railroad movement who helped refugees from slavery to reach Canada West. Those who heard May's entreaty in St. Lawrence were probably not surprised to learn in the fall of 1851 that he had been a participant in the "Jerry Rescue," a dramatic community action in Syracuse that successfully challenged the application of the Fugitive Slave Law.

Another kind of violent anti-slavery action was recommended by Douglass to an assembly of refugees from slavery in Toronto on Wednesday evening, April 2. The venue is uncertain: only a few attended, reportedly due to an "imperfect notice, and some offence received at its form," and the resulting confusion about the meeting's place, time and "the conditions governing admission." Those who managed to get there may have been further disquieted to hear Douglass voice opposition to their presence in Canada. African Americans were needed at home, he said, to oppose the Fugitive Slave Law. One effective method of doing this was to make it dangerous for slavecatchers to do their work: the spilling of their blood was not much different from spilling that of bloodhounds.

The following evening, when Douglass spoke at St. Lawrence Hall (probably to a predominantly white audience), he did not argue against emigration to Canada, though he did return very briefly to the subject of a violent end being merited by those attempting to "hunt down slaves." (This statement is conveyed in the *Toronto Globe's* report, but not in the transcript of the speech in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Vol. 2*.) Historian Allen Stouffer recounts a hysterical response by the Church, a vehicle of high Anglicanism in Toronto that had formerly attacked slavery and discrimination against black refugees. In its view, "anti-Christian rantings" that branded the slaveholder as "an insatiable blood-hound," and "...advocated treating him as a "beast of prey [to be] done to death like a wolf," as Douglass had called for, ...were a disgrace, transforming noble Britannia, the symbol of 'virtuous liberty' into a 'savage gore-soaked thug.'"

Toronto and St. Lawrence Hall, 1851

Douglass evidently did not encounter such hostility at St. Lawrence Hall on April 3. A cheering crowd of 1,200 filled the grand ballroom, and listened with rapt attention for more than two hours as he expounded on the cruel evils of American slavery, referenced some personal experiences, and spelled out the control this institution exerted over the U.S. Government and the complicity of Northerners and the Church in its maintenance. In the main, his "Appeal to Canada" could have been delivered anywhere; only fleeting references were made to his locale. Douglass argued that slavery corrupted not only "the nation in which it existed" but the "nations by which it was surrounded."

He had come to Canada to counteract lies told abroad by slaveholders and to represent "three millions in chains" who "cannot come here." Because "the moral power of the world around us" was needed to "strike down slavery," he asked his audience "...for the influence which you can exert for freedom in your intercourse with the people of the United States."

In his speech, George Thompson had remarked that Toronto was a "beautiful, improving and important city." Its grand new place of public assembly on King Street testified to this. The construction of St. Lawrence Hall had been completed only four months earlier, but the building was well on its way to becoming Toronto's "chief social and cultural centre." Designed by local architect William Thomas, its lower levels accommodated retail and offices, while its third-floor grand ballroom or Great Hall, beautifully decorated and chandeliered, hosted assemblies, lectures, balls, and concerts. According to an 1858 guide to Toronto, this room was 100' long, 38' 6" wide, and 36' high, with a gallery "at the entrance end." Further, it was "easily filled by the voice," and produced "no echo to mar the performance." The grand ballroom was evidently an ideal location for

The Great Hall, seen before its restoration. In 1851 and 1854, Torontonians crowded into this large third-floor assembly and ball room, the raison d'être of St. Lawrence Hall, to listen to Frederick Douglass. From St. Lawrence Hall, 1969.

the April 1851 lectures, the first to be held in the building.

By 1851, the population of Toronto was about 30,000; between 500 and 1,000 were of African descent. Though the latter encountered racial hostilities and discrimination, during that decade they seem to have met with less segregation and fewer incidents of violence than were reported in other centres in the province. The efforts of the *Globe* probably contributed to this atmosphere, as did the vigilance of prosperous local blacks like Wilson Ruffin Abbott, Dr. Alexander T. Augusta, Thomas Smallwood, and John T. Fisher.

Aftermath

St. Lawrence Hall maintained its early association with the anti-slavery cause. It became the site of the annual meetings of the ASC, along with fund-raisers and other assemblies that forwarded the cause of abolition and racial uplift.

The lecture series in which Douglass participated in April 1851 may have left the impression that the ASC was working hand-in-glove with the most prominent abolitionists in the United States and Britain, and was on the threshold of achieving great importance in the world. The Society did not live up to this promise, though its leaders were spurred to consequential action in the province from time to time—most notably to prevent the rendition to slavery of John Anderson during an extradition case in 1860 that riveted abolitionists and governments in three countries, and, like no other, focused Canadian attention on the runaways from slavery in their midst.

Still, the ASC's hosting of these famous visitors in 1851 probably helped to forge links across the border for the abolitionist cause. Opportunities to make use of these connections were presented in the fall of that year, after two spectacularly unsuccessful attempts to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. In September, William Parker, the hero of the Christiana Rebellion in Pennsylvania, arrived at Douglass' home in Rochester, and was sent on (via Kingston, Canada West) to Toronto. There, Parker reported that the ASC had supplied him with some aid, and Dr. Willis had provided a loan and a letter of introduction to the Reverend William King in Buxton. In October, Samuel Ringgold Ward, under indictment for his role in the Jerry Rescue, arrived in Toronto with letters of introduction from Samuel May. For the next two years, Ward served as an agent of the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society and its most important activist.

Other contacts that Douglass incubated during the April 1851 visit probably included the Toronto Ladies' Association for the Relief of Destitute Coloured Refugees, an independent body formed in May by women with close family ties to ASC leaders. In early June 1854, this Association's fund-raising efforts on behalf of *The Frederick Douglass Papers* would trigger the sharp criticism of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, publisher and editor of the Toronto-based *Provincial Freeman*, a black newspaper founded in Canada West in 1853.

A Grand League of Freedom?

In June 1854, the editor of the *Provincial Freeman* was infuriated to discover that a fund raiser planned for her financially strapped weekly had to compete with a bazaar at St. Lawrence Hall to benefit Douglass' Rochester paper, one she considered to be much better supported by subscriptions, annual bazaars, and private patronage. Her editorial heaped scorn on "Miss Julia Griffiths ... an English lady...and assistant in the office of Frederick Douglass' Paper," and pointedly asked: "How is it that the wire workers of a paper opposed to emigration to Canada are making arrangements to hold a Bazaar for its support in the country? Are the abolitionists of Canada, or rather of the Toronto Society, opposed to free colored people coming into the Province to settle? And are these the initiatory steps to a public endorsement of Anti-emigrationist views?"

Douglass declined to express his anti-emigrationist convictions when he crowned the Toronto bazaar and the ASC's annual meeting with his presence, delivering two more speeches at St. Lawrence Hall on June 21 and 22, 1854. Instead, he expounded on the theme "Bound Together in a Grand League of Freedom" to a "large and enthusiastic" gathering on June 21. They cheered his introductory remarks on Canadians as "a free people" who were not implicated "in any way" in slavery, and who had made "the great principles of the Anti-Slavery movement" part of their institutions, their thoughts, and their literature. Douglass went on to explain in fairly familiar terms why he was calling upon the citizens of Toronto and "the subjects of a monarchy" to "meddle with the question"

Continued on p. 27

Escape to Canada

While Douglass argued against African-American emigration, from his home in Rochester, New York, he helped dozens threatened with prison and enslavement to cross the Canadian border. Harriet Tubman, Jermain Loguen, and Hiram Wilson were among his main collaborators in this cause in the 1850s. At one time or another, all lived in St. Catharines, Canada West, a town not far from Niagara Falls and about 80 miles from Rochester.

Douglass was very unpleasantly surprised, in October 1859, to find that he had to make use of clandestine routes and Canadian contacts to make his own escape across the border because he was under threat of indictment for treason for his supposed role in John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. He briefly returned to Toronto during this period of forced exile, the *Toronto Globe* noting his presence on November 8:

> Mr. Frederick Douglass, of Rochester, passed through Toronto yesterday on his way to Quebec, from which place he sails for England on Saturday in the *Nova Scotian*. He has been engaged to go to England for some time, and his present visit, therefore, is not the result of the late Harpers Ferry insurrection. It is a fact, however, that United States officials visited Rochester for the purpose of arresting him, and it is, perhaps, just as well that he will be absent for a time. The friends of the slave in Canada will wish him God speed wherever he goes.

Diligent *Globe* readers already knew that Douglass was in the province: his "Open Letter from Canada West," dated October 31, had been published in the paper on November 4, and confirmed a November 2 *Globe* report which contained other details:

> FREDERICK DOUGLASS.—The whereabouts of this individual has been a matter of talk since the Harpers Ferry insurrection. We are assured that he was in Canada, near Suspension Bridge [Niagara Falls] a day or two since, and there intimated to a Rochester gentleman that he thought it was best for him to remain where he was for the present. We do not believe that any attempt will be made to take Douglass out of the State of New York, to answer for anything he may have done in relation to the late insurrection.

The name "F. Douglas" appeared in the *Globe's* list of cabin passengers embarking for Liverpool, England on November 12 from the port of Quebec, Canada East, on the Royal Mail steamer *Nova Scotian*. Most of his first-class travelling companions were from Quebec City; five came from Toronto, one from Ottawa, and a family of six from Hamilton. "From Clifton" appeared beside Douglass' name. This was also the provenance that Douglass penned on a letter he wrote to Rochester on October 27. Clifton has been misconstrued by some Douglass biographers as Clifton, New Brunswick, not far from Bathurst and about 800 miles from Rochester. Did he have to flee as far away as this to stay out of the clutches of U.S. authorities?

In fact, he did not. Clifton is the former name of what is now Niagara Falls, Ontario. Even under indictment for treason and easily recognizable, Douglass initially appears to have gone no farther from the border than a mile or two from the Suspension Bridge. The reach of the slave power may not have been as long as many think.

Hilary Russell

PASSENGERS

Per steamship *Nova-Scotian*, Robt Borland, master, 5th voyage from Quebec for Liverpool, Nov. 12th :—From Quebec –Capt Reeve, Lieut Allan, Dr Sewell, Miss C Sewell, Miss J Sewell, Mr Berrill, Alex McFarlane, W T Cresp, Mrs Cresp, Mrs H Ireland. From Montreal—Mr Wm Brown, Mr R Balmer, Mr M Newton, Mrs Harris, Miss Hill, Mr Brandin, Mrs Brandin and child, Mr Hester, Mrs Hester. From Toronto—Mrs Horne, Mr H Duncan, Mrs Duncan and infant, Mr Taborner. From Clifton—F Douglas. From Hamilton—Mr J B Watts, Mrs Watts and 4 children. From Ottawa—Mr C C Henderson—30 cabin and 42 steerage, 50 soldiers of 100th Regt, 2 do 39th, and 1 do 17th Regt—Total 128 passengers.

Montreal Ocean Steamship Company.

WEEKLY LINE

Of Steamers Sailing every Saturday from Quebec to Liverpool.

THE ROYAL MAIL STEAMSHIP

"NOVA SCOTIAN,"

BORLAND, Commander,

WILL SAIL FROM QUEBEC FOR LIVERPOOL, on

Saturday, the 12th November.

Through fares from Toronto, (reduced rates) :—

First Cabin, $72 @ $88, according to accommodation.

Steerage..... $34.

Steerage passengers are found with cooked provisions, but have to provide themselves with bed and bedding, and eating and drinking utensils. No berth secured until paid for.

N.B.—Passage Certificates and Return Tickets are also issued.

For passages, &c., apply to:

JOHN GLASS,

9 Toronto Exchange, Wellington street.

Toronto, Nov. 4, 1859. 2959-8t

of American slavery, and ended with a warning about the slave power's ambition to subjugate the entire continent.

Mary Ann Shadd Cary was not impressed. She opined in her paper on June 24 that Douglass' oratorical effort had not met the crowd's high expectations nor the standard of his last speech in Toronto. She went on to generalize about speakers who lived in the United States who were unable to adapt their remarks to "a Canadian or British audience." In this circumstance, she thought "great genius" was required to "determine the subjects most suitable to dwell upon"; in its absence, "residence and observation are imperatively necessary."

On the platform with Douglass at St. Lawrence Hall were two white residents of the province whom he had encountered elsewhere. One was the Reverend William King, denounced by Douglass during his 1845 campaign against the Free Church in Edinburgh because he was a slaveholder (through his American wife). Since then, the Presbyterian divine had become an emancipator and the founder of the much applauded Elgin Settlement in Buxton, a refuge for runaways from slavery. The other familiar face on the platform belonged to John Scoble, the former Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in England, who had met Douglass at the Liberty Party Convention in Buffalo in 1851, if not in Britain. Scoble had moved to Canada West in 1852, where he had taken charge of Dawn, another utopian black settlement not far from Buxton, but one mired in bitter controversy.

That evening, Scoble and King may have invited Douglass to visit their communities, some 175 miles southwest of Toronto, during their upcoming British Emancipation celebrations. Douglass may have taken some convincing, since he did not generally approve of separate black communities and institutions, and a busy Ohio trip was looming. He could not have anticipated the bad press that would result from his visit to Dawn and his later article about it, nor could he have suspected that the wily Scoble wanted to make use of one of the greatest African Americans of the time for his own malignant ends.

An Insoluble Conundrum

The Provincial Freeman's critique of him notwithstanding, Douglass followed his visit to Toronto with a June 30 article in his paper entitled "The Coloured People of Canada." Mary Ann Shadd Cary responded editorially, expressing deep offence at the article's presumption and tone, aiming sarcastic barbs at "would-be leaders of Canadians, living in the United States," and referring to "...the law, as recently promulgated from the tripod by a high priest—whose energy we admire, though our conscience will not assent to his measures, that is, to look through his spectacles to see our people in Canada and the U.S. through his interests."

In August, Douglass became more deeply enmeshed in Canadian issues. He attempted to defuse criticism of Scoble during an acrimonious meeting at Dawn, made what Victor Ullman described as a "public apology" to King in St. Andrew's Church in Buxton, and offered "Advice to My Canadian Brothers and Sisters" to a large racially mixed audience in the Court House in Chatham. On his return to Rochester, he published an article about Dawn that praised Scoble.

These actions triggered even more vehement criticisms in the columns of the *Provincial Freeman*. One of Scoble's main antagonists raged against Douglass for having "the impudence" to enter the controversy, and for trying to help Scoble neutralize his opposition. The writer went so far as to suggest that Douglass was "...a foreigner who knows nothing of our grievances in this matter, only as so far as he is informed by designing parties, who desire to enlist him in a crusade against the colored people in this country, and he seems willing enough to do their dirty work for filthy lucre's sake."

Douglass may have later regretted his naive support for the misanthropic and unpopular Scoble, who was later charged with mismanagement and successfully sued by Dawn trustees. In any event, though Douglass returned to the province to lecture, he was probably more reticent about intervening in burning issues that were peculiar to the African-Canadian experience.

Arguably, what he saw and heard in Canada West posed insoluble conundrums for Douglass. He could not wholeheartedly share in and celebrate the successes and dreams of black refugees in Canada, given the fact that he did not want them to be there at all. If they prospered, this would encourage others to cross the border, thus tightening the grip of slavery and proscription on those left behind and furthering the aims of colonizationists. On the other hand, Douglass did not want the refugees to do badly. Not only were they his "brothers and sisters," but they needed to thrive in Canada to sustain his cherished beliefs in the Yankee origins of prejudice against black people and in the redemptive and empowering consequences of freedom and equality under the law.

Hilary Russell will soon be leaving her position of historian at Parks Canada, which she has held since 1970. Her research interests will remain black history, women's history, architectural history, and material history.

Muriel Crespi

Local Pasts in National Programs

Interpreting slavery challenges parks to confront the echoes of divisive pasts. Recent ethnographic work highlighted this at Cane River Creole National Historical Park (CARI), a new National Park Service plantation unit in Natchitoches Parish, northwest Louisiana. Plantation parks elsewhere probably face similar challenges, especially when their neighbors include the plantations' white owners and their former tenants. Some tenants, identified partly by French surnames, are called, and call themselves, Creoles of Color. Others, with surnames described as "American," are called, and call themselves, black people, although youth sometimes prefer "African American." Not only were black people and Creoles of Color former sharecroppers or laborers, many were born at the plantations and trace their ancestry to slave families.

Each group's perspective on park programs necessarily resonates with their diverse experiences. The park is also, in a sense, "in their face"; that is, it incorporates nearby public and private spaces, including former residences, gardens and work areas, that local white, black, and Creole people had used and culturally defined as theirs. In these circumstances, creating public programs that clearly respect everyone's concerns about their pasts and identities, and the interrelationships the groups have negotiated, assumes exciting but almost formidable dimensions.

Regionally different views on slavery, say between southerners and northerners, introduce more complexities. Still others may reflect scholarly debate, uncertainties about the information park visitors should receive and the techniques for delivering it, difficult choices among competing views of the past, and the reconciliation of disparate views so that local concerns are conveyed while regional and national visitors are effectively served. But it was interest in the community members' perceptions of their own pasts and interpretive suggestions that led the park manager and planners to request a rapid ethnographic survey. Some findings follow, drawn primarily on my work the summers of 1996 and 1997. Dayna Lee and Susan Dollar of Northwestern State University and Allison Pena of Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve also worked on the 1996 project. In 1997, Allison Pena, Larry Van Horn of the NPS Denver Service Center, and Sherri Lawson Clark of the Cultural Resources National Program Center in Washington were involved.

Sections of two plantations comprise the park's resource base, the farm buildings and 19th-century brick slave quarters that later housed tenant laborers at Magnolia, and the creole-style big house, farm buildings and quarters that later housed sharecroppers at Oakland. The landscapes and people's earlier distribution on it reflected political, economic, and social traditions so that the "big house" or control center which dominated the landscape was separated physically and symbolically from the tenant areas and outbuildings by gardens and tree-lined avenues. White owners occupied the big house and, until mechanization prompted the final rural exodus in the 1960s, black people lived in the quarters, and black people or Creoles of Color occupied sharecropper houses. Oakland's last overseers were also Creoles of Color. Former residents speak of the relatively friendly relationships that existed across class or ethnic lines in the small plantation communities. Even now, chance encounters of plantation and worker families in town or the countryside might still bring cordial greetings and both face and name recognition on the part of the plantation owner.

Plantation owners and former tenants, and other Natchitoches residents shared their insights on interpretive topics, especially slavery. Responses varied somewhat with age, plantation ties, and ethnicity or class. Some Creoles of Color, white, and black people, without direct ties to the plantation communities, thought no interpretation was possible without discussing slavery as a feudal system, a pragmatic business arrangement for agricultural production, or an inequitable dehumanizing institution. Some people, directly linked to the plantations, thought a combined feudal-market model was acceptable.

Other white and black people, and some Creoles of Color, closely associated with the park found slavery a nearly tabu subject. Discomfort about the past and distrust about approaches outsiders might take, sometimes coupled with anger and hurt, and the reticence community members expressed signaled the topic's continuing emotional hold. This was true especially, but not only for older people.

Although some black people said "no brutalizing" occurred at the plantations, and one woman from the area spoke proudly about her slave ancestors, others recalled the emotional pain and bitterness that kept their parents and grandparents from speaking of slavery or its immediate aftermath. White people closely associated with the plantation said little about that era, but described the subsequent family struggles to maintain a viable agricultural enterprise despite crop infestations and failures, and financial disasters. Most people, regardless of class or ethnicity, preferred interpretive programs emphasizing "our times," events of the present century, the times they remembered and often enthusiastically described.

Despite their initial reluctance, people came to agree that slavery was a legitimate interpretive topic, but not as the major or single focus. Slavery was acceptable for public discussion only if presented as one phase in a historical sequence that ran from the plantations' start through responses to new technologies and transformations from traditional enterprises to the presently mechanized commercial farming operation. Nor should plantation agriculture be the exclusive emphasis. Creole people want their family and community strengths covered. Black people proposed highlighting their own advancement as a community from slavery through tenancy to positions as successful entrepreneurs, professionals, and homeowners. Change had affected white accommodations too so that today's plantation family members are educators and other professionals, businessmen, and managers.

All people saw their respective religious institutions as lynch pins of community and cultural survival. Local people want visitors to understand the dynamic qualities of their lives, and know that rural and urban roles and positions, especially as related to the political economy, have been recreated and renegotiated over the past century. In this sense, NPS is being asked to contextualize past events in terms of political, demographic, economic, etc., conditions. Slavery is not viewed so much as an isolated episode, or statement about morality or the lack of it, or reflections of peoples' inherent abilities, but rather as one of a series of responses to regional and national conditions. If NPS must speak of slavery, one person said, "... then get into it and get out," because the people associated with slavery have moved on too.

Concern also surfaced about managing hurt and anger in public. As one black man noted "... we must talk about the past with compassion because hardships were suffered by everyone, black and white..." and NPS must "...end the story where it comes out now. Even if things may not be the way everybody wants them, they still progressed to a degree." Being forced to revisit the pain will be difficult, one black woman observed, but if the NPS is to discuss those days "the lord will show you how to talk about this in a way that doesn't offend people, but to speak as necessary, not to hurt people or create pain, but to make them understand more." One benefit black and Creole people saw in interpreting plantation history—their history—was documentation and perpetuation of their own past, "preserving the memories of our people from generation to generation." It seemed particularly attractive as a mechanism for educating youth who might not either know or were in danger of forgetting their peoples' past struggles.

Still, black people cautioned NPS against trivializing their past, specifically, not to mimic or mock slaves by having people dress as old mammies, speak like they think slaves must have sounded, or act the way they think slaves did. The language of slavery also drew comment with regard to "slave quarters." Blacks and whites preferred just "quarters" because the houses were occupied successively by different categories of workers. Former tenant laborers asserted the need to "make it clear that we were not slaves."

The transformation of local plantation society had been ritually crystallized in the celebration of June 19, the day celebrated as freedom day, Emancipation Proclamation Day. Although it was January 1, 1863, when the Emancipation Proclamation actually took effect, June 19 is the day news of it supposedly reached Louisiana. Well into this century black people observed the day as their own, often with the support of plantation owners who gave tenant laborers food—perhaps a steer for barbecuing—and time for celebration at family and church gatherings. In this sense, the event marked a redefining of black and white roles and the realignment of local relationships in general. During the past decades, the June 19 celebration had lapsed, replaced partially by the reuniting of dispersed families and festivities for July 4, which came to be seen as everyone's Independence Day. Efforts to revive the event are evident now, perhaps with new meaning assigned to it. Meanwhile, the old celebrations of June 19 remains, as one elderly woman remarked, a time a person could say "I'm free, I'm free."

Muriel (Miki) Crespi is a cultural anthropologist in the NPS National Center for Cultural Resources Stewardship and Partnerships Programs. She is the NPS national coordinator for park ethnography.

Ronald L. F. Davis

The Natchez Court Records Project

In 1991, the Natchez National Historical Park contracted with me to write a historical study of the African-American experience in Natchez, Mississippi, from 1720 to 1880. I was awarded this contract because of previous experience researching Natchez social and economic history. That contractual agreement resulted in *The Black Experience in Natchez, Mississippi, 1720 -1880* published by Eastman publishers in 1992, and it also changed my life as a scholar and teacher of southern history.

Briefly told, the Park contract coincided with an educational venture based upon the idea of taking my graduate seminar at California State University at Northridge to research the history of the Old Natchez District in the National Archives in Washington, DC. With the contract in mind, I redesigned my seminar to focus on materials at southern archives in Louisiana and Mississippi, with hands-on research in the historical records located in the county records office in Natchez, Mississippi. In the spring of 1992, I led a group of 12 graduate students to work in the Natchez records, stopping first at Louisiana State University, followed by three days of work in Natchez, and ending with research at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi.

While working in Natchez, I noticed that many of the court records that I had used in my previous research were no longer shelved in the public records room of the county courthouse. Mary Miller, the educational director and historical preservationist of the Historic Natchez Foundation, suggested that the missing records were probably locked away somewhere in the basement of the courthouse. Upon investigating, we found four damp and foul-smelling rooms filled with an incredible treasure trove of legal documents. Three rooms contained several thousand bound ledger volumes, and a third room, much to my astonishment, held massive steel cabinets filled with nearly 100,000 manuscript legal cases (civil and criminal litigation) dating from the Spanish period through the 1940s. Most of the land records involving sales, inheritance, and probate were still housed in the reading rooms accessible to lawyers and the general public.

Understanding the historical value of these basement materials, it was clear that something had to be done not only to rescue these records but also to preserve and use them for historical research. Natchez, Mississippi had functioned as the very center of the slave-plantation economy of the lower Mississippi River Valley on the eve of the Civil War. Its slave market was the second largest in the lower South, and the town's immediate environs was home to some of the wealthiest planters in the nation. Occupied shortly after the fall of Vicksburg by Union forces in the summer of 1863, the town survived the war as a federal garrison. Nearly 3,000 African-American troops (mostly ex-slaves in the area) had patrolled its streets, staffed its Union-built fort, and dominated much of the surrounding countryside. Thousands of other slaves, mostly women and children, had flocked to the town only to be relocated to Union controlled plantations as wage hands or to refugee holding depots. Many thousands of these slave refugees had died in Natchez area contraband camps from infectious diseases and sickness during the war years.

After the Civil War, the town functioned as a stronghold of Republican politics, sending Hiram Revels to Washington, DC, as one of the nation's first black senators. He occupied the U. S. Senate position last held by Jefferson Davis. The community's population of antebellum free blacks, some of whom had owned slaves, survived the war to become the basis for a successful black political machine that was persevered until the late 1890s. Republican carpetbaggers, defeated Confederate veterans, war widows, thousands of freed men and women, and a new class of merchants and lawyers struggled to gain political and economic ascendancy in the turbulent years from 1870 to 1900. By 1900, a new caste system of race relations defined by sharecropping, Jim Crowism, and debt peonage had settled itself firmly upon the District. Much of the social and economic history that accompanied the changes described above lay within the aged manuscripts then rotting away in the basement of the Adams County courthouse.

Most immediately, the materials would have to be relocated, sorted, organized, and cleaned. The first task was accomplished with grants from the Adams County Board of Supervisors, California State University at Northridge, and the Natchez National Historical Park. These three support groups helped to underwrite some of the expenses for bringing to Natchez in the summer of 1992 a

team of California graduate student interns to physically relocate and do an initial cleaning of the records. Ronald Miller, the director of the Historic Natchez Foundation, which is housed in a turn-of-the century school building, agreed to make available several classrooms in the Foundation building for temporary storage and use as workrooms for handling the documents. The Natchez National Historical Park supported the project by offering internship certification to the students, assistance with acid-free archival supplies, staff support, and the use of Park vehicles for transportation. Additionally, the staff of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History helped in the supervision of the students' work by means of seminars and other on-site assistance in the preservation and handling of aged historical documents. Mary Miller, of the Historic Natchez Foundation, served as the project's co-director and invaluable resource person.

By the end of the summer of 1992, all of the records had been relocated to the Historic Natchez Foundation, partly with the help of a team of prison trustees assigned to us by the Adams County Sheriff. For three intensive weeks, the students cleaned, sorted, cataloged, filed, and indexed 1,100 bound volumes, wrapping them in acid-free paper for temporary storage. These oversized volumes are diverse in character, ranging from minute books for the various county and municipal courts, records of judgments, court execution and sheriff dockets, chattel mortgage record books, land rolls, marriage records, naturalization ledgers, appraisement ledgers, poll registration books, tax ledgers, index books, and other materials related to civil and criminal litigation. The monumental task of opening the aged cartons containing the actual court cases was postponed for the following summer.

Beginning in the summer of 1993, and running through each consecutive summer thereafter, teams of graduate students have returned to Natchez to work in the historical court records—including six interns from the the University of Southern Mississippi in the summer of 1997. In 1996 and 1997, the Department of the Interior awarded substantial grants, authored by the Superintendent of the Natchez National Historical Park, Robert Dodson and myself, to the Historic Natchez Foundation for the continuation of our work. These funds, which were supplemented by monies allocated to the project from California State University at Northridge, enabled the records project to proceed in a timely fashion.

Working in the Historic Natchez Foundation building, each member of the student team assumed the responsibility of removing the case documents from dirty acidic, high-pulp wrappers, cleaning and flattening the handwritten manuscripts, assessing their historical significance, documenting contents, interpreting the information with key questions and references in mind, and placing the papers in acid-free file folders for storage in acid-free boxes. Most of the old packages had not been touched since their insertion in sets of metal file drawers in the 1890s. Almost none of them had been opened since their original court dates, ranging from 1798 to the 1940s.

The bulk of the cases were debt related, but most packages (typically holding a dozen cases with several hundred manuscripts therein) contained litigation dealing with the vast complexity of life in the old South. Students processed cases involving Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, slave traders, kidnapped slaves petitioning for their freedom, manumissions, prostitution, murder, rape, orphans, divorces, riots, arson, fraud, larceny, and much more. (Among our most interesting finds was Jefferson Davis' marriage certificate.)

Crucial to the assessment process was the use of a data sheet on which students comment on the particulars of each case. Once the materials were accurately interpreted and preserved, information contained on the forms was then entered into a computer program designed by Ronald Miller for the retrieval and integration of the information. By summer's end 1997, the students had logged in most of the cases for the Territorial period, 1803-1817, as well as numerous sample cases for each of the following decades. The completed case documents are now archived in several large, dry record vaults in the lower level of the building, rooms once used for school records that are well suited for holding the documents on a temporary basis.

In addition to processing and archiving the documents, the student interns research the legal records as part of their formal seminar assignment. The typical week's schedule allows time for individual research in the evening and on select research days. Nearly 60 student interns have participated in the program, producing essays on subjects that cover a range of social, political, cultural, economic, and military history.

Many of the students conduct oral history interviews with local people, ranging from the descendants of District slaves to the offspring of the most prominent families in the area. In the summer of 1997, for example, one student (Ben Brenner) worked with a local African-American doctor, the son of sharecroppers, who now operates a medical clinic in town. The doctor drives a white pick-up truck that sports a signature license plate which reads "ex-slave." Some of his ancestors were three prominent free black women, whom popular history has relegated to having

been prostitutes with no clear evidence in support of the allegation. My student explored the history of that legend in the legal records, concluding that much of the allegation possibly stemmed from the professional jealously of a racist, white doctor who felt threatened by the successful midwifery practice of the Kyle women.

Another student uncovered a set of public school records in the court materials, detailing the history of segregation in 19th-century Natchez. She (Caren Sebok) developed a project researching black teachers at the turn-of-the-century, interviewing in the process elderly members of the community who were related to some of the teachers or had been their students. Other students worked on subjects ranging from the genteel women of a prominent Victorian-era banking family to descendants of free black property owners, Jewish merchants, crime in the 1820s compared to the 1890s, law enforcement in Civil War Natchez, the Natchez economy of the 1830s, vernacular architecture, sharecropping debts, slave trials, the elite Catholic families of Old Natchez, early newspaper editors, and more.

One of our most successful students, Joyce Broussard, presently the Archivist and Director of Special Collections at Dickinson College (and who also assisted me as coordinator of the conferences and the summer internships), developed her work in the records into a Ph.D dissertation at the University of Southern California, entitled "Female Solitaires: Women Alone in the Lifeworld of Mid-Century Natchez, 1850 - 1880." Another student, Leslie Smithers, is completing her Ph.D. studies at Purdue University, working on a dissertation dealing with the public and private gardens of the Old Natchez District. Thomas Scarborough, to give just one last example of many, is doing a dissertation at the University of California at Santa Barbara on the federal control of abandoned and leased lands in the Old Natchez District during the the Civil War.

The Biennial Historic Natchez Conference

A key component of the Natchez Project is the Biennial Historic Natchez Conference, which grew out of our preservation work in the courthouse records. In 1993, the Natchez National Historical Park, in cooperation with the Historic Natchez Foundation, endorsed the idea of a special conference featuring presentations by scholars who have worked in those southern archives holding significant collections of Natchez related materials. The response was immediate and positive. We held the initial conference in 1994, involving 20 scholars of national acclaim and several dozen graduate students from around the nation, including 15 student interns. The conference attracted nearly 300 registered participants. We held the second conference in 1996, with similar success; and the third conference was scheduled for February of 1998.

The Gandy Exhibit

A second offshoot of the courthouse records project was a wonderfully successful exhibit sponsored by the National Park Service, the Historic Natchez Foundation, and California State University at Northridge in Los Angeles, California 1995. The exhibit grew out of our association with Joan and Thomas H. Gandy, who opened their collection of 19th-century photographs to our students for research. Typically, the Gandys invite the student interns to informal workshops in their antebellum home, Myrtle Banks, and the students are always astounded by what they observe: filing boxes full of old glass plate negatives and dozens of beautifully restored and interpreted 19th-century photographs.

Future Plans

As of this writing, we have an established archives in Natchez in which all of the 19th-century over-sized ledgers (1,100 volumes) have been cleaned, wrapped, and cataloged. The territorial-era volumes, moreover, have been indexed for every entry and are now being entered into a computer data bank. Approximately 20% of the 100,000 court cases have also been cleaned, processed, and safely placed in acid-free storage materials. These cases have been indexed and interpreted with the information entered into a computer data bank. Both sets of information will be published in a usable guide to the records in the coming months. We have three large vaults suitable for records storage that have been cleaned and properly arranged with cabinets and archival accessories by our students over the last three summers.

What remains, of course, is to process the remaining 80% of the court cases and to index the remaining volumes for the 19th century, some 950 volumes. In addition, we still have to clean, preserve, catalog, and wrap another 500 volumes of ledger books for the first 30 years of the 20th century. These large volumes have been stored in the upstairs rooms of the historic school building in which we are working. And the same is true for a vast number of early-20th-century court cases that run from 1900 to the 1960s, including the invaluable materials dealing with the Civil Rights era of Mississippi history.

An Interpretive Lens

My approach to working with the student interns draws upon our use of the legal records to illuminate the so-called lifeworld experiences commonly shared by Natchez individuals in the daily routines of life. Our research challenges and inves-

tigates the notion that individuals within the Natchez lifeworld were guided in their everyday experiences by social recipes for getting around in a social milieu totally and completely dependent upon slavery. It is a conceptual framework that sees the Civil War as disruptive of a particular lifeworld that privileged slave-owning white males over all other individuals, especially blacks, women, and marginalized white men.

Most importantly, our work in the preservation and interpretation of the legal records of the Natchez environs has provided the National Park Service at Natchez with a wealth of documentation for its interpretive work in the community. We have uncovered tremendous amounts of information about the law of slavery as it was played out in the courthouse and on the streets; about the character of the free-black community of Natchez; about the manifestations and institutionalization of white male dominance over women and children in the family and about the extension of that dominance over women in Natchez society in general; about the everyday workings of Natchez life; about the meaning of mastery as a paternalistic ideology that often softened the more brutal aspects of the Natchez patriarchy; about the material character of Natchez society—from buildings, pathways, and burial grounds to the corner life of its courthouse scene over time; about the impact of the Civil War on the physical and cultural character of the place; about the transition from slavery to sharecropping; about the political culture of post-reconstruction Natchez as reflected in civil and criminal litigation; about the legalistic connections between the private and public worlds of Natchez residents over time; and about the linkage of long-dead Natchezians of all races and both genders with the present as reflected in the institutionalization of their history in the public domain.

What remains to be accomplished, along with the continuation of our work in the preservation and interpretation of the legal records, is the infusion of our interpretive work into the public messages presented by the National Park Service in Natchez. The basis for this infusion has already been set in place due to the attentiveness of the Park Service in Natchez, under the direction of Superintendent Bob Dodson, to the interpretive promise offered by the court records project. But much of the Park's work up to the present has been consumed by the time-demanding task of doing site restoration and by the type of historical analysis that emphasizes material culture over lifeworld analysis and site interpretation over the larger contextual realm of social and economic history.

With much of the material and site interpretive analysis of Natchez Park properties now in hand, the time is ripe for the Park Service to turn its attention to the meaningful integration of our work in the legal records, the conferences, and the various publications into the ongoing interpretive messages presented to the public. What is needed is a broadening of the Park's interpretive agenda to include within its emphasis on material culture and site interpretation the larger social context of slavery and the Natchez world that it created.

This goal can best be achieved by a series of tutorial workshops aimed at informing Park staff about the insights revealed in the documents. Additionally, by integrating the staff more closely into the records project in hands-on experiences with the documents, Park personnel will come to have a personal stake in the ongoing presentation of the interpretive essays that flow from the project in study guides, interpretive publications, and resource pieces for use by the Park staff and the public at large. Finally, perhaps now is the time to include within the Park's agenda projects that bring the public more into contact with the Natchez court records and Park sites in joint educational ventures such as Natchez exposure seminars, a summer institute in southern legal history, and genealogical workshops in African-American history and the Natchez historical scene.

Thanks to the tremendous support offered by the Natchez National Historical Park, the Historic Natchez Foundation, and the California State University at Northridge, we have in the Court Records Project the unique fusion of federal, state, and local agencies in the preservation and interpretation of a significant historical place. The next step is to more directly integrate the historical social context that is so dramatically revealed in the court records, seminar papers, and conference presentations into the interpretive messages carried by the Natchez National Historical Park and the Historic Natchez Foundation. Although Natchez was not just a lifeworld driven and defined by slavery and the social upheaval that accompanied its finial demise, it was that above all else. This is the message clearly revealed in the court records, and this should be the interpretive thrust of the stories being told to the public at large. To do anything less is to distort the history of a significant southern place that was once known as the Old Natchez District.

Ronald L. F. Davis is a professor at California State University at Northridge.

Michael M. Swann

The Educational Value of Quindaro Townsite in the 21st Century

There are few sites and structures from 19th-century Kansas City that remain as well known throughout the nation today as the townsite and ruins of Quindaro. Indeed, many elegant homes, massive warehouses, and other commercial buildings from the 1800s can still be found in Kansas City, but such structures are common in other places and they really don't distinguish the metropolitan area. With the exception of the site once occupied by the stockyards, there is arguably no place within the Kansas City area that is as unique, as well known, and as directly linked to early settlement here as the old town of Quindaro.

Just as the image of the Kansas City stockyards reminds us of a time when the country's expanding network of railways opened up new agricultural areas that sustained booming gateway cities, the Quindaro ruins symbolize a slightly earlier period when river towns were being carved out of the towering bluffs along the Missouri and groups of settlers were pouring into this region, intent on either establishing slavery in Kansas Territory or keeping the horrible institution out. As a Free State port on the Missouri, Quindaro stood as the first point of resistance in the battle to halt the western spread of slavery.

Today, the ruins at the site serve as a monument to racial harmony, to rationality, and to freedom. They have cultural and historical value for the descendants of native Americans who once owned and occupied the site, for African Americans whose ancestors once looked to Quindaro as a gateway to freedom, and for the descendants of Euro-Americans who saw the need to found a Free State port and fight slavery. In a sense then, the ruins and the surrounding overgrown townsite have great political value, not just as an important local historical site, but as a national monument. This hidden and neglected spot, hemmed in today by interstate highways, rail lines and pipe lines, is where 19th-century abolitionists decided to stand their ground.

The ruins, townsite, and surrounding Quindaro community also have tremendous educational value, not just for the majority of Kansas Citians who know little, if anything, about this nationally-significant settlement, but for people throughout the United States and the rest of the world who want to understand how the United States ended slavery and occupied the American West in the 19th century.

First, and most obvious, Quindaro has significance as a place that can be visited, studied, and interpreted. Second, the institutions, communities and people that have emerged around and in the vicinity of Quindaro have much to say about the history of this region and of family life on the urban frontier. As an educational focus, they also tell the story of race relations and city growth, of the migration of peoples and the ebb and flow of opportunities in different places. And, third, the accounts and memoirs, photographs and newspapers, and perceptions and images of Quindaro that survive today in libraries and archives and in family albums and attic trunks constitute another educational focus that grows out of the establishment of the Free State port. All of these resources can and should be studied and linked, not just for the history they can reveal, but for the valuable lessons they hold about the ability of people to get along in the past.

Recent Educational Activities

During the 1990s, groups of students and faculty from area colleges and universities have visited the Quindaro ruins at the northern terminus of 27th Street in Kansas City, Kansas, with the

Plat of Quindaro, Kansas by O.A. Bassett, December, 1856. Illustration courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

The Lane Trail from Topeka, Kansas, into Nebraska with connecting roads to the Missouri River towns.

hope of learning something about our cultural heritage—about the way a town was settled in the 1850s, about the way African Americans fled into Kansas Territory to escape slavery, and about the ways in which multi-ethnic communities developed after the Civil War. As all educators know, there is no substitute for experience in the field, on the very site where history took place. To stand in the center of the Quindaro ruins and imagine the bustle and industry that characterized this free port town in the 1850s is an experience that cannot be replaced by a classroom lecture or a "virtual visit" on the computer. Many students have benefitted from getting to know Quindaro in recent years.

Park Design and Planning

Perhaps one of the most organized and structured educational projects that has focused on the Quindaro townsite was a design studio project carried out in fall, 1993. The Mayor's Underground Railroad Advisory Commission, chaired by Marvin Robinson, together with the Quindaro Town Preservation Society, engaged two classes of graduate students from Kansas State University to create sets of Quindaro archeological/historical park design proposals for the citizens of Kansas City, Kansas to consider. The idea was to produce rough and preliminary visual or graphic depictions of the kinds of development that might be possible at the site.

Four months after they started their research, the students returned to Kansas City with 13 different proposals for a Quindaro Park. They presented their plans at a public meeting, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and hosted by the Mayor's Office. Residents of Kansas City, Kansas had an opportunity to view the various design proposals and tell the many politicians in attendance (as well as the students) exactly what they liked or didn't like in each proposal. The meeting was much more than an ordinary public presentation and community commentary; it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to see how public opinion is formed and how community consensus is built.

The park proposals have enjoyed a long and controversial life since that initial public meeting. They were exhibited in the rotunda of the Kansas State Capitol. They have been displayed at numerous libraries, schools, community centers, and public spaces throughout the metropolitan area. They have been shown at many key events and activities scheduled during Black History month. And they have been presented in slide format to numerous civic and business groups throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. This was clearly an educational activity that had as many benefits for the community as for the students.

Site Visits and Local History

The most common educational use of the site in recent years has been as a focus for tours that want to explore the character of Kansas City on the eve of the Civil War. Many groups, from elementary schools to universities and from local book clubs and businessmen's groups to congressional staffs want to know more about Kansas City's heritage and what makes us special. The Quindaro site is the best place to imagine and describe life near the confluence of the Kaw and the Missouri in the 1850s, for it's here that one sees the contrast between a swift-flowing, wide river and the thickly wooded bluffs that towered above it and offered a tenuous but secure foothold for settlers wishing to disembark.

Many local classes have visited the Quindaro ruins in recent years. The normal procedure is for a teacher to bring a group of students to the northern terminus of 27th Street, where they are then led down the slopes, through the thick vegetation cover and on to the old center of the town. Side tours to the river banks, the old town cemetery atop the ridge, or up Happy Hollow to the ruins of the Quindaro brewery usually follow. Students walk away from the site with a far greater respect for life on the frontier and the plight of fugitive slaves than they'll ever develop by watching a PBS special on television or reading a dull and uninspired history textbook.

Archeological and Historical Field Research

Archeological field research is probably the most obvious and promising educational use of the Quindaro site, but so far excavation and reconnaissance at the site have been limited to professional archeologists under contract. Student groups have not participated in, nor have they observed, the recent clearing and stabilization of ruins at the site.

The site does have tremendous potential for historical field research. During the fall semester, 1996, a class of students from the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Design toured the site, paced off buildings and street intersections, examined extant foundations, cisterns and

Continued on p. 37

Quindaro—A Free-State River Town in the UGRR

On the eve of the Civil War, more than a dozen small towns hugged the western bank of the Missouri River, serving as potential gateways between the slave state of Missouri on the eastern banks of the river and the free territory of Kansas on the west. Quindaro stood out from the rest because of its connection to the slavery question. Unlike the others, it was created to serve as a port-of-entry for the abolitionist forces of Kansas, linking it to the fight against slavery. It thrived as a key point in the abolitionist trade and transport network only as long as the free-state status of Kansas was in question.

In its first year Quindaro boomed. The key to growth was the development of trade. Overland stage links were made immediately with Lawrence and other towns in the Kansas River valley and a free ferry ran across the river to Parkville, Missouri. Quindaro rivaled Leavenworth and Wyandot as the premier river town.

Quindaro was a typical frontier river port displaying all the bustle and boom of a town strategically positioned to control trade in the region. It was also part of the western branch of the underground railroad that emerged once the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed. Prior to 1854, fugitive Missouri slaves had to flee north or east into Iowa or Illinois, and then on to Canada. After 1854, free-state settlers in Kansas opened new routes of escape for slaves.

The most important of these underground routes was the Lane Trail, which was opened in 1856 after the Missouri River was closed to free-state emigration. This overland trail ran north out of Topeka, Kansas, into Nebraska and Iowa and it provided a safe route for supplies and settlers into Kansas Territory and a passageway for fugitive Missouri slaves north through Kansas. John Brown, James Lane, and other abolitionists used this route to lead slaves to freedom.

According to one source, only one slave is said to have been caught at Quindaro while escaping to freedom. Those who passed through the town reportedly stayed in a nearby cabin before moving farther into Kansas Territory.

Once statehood was achieved and the Civil War was well underway, the number of contraband slaves fleeing their Missouri owners for freedom in Kansas increased dramatically. Many slaves entered Kansas under the protection of Union troops. An even greater number, however, came on their own. Some traveled by land across the state border south of the Missouri River's great eastward bend. Many others, however, crossed the Missouri River. They even walked across the Missouri River when the ice was thick enough to support their weight.

Quindaro's economic fortunes began to change in 1858. The financial panic of 1857 drained some of the speculative capital away from the western states and the rising probability of free-statehood for Kansas removed Quindaro's political edge. After the Civil War, the buildings of Quindaro crumbled and were quickly covered over by the eroding river bluffs and the regrowth of the natural vegetation cover. The ruins of the abandoned settlement remained a landmark for the African-American community of Happy Hollow which emerged on the fringes of the abolitionist town. Today, the partially excavated Quindaro stands out not just as an unaltered example of an 1850s town, but as a legendary entry point for fugitive slaves and Civil War contrabands who made their way to Kansas and to freedom.

Quindaro's rapid demise, its isolated location, and its quick and almost complete burial under the eroding river bluffs that surround it have kept it out of the traditional and popular writings on the underground railroad. For most of the 20th century, the ruins have been known only by the residents of Happy Hollow and the surrounding African-American community. It was not until the 1980s that this important site, situated only a few miles from the center of a major metropolitan area, became known to a much wider population.

In 1984, the City of Kansas City, Kansas, issued a permit to Browning-Ferris Industries to build a landfill on the site of the ruins. A condition of the permit was the execution of a preliminary archeological excavation of the site. As digging on the site and in the local archives continued into the mid- and late-1980s, Quindaro suddenly became known to many people outside of Happy Hollow. The old town of Quindaro, with its artifacts and foundations preserved so well under the mud of the Missouri bluffs, was a true landmark that recalled the abolitionist spirit that gave rise to a free state in Kansas and that protected the western branch of the underground railroad.

Michael M. Swann

building walls, and used these observations to construct renderings of individual buildings, sketches of likely street scenes, and 3-dimensional bird's-eye views of what the town might have looked like in 1857 and what it could have evolved into by 1900. Contact with the ruins and with the site forced the students to reconstruct building patterns and arrangements from incomplete evidence, requiring a good understanding of how early river towns were laid out.

These kinds of field exercises that combine the study of history, the examination and recording of objects in the landscape, and the ability to use one's imagination to reconstruct something from incomplete historical evidence are especially valuable educational activities. They require just about every type of reasoning and communication skill that students will need in their careers.

Oral History

As in the tales of most other significant historical sites that have undergone a long period of neglect before they are recognized and restored, Quindaro's history exists to a large extent in oral tradition—in the form of knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Several scholarly articles have been written about the townsite's early history and there are numerous short pieces that have appeared in local newspapers retelling the Quindaro story on a regular basis, however, the day-to-day history of the town, its residents, their descendants, and the current Quindaro community has not been written. It exists mainly in the minds of Kansas City's older African-American residents who grew up near the old townsite, in their memories and in the stories they tell their friends, their children and grandchildren, and in the old photographs and clippings they have stored away in a long-forgotten shoebox or bureau drawer.

One of the buildings of Western (Freedmans) University overlooking Quindaro, 1920s. Photo courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

These memories and mementos have great value for the community and, in recognition of this fact and of the national significance of Quindaro, more than a dozen faculty members from prominent black colleges and universities throughout the United States spent a part of the summer, 1996, interviewing Quindaro residents about their memories of the place and the stories and legends that their own parents and grandparents told them earlier in the century. This same group of college instructors was selected by the National Endowment for the Humanities to attend a two-month seminar held at the University of Kansas in June and July, 1996. Working under the sponsorship of the Hall Center for the Humanities, these scholars initiated what could become one of the most significant oral history projects ever carried out in this region. Several of the seminar's participants plan to return to Kansas City to continue their work and to add to the archive of Quindaro history that they've started to build.

Archival and Library Research

The dearth of published research and scholarly writing on Quindaro makes it an especially attractive and exciting focus for students and scholars who want to conduct library and archival research. Almost every class that has visited the site or carried out a history project related to the site has come into contact with the archeological reports and journal articles produced by Larry Schmits. These resulted from his archeological work at the site which stretches back more than a decade. A few other relevant secondary works have been published in regional journals such as the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* and there have been enough publicity pieces printed in local newspapers in recent years to fill a good-sized clipping file. Beyond these sources, the microfilmed issues of the *Chindowan*, Quindaro's mid–19th-century newspaper, and a few other letters and documents housed at the Kansas Collection at the University of Kansas, there is little Quindaro documentation that has been mined from local libraries, archives, and private collections.

During the spring, 1992, several architecture students from the University of Kansas and Kansas State University launched an initial sweep of local libraries and archives to locate documents related to the early history of Quindaro. After a couple of months of work, a number of published and unpublished sources that dealt with life at Quindaro in the 1850s were uncovered in several regional collections. Although these materials did not add substantially to the historical record, their existence did underscore the need to search some of the major collections of Western Americana at other places (Newberry Library, Chicago; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; John Carter Brown

Aerial view of the partially excavated ruins in the center of Quindaro, 1987. Photo courtesy Larry J. Schmits.

Library, Providence, RI; Beneke Library, Yale University) and archives and museums that carry records of the 19th-century settlement companies and trans-Missouri shippers. In other words, the best way to augment our knowledge of Quindaro is to pursue local oral histories with great vigor and to systematically search the major repositories that contain important records and documents describing towns on the western frontier.

Computer Modeling

Faculty and students at the University of Kansas have devoted some time to computer modeling the townsite and the existing ruins. During the spring, 1994, Professor Brent Anderson of the School of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Kansas started work on a 3-dimensional model of the town that would include the slopes and bluffs at the end of 27th Street, the striking local relief of the Happy Hollow area, and the broad, flat river terraces and banks north of the railbed. Professor Anderson's work was continued by a graduate student in the Architecture Program who, that same semester, added the central ruins to the model so that what can be seen of the old town of Quindaro could be inspected from different distances, angles and perspectives, without setting foot on the site.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Quindaro site has great educational value. Here, students of all ages can learn about the physical barriers that the early settlers faced and about the harsh environments that the indigenous peoples had mastered. At Quindaro, students learn about life, culture, and settlement on the frontier by examining the ruins and imagining what once stood on the site. The stone foundations become proof that people of different cultures and races were willing to travel across continents to help each other.

Quindaro tells us, in no uncertain terms, that settlement on the margins of the plains is fragile, that the cities we have built and the governments we have created are but tiny assemblages and events in the larger scene of humankind. And, more important, when students look at the city that has grown up around old Quindaro, they grasp the ongoing sequence of arrival, settlement, community formation, economic change, migration and rebirth that characterizes American society.

Suggested Readings

Farley, Alan W. "Annals of Quindaro: A Kansas Ghost Town." *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 22 (1956), 305-320.

Magnuson, Carl. "The Town of Quindaro: From Community Narrative to Public Debate." *Mid-America Folklore*, 2 (1990), 91-107.

Schmits, Larry. "Quindaro: Kansas Territorial Free-State Port on the Missouri River." *The Missouri Archaeologist*, 49 (1988), 89-145.

Michael M. Swann is Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the School of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Kansas.

African Americans from Slavery to Contemporary Times

A combined public conference and NPS training (March 22-27, 1998) provided an overview of the African-American experience, starting with slavery and concluding with diverse African-American cultures now associated with national parks.

Sessions addressed slavery as socio-cultural, political, and economic expressions of world and regional conditions, as evidenced in local features including landscapes, family, and class relations. Presentations also covered resistance movements such as the underground railroad. Maroon and freedmen communities and emancipation, with its urban and rural aftermath, were considered in addition to current ethnographic research strategies, research findings, National Park Service models of park and African-American relations, planning, and interpretive challenges and responses.

For information, contact NPS Chief Ethnographer Miki Crespi.

John C. Paige

NPS Study to Preserve and Interpret the UGRR

The underground railroad was perhaps the most dramatic protest action against slavery in United States history. It was a clandestine operation that began during the colonial period, later became part of organized abolitionist activity in the 19th century, and reached its peak in the period 1830-1865. The story of the underground railroad is one of individual sacrifice and heroism of enslaved people to reach freedom from bondage.

In passing Public Law 101-628 in 1990, Congress directed the National Park Service "to study the underground railroad, its routes, and operations in order to preserve and interpret this aspect of American history." This legislation further required that the study be completed in cooperation with an advisory committee representing experts in historic preservation, African-American history, United States history, and members of the general public with special interest and experience in the underground railroad. Congress further required that escape routes to Mexico as well as Canada be considered in the study. The Washington Office of the National Park Service (NPS) requested that the Denver Service Center undertake this project in consultation with all involved NPS regions. Over the next several years, this advisory committee worked with the NPS planning team on gathering data, public involvement, and developing a range of alternatives.

The number of possible sites and structures associated with the underground railroad story is immense. The underground railroad is every route the enslaved took, or attempted to take, to freedom. It is a vast network of paths and roads, through swamps and over mountains, along and across rivers and even by sea, that cannot be documented with precision. The Underground Railroad Special Resource Study involved consultation with 34 states, two territories, hundreds of interested individuals and organizations around the country, as well as Canada and the Caribbean. The study considered 380 suggestions about potential sites of significance to the underground railroad story. Since the study was finished additional sites have been identified. Additional research has identified 42 sites as having the highest potential to meet established National Historic Landmark criteria for national significance. The NPS is completing National Register of Historic Places forms and submitting these for designation as National Historic Landmarks.

Given the national significance of the story, the need for long-term preservation of resources, the public enjoyment potential, and the current amount of public ownership, the underground railroad story could become an example of the "new wave" national park unit—a cooperative or partnership park. Cooperative or partnership efforts, if successful, should reduce NPS staffing and development requirements and operating costs.

Through working with the URAC, the public, and NPS regions and parks, five alternative concepts were developed for preserving, commemorating, and interpreting resources associated with the underground railroad. All of these concepts were intended to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the underground railroad and to preserve its many important resources. Each concept is briefly described below:

Concept A. At a newly established commemorative, interpretive, educational, and research center, visitors would come to understand the whole story of the underground railroad and its significance in their area or region and in United States history. Resources related to the underground railroad would be fully inventoried and documented.

Concept B. An appreciation of the underground railroad would be accomplished by improving existing interpretive programs and by implementing new programs that would provide visitors with a complete, in-depth understanding of the underground railroad while focusing on local aspects of the story of the site.

Concept C. Visitors would have an opportunity to encounter a concentration of underground railroad resources over a large geographic area (up to several hundred miles). These areas could include National Historic Landmarks and existing NPS units associated with the underground railroad story, documented escape routes used by enslaved Americans, structures and sites associated with personalities and aspects of the underground railroad story, and opportunities to illustrate the

international connection to the underground railroad.

Concept D. The history, meaning, significance, and legacy of the underground railroad would be remembered through a single commemorative monument. This monument would honor those people who risked or lost their lives to escape the oppression of slavery and reach freedom on the underground railroad and those who assisted them.

Concept E. Visitors would have an opportunity to travel along trail systems that evoke the perilous experience encountered by those who sought freedom through escape on the underground railroad. A variety of natural resources (e.g., swamps, forests, and rivers) and cultural resources e.g., underground railroad stations, homes of significant individuals, and archeological sites) along these trail systems would help to bring this story alive. A trail or trails would be designated through the National Trail System Act of 1968, as amended. One option in implementing concept E would be to establish a government-chartered commission or foundation to work toward establishment of the trail(s).

The study also included an environmental assessment and a required no-action alternative. On August 11, 1995, the Underground Railroad Advisory Committee made the following recommendations:

- That the Congress authorize a national Underground Railroad Commission and fund a national initiative to support projects focusing on activities associated with the underground railroad.
- That all alternatives identified as concepts A-E in the Underground Railroad Special Resource Study be pursued with equal vigor and simultaneously as appropriate.
- That public and private sector (corporate, university, organizational) partnerships be encouraged and pursued wherever possible and appropriate to achieve the varying goals of the underground railroad project.
- That an interpretive handbook on the underground railroad be researched, written, and published, and that the skills of non-NPS experts be used wherever possible to ensure historical accuracy and the broadest range of interpretation (recently published).
- That the mandate of the current Underground Railroad Advisory Committee be extended through congressional funding and NPS implementation stages to ensure project continuity and to maintain project oversight.
- That, regardless of the existence of other congressional mandates or funding, the National Park Service continue and accelerate its efforts to document and interpret the underground railroad in all parks, memorials, and trails within its jurisdiction.
- That the National Capital Regional Office of the National Park Service be authorized to coordinate underground railroad activities throughout the National Park Service.

In addition, the study contained findings which included the following:

- The underground railroad story is nationally significant.
- A few elements of the story are represented in existing NPS units and other sites, but many important resources are not adequately represented and protected.
- Many sites remain that meet established criteria for designation as National Historic Landmarks.
- Many sites are in imminent danger of being lost or destroyed.
- There is a tremendous amount of interest in the subject, but little organized coordination and communication among interested individuals and organizations.
- Some sites have very high potential for preservation and visitor use.
- No single site or route completely reflects and characterizes the underground railroad. The story and resources involve networks and regions rather than individual sites and trails.
- A variety of partnership approaches would be most appropriate for the protection and interpretation of the underground railroad. These partnerships could include the federal, state, and local governments along with a variety of private sector involvement.

The study was completed and submitted to Congress on February 7, 1996. A series of bills have been offered which would implement some of the study's alternatives, but Congress has not taken final action on any of these bills. The NPS, through interpretive media and programs, continues to develop new ways to present the underground railroad story to the public. These programs include the development of an interpretive handbook which would not only interpret the underground railroad, but also serve as a guide. In addition, the NPS is working with Parks Canada to develop a more comprehensive interpretation of sites associated with the underground railroad. The NPS continues to work toward nominating underground railroad sites and structures as National Historical Landmarks. Meanwhile, organizations and individuals outside the NPS continue to work toward the recognition of the importance of the underground railroad to American history.

John C. Paige is a cultural resource specialist for the Resource Planning Division of the NPS Denver Service Center.

Aaron Mahr Yáñez

The UGRR on the Rio Grande

The underground railroad phenomenon occurred over a tremendous territorial extent and encompassed a wide diversity of experiences and features, all linked by the common denominators of resistance and escape from enslavement. Enslaved blacks in the United States often crossed international boundaries in their struggle for freedom. Congress, therefore, has authorized the NPS to seek alternative means to link underground railroad sites in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean with those in the U.S.[1]

Canada has long been recognized as the primary destination for fleeing slaves who used the underground railroad system. Within the last 10 years, commemoration and preservation undertakings related to the underground railroad by Parks Canada have had some modest successes and have benefitted by a recent re-evaluation of the importance of African-Canadian history to that nation's heritage.[2] One of the most intriguing features of the underground railroad experience, and certainly one that has been largely overlooked, is the choice many enslaved blacks made to pursue freedom by fleeing over the west Texas mountains and deserts and crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico.

Including Mexico within the scope of the NPS underground railroad project shows the great complexity of the underground railroad story. The underground railroad to Mexico is associated almost exclusively with slavery in Texas—slavery's "last frontier" in the United States. Many of the features usually associated with the underground railroad, such as a clandestine network of abolitionist "stations," or heroic efforts by black leaders such as Harriet Tubman to guide the enslaved to freedom, are usually missing in the underground railroad story in Texas and Mexico. Instead, with a few noteworthy exceptions, resistance against slavery in Texas and flight to Mexico was founded almost entirely on personal initiative among the enslaved. Once the enslaved chose to run away in Texas and seek freedom on the right bank of the Rio Grande, his or her daring flight led through a harsh environment and could lead to tenuous alliances with other racial or ethnic groups who themselves were distinct and perhaps in conflict with the Texas slavocracy. Once across the Rio Grande, the runaway had to adapt to a new language and culture distinct from that of the slave owners that the runaway was accustomed to. The unstable frontier could provide a home for the runaway, but chances were the runaway would have to fight to defend it.

Slavery developed late in Texas, but from its very earliest beginnings, it was impacted strongly by Mexican views toward African slavery. Although the Spanish Crown abolished Indian slavery in Spanish America in the 16th century, black slavery continued in Mexico through the colonial era. By Mexican independence in 1821, African slavery had declined in importance and President Vicente Guerrero abolished slavery in the republic in 1829. Despite Mexico's endemic political instability after independence, later governments reiterated and strengthened the abolition decree. Federal intransigence concerning the abolition of slavery culminated in the Constitution of 1857 which conclusively abolished African slavery in the republic and, in a clause specifically directed to slavery in the U.S., granted freedom and protection to any slave that set foot on Mexican territory.

The lingering ambiguities in Mexico's abolitionist legislation arose out of the unique circumstances that surrounded the evolution of the northern territory of Texas. In 1821, Mexico began to grant huge tracts of land to empresarios, primarily from the United States, in return for promises of populating the grants with a specified number of families. Many who settled in Texas came from the southern United States, and many brought their slaves. Mexico made special allowances for their settlement and the settlers exploited certain loopholes in the Mexican legal code to import their slaves into the territory. Despite Guerrero's abolition decree in 1829, slavery in Texas expanded through the Mexican period.[3]

The Texas Revolution guaranteed the institution's survival in the new republic. U.S. statehood in 1845 further guaranteed that slavery would continue in Texas and the institution spread and strengthened through the next decade. Nevertheless, the proximity of free-soil Mexico still impacted the evolution of slavery in Texas.

When slavery was abolished in Texas at the close of the Civil War, it was confined to only about one third of the state, generally along the river valleys of East Texas. A desert buffer, sparsely populated mostly by Apache and Comanche Indians and free Tejano settlements, ran between

the Texas slave areas and the Rio Grande. The proximity to Mexico also made the slavocracy society highly suspicious of any abolitionist sentiment. Rumors of abolitionist activity and slave uprisings usually led to periods of general hysteria and repression against the non-Anglo populations in Texas.

Within this milieu, the enslaved sought freedom in different ways. Mexico's persistent colonization programs on its northern frontier offered enslaved blacks opportunities for freedom across the Rio Grande. Throughout most of the 19th century, Mexico pursued different colonization programs to encourage population growth on its extensive frontier. Mexico's objectives were to increase its defensive capabilities against the nomadic Indian tribes and to create a barrier to further U.S. expansion into northern Mexico, particularly by the southern slavers who Mexico viewed as the principal agitators for expansion into northern Mexico.

Mexico's liberal colonization policies offered opportunities to a wide variety of ethnic and racial groups. The idea of settling free blacks in northeast Mexico as a buffer against Texas filibusters and nomadic Indians first came about in the 1820s. Benjamin Lundy, the northern abolitionist and an early, outspoken critic of slavery in Texas, was one of the first Americans to seek a land concession in northern Mexico to colonize escaped slaves. He sought to settle freed blacks in the area between the Rio Grande and Nueces River. The project failed, as did many others that never were implemented.[4]

The most noteworthy exception occurred after the War between Mexico and the United States, when, in 1848, the Mexican government sought to reform its frontier defense system. To this end, the Mexican government created military colonies located along the new international boundary. Although the colonies failed to attract many Mexican settlers, recruits came from an unlikely place. In 1850, Mexican officials in northern Mexico reached an agreement with American Seminole Indians under Wild Cat and the Seminole blacks under John Horse to help them escape persecution in the U.S. and settle in military colonies in northeast Mexico. In return, the Seminoles and blacks, called Mascogos, were obligated to defend the frontier and campaign as Mexican army auxiliaries. Several sites in Coahuila are associated with Seminole and Mascogo colonies, including the Hacienda de Nacimiento near Múzquiz, El Moral near Monclova Viejo, San Fernando de Rosas, Nacimiento near Zaragoza, and Guerrero. While many of the Seminoles and Mascogos returned to the U.S. and settled, in particular, around Fort Clark and Bracketville by the 1870s, many stayed in the Coahuila colonies, or dispersed and settled in Parras, Coahuila, or Matamoros, Tamaulipas.[5]

The unique history of the Seminoles and the Mascogos is a noteworthy exception to the more common lack of organization in the movement of fleeing slaves across the Rio Grande. More often, individual initiative was the motivating factor for runaways. The impulse was strong. A contemporaneous estimate suggests that by the eve of the Civil War an estimated 4,000 slaves had escaped

Annaberg Sugar Mill

Annaberg appears on the Oxholm map of 1780 as one of the then 25 active sugar producing factories on St. John. Molasses and rum were also products of bustling Annaberg, or "Anna's Hill," named for an infant daughter of William Gottschalk, a planter-owner from St. Thomas. The Danes, Dutchmen, and slaves from the Danish colony on St Thomas came to St. John in 1717. Slaves had to harvest and process the sugar cane on the steep slopes.

Today, Annaberg Sugar Mill ruins remain with one of the 16 cabins found in the area. The foundation of the slave quarters, with a lime concrete floor and a door in one end, each cabin housed a slave family or served as bachelor quarters. Posts were set in the masonry walls and branches were woven to form the wattle, then daubed with a lime and mud mixture. The roof was probably thatch with palm leaves.

Doug Stover

Annaberg Sugar Mill ruins. Photo by Doug Stover.

enslavement in Texas by crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico.

Many factors influenced slave runaways to Mexico. During the Texas Revolution of 1836, Texans increasingly viewed forced emancipation as a consequence of Mexican suppression of their rebellion. Many Texans feared Mexican complicity in inciting slave revolts and runaways in Texas. These suspicions often led to increased repression against blacks and the Tejano and Indian populations who were thought to harbor runaways or incite rebellions. There were many reports of fleeing slaves seeking the protection of the Mexican army as it campaigned through Texas. By 1836, a small colony of escaped slaves had emerged in Matamoros. The matter was important enough that the Texans fruitlessly demanded the return of runaways as a point in the treaty which ended the rebellion.[6]

Ten years later, during the War between Mexico and U.S., many slaves escaped to freedom while travelling in southern Texas and northern Mexico as servants to their soldier owners. The frequent incidents of runaways heightened tensions between the U.S. officers and the Mexicans, who abhorred slavery. The occupying forces frequently raised accusations against the Mexicans of collaborating with the slaves to achieve their freedom in Mexico. The U.S. occupation along the Rio Grande also tended to disperse the runaway slave colonies that had evolved over the previous decades.

Slavery expanded rapidly in Texas in the late 1840s and 1850s, as did the incidents of runaways to Mexico. Piedras Negras, Coahuila, opposite Eagle Pass, became one of the primary destinations for runaways. Likewise, expeditions out of Fort Duncan in Eagle Pass increasingly turned their resources to patrolling the river bank in search of escaped chattel. The fort also became the center of licit and illicit slave capturing activities.

Since Texas achieved statehood in 1845, the state government had petitioned the federal government to negotiate an extradition treaty with Mexico that included the return of runaway slaves. The agreement was never reached in large part due to Mexico's unwillingness to allow U.S. forces to enter Mexican territory in search of runaways. Without an international accord on extradition, Texan militia groups from such places as San Antonio, Bastrop, La Grange, Gonzalez, and Seguín grew emboldened as they roamed the Rio Grande frontier in search of runaways. Their activities destabilized the border region through the 1850s. Two examples are particularly noteworthy.

Between 1850 and 1853, José Carbajal led a series of raids against several towns in northeast Mexico to protest Mexico's oppressive tariffs. One of the more sordid elements of his movement was the complicity of a large contingent of Texas mercenaries who combined their personal goals of filibustering and pursuing runaway slaves with Carbajal's federalist mission. The movement died after defeats in Matamoros, Cerralvo, Nuevo León, and Camargo, Tamaulipas.

In another incident, Texas Ranger Captain James Callahan led an expedition across the Rio Grande near Fort Duncan on Oct. 1, 1855 ostensibly to capture a band of raiding Lipan Apaches, although their true mission was probably to capture runaway slaves. A large brigade of Mexican militia and Indian auxiliaries confronted Callahan's expedition at the Rio Escondido near La Maroma, Coahuila and the Texans were forced to withdraw. A combined force of Mexicans, Indians, Seminoles, and Mascogos pursued Callahan's column to Piedras Negras. They were forced to cross the river, but not before they sacked and burned the town.[7] Incidents such as these did little to stem the flow of runaways to Mexico, although they increased tensions along the Rio Grande dramatically.

The matter of extraditing runaway slaves dominated activity along the Rio Grande during the 1850s. While the two federal governments were unable to reach an extradition treaty, the issue became very complex on the river frontier. For example, Mexico's inability to fund colonization efforts, combined with the lack of an institutionalized system for accepting runaway slaves, be it abolitionist societies or federal programs, meant that the runaways often turned to banditry to survive and they became a burden on the frontier communities. On the eve of the Civil War, despite national efforts to resist capture expeditions, sympathies on the northern frontier were turning against the ex-slaves.

On the other hand, Mexico refused an extradition treaty with the Confederacy and slaves continued to seek freedom in Mexico. Their numbers were undoubtedly swollen by the entrance into Texas of many slave holders from the southern states who brought their slaves to Texas in a futile effort to avoid the occupying Federal army. Many of the enslaved took advantage of the proximity to free soil to flee across the Rio Grande. In addition, the expansion of cotton trails to the mouth of the Rio Grande caused by the federal blockade of Confederate ports, brought many enslaved blacks to the Rio Grande as teamsters. Not a few crossed the river into freedom. This was particularly true in Matamoros, the outlet for much of cotton trade.[8]

The present bill before congress (HR 105-1635) recognizes the importance of the underground railroad by seeking to authorize the NPS "to coordinate and facilitate Federal and Non-Federal activities to commemorate, honor, and

interpret the history of the underground railroad," and "to enter into cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding with, and provide technical assistance to, in cooperation with the Secretary of State, the governments of Canada, Mexico, and any other appropriate country in the Caribbean." The NPS should seek to work cooperatively, within the parameters of the proposed legislation and in accordance with all Mexican laws and regulations, with the NPS's counterpart for cultural resources in Mexico, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), to identify resources associated with the underground railroad in Mexico and Texas.

A likely place to begin is to identify resources associated with the Seminole and Mascogo colonies in Coahuila and Tamaulipas. Likewise, Fort Clark, a National Register site and the home of the venerable Seminole scouts from 1872-1914, should be included in this survey, as should the Seminole Camp and the Back Seminole Scout Burial Ground in and around Bracketville, Texas. Battlefields or skirmish sites associated with the Seminoles and Mascogos in the U.S. and Mexico also warrant attention.

Other important candidates for resource identification include the neighborhoods, or colonias, of runaways that evolved in the towns and cities on the right bank of the Rio Grande. A good place to start might be in Matamoros, Tamaulipas and Piedras Negras, Coahuila. Likewise, skirmish sites in Texas and Mexico associated with slave-catching raids and filibuster activities might also be identified. Mexican and U.S. resource specialists might also work together to identify resources in Texas that reveal the life patterns and customs of enslaved blacks on Texas plantations and ranches, and in Texas cities. Finally routes and river crossings can be identified, and can help to explain the hardships and challenges that runaways faced in escaping to Mexico. For example, after 309 Seminoles crossed into Mexico at Lehman's Ranch, north of Eagle Pass, that site became a frequent route for runaways into Mexico. Runaways found many spots along the Rio Grande where a hand-pulled skiff waited for them to pull their way to freedom.

This is virtually virgin territory. In Tamaulipas and Coahuila, INAH, which runs a vigorous program of resource identification and cataloging, has not identified sites with a clear thematic association to the underground railroad. Neither has the underground railroad story in Texas been adequately explained. But perhaps by sharing the expertise, resources, and missions of both agencies and other pertinent groups, this neglected feature of the underground railroad story in North America may yet be uncovered.

Notes

1 U.S. Department of Interior, National Park service, *Underground Railroad: Special Resource Study,* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995).

2 Hilary Russell, "Underground Railroad Parks: A Shared History," *CRM* 20:2 (1997):15-21.

3 Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York: Arno Press, 1971); *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas;* Eugene Barker, "The Influence of the Slave Trade in the Colonization of Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 28 (July 1924).

4 Merton Dillon, "Benjamin Lundy in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 63 (July 1959):60.

5 Shirley Boteler-Mock and Mike Davis, "Seminole Black Culture on the Texas Frontier," *CRM* 20:2 (1997):8-10; Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas,* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).

6 Paul Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836,* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 238-253.

7 Ronnie Tyler, "The Callahan Expedition of 1855: Indians or Negroes?" *Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* 579-82.

8 Arnoldo de LeHist *They Called them Greasers, Anglo Attitudes towards Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

Aaron Mahr Yáñez is the supervisory historian at Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site in Brownsville, Texas.

Upcoming Events

- May 1998 - International Emancipation Day Program, Smithsonian Institution, Anacostia Museum, Washington, DC
- December 1998 - International Program of Frederick Douglass
  For information call Frank Faragasso 202-690-5185.

Vincent deForest

NPS Aids Pathways to Freedom Group

It wasn't quite 7:00 am on July 29, 1997 in Washington, DC, when the group of sojourners crossed the line between North Carolina and Virginia. We and others like them were waiting to receive them at some point during their stay. The accident occurred around 7:30 am on the same day. I had embraced the chance to meet the group upon their arrival in Washington. I had been invited to discuss the local history of the underground railroad and the National UGRR Network to Freedom Initiative in which the National Park Service (NPS) and I had been intricately involved over the past several years.

The sojourners were Pathways to Freedom students involved in the national summer program of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development. My exposure to this program was to become one of the most moving experiences of my work with the NPS and the UGRR Initiative. Most of the youth were from across the nation. Two students, Makia Gibson and Deon Thurston were from the Bahamas, a location rarely mentioned in the context of areas into which people sought freedom. The group's members came together without prior introduction to join in an educational and historical research program which would take the history lesson from the traditional classroom setting and retrace the sites and routes of the UGRR, the civil rights movement, and explore other valuable subjects.

Five adult chaperons guided the participants, aged 11 to 17, on their journey. They were en route to the Capitol to join other youth to express to the Members of Congress their views and support for pending legislation calling for the establishment of the National UGRR Network to Freedom Program within the NPS. The legislation would further the NPS's efforts to preserve, commemorate and interpret the UGRR sites and routes across the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. Subcommittee hearings on H.R. 1635 had been held the week before with strong support from around the nation.

The students were to stay at Howard University and be hosted by several local institutions including Georgetown University and the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church both in Georgetown, once a thriving area for UGRR activity. They would tour selected sites significant to African-American history in general and UGRR history in particular.

Addie Richburg and I had met months earlier and we had since shared extensive dialogue about the program. This provided an excellent opportunity to further the 1990 Congressionally authorized study of the UGRR by educating youth, the only true way in which the NPS would succeed in its efforts. A U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons Headquarters employee by day, Richburg was also co-owner in a North Carolina partnership which served as program development consultants for the Institute, and began her night shift for the Pathways program. It was imperative that the NPS and those involved in the initiative realize the value of youth and their role in carrying forth the message and potential of self-empowerment. It was that assertiveness and strength which carved the loose and secretive networks we have grown to know as the underground railroad movement. While we were far from making a formal partnership between government and other organizations through the initiative, Richburg and I discussed history, resources, and dual partnerships between the NPS UGRR Initiative, Pathways to Freedom Program, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (perhaps as constructively as the UGRR conductors and stationmasters did in the 1800s). We examined our mutual goals and concurred that we would plan and execute actions supportive of our respective programs.

For more information on the NPS Underground Railroad National and International Initiative, contact: Underground Railroad Initiative, National Park Service, National Capital Region, 1100 Ohio Drive, SW, Washington, DC 20242; Telephone: 202-619-7077. The text of the House and Senate versions of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1997 [H.R. 1635 and S887, respectively] are available on the Internet at <http://www.congress.gov>.

The Pathways to Freedom Program is open to all youth aged 11 to 17. It provides historical research journeys to U.S. and international sites significant to the underground railroad and civil rights history, and focuses on self-development skills. For more information, contact: The Bell Richburg Group, Program and Management Consultants, P.O. Box 10476, Goldsboro, NC 27532; tel: 919-778-4831.

In revisiting the morning of the accident in my mind, I remember watching flashing TV news reports which showed a chartered bus lying on its side in a river south of Petersburg, VA. The group's journey was cut short by the very element that had befriended and hidden the tracks of an enslaved people. Adisa Foluke, one of the chaperons, died at the scene. Like Harriett Tubman, death had also survived many journeys.

Terry Carlstrom, NPS National Capital Region (NCR) Director, dispatched a four-member team that I led to provide humanitarian support to the victims. After contacting Pathways national coordinator Richburg, who had established a command center in Petersburg, VA, the NPS team left NPS-NCR headquarters at 10:00 pm to aid the victims. Other NPS-NCR team members were: Motor Pool Chief Howard Wilder, Wilder's nephew volunteer Rick Young, and volunteer Peter Hanes.

In summation, there are striking similarities between the experiences of these youth, my work, and the goals of the National Park Service Underground Railroad National and International Initiative. To capture reasons for my work, I look toward a higher vision: the legislation as sponsored by Rep. Stokes and U.S. Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio; the NPS's involvement in protecting and conserving the nation's cultural and natural resources for its citizens; the pivotal roles of Rosa Parks and others like her in history; the forethought and commitment of Parks and Steele to educate youth; and Adisa Foluke, who gave his life to lead this group. In closing, I refer to the words of accident survivor Christopher St. Clair Lowe of Philadelphia, who dedicated his high school report entitled "What is the Price of Freedom?" to Foluke's memory: "The theme (of Pathways), 'Where have we been? Where are we going?' means that anything you want to become in life, you can become, but you have to know what you've been through and where you've been before you can know where you are going. To get where you are going successfully, you have to know where it all began."

Vincent deForest is the Special Assistant to the Director, NPS, for the NPS Underground Railroad National and International Initiative. Peter Hanes, NPS - National Capital Region volunteer, and Addie Richburg, Pathways to Freedom Program national coordinator, contributed to this article.

Tara Morrison

The UGRR Archeology Initiative

The Underground Railroad Archeology Initiative is a direct result of the National Park Service (NPS) Underground Railroad Special Resource Study and the National Park Service National Historic Landmark (NHL) Archeological Initiative. In 1990 Congress enacted Public Law 101-623 which directed the NPS to identify ways to commemorate and interpret the underground railroad. Although many underground railroad related standing structures were identified through this process, there are many related structures which are no longer in existence. The Special Resource Study created an opportunity to combine the NPS efforts initiated by the Special Resource Study to commemorate and interpret the underground railroad with the NHL Archeological Initiative.

The NHL Archeological Initiative serves as a vehicle to increase the number of archeological National Historic Landmarks. The NHL Archeological Initiative has three components: to develop nominations of new archeological sites; to increase public and professional awareness of archeological NHLs; and to improve documentation about existing archeological NHLs. This Initiative provides the framework for the Underground Railroad Archeological Initiative and supports the ultimate goal of improving public understanding and appreciation of the history of the underground railroad from the perspective of archeological resources and cultural landscapes. In addition, the NHL Underground Railroad Archeological Initiative will result in information that can be used by federal, state and local governments and agencies to protect, preserve, and commemorate archeological properties associated with the underground railroad.

As the Initiative was developed it was determined that the underground railroad has not been a focus for historical archeologists. This conclusion is also based on a presentation to the Society for Historical Archeology (SHA) in January 1997. At that meeting of the SHA Executive Board, a final resolution was passed which endorses the

Underground Railroad Archeological Initiative and encourages participation in it by professional archeologists.

It was agreed that in our efforts to identify and eventually nominate nationally-significant sites as NHLs, we need to address questions such as what is the archeology of the underground railroad, or how does one associate an archeological site with the underground railroad.

Activities to date have included: review of NHL underground railroad related nominations for the purpose of determining the archeological potential of the site; the collection and collation of data for specific corridors through Northern Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia and Delaware; and the development of a project prospectus that focuses on a multiple property context approach which already is a well-established part of both the NHL program and the National Register of Historic Places.

Development of model documentation using the multiple property approach is appropriate due to the complexity and variety of the underground railroad story. This approach will allow the NHL Underground Railroad Archeological Initiative to focus not only on the popular story of white abolitionists of the North. It also requires the identification of archeological sites and features, which tell a more complete story involving enslaved African Americans in the slave states and their conditions prior to escape, free African Americans, and the social networks utilized to facilitate successful escapes. The Archeological Initiative also will serve to identify those sites associated with actual stops on the underground railroad, sites from which the enslaved escaped, communities established by escapees, and freed people in free and slave states and the property types associated with their travels.

Tara Morrison is an archeologist with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices. She is assigned to the NPS Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia.

Aboard the Underground Railroad on the Web

A National Register Travel Itinerary

Travel aboard the underground railroad on the web at <www.nps.gov/nr/underground>. The site introduces travelers, researchers, historians, preservationists, and anyone interested in African-American history to the fascinating people and places associated with the underground railroad.

The historic places along the underground railroad are testament to African-American capabilities. The network provided an opportunity for sympathetic white Americans to play a role in resisting slavery and brought together, however uneasily at times, men and women of both races to begin to set aside assumptions about the other race and to work together on issues of mutual concern. At the most dramatic level, the underground railroad provided stories of guided escapes from the South, rescues of arrested fugitives in the North, complex communication systems, and individual acts of bravery and suffering in the quest for freedom for all.

F. Julius Lemoyne House, Washington Co., PA.

The itinerary provides descriptions and photographs on 21 historic places that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It includes a map of the most common directions of escape taken on the underground railroad and maps of individual states that mark the location of the historic properties. Links provide more information on the slave trade, early anti-slavery, the operation of the underground railroad, and the Civil War.

Frank J. J. Miele

The *Amistad* Research Center

Resting quietly in the stacks of the *Amistad* Research Center in Tilton Memorial Hall on the campus of Tulane University in New Orleans is a cultural resource, the American Missionary Association Archives, which grew out of one of the most explosive episodes in the history of slavery—the *Amistad* incident.

Today, through endowments and with regular contributions from the United Church of Christ, the American Missionary Association (AMA), which is now a division of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, contributes to the support of Dillard, Huston-Tillotson, Tougaloo, Talladega, and LeMoyne-Owen. Talladega remains an exclusively AMA institution, but other denominational bodies cooperate with the Association in sustaining LeMoyne-Owen, Dillard, Huston-Tillotson, and Tougaloo. The AMA also retains an interest in Hampton Institute, Fisk University, and Atlanta University, which it founded and supported during its formative years.

The American Missionary Association Archives, which is the flagship collection of the *Amistad* Research Center, contains approximately 350,000 manuscript pieces and primarily spans the period 1839-1882, but several thousand are dated before and after that period. Letters make up the majority of the papers, and they are of three types.

The largest number, more than 100,000, consists of reports from the foreign and home missionaries and teachers. The second largest number is made up of letters from financial and moral supporters of the AMA. The third largest number of letters consists of correspondence among the officers of the Association. Another valuable type of letter (over 1,500) is from government officials. Most of these are from agents of the Freedmen's Bureau, but a large number came from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and a few from prominent men in the executive and legislative branches of government.

The collection also contains some of the Associations's treasury papers—account books, annual reports, some minutes, and other items such as sermons, statistical reports, drawings, pictures, and essays.

The papers convey the detailed history of the AMA from its establishment in 1846 to 1882. The materials dating prior to the formation of the AMA relate to several subjects, of which the most important are the *Amistad* case and the futile efforts of the evangelical abolitionists to promote abolitionism among Northern churches and among religious societies.

Aside from the history of the AMA, the papers are most valuable as sources for studying the abolitionist movement, particularly as it affected the Northern Protestant churches, and for studying the education of the freedmen during and after the Civil War. Finally, although not extensive, students of the underground railroad will find

Mutiny Aboard the Amistad mural located at the Amistad Research Center.

some material of value in the AMA Archives as well. The collection documents the activities of at least 15 home missionaries who were involved with the underground railroad. The collection's finding aid notes that participation was undoubtedly much greater since the AMA was unequivocal in its opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and urged Christians not to obey or aid in its enforcement.

In recent years, the AMA Archives was enhanced by a huge acquisition of additional materials which focus primarily on the educational efforts of the AMA. Among other things, the AMA Addendum documents the founding and early years of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities mentioned above.

The *Amistad* Research Center itself was established by Dr. Clifton H. Johnson in 1966 as a division of the Race Relations Department of Fisk University. In 1969, the Center became an independent archives and moved to Dillard University in New Orleans. Eleven years later, in 1980, it moved to the Old U.S. Mint building (a wonderfully restored and preserved National Historic Landmark), and, finally, in 1987, it relocated to Tilton Memorial Hall on the Tulane University campus.

The Center is an independent, privately supported archives, library, and museum dedicated to preserving the history and culture of African-Americans and ethnic minorities. In fact, about 80 percent of the holdings deal primarily with the history and culture of black Americans, civil rights, and relations between blacks and whites. In addition to its well over 4,000 linear feet of primary source documents, the Center maintains an extensive collection of books, audio and video tapes, and important collections of African and African-American art, such as the Victor DuBois and Aaron Douglas Collections.

Collections generated by women, or about women, account for a larger than usual percentage of holdings at the Center. Most notable in this group are the papers of educator and activist Mary McLeod Bethune; journalist, actress, and teacher Marguerite D. Cartwright; Mississippi civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer; author Dorothy Sterling; actress and newspaper columnist Fredi Washington; concert artist Camilia Williams; and artist Dorothy Yepez of New York.

Other noteworthy collections include the Countee Cullen Papers, which contain correspondence and other items of most of the Harlem Renaissance writers; the archives of the Southern Education Reporting Service (later the Race Relations Information Center) which document the efforts of Southern journalists and newspaper editors to collect and disseminate accurate information relating to the desegregation of public schools in the South; and the records or papers of several important New Orleanians, including those of Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial, first black mayor of the city.

As the Center looks forward to the new century, it is attempting to reach a wider audience by becoming part of the On-Line Computer Library Center (OCLC). All of its holdings will eventually become part of that database. In addition, the Center is refining its new World Wide Web site, which has descriptions of the archives and an online collection of paintings from its art collections. In the meantime, the *Amistad* Research Center forges ahead, focusing on its mission of keeping alive for future generations not only the cultural resources related to the *Amistad* incident and the American Missionary Association, but those resources which tell the story of all peoples in the universal struggle for freedom, human rights, dignity, and equality.

Sources Consulted

Amistad Research Center. American Missionary Association Archives: Author and Added Entry Catalog of the AMA Archives. Vol. 1, A-EZ. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corp., ca. 1969.

Borders, Florence. "What Hath God Wrought!: American Missionary Association Core Collections at *Amistad* Research Center." *New Conversations* 11 (Winter/Spring 1989): 32-35.

Johnson, Clifton H. "The American Missionary Association: A Short History." *Our American Missionary Association Heritage*. New York: United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1967.

Johnson, Clifton H. "The *Amistad* Incident." Amistad *II: Afro-American Art*. Edited by David C. Driskell. Nashville: Fisk University and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1975: 15-35.

Johnson, Clifton H. "The *Amistad* Incident and the Formulation of the American Missionary Association." *New Conversations* 11 (Winter/Spring 1989): 3-6.

Jones, Howard. "Mutiny on the *Amistad*: 'All We Want is Make Us Free.'" *The Connecticut Scholar;* Occasional Papers of the Connecticut Humanities Council 10 (n.d., c. 1989) 7-25.

Frank J. I. Miele is senior historian in the National Register Programs Division of the National Park Service, Southeast Region, Atlanta, Georgia. His primary responsibilities center around the regional National Historic Landmarks Program.

BOOKS

Whither Underground Railroad Historiography?

John David Smith

Until recently, the history of the legendary underground railroad has been mired in mystery and mythology. In 1961, historian Larry Gara exposed the legend of the underground railroad for what it was: part fact, mostly mythology. In his pathbreaking book, *The Liberty Line,* Gara argued that blacks, not whites, orchestrated the escape process. He also concluded that white abolitionists exaggerated both the number of slaves who absconded and the number of railroad "lines" to freedom. Previous scholars, drawing heavily on memoirs of white abolitionists, generally ignored the contributions of blacks. Gara, however, concluded that fugitive slaves were the key players in the underground railroad. He correctly identified Wilbur H. Siebert as the historian most responsible for perpetuating the romanticized view of the underground railroad. "He accepted the elderly abolitionists' statements at face value," Gara explained. "The romantic stories of the abolitionists were apparently difficult for him to reject, and he did not modify his early impressions in any of his later writings."[1]

To what extent have modern scholars taken heed of Gara's revisionist interpretation? Have they underscored the importance of blacks like William Still, leader of the General Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, who personally assisted many fugitive slaves to freedom? Have they de-emphasized the role of white abolitionists and credited the slaves with playing a more significant role in their self-emancipation? This brief overview examines recent treatments of the underground railroad from different genres with an eye toward assessing the impact of Gara's thesis.

In the documentary history *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* for example, C. Peter Ripley described the underground railroad as "a loosely linked web of northern vigilance committees and groups of southern blacks who smuggled fugitives and rescued slaves from the upper South. It operated without much white aid beyond that provided by a few dedicated Quaker abolitionists like Levi Coffin and Thomas Garrett."[2] In a recent encyclopedia article, Donald Yacovone commented that "The Underground Railroad never freed as many slaves as its most vocal supporters claimed, and far fewer whites helped than the mythology suggests. Undeniably, however, the existence and history of the system reflect the African-American quest for freedom and equality."[3]

In *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (1996), Randolph Paul Runyon has written a meticulously-researched book about the underground railroad in Kentucky.[4] He examines the complex relationships between Delia Webster, a white Vermont abolitionist; Calvin Fairbank, a white New York clergyman and abolitionist; Lewis Hayden, a slave employed at Lexington's Phoenix Hotel; and Newton Craig, a planter who served as keeper of Kentucky's Penitentiary in Frankfort.

In September, 1844, Webster, who taught at Lexington Female Academy, and Fairbank, rented a carriage and drove Lewis Hayden, his wife Harriet, and their son Jo, from Lexington to Maysville. From the northern Kentucky town the slaves made their way across the Ohio River to free soil. The abduction of the Haydens occurred unabashedly, openly challenging Kentucky's slave code and the Commonwealth's gender, class, and racial etiquette.

Upon their return to Lexington, Webster and Fairbank were arrested, jailed, and tried for assisting runaway slaves. Their trials attracted attention throughout Kentucky and nationwide. Webster was convicted and sentenced to two years in the state penitentiary. Fairbanks was sentenced to hard labor for 15 years. Much of Runyon's book untangles the post-trial relationships between Webster, Fairbank, Hayden, and Craig.

Runyon's exhaustive detective work revises the account of Webster, Fairbank, and Hayden in J. Winston Coleman's *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (1940). But aside from getting the facts straight, and for unearthing the destructive relationship between Webster and Craig, his book adds little to the history of the inner workings of the underground railroad in Kentucky. Like previous writers, Runyon accepts abolitionist lore at face value. Unfortunately, he ignores Gara's book.

So too does Charles L. Blockson in his *Hippocrene Guide to The Underground Railroad* (1994), the first guidebook to the underground railroad's historic sites. Blockson identifies more than 200 landmark houses, institutions, buildings, and markers believed to have been associated with the underground railroad. Arranged geographically, this reference describes "stations" in 32 states and in Canada. Each entry contains a description of the

site with detailed information pertaining to its history, visitor information, directions, contact addresses, and telephone numbers. The amply-illustrated volume includes a chronology, a glossary, a bibliography, a listing of songs of the underground railroad, a suggested underground railroad tour, listings of underground railroad tour organizations and African-American antislavery newspapers, and indexes of sites and towns. While Blockson argues that the role of the Quakers in the underground railroad has been exaggerated, he fails to inform readers of other debates that historians have waged over the movement of the escaped slaves to freedom. Like historians who wrote a generation ago, Blockson often accepts uncritically the numerous pre- and post-Civil War legends of the underground railroad—its inflated scale, alleged organization, and white abolitionist leadership. To be sure, Blockson credits the slaves and their free black allies with playing a major role in the drama of the underground railroad. But modern scholarship interprets the underground railroad as having been more spontaneous and less systematic than Blockson suggests.[5]

Gary Collison realizes this in his fascinating Shadrach Minkins *From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (1997). Recognizing Gara's caveat, Collison remarks that in the writings of Siebert and others on the underground railroad, "fact and legend were inextricably intertwined."[6]

In May, 1850, Minkins, a Virginia house slave, ran away from his Norfolk owner and made the perilous way by sea northward to Boston. There, thanks to support from Boston's free black community, he established himself as a waiter. Minkins' fears of recapture and being remanded to his owner were made real by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, part of the Compromise of 1850. Under the law, federal marshals were empowered to assist in returning fugitive slaves to their owners. From the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 until 1854, masters and their agents made several hundred attempts to recover their slaves throughout the North. Many fugitives had lived there for years.

Under the new Fugitive Slave Law, Minkins and other slave refugees were denied basic civil liberties (habeas corpus, trial by jury, the right of the accused to testify) accorded white citizens. The U.S. Supreme Court confirmed this in 1857 in the famous Dred Scott case. Collison falls short, however, by failing to delineate what constitutional rights blacks possessed in 1850 and the implications of their changed legal status by the new Fugitive Slave Law.

He is more successful, though, in narrating Minkins' February 1851, arrest and hearing in Boston's U.S. court room. While most fugitive slave cases occurred in the border states, Boston, because of its high abolitionist profile, was targeted by owners of fugitive slaves. During Minkins' hearing, a small band of Boston blacks broke into the courtroom, shoved the officials aside, and seized Minkins. A network of blacks spirited him through Boston's streets. Blacks not only coordinated Minkins' dramatic rescue from Boston's federal courtroom, but orchestrated the successful defense of those accused of aiding in his flight. One of the more surprising of Collison's conclusions is the number of rank-and-file white Bostonians who assisted Minkins indirectly by establishing alibis for his black rescuers.

Interestingly, when reflecting recently on his book, 35 years after *The Liberty Line* first appeared, Gara remarked:

> Were I to write the book again, I would give more recognition to the [white] abolitionists, many of whom risked a great deal to help escaping slaves.

But, he insists, "the slaves themselves actually planned and carried out their runs for freedom." Gara also now interprets the underground railroad as "a nearly perfect model of nonviolent action"—an insight he missed when he first wrote the book.[7]

But Gara stands by his original thesis. Despite historical and archeological evidence that challenges the mythology of the underground railroad, he says, "elements of the legend persist, describing a well organized national network with imaginative hiding places and tunnels, and painting an oversimplified picture of helpless fugitives being carried, literally, to freedom." Local traditions and memories indeed die hard. Gara's important book remains an essential revisionist work, one that is important to keep students of the underground railroad on track.[8]

Notes

1 Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), 190.

2 *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley (5 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985-1992), 3:39.

3 Yacovone, "Underground Railroad," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, eds. Jack

Salzman, David Lionel Smith, and Cornel West (5 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1996), 5:2701.

4 Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

5 Blockson, *Hippocrene Guide to The Underground Railroad* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994). In *The Underground Railroad* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987), 199-200, Blockson mentions Gara and his thesis in passing.

6 Collison, *Shadrach Minkins From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 43.

7 Gara, "Preface to the 1996 Edition," *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), xii.

8 Ibid., xiii. See Byron D. Fruehling and Robert H. Smith, "Subterranean Hideaways of the Underground Railroad in Ohio: An Architectural, Archaeological and Historical Critique of Local Traditions," *Ohio History*, 102 (August, 1993): 98-117.

John David Smith is Graduate Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at North Carolina State University, where he directs the M.A. in Public History program. His most recent book is "This Wilderness of War": The Civil War Letters of George W. Squier, Hoosier Volunteer, *co-edited with Julie A. Doyle and Richard M. McMurry.*

Book Reviews

Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen. Gary Collison. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. 1-294.

Reviewed by Marie Tyler-McGraw, historian, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices, NPS History Program.

On a February morning in 1851, while Frederick Minkins was serving breakfast at the Cornhill Coffee House in Boston, he was arrested by federal officers as a fugitive slave from Norfolk. He was the first fugitive slave to be seized in New England under the new Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and his arrest drew national attention. This stringent law was a part of a package of legislation known as the Compromise of 1850 enacted to try, once more, to keep the United States united despite intense internal differences over the morality and legality of slavery. The Fugitive Slave Law was designed to please the South through a vigorous effort at recapturing runaways from slavery.

If the Congress believed that the Fugitive Slave Law would resolve the differences between North and South, it could not have been more mistaken. Shadrach Minkins was rescued by a group of Boston's black citizens from the courtroom where he was about to be transferred to the custody of slave-catcher deputies and returned to Virginia. This daring rescue was the first of many public confrontations between antislavery advocates and those who, armed with a warrant or simply a description, sought fugitives among the North's free blacks. Few Congressional acts did more to make the evils of slavery public than the Fugitive Slave Law.

Hustled out of Boston and stopping permanently in Montreal, Shadrach Minkins became as unknown to history as he had been before the spotlight found him. This was not because informed speculation was impossible, but because such minute attention to one obscure person has only recently been a primary interest of scholars. Collison's study is useful both for the story of Shadrach Minkins and for the examples of research techniques in social history that he offers.

In this study, Gary Collison creatively used a variety of primary and secondary sources to construct the life of Minkins before and after his arrest. While a slave in Norfolk, Minkins appeared in the decennial census only as a nameless check mark in a category: male slaves between 14 and 21, for example. Vital records of births, marriages, and deaths are usually not available for slaves. But Collison was able to use the document presented to the Boston court to learn the names of Minkins' recent owners. With this as a base, Collison found the several persons who had owned Shadrach Minkins in Norfolk, Virginia.

Minkins fit the profile of the typical runaway. He had been sold several times; he had been hired-out at a specialized trade or business in a town; he was a young male. He was also in a port city where escapes by water were rather frequent. Although the details of Minkins' escape are not known, Collison was able to use William Still's *The Underground Railroad* to identify slaves in Norfolk who regularly aided fugitives and the ship's cap-

tains who would take money to transport escapees. Whether he was known to the captain or hidden by crewmen, alone or with a companion, Minkins left Norfolk on May 4, 1850 and arrived successfully in Boston.

His experience in working with the public helped him get employment at the Cornhill Coffee House and he boarded in a hotel under an assumed name. Within a few months, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed and, shortly after that, Minkins was seized at his work and carried to the Court House. Boston's black community was possibly the best organized in the United States and, while the Vigilance Committee sought legal representation for Minkins, word spread rapidly of his arrest among all African Americans.

Usually fugitives were given a brief summary hearing and hustled off to a ship, but Minkins' experienced abolitionist lawyers got a three-day reprieve. When the hearing convened, a large crowd of black men, denied access to the courtroom, waited just beyond the door and, in mid-afternoon, pried the door open and grabbed Minkins from the small force of guards. He was last seen disappearing around the corner of the street. The dramatic impact of this rescue was incalculable in both the North and the South. Those who wanted to maintain the national status quo railed against mob rule. Antislavery advocates rejoiced. Many whites who had managed not to think much about slavery were forced to consider its meaning.

Collison follows Minkins' path to Canada, carefully picking through various testimonies and accounts, some recorded many years later, to find the ones closest to the actual occurrence.

His narrative illustrates the spontaneous contributions of many people to Minkins' escape and suggests that Minkins went to Montreal, rather than Toronto, because the Vermont Central Railroad, in which his Norfolk owner had stock, had a new direct line to that city.

In Montreal, Shadrach Minkins followed the urban entrepreneurial life he had known in Norfolk and Boston by operating several restaurants in Old Montreal. One of his first ventures was the West End Lunch; a later restaurant was called Uncle Tom's Cabin. By the end of the decade, Minkins had become a barber. Minkins was traced through the census, tax records, city directories, advertisements for his business enterprises, and the records of the Protestant cemetery where two of his children were buried. A petition in the National Archives in Ottawa revealed that Minkins was part of a group that, in 1860, requested permission to form "The Colored Company of Montreal Volunteer Rifles." Minkins died in Montreal in 1875 and the memory of the fugitive slave era faded.

In this book, Shadrach Minkins has a life, but, because he left no letters or papers, he has no voice. His one powerful decision — to run away from slavery — precipitated all the later events in his life and we must ultimately assess his hopes and plans by that act. But Collison has gathered up the many strands of Minkins' life and times and woven together a context that allows the reader to see Shadrach Minkins traveling through a perilous time to his destination as a free man.

Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol. Nell Irvin Painter. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996; 370 pp.

Reviewed by Rachel Franklin-Weekly, historian, NPS Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska.

Sojourner Truth, the anti-slavery crusader, is a familiar figure in American culture, but few know the real person behind the image. Through *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol,* Nell Irvin Painter brings the two together. The masterful work examines the life of Isabella, the slave who became Sojourner Truth, and explores the evolution of this paragon within appropriate 19th-century contexts. Painter illustrates the cultural need and use for Truth, in Sojourner's era as well as our own.

Painter presents three versions of Truth; beginning with the life of Isabella Van Wagenen, her rebirth as Sojourner Truth, and the broad contributions of the anti-slavery crusader. Isabella, born c. 1797, lived among the Dutch in upstate New York. Hers was not the stereotypical world of southern slavery, but it held similar cruelties of physical and sexual abuse, disintegration of family, and lack of personal autonomy. Through New York's program of gradual emancipation, Isabella claimed her freedom in July 1827. Religion pro-

vided an empowering force in her life and, through faith, Isabella transformed herself into Sojourner Truth, itinerant preacher.

Isabella embraced a pentecostal strain of Methodism, known as "perfectionism," during the Second Great Awakening of the 1820s-1830s. Sojourner Truth, born of Isabella's faith, held a strict millenarian view of society, warning white Americans of God's vengeance for their sins of slave-holding and racism, and decrying freedmen who relied on federal relief. Ever the skilled communicator, Truth couched her rebukes with wit and humor in messages that her audiences could accept.

Painter brings us a very personal understanding of the woman who was Sojourner Truth. She illustrates the best of the historian's craft by piecing together a life bridging sociological cohorts that often elude analysis; the illiterate, former slaves, African Americans, women. Early biographers, essayists, and personal correspondents provide the framework on which Painter builds her documented history of this complex individual. Although illiterate, correspondence, photographs, and the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* supply Sojourner's voice. It is that of a strong feminist crusader who railed against slavery, racism, and discrimination against women.

Nell Painter has written a much-needed biography which reveals the woman behind the symbol and explains why the symbol predominates our collective memory. Isabella's metamorphosis was first honed by Truth, herself, and marketed through *cartes-de-visite* photographs, public appearances, and the publication of her *Narrative*. Painter carefully tracks the devolution of the famous and falsely attributed "ar'n't I a woman" speech and fraudulent descriptions by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frances Dana Gage. Calling Sojourner Truth one of the "invented greats," Nell Painter fashions her as a timeless Strong Black Woman, admitting that cultural iconography often is more relevant than historical scholarship.

Painter's meticulous research and analysis deserves high praise; however, the deconstruction of Truth as cultural symbol becomes tedious and repetitive. Awe for her subject seems to hinder full analysis of Truth's motivations despite a well-balanced presentation. Lack of documentation accounts for some of this, but Painter barely pursues some contradictions in Truth's life, particularly her reliance on white benefactors and efforts to acquire a home and gather a family which she leaves. Perhaps by relinquishing these questions to the reader, Painter offers the greatest contribution, that of humanity, by presenting Sojourner Truth, A Person.

Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America. Wilma King. Bloomington, Indiana. Indian University Press. 1995.

Reviewed by C. James Trotman, Professor of English and Director, Frederick Douglass Institute, West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Children and childhood have never been very far from the influential studies on slavery in the United States and indeed around the world. John Blassingames's *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (1979) and Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 1750-1925 (1977) in historical studies, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs in autobiography are just a few of the writers who have reminded us of the particularly profound human toll enacted in chattel slavery by eliminating much of childhood from normal human development.

Nevertheless, as Wilma King points out in the introduction to this well documented, readable study, "few historians have stressed this aspect of slavery. . . because they [the children] were silent and invisible." The author sets out to explain and outline what is important for us to see and hear in a stolen childhood. Conceptually speaking, "silence" and "invisibility" are terms which are part fact-based evidence of the world in which slaves existed and survived. But they are also metaphors, unwrapping the sounds of history and its ordinary folk so that chattel slavery's muted voices and disfigurements can be heard and seen.

In our time, when "parenting" is very much a part of the social discourse, this compelling book moves us to imagine what it must have been like to raise offspring who could not exercise the natural child-like behavior of curiosity and play for fear that the child would be in danger or, worse, inno-

cently endanger adults. There were no limits to the danger, from children being sold, stolen, or assaulted. The injuries, both physical and psychological were virtually endless. Some of the book's important chapters illustrate the grim realities of growing up black on a southern plantation and the absence of childhood in slave community. However, while *Stolen Childhood* depicts familiar images of plantation life, the intriguing parts of the book belong to its narratives of first-hand witnesses and the resources the author assembled.

Some of the best of these individual stories of course come from classic slave narratives such as the famous 1848 story by the great patriot Frederick Douglass. Perhaps because others are not so well known, we get a renewed picture of the "bonded" children and the legalities of plantation life which further locked them into the chains of a system with no beginning and no end, with only work defining one's existence.

Even under these circumstances, King documents the timeless moral authority of parents. In 1853, for example, one father on a gold field in California wrote back to his wife in California to "Rais your children up rite," perhaps unaware of his pun. But this book is full of documentation like this which puts more and more evidence before today's readers about the moral life of slaves themselves.

Stolen Childhood represents an important addition to our understanding of slave culture by its extensive focus on children and childhood in southern slave communities. A reading of the book leaves one with a clearer understanding of how childhood and other forms of human development were lost or distorted on southern plantations under the ideological falsehoods that slaves were not human. The book is worth reading. However, it is only a prelude to more studies. We need studies of "childhood" in the North, for example. Did one lose childhood and children in the North the same way they were lost in the South? Since labor differed, did that mean that one's status changed too? Future studies responding to these and other questions will build upon the contribution made by *Stolen Childhood*.

In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks 1700-1860. James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by Stephen Balyea, Re-enactor Coordinator, Centennial Celebration, Shaw/54th Massachusetts Memorial.

In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks 1700-1860, by James Oliver and Lois E. Horton, weaves a tapestry of life that we of the late-20th century have largely forgotten. The authors have breathed life into this history. It is impossible not to feel the pain and experience the frustration of those persons held in bondage by either slavery or (in the case of freed blacks) by the mores of white society.

Most interesting are the chapters dealing with the Colonial North. Crispus Attucks is the one black man of the Revolution that most people recall. Sometimes he seems to be the only black man who fought for freedom. The reader is introduced to strong black women and citizen soldiers who fought for liberty and those who stood with the British interracial bands of soldiers such as the one commanded by William Hunt. Hunt was a man of color who worked independently as well as with the Crown forces in South Carolina. These "backcountry Tories" raided fortifications and plantations sometimes freeing slaves and indentured servants. The Continental Army had its share of black troops in integrated regiments and, in the case of Rhode Island, an all black regiment. Many slaves were able to gain their freedom at the end of the war even though slavery continued.

In Hope of Liberty takes the reader through the early years of the Republic. The populations of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia are charted in depth including information on marriage patterns and the struggle for jobs in competition with Irish immigrants. African Benevolent Societies, Prince Hall Masons, the black churches, and the abolitionist movement are included in a well-rounded and detailed narrative. Each chapter covers a catastrophic event of the 1850s and '60s. The growth of the anti-slavery movement, African-American identity, and the question of colonization are given ample treatment in the last chapters.

In Hope of Liberty is the story of real people worth remembering. It is a work that should be in the library of any one who wants to understand the foundations of slavery in America.

Frederick Douglass purchased his final home in 1877, and named it Cedar Hill. He expanded the house from 14 to 21 rooms and purchased additional land to expand its acreage. Most of the furnishings at Cedar Hill, located in Washington (Anacostia), DC, are original from Douglass' time. Numerous items from his personal possessions are on display, and the home is decorated with many reminders of his reformist career and of his fellow reformers. Douglass died here in February 1895. His second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass, preserved the home as it was when Douglass lived there. She formed the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, which was largely responsible for maintaining the home until it became a unit of the national park system. NPS photo.

Printed on recycled paper

CRM

VOLUME 21 • NO. 4
Cultural Resources
Washington, DC

U.S. Department of
the Interior
National Park Service
Cultural Resources (Suite 350NC)
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300

FIRST CLASS MAIL
Postage & Fees Paid
U. S. Department of the Interior
G-83