

NCUGRHA RECEIVES GRANT FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BOOK

A major national foundation is supporting a new book on important Underground Railroad figures, including one with a clear link to the North Country, including the John Brown farm and burial site.

The J.M. Kaplan Fund awarded a \$2,500 grant for "The Secret Lives of Sydney Howard Gay and Louis Napoleon in the Underground Railroad," being researched and written by Don Papson, President of the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association, and Tom Calarco. Papson is curator of the new North Star Underground Railroad Museum in Ausable Chasm. Calarco is author of "The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region," and two national Underground Railroad encyclopedias.

The new Museum opened in Spring 2011 and drew thousands of visitors in its first year. Open daily from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, the Museum features stories of people and communities engaged in the effort to help hundreds of slaves escape along the Champlain Corridor to freedom in Canada between 1830 and 1860.

Papson and Calarco anticipate completing "Secret Lives" in 2012. It will be an annotated account of the unpublished records of fugitives from bondage that National Anti-Slavery Standard editor Sydney Howard Gay kept between 1855 and 1856. Many of the runaways were conducted by African American UGRR "Engineer" Louis Napoleon, who reputedly aided 3,000 people during his lifetime. They were based in New York City—which was the "grand station" of the Underground Railroad. Some fugitives from slavery traveled from the city to the North Country, and then to Canada.

John Brown, the famous abolitionist leader, lived in North Elba and became a martyr to the cause after his execution in 1859. Papson's research shows one individual connected with Napoleon helped finance the preservation of the John Brown Farm, which is now a New York State Historic Site.

The Kaplan Fund award comes from its Furthermore grants in publishing program, which supports books on art, architecture, and design; conservation; cultural history; and public issues.

If you are a descendant of Sydney Howard Gay or Louis Napoleon, please contact Don Papson at don.ugr@frontier.com.