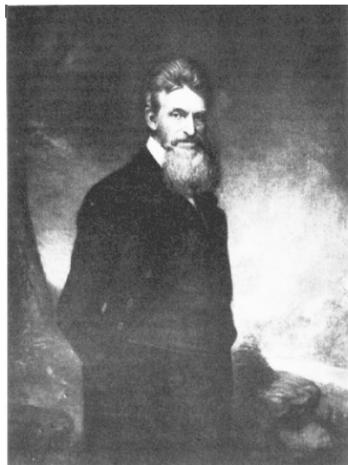


## JOHN BROWN COMING HOME



- Dec. 4th at 7:30 - Slavery: An Exploration Through Contemporary Film
- Dec. 5th - Symposium: The Life and Legacy of John Brown
- Dec. 6th at Noon - Don Papson on "John Brown and the Underground Railroad"
- Dec. 8th at 11 AM - Memorial Service

For complete schedule of events, visit  
John Brown Coming Home at:

<http://www.johnbrowncominghome.com/Symposium.html>

## We're on our way! Asbestos Removed From Estes House

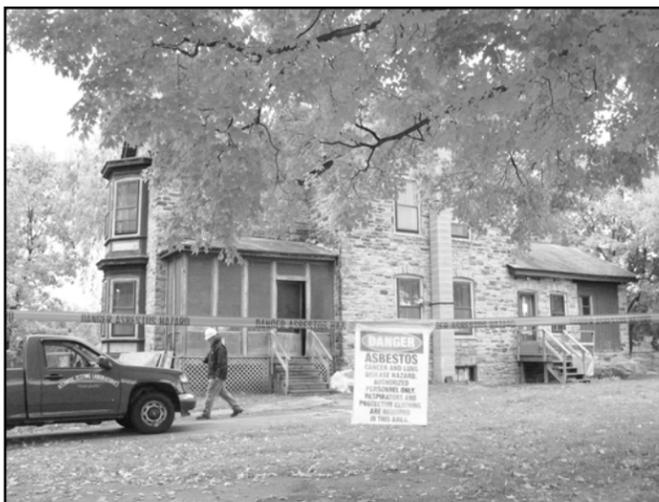


Photo by Mike Hanke

North Country  
Underground Railroad  
Historical Association  
P.O. Box 2413  
Plattsburgh, New York 12901

### Visitors Center - Museum Manager & Contingency Fund Donation

NCUGRHA will begin managing the Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center and North Star Underground Railroad Museum in 2010. \$10,000 will enable us to hire a part time Manager and create a contingency fund. We are calling on all members and friends to help us meet our goal.

Please indicate the amount of your contribution and return this form to us as soon as you can.

\$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

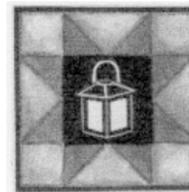
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: NCUGRHA  
P.O. Box 2413, Plattsburgh, NY 12901

NCUGRHA is a 501 9 (c) ( 3) not for profit tax-exempt organization chartered by the Department of Education of the State of New York. All contributions are tax deductible to the extend allowable by law.

### "Lighting Freedom's Road"



*Celebrating the Importance of Freedom to the Survival of the Human Spirit*

Number 11

Summer 2009/Fall 2009

North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association  
P.O. Box 2413 - Plattsburgh, New York 12901 (518) 561-0277 - NCUGRHA@aol.com  
[www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com](http://www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com)

## NCUGRHA Given Leg Iron

John and Nancy Lecky fondly remember their friends from the years they lived in an old Quaker farmhouse in the village of Peru. When they decided to move to Keene, they left Peru with more than fond memories—they took a leg iron with them. For nearly forty years, John and Nancy kept this artifact from Peru's Underground Railroad history. A few years ago, one of our members, Kathryn McCormick, told the Lecky's about us, and this year they decided to donate the leg iron to our collection. John gave us the following account:

*This leg iron was found by me in 1970 while renovating a farmhouse on Hallock Hill Road between Keeseville and Harkness. The leg iron had been hidden away under floor boards at the top of a stairway leading to the attic.*

*The house had been built in 1820 by Pliny Hoag on approximately 190 acres owned by his father, David Hoag, who had purchased the property in three separate parcels in 1802 to 1804 from an Osborne, a Cochran and a Hallock. David Hoag had come from Starksboro, Vermont, and was a member of the Quaker Meeting based at the foot of Hallock Hill on the road to Peru and now known as the Quaker Union.*

*Ownership of the house passed from David Hoag's heirs to his son Pliny Hoag in 1846 and then from heirs of Pliny Hoag to Isaac Roberts on April 1, 1875, ten years after the end of the Civil War. Since Keeseville and the Quaker Union are known to have had members sympathetic to the plight of southern slaves fleeing to the north, we concluded that the Hoag family had provided assistance to at least one as represented by this leg iron.*

John Lecky's history inspired us to do some additional research. David and Elizabeth Hoag's son, Embree, was a founder of the West Peru Anti-Slavery Society and the Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society. Their son, Pliny, was the great-great-great grandfather of George "Speedy" Arnold of Keeseville and his sister, Allison, of Harkness.

Our abolitionist history is a living history!



John and Nancy Lecky present leg iron to NCUGRHA President Don Papson. Photos by John Lecky and Jennifer Kuba.

## State Cancels \$25,000 Contract

## Board Sets \$10,000 Center Manager & Contingency Fund Goal



The Town of Chesterfield now owns the Estes House. The lights are back on. The asbestos has been removed. Roof repairs are next. Exciting exhibit designs are being planned. But the State of New York is in a financial crisis and has cancelled a \$25,000 grant we were promised for one of our major exhibits. We're back to the drawing board...

NCUGRHA has entered a new stage in our development. As a volunteer organization, we have accomplished a tremendous amount over the last five years -- on a shoestring budget. Now we need to make the most of new challenges by raising funds to hire a part-time Center/Museum Manager and create a contingency fund.

The Estes House will open next year as the Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center and North Star Underground Railroad Museum. We will be responsible for daily operations. (In return, the Town is granting us use of the second floor of the building for our offices.) We must be in a position to make the most of the many new opportunities the Interpretive Center and Museum will bring us. We need someone to recruit and train docents and organize special events. We need a Center/Museum Manager.

NCUGRHA's Board of Trustees has initiated a "\$10,000 Museum Manager & Contingency Fund." We need your help to reach our goal. Please contribute. As soon as you can, return the enclosed form with your donation. Thank you.

## A Risky Business

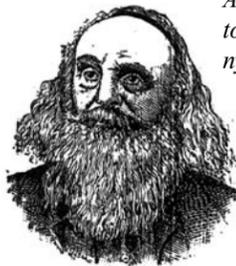
Our “Risky Business” presentation for Museum Day on June 6th did a rousing business. Mitchell Ray managed the flow of spectators as Vivian Papson and Lee Clark showed how abolitionists who took action against slavery risked their reputations and faced the possibility of violence. Plattsburgh cabinet maker William G. Brown was the secretary of the local branch of the Liberty Party. He was hanged in effigy for assisting runaway slaves on their journey to Canada. Vivian constructed an effigy to dramatize the opposition William G. Brown faced.

John Brown raided the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, 150 years ago. Only five of the 21 men in his army escaped death on the spot or on the scaffold soon after. Brown lost two of his sons, and on the way to his hanging, said “...this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood.”

Adirondack guide Billy Nye came close to going with Brown on his fateful trip to Harpers Ferry. Had he gone, Nye may not have returned alive. When Brown’s body was returned to North Elba, his widow, Mary, asked Nye to prepare it for viewing and to oversee the digging of her husband’s grave. As a reward, she gave Nye the collar worn by Brown on the day of his execution.



Lee Clark, Vivian Papson and Mitchell Ray.  
An arm of the William G. Brown effigy is visible to the right of Mitchell. Lee Clark had an uncanny resemblance to Billy Nye.



## Rouses Point, NY on National UGRR Network to Freedom

On August 26, 2009 the National Park Service accepted our nomination of the old Rouses Point Pier for its National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

The former Pier, now the Rouses Point Sportsman’s Club, was the most important stop on the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad which encompassed the geographical corridor between Albany and Troy and Canada’s Richelieu River. Located a mile below the international border, Rouses Point’s busy 100 foot dock and train depot was a landing for Lake Champlain steamboats and a terminal for trains from New York City and Boston. Self emancipated men, women and children continued north on trains to Montreal or by rail to Ogdensburg, New York, where steamboats took them to refugee settlements in Canada West. Maryland runaway Charlotte Gilchrist entered Canada on a train which passed through Vermont in 1854. Two years later, Vermonters helped a fugitive from slavery evade his former master and a U.S. marshall and put him on a freight train bound for Canada. A man identified only as “Bill” was forwarded from Massachusetts to Vermont in 1859 with a note that he was not to be sent through Rouses Point because he might be seen and captured. In the winter of 1861, Mrs. Lavinia Bell escaped from Texas and followed the North Star to Rouses Point where a Canadian Underground Railroad agent paid her fare to Montreal. Thus, Rouses Point’s Pier served as a major transfer station where fugitives from slavery boarded trains for their final destinations in Upper and Lower Canada.



## Correction

It has been brought to our attention that we published an error in our last newsletter. We stated that the New York Constitution was revised in 1821 to require black men to own land valued at \$250 in order to vote in state elections while white men were required to own land valued at \$100. The injustice was, however, even greater than we stated: the revised constitution eliminated the property requirement for white men.

## August 1st is Emancipation Day in Ontario

Ontario, Canada, has officially recognized August 1st as Emancipation Day. For many years August 1st has been recognized in several Caribbean island nations which were once British colonies. However, slaveholders decided that they would extract another six years of free labour, by naming the Africans “apprentices.” It wasn’t until August 1, 1838, that widespread protests in the Bahamas, Trinidad, Jamaica and Guyana forced the British government to end the “apprenticeship” system.



Lianna Yaki-Nee Hall, Isaiah (31/2 years) and baby Jacob (about 1 mo.) and Grandpa Larry Hall, January 2009.

## Our Ancestors Gave Us Genuine Freedom

By Larry Hall

Canadian society has been enriched by the immigration of African Americans beginning perhaps 200 years ago, culminating in the 1850’s with the deluge resulting from the ill considered fugitive slave act.

At the dawn of the 19th century from three to five thousand slaves accompanied the United Empire Loyalists, prosperous colonial land owners, who fled North to Canada following the war of Independence. While these white families preferred to remain under the British crown and laws, the blacks soon learned that, while slavery did exist in Canada, it wasn’t supported either by custom or by law. They simply drifted off to form pioneer communities of their own or to gravitate to the few cities that existed at the time, usually entering into their own subsistence businesses.

The major move North to Canada began in mid-century. That’s when two of my great-grandfathers, Samuel Hall and Charles Williams, rode the underground railroad to Canada. Hall (1829-1913) described as a mulatto, 21, fled from bondage to William Hutchins of Harford County Maryland, together with two others. Hutchins advertised a reward of \$750 for their return. Hall family lore says Samuel was guided in his successful escape to Niagara Falls by Harriet Tubman. Shortly after his arrival Hall married a young, white, Scottish born widow who had come to Canada at about age 16 as an indentured servant. They had three sons and two daughters. They were among the early families attending the BME (British Methodist Episcopal) church that has since become an important historical site still existing in Niagara Falls.

Charles Williams (1821-1897) was also born in Maryland, possibly on the large Hampton estate near Baltimore where hundreds of blacks were held in bondage providing free labour for numerous enterprises. He came under the protection of the abolitionist Healy family of Boston. An account of Williams life as a fugitive hiding from the bounty hunters can be found in the diary of Caroline Healy Dall. He lived with the Healy family for six years until fear of recapture led to his escape, again on the underground railroad, to Montreal. There, Williams married Irish born (1826) Margaret Maguire. They had one son and four daughters.

One of the Williams girls, Margaret Ruth, married Samuel Hall Jr., the eldest son of Samuel Hall of Niagara Falls, in 1885 at St.

James Methodist Church in Montreal. Samuel had moved to Montreal with one of his brothers a few years earlier to work on the Grand Trunk Railroad.

Samuel and Margaret Ruth almost immediately moved to Toronto. The couple had nine children. Samuel died on his train in 1904 leaving his large family in poverty. Margaret Ruth brought her family up through a combination of absolute determination and great religious faith. She insisted her brood become acquainted with classical music and proper enunciation. By the sheer force of her will she created a family that has remained conspicuously productive in all the following generations. Two sons served in France in WW I, one of whom was drafted into a servicemen’s entertainment group known as the Dumbells. They toured on the vaudeville circuit following the armistice.

Many family members were involved in music. One of Margaret Ruth’s granddaughters, born in Detroit, won the Metropolitan Opera’s “Auditions of the Air” in 1948, singing in Opera Companies in Chicago and San Francisco during a long career as a performer and teacher. Another of Margaret Ruth’s descendants won a \$50,000 Mellon research award in 2008 for his work in computer systems. He teaches at King’s College London.

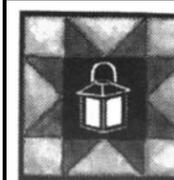
There are two physicians and three lawyers among the many skilled people who originated from the escape of Samuel Hall and Charles Williams one and a half centuries ago.

All the Hall/Williams successors owe an enormous debt to these two one-time slaves. When these two men made the decision to risk their lives in an escape to Canada they insured that their descendants would be saved from slavery and the terrible Jim Crow century that followed the Lincoln emancipation.

These men gave us genuine freedom and hopefully we are repaying the debt.

*A retired broadcaster, Larry Hall is an Advisory member of NCUGRHA. For more about Larry’s search for information about his great-grandfather Charles Williams, see “Portal to the Past” at*

*<<http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2001/02.08/14-portal-topast.html>>*



### The North Country Lantern Editor, Don Papson

Published by the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association, a not for profit 501(c) 3 educational organization, dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and promotion of the history of the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad. Our geographical corridor encompasses Northeastern New York’s Waterways to Freedom--the Upper Hudson River, the Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain.

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