

THE NORTH COUNTRY LANTERN

Number 6

Winter 2006/Spring 2007

North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association
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Work to Begin on Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center from a *Plattsburgh Press Republican* article by Andrea VanValkenburg



Photo by Luke Bush

The Estes House at Ausable Chasm will be the Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center featuring NCUGRHA’s UGR exhibits

CHESTERFIELD — For years, the historic Estes house has towered over the sloping entrance to Ausable Chasm, vacant and in need of repair.

But after recent efforts by Town of Chesterfield officials, Ausable Chasm and the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association (NCUGRHA), the aging sandstone home will soon become The Town of Chesterfield Visitors Interpretive Center and home of NCUGRHA’s Underground Railroad exhibits.

“Hopefully, (renovations) will start in early spring when the weather breaks. I’d like to see it operating by this summer,” said Chesterfield Town Supervisor Gerry Morrow.

The immense structure that was once the home of Civil War veteran Herbert Estes will serve as a Lakes to Locks visitors center on a National Scenic Byway.

Officials would like the new center to be fully restored for the tourist season.

“We’re very excited and more than pleased with the project,” said Tim Bresett, the director of Ausable Chasm, which has donated the house to the Town of Chesterfield. “I couldn’t think of a better way to use (the building). It will serve a great purpose of telling the story (of the Underground Railroad).”

The \$408,862 renovation project, with the help of three large grants secured by the town, will soon be under way.

Volunteers from the Underground Railroad Historical Association, a regional not-for-profit organization, will staff and operate the seasonal museum for the town, which will fund the daily operating expenses. Daily upkeep of the grounds will be provided by the Chasm corporation’s maintenance crews.

“We have envisioned a wonderful place here. We’re going to be developing exhibits for a number of years,” said volunteer NCUGRHA president Don Papson.

The final plans for the center include an array of historic exhibits, literature and presentations, including a children’s research library and a series of Waterways to Freedom exhibits, which will focus on the rich history of the anti-slavery movement within the greater Upper Hudson-Champlain Canal-Lake Champlain region.

“We would also like to replicate a hiding place,” Papson said. “A bronze statue of a freedom-seeking family will also be constructed if funding is available.”

But as planning continues, officials are now just hoping the renovations will be completed by the summer so the history of northeastern New York’s abolitionist movement can finally be shared through the resources of a permanent interpretive center.

“Our vision is to inspire all people to overcome their differences today like (those in the abolitionist movement) did,” Papson added. “And to celebrate the importance of freedom to the survival of the human spirit.”

Canal Corporation funds Waterways to Freedom Exhibits

The New York Canal Corporation has awarded the Town of Chesterfield a \$174,600 grant for Waterways to Freedom Underground Railroad exhibits. The grant will support the construction of NCUGRHA’s displays and interactive exhibits depicting the history of the Underground Railroad in the Lake Champlain Corridor and the role the canal system played in this important but often neglected story in American history. Exhibits will focus on northeastern New York’s Upper Hudson-Champlain Canal-Lake Champlain Passageway to Freedom.

Panel on History of Blacks in Quebec Enlightens Large Audience

by Benjamin Pomerance

Last September 19th three acclaimed Canadian scholars visited SUNY Plattsburgh for a lively panel discussion on the history of “Blacks in Montreal and Quebec.” The event was co-sponsored by the colleges’ Center for the Study of Canada and NCUGRHA. A large audience was enriched with knowledge about several hidden chapters in Canada’s history.

Historian Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne shared the story of Marie-Joséphé Angélique who was condemned to death after being accused of starting a fire that destroyed 45 of Montreal’s grandest homes. The Portuguese born slave was arrested because of a “public rumor” and was convicted on the testimony of 21 adults who declared to the judge that they did not see who started the fire, but they were sure it was the “Negress.” At the last minute, a six year old girl told the Court she saw Angélique light the fatal flame. (The child happened to be the niece of Angélique’s owner.) In 1734, this was enough evidence to force a slave’s confession by torture and order her death by public hanging on a Montreal street corner where the executioner burned her body in a bonfire as the mob watched.

Over 200 years later, Ms. Beaugrand-Champagne remains fascinated by Angélique’s trial. She remarked, “Court records tell you a lot, and the court records of this particular trial are packed with information about the daily life of a slave in New France.” Yet the French-Canadian historian’s interest in the story of Angélique ranges far beyond the trial transcripts. The author of *Le proces de Marie-Joséphé-Angélique* (a detailed account of Angélique’s biased trial and gruesome death) Beaugrand-Champagne has a definite opinion about the outcome of the case. “I am convinced that Angélique was innocent,” the author knowingly stated. “In fact, I believe it was an accidental fire set by another slave, next door. Some writers might think Angélique was not guilty, but they have to come up with the proof. That’s why I wrote my book. I wanted the public in general to have access to the documents and decide if she was guilty or innocent.”



A question addressed to Ms. Beaugrand-Champagne

Montreal Gazette copy editor Frank Mackey told a different story of slavery. Legal proceedings in Quebec had taken a distinctly different tone by the time Diah, a fugitive slave from Plattsburgh, NY, ran away from the farm of Nathaniel Platt. In October 1794, Diah’s whereabouts were discovered by Eden Johnson, who purchased the runaway slave from Platt with the intent of capturing him and bringing him back to the United States. The Quebec

newspaper *Times/Cour du Temps* reported, “The Court heard the argument on both sides, and made (much to their Honor, and the Honor of humanity) the following decree: That slavery was not known by the Laws of England.” Therefore, the “negro man” was discharged.

According to Mackey, author of *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal 1780s-1880s*, this verdict was typical of Montreal slave trials of that era. “Runaway slaves often ended up in the Montreal district, and several trials similar to Diah’s were held in Canadian courts,” reported Mackey. “The slaves defeated their former masters every time.” Slave owners did not take their defeats lightly. “The slave holders constantly petitioned the Canadian government to formally legalize slavery,” he ruefully laughed. “A bill legalizing slavery was brought to a vote three times - in 1799, 1800 and 1803 - and was defeated all three times. We have no Emancipation Proclamation or 13th Amendment to give an official date to slavery’s death in our country, but the final defeat of this bill was really the end of slavery in Canada.”

In 1969, students at Sir George Williams University felt that the effects of Canadian slavery were alive and well. For decades, the black community of Montreal had managed to tolerate segregation and discrimination. But a zoology professor’s racist remarks were the last insults six black students were willing to bear. The students and their supporters staged a sit-in on the university campus, refusing to move even when ordered to leave by police. After they were arrested and jailed, the “Sir George Williams Affair” became a rallying cry for a people whose voices the city had silenced for years.



Dr. Dorothy Williams & NCUGRHA's Mitchell Ray

To Dr. Dorothy Williams, the Sir George Williams Affair was a significant turning point in Canadian history. “Blacks played a major role in the history of Montreal, but the city suffered from ‘Negrophobia’ well after the formal end of slavery,” explained the author of *The Road to Now: a History of Blacks in Montreal*, the only chronological study of Montreal’s black citizens. “When blacks from the United States came in the late 1800s to work for the Canadian railroads, they were considered ‘visitors’ instead of ‘immigrants.’ This was the attitude that the city took toward blacks – forcing them into the West End neighborhood, forbidding them from nightclubs and restaurants, not allowing them to fight in the Canadian armed forces in both World Wars - for a terribly long period of time. When the students at Sir George Williams University stood up to racist actions and refused to submit – even in the face of the police force – it gave a new identity to the black community of Montreal. This new-found sense of pride has carried over in the city to this day.”

Black men and women have played a vital role in Montreal and Quebec for four centuries. Thanks to Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, Frank Mackey and Dorothy Williams, their stories will be remembered.



Photo by Sgt Éric Jolin

Governor General Michaëlle Jean at the April 7, 2006 dedication in Old Montreal of a plaque in honor of Marie-Josephe Angélique

Angélique Honored After 272 Years

by Jeff Heinrich

from the April 8, 2006

Montreal Gazette

June 21, 1734: Found guilty of setting a fire that destroyed a hospital and 45 houses in the French colonial city of Montreal, a young black slave woman from Portugal named Marie-Josephe Angélique is tortured and then hanged in the street. Her body is thrown into a bonfire and burned.

April 7, 2006: Canada's first black Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, herself a Montreal immigrant descended from slaves in Haiti, lays a bouquet of Easter lilies beneath a plaque in Angélique's memory, tours the sites in Old Montreal where she lived and died, and inaugurates an educational website detailing her case.

"I think today is sweet revenge," Jean told dignitaries and other invitees at the Centre historique de Montreal after taking a symbolic walk through the rainy streets of the old city in the footsteps of Angélique, whose crime may not have been arson but simply the colour of her skin.

Contrasting yesterday's commemoration with "that other gathering, the day of her execution, when she died under a hail of angry, contemptuous shouts and insults," Jean said Angélique was a proud black woman whose tragic story is a symbol of the Canadian dream of freedom and equality for all.

"Every time the story of Marie-Josephe Angélique is told to me, I'm filled with emotion, as we all are," Jean said, recalling how Angélique maintained her innocence until tortured into confessing.

"I can't help but think this woman, in the prime of her life, would have had a completely different fate if she had been of a different race or if she'd been free," Jean said. "She was treated that way because she was black."

Almost 272 years later, it's important to understand that slavery was "the source of the prejudice that continues to contaminate, even poison, the way in which we deal with one another," Jean added.

"Racism has a history that we must never forget. The racism of today is an extension of the lingering racism of yesterday. If we forget this, then we risk perpetuating an unacceptable situation." As if the present mimicked the past, the commemoration was almost marred by fire at the Maison Parent-Roback, a women's centre based in a heritage stone house around the corner from St. Paul St., where the original blaze broke out on April 10, 1734, and where Angélique was executed 10 weeks later.

After her speech, Jean laid a bouquet under a commemorative plaque on a wall outside the Ste. Therese St. building. She then walked in the drizzle with her entourage under black umbrellas a short block down Vaudreuil St. to the corner of St. Paul, where historian and author Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne pointed out the site where 29 year old Angélique was executed.

The procession - including Mayor Gerald Tremblay and Quebec Immigration Minister Lise Theriault - then headed west along St. Paul, past the scene of the 1734 fire, to St. Sulpice St., where Angélique lived with her owner, the widow Madame de Francheville.

Then it was on to the Centre historique, where Jean clicked a computer mouse on a projection screen, opening a new website about Canadian "multicultural mysteries" like Angélique's.

The symbolism of Jean's walk in the slave woman's footsteps struck home. "It's not only an important moment, it's a great moment," said Beaugrand-Champagne, whose 2004 book *Le proces de Marie-Josephe Angélique* is considered the authoritative text on the subject. "We are finally acknowledging that this slave, Marie-Josephe Angélique, did walk these same streets. It really happened, right here in our own city."

For more on Marie-Josephe Angélique, go to the bilingual website, www.canadianmysteries.ca.



Annie Beaugrand-Champagne's design courtesy of the artist and www.canadianmysteries.ca

Footnote

For Anglophones, there is historian Dr. Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angélique; The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal*. While Ms. Beaugrand-Champagne's meticulous examination of the trial records convinced her that Angélique did not set fire to Montreal, Dr. Cooper believes she did. It was long thought that Angélique started the fire because she wanted to run away with her white lover, Claude Thibault, but Dr. Cooper feels that interpretation diminishes "the violence inherent in slavery." She brings the experience of being a black woman to her interpretation of the story. Dr. Cooper has said, "I wasn't enslaved... But I come from that tradition."

Was Angélique a victim of slavery and injustice or an enslaved insurrectionist? Bilingual readers may want to read and compare *Le proces de Marie-Josephe Angélique* and *The Hanging of Angélique* and decide for themselves.



Photos: above,
Courtesy Luke Bush;
right, courtesy
Cliff Oliver Mealy

John Thomas Brought to Life

Historical re-enactor Cliff Oliver Mealy of Greenwich N.Y. premiered “John Thomas, From Fugitive Slave to Free Man” at Plattsburgh’s North Country Cultural Center for the Arts on the afternoon of February 3rd. He based his performance on research conducted by NCUGRHA president Don Papson.

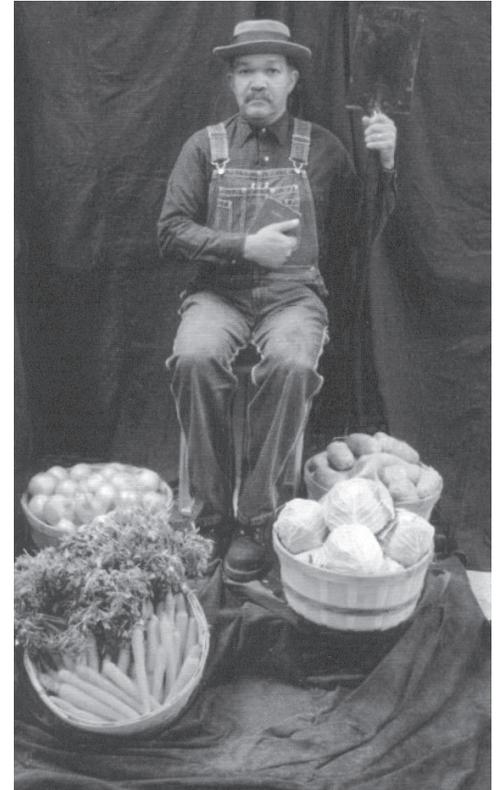
John Thomas (1810-1894) was born into slavery on the plantation of Ezekiel Merrick in Queen Anne’s County on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. He escaped in 1839 after his wife and children were “sold to Georgia.” In the company of two other slaves, he reached Philadelphia. He was secreted there for six weeks and then sent to Troy, N.Y. He married Mary Vanderhyden in Troy, and they started a new family.

In 1846, Mr Thomas received 40 acres in Franklin Falls from the wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith. When slave catchers came for him, local white men warned them Thomas was “armed and would never be taken alive” and they would “stand by him.” The slave catchers turned back.

Because his land was too far from “church and school,” Mr. Thomas sold his 40 acres and returned to Troy. Later, he returned to the Adirondacks and purchased 50 acres near Bloomingdale. By 1872, he was the proud owner of 200 acres. When Mr. Thomas died on April 30, 1894, he was eulogized in the *Malone Palladium* as “an honest, upright and fair dealing man, a good citizen” who was “much respected.”

In a pre-performance interview, re-enactor Mealy told *Plattsburgh Press Republican* reporter Robin Caudell, “He was a hardworking man, he succeeded where others failed. Being a farmer, black or white, in the Adirondacks is something hard to do. He left an estate. He was illiterate, yet he was written about. I think that is pretty remarkable. He had everything going against him but he still survived. He was a good man seeking freedom, the most basic of all wants.”

The story of John Thomas is more than an inspiring African American story: it is a quintessential American story of triumph over adversity.



John Thomas’ descendants wove Native, African and European strands together: his great grandson Marshall Morehouse married Elizabeth Gorrow, a Wolf Clan Mohawk with French Canadian ancestry.

“That’s a testimony to the strength and perseverance of our ancestors,” re-enactor Mealy declared.

His dramatic portrayal, funded in part by NCUGRHA and the Red Hummingbird Foundation, opened a Black History Month photo exhibit, “Encounters with Abolitionists.” One of the most successful events the North Country Cultural Center for the Arts has ever hosted, it included Mr. Mealy’s striking image of “Muhammad Ali” and a poignant “Foot Print to Freedom.” Visual artist/historian/educator June C. Gallop came North from Staten Island to show her expressive collection of images including Villa Lewaro, the Irvington on Hudson mansion of Madame C. J. Walker. The daughter of former slaves, Madame Walker invented and marketed hair care products for Black women and became the first self made American woman millionaire. NCUGRHA member Laura Sells Doyle featured haunting images of northeastern New York “safe houses” where Freedom Seekers took shelter on their flight to Canada.

The tremendous turnout for Mr. Mealy’s performance and the accompanying photo exhibit was an unmistakable indication that the North Country is ready for an inclusive telling of our nation’s history.

John Thomas Story Continues to Unfold

Research into the life of John Thomas began one day at Plattsburgh State University's Feinberg Library when our President discovered an 1872 letter sent by Mr. Thomas to his benefactor, Gerrit Smith. Smith had circumvented New York's discriminatory voting qualifications law in 1846 by offering parcels of his vast land holdings to 3,000 Black men so they could qualify to vote in state elections.

Until Don Papson discovered John Thomas's letter and investigated its contents, most local historians believed that Smith had not given any land to fugitive slaves.

"This is a wonderful story," Don says. "It is the most complete one we have. It takes the UGR from the 19th into the 21st century." His exhaustive search of obituaries, land deeds, cemeteries, archival, census and Civil War records and microfilms of old newspapers led him to the most amazing discovery of all - he found two of Mr. Thomas' great-great grandsons, Oscar and Victor Morehouse, living in the Adirondacks. They are the first Adirondack descendants of a fugitive slave to be positively identified. The Morehouse brothers had never heard of their ancestor John Thomas. Nor had they heard of their great-grandfather Stephen Warren Morehouse who was a private in the Massachusetts 54th, the first Black regiment in the Civil War. What is most amazing is that even though Oscar and his wife Donna live within a mile and a half of the cemetery where Oscar's ancestors are buried, he didn't know anything about them.

Don's initial research findings were published as a series in the *Lake Champlain Weekly* last fall. His efforts were enhanced by the research of several NCUGRHA members. Well known Adirondack historian Amy Godine, (who had discovered Mr. Thomas' letter in her research) confirmed the fact that Stephen Morehouse, the father in law of Mr. Thomas's eldest daughter Charlotte, also received a parcel of land from Gerrit Smith. Saranac Lake researcher Shirley Morgan helped lead Don to Oscar Morehouse. Robin Caudell conducted research on the slaveholding Merrick and Thomas families of Maryland and searched for the Morehouse's Mohawk relations.



Photo Courtesy Donna Morehouse
Oscar (left) and Victor Morehouse

Over Christmas time, the John Thomas story was taken to a higher level by his great-great-great-grandson Robert Louis Lagroone, Jr. of Baltimore, Maryland. An online search led him to his Adirondack uncles. Ironically, four of Mr. Thomas' Morehouse descendants including Mr. Lagroone's late mother, Ann, unknowingly migrated to the very state from which their ancestor fled. After being sent a copy of the *Lake Champlain Weekly* series on John Thomas, Mr. Lagroone emailed back "the packet you sent me put me on a whole different level of my existence."

Photos courtesy of Robert LaGroone Jr.

From the left, Joan Marie Morehouse Queen, the late Ann Morehouse LaGroone, Patricia LaGroone Davis, and Margaret Morehouse Hayden

Renewed contact between Oscar and Victor Morehouse and their Baltimore sisters inspired a special feature in the February 18th issue of the *Plattsburgh Press Republican* - Kim Smith Dedam's interview of Oscar and Donna Morehouse and Robin Caudell's interviews with Oscar's sisters Joan Marie Morehouse Queen and Margaret Ruth Morehouse Hayden.*

The articles by Kim and Robin brought the story of Adirondack pioneer John Thomas and his descendants to a wider audience. Robin's piece was picked up by the online *Maryland News*. A Plattsburgh Morehouse relative who had not been in touch with her cousins in 20 years was overjoyed to recognize herself in Robin's article. (We subsequently researched her father's unknown story and discovered that he was descended from a Vermont veteran of the Massachusetts 54th, making her a descendant of two men who fought in that famed regiment.) Another reader found a connection to her family in Kim's article - her mother lives in the Saranac Lake home on Main Street where the Morehouse children grew up.

Through the efforts of members and friends of NCUGRHA, a grateful family now knows it has a proud past. Ten descendants are planning to come up from Baltimore for a July 21st family reunion in Vermontville's town park. It will be the first time Oscar and Victor Morehouse will have seen their sisters in nearly 40 years. Cliff Oliver Mealy will be there to portray John Thomas in the county where he lived as a free man.

The family has extended an invitation for all NCUGRHA members and friends to come to this community wide celebration. And what a celebration it will be!

*Kim Smith Dedam's article "Generations of freedom: Legacy of John Thomas lives on through family" and Robin Caudell's "Two Sisters born in Saranac Lake return to unknown Maryland roots" can be accessed online.

Sankofa, a West African symbol which means “return and get it.” It is a symbol of the importance of learning from the past.
Source: www.welltembered.net/adinkra/htmls/adinkra/sankofa.htm



Apologies for Slavery Abound

Humanity is making symbolic if not significant steps as it comes to terms with the legacy of African slavery.

In June, 1995, on the eve of its 150th anniversary convention, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution renouncing its racist roots and apologizing for its past defense of the institution.

On June 16, 2006, the Episcopal House of Bishops unanimously endorsed a resolution apologizing for its complicity in slavery and its silence over “Jim Crow” laws, segregation and racial discrimination.

On February 24, 2007, on the grounds of the former Confederate Capitol at Richmond, the Virginia General Assembly voted unanimously to express “profound regret” for Virginia’s role in slavery.

Last November in West Africa, Canada’s Governor General Michaëlle Jean congratulated Ghana for apologizing for its role in the slave trade. Ms. Jean said, “I know it is not possible to go back and solve past injustices. All we can do is learn from the lessons of the past - even the painful lessons - and use that knowledge to build a better future.” A native of Haiti and a descendant of slaves, she made an emotional visit to Elmira Castle, the seaside fortress with its infamous Door of No Return from which thousands of Africans were shipped to the Americas from their native continent.

Ghana was a major hub of the international slave trade. Today, through a program called Project Joseph, the nation invites Blacks who trace their lineage to the slave trade to discover the land of their ancestors. (Project Joseph honors the Biblical Joseph whose brothers sold him into bondage in Egypt. He forgave them when he realized they sincerely regretted what they had done.)

2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the end of the British slave trade, and the United Kingdom has planned a year long celebration. The feature film *Amazing Grace*, which premiered in February, chronicles William Wilberforce’s 20 year fight in Parliament for passage of a bill to end Britain’s involvement in the horrendous slave trade. Some viewers have been so moved, they have applauded during the scene when Parliament at last takes action. But it wasn’t until 1834 that slavery was abolished in the Empire.

Freedom!, a sculpture Haitian artists constructed from recycled materials gathered from the slums of Port-au-Prince, is now on a tour of the United Kingdom and will be permanently installed in Liverpool’s International Slavery Museum. The new museum is scheduled to open on August 23rd, Slavery Remembrance Day.

The British government, however, is being criticized for not dealing with the fact that the UN has identified the United Kingdom as one of the top 30 countries in the modern slave trade. The U.K. is a major destination for adults and children who are being trafficked to work for “slave-masters” in prostitution, domestic labor and petty crime.

The United States, which did not abolish slavery until 1865, has also been criticized for its role in the modern slave trade. Three years ago, the *Christian Science Monitor* charged that between 14,000 and 17,000 people are trafficked into the U.S. every year.

In Canada, a long history of the enslavement of native peoples (called *panis*) and Africans preceded the days of the Underground Railroad when an estimated 40,000 free and enslaved Black Americans found refuge across the border. However, freedom did not mean an absence of Negrophobia, and today, many Black Canadians feel that their history has been largely ignored. They have taken matters into their own hands and organized local committees to plan special events during 2007 - in Halifax, Buxton, and Owen Sound. In Toronto, the activist professor and poet Afua Cooper joined such a coalition and began to lobby for a nationally sponsored Bicentennial commemoration.

For Everton Gordon, a Jamaican immigrant who lives in Toronto, the commemoration of the end of the slave trade in the British Empire is an important time to recall *Sankofa*. He writes, “*Sankofa* has a powerful meaning in the fabric of Ghanaian social and cultural expressions. It is an Akan word symbolized by a bird whose head turns back, looking to the past.” *Sankofa* has generally been defined as a process that asks us to look back to recapture and reclaim our past, and thus allow ourselves to move forward as we understand the dynamics of why and how we came to be who we are today.

For a catalogue of inspiring videos, visit: <http://sankofastore.com/catalog/homepage.php>



Some of the NCUGRHA Steering Committee Members present at October Vision/Mission Workshop: Standing from the left, Dr. Norman Enhorning and Don Papson; Seated, from left, Vivian Papson, Renee Moore, Tom Johansen, Marilyn Van Dyke, Carol Blakeslee-Collin, and Jackie Madison

Upstate History Alliance Provides Excellent Training

The Upstate History Alliance (UHA) is providing NCUGRHA with invaluable training opportunities. A GET SET! grant in the amount of \$1,656 has enabled us to retain the services of museum specialist Anne W. Ackerson. Ms. Ackerson is helping us define our Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies. A brain storming session with Ms. Ackerson took place on Saturday, October 28th in Glens Falls. Jackie Madison, Carol Blakeslee Collin and Vivian Papson subsequently met to synthesize our many ideas into a statement which clearly defines our vision. Our Vision Statement now reads: “We inspire all people to overcome their differences and celebrate the importance of freedom to the survival of the human spirit.” During an upcoming second session with Ms. Ackerson, the Steering Committee will focus on our association’s mission, long and short goals and the tasks we need to complete in order to reach our goals.

GET SET! grants are one of a series of grants offered to help museums and historical societies strengthen and develop their institutions and work effectively with their communities. The Upstate History Alliance administers the grants for the New York State Council on the Arts.

UHA has an agreement with Heritage New York to conduct trainings for its Heritage Trail sites, and NCUGRHA has been the recipient of one such grant. A GO! grant enabled Vivian and Don Papson to attend the New York State Rural Tourism Conference on January 11-12th. The conference theme “Bringing The World to Our Backyard” was an opportunity to learn how to successfully promote rural tourism. The lessons learned will be applied in efforts to promote our programs and our exhibits at the Town of Chesterfield Visitors and Interpretive Center.

Upstate History Alliance sponsored workshops and those it organizes for Heritage New York are helping NCUGRHA become a successful historical association.

Profiles in Commitment

Steering Committee Members Vivian and Don Papson recently participated in the Profiles in Commitment Lecture Series at SUNY College at Plattsburgh. They spoke about what serving the community means to them. For Don, “The most important history is history which changes us.”

Vivian feels, “There has never been a better time to invest in your dream of a more humane community.”

Book Review

The Blind African Slave or the Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace

by Jeffery Brace as told to Benjamin F. Prentiss, Esq.

Edited, with an Introduction by Kari J. Winter

The University of Wisconsin Press 2004 ISBN 0-299-20144-9

Kari J. Winter has expertly documented this rare 1810 accounting of the life of Jeffrey Brace who was enslaved in West

NCUGRHA to Receive Award

The New York State African Studies Association will present NCUGRHA with a Community Service Award during its 31st annual conference. The award will be presented at a 1 pm luncheon banquet in the Alumni Room at SUNY Plattsburgh on Saturday, April 13th. To register for the two day conference, call (518) 564-3054. Those who wish to attend only the \$20 banquet must reserve a space by contacting laura.collier@plattsburgh.edu.

Africa at the age of 16, earned his freedom fighting in the American Revolution, and settled in St. Albans, Vermont. We agree with the author that Braces’ descriptions of his Mali homeland and 18th century African society are a history we need to “hear and know about” and that the description of his capture and the middle passage are “heart wrenching.”

Kari J. Winters has attained her goal of documenting slavery “as it really was.” We highly recommend *The Blind African*.

Letters to Our President

I remain fascinated about your on-going project up in "North Country."

Please find enclosed a contribution of 10 Original BLAC-FAX Calendars.

R. Edward Lee,
Publisher
BLACKFAX PUBLICATIONS

*Three calendars remain at \$12 each.
Email NCUGRHA@aol.com to order a copy.*

*

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Missisquoi Historical Society, I would like to thank you so very much for coming to the Missisquoi Museum on February 11, 2007. Your presentation to us was really wonderful...I am personally inspired to do what I can to help fill out the picture of the community on this side of the border...

Heather A. Darch
Curator
Missisquoi Museum
Stanbridge East, Quebec

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have information on UGR agents who operated in the Eastern Townships of Canada please contact us.



Sankofa, an Akan word for a West African symbol which means we must reclaim our past so we can move forward and understand why and how we came to be who we are today.

Upcoming events

April 7th 1 pm - Saranac Chapter of the DAR, corner of Oak and Cornelia Streets. Plattsburgh. Don Papson will share the story of John Thomas.

April 13-14th-Third - Annual New York State African Studies Association Conference to be held at SUNY College at Plattsburgh. To register, call (518) 564-3054

Until April 29th - "Passage to Freedom: Secrets of the Underground Railroad" at Exporail, the Canadian Railway Museum. 110 St. Pierre Street (Route 209) in St. Constant on the South Shore. Call (450) 632-2410 or visit exporail.org

May 2nd 6 pm - Ole Tymes Cafe, 90 Lake Street, Rouses Point. Don Papson will share latest research on Northeastern New York's Waterways to Freedom for the Champlain-Rouses Point Kiwanis.

Until September 3, 2007 - "New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War." New York Historical Society 170 Central Park West.

A new shipment of our DVD, *Northward to Freedom* has arrived. To order a copy, send \$15 (this includes postage) to NCUGRHA/
P.O. Box 2413, Plattsburgh, NY 12901

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