Vol. 17, Nos. 1 & 2 Winter Spring 2004 $3.95

Spectrum

The magazine for Columbia and Montour counties

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE:
Slavery, The Underground Railroad, and Racism in Pennsylvania

BEHIND THE LINES

This special issue of *Spectrum* began several months ago when Dr. Ekema Agbaw, director of the Frederick Douglass Institute at Bloomsburg University, suggested that Dr. Walter Brasch, *Spectrum* editor-in-chief and professor of journalism, might want to have his newswriting class focus upon the Underground Railroad. And so a culturally and racially diverse group of freshmen and sophomores, few of them journalism majors, helped establish the foundation for a special issue of a magazine that usually only upper division students produce.

To get their stories, the students—lower division students in Newswriting, in collaboration with the Institue, and upper division students in Magazine Editing and Production—dug into courthouse records, historical society papers, dusted off 150-year-old newspapers, and conducted research in both the college library and the Library of Congress.

This issue is the largest in our 17-year publishing history. And, it is the most controversial, as the entire staff investigated numerous historical and contemporary issues, talked to dozens of people, and learned that American Black history is also a study of local and American history.

The university administration has been a strong supporter of *Spectrum*. But, like any commercial publication, *Spectrum* must pay for itself from advertising and circulation revenue. Further, to establish our editorial independence, we have been reluctant to take outside funding. However, for this special issue, we received additional funding from the Bloomsburg University Foundation. This financial assistance allowed us to increase our editorial expenses while significantly improving our editorial quality, double the number of pages we normally publish, add more color pages, and increase our circulation.

Spectrum has done only three special issues. The first one was a look at Columbia and Montour counties' relationships with the rest of the world, and included features about what was produced in these two small rural counties that had an impact upon the people and business communities in other countries. That issue earned the magazine recognition from the Agency for International Development. The second special issue looked at Domestic Court issues and problems of violence. For that in-depth look, the American Bar Association honored *Spectrum*, the only time the ABA ever honored a college publication. Along the way, we have been inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Associated Collegiate Press, an honor only four other college magazines have earned; and have earned dozens of other national honors. But, we don't publish *Spectrum* to win awards. Our intent is to report and bring information to our readers to help them better understand their own lives and the lives of others around them. In every one of our issues the past 17 years, we have presented features that recognize the fine work our counties' residents do—including a woman with cancer who is an accomplished folk artist, a man who customizes Corvettes, and features about the owners of two major orchards. And, we have presented controversial issues, looking at Courthouse security, steroid usage in local schools, and nuclear plant safety.

By publishing *Spectrum*, not only are students learning more about journalism, they are helping themselves and others better understand who we are, who our neighbors are, and the achievements and problems all of us face. ■

—THE EDITORS

Spectrum Magazine

Volume 17, Nos.1&2 Winter/Spring 2004

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Spectrum

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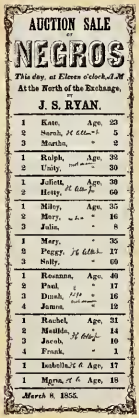

AUCTION SALE
OF
NEGROS
This day, at Eleven o'clock, A.M.
At the North of the Exchange,
BY
J. S. RYAN.

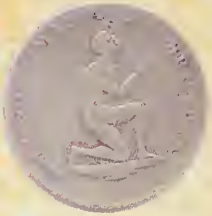
1	Kate,	Age.	23
2	Sarah,	"	5
3	Martha,	"	2
1	Ralph,	Age.	32
2	Unity,	"	30
1	Juliett,	Age.	30
2	Henry,	"	60
1	Miley,	Age.	35
2	Mary,	"	16
3	Julia,	"	8
1	Mary,	"	35
2	Peggy,	"	17
3	Solly,	"	60
1	Roxanna,	Age.	40
2	Paul,	"	17
3	Dinah,	"	16
4	James,	"	12
1	Rachel,	Age.	31
2	Matilda,	"	14
3	Jacob,	"	10
4	Frank,	"	1
1	Isabella,	Age.	17
1	Myra,	Age.	18

March 8, 1855.

Cover CREDIT: Wilberforce House, Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, UK/Bridgeman Art Library

About the Cover

The cover depicts "The Kneeling Slave–Am I Not a Man and a Brother," an oil painting on canvas by an unknown artist from the English School in the 18th century. The original is in the Bridgeman Art Library. British anti-slavery advocate Josiah Wedgwood produced the Slave Medallion in 1787. Benjamin Franklin, upon receiving some medallions, wrote to Wedgwood that he was "persuaded it may have an effect equal to that of ... best written pamp... in procuring honou... to these oppressed people."



Five generations of slaves on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina. Photo taken in 1862 during the Civil War.

Photo by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-B817-152-A

All Aboard to Freedom!

The railroad that changed history

by Michelle Johnson Sorber

Without reliable means of transport, enslaved Blacks breaking free from the grip of owners, faced daunting obstacles. Slave-catchers searched for runaways to return them for bounty. Escapees often left families, friends, and security behind to march hundreds of miles to the free North. A few compassionate individuals risked public scorn and imprisonment to provide runaways with shelter and support in a loose-knit network called the Underground Railroad.

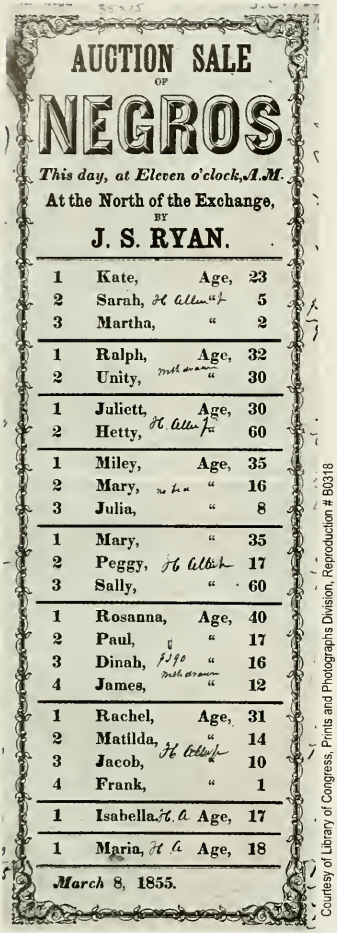
The term "Underground Railroad" was first used in the 1830s. From then until 1865, the system helped thousands of slaves escape. Although it isn't certain when the Underground Railroad first began, it is believed that the first abolitionist society was organized in 1775 in Pennsylvania. Members of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, provided shelter and food for Blacks escaping to Canada.

In spite of its namesake resemblance, one of many myths claims the Underground Railroad coined its name from the railway system that was being developed at the time. "Underground" operations relied heavily on secret code using railroad jargon, which allowed both slaves and their "conductors" or "engineers" to communicate. The places along the escape route were called "stations," while the escaping slaves were called "passengers," "cargo," or "goods."

Another myth tells of a slave named Tice Davids who fled from Kentucky and may have taken refuge with John Rankin, a White abolitionist, from Ripley, Ohio. Determined to retrieve his property, the owner chased Davids to the Ohio River, but Davids disappeared without a trace, leaving his owner to wonder if he had "gone off on some underground road." Thereafter, the term "Underground Railroad" was used to describe the network of people that helped escaped slaves.

In the antebellum South, plantation owners had acquired valuable possessions known as chattel. This included, but was not limited to, household items such as furniture and cabinets as well as livestock, horses, and slaves. The slaves were legally considered part of the estate and were treated similarly to other possessions, only worse.

Slaves were an integral part of the economy of the antebellum South. Southerners relied on the work and performance of their slaves much as they did their draft horses and farm machinery. Southern culture considered slaves to be in the same classification as the farm animals. The labor-intensive farming of the time required cheap fieldhands.



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March 8, 1855.

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # B0318

Owners had a stake in ensuring that no great harm came to the slaves. But they could be sold, raped, beaten, or killed at will. Many preferred death to this treatment, and so took enormous risks to escape.

Laws of the time dealt with the protection of slaves in the same manner they dealt with other chattel. They placed restrictions on the manner in which slaves could be harmed, but didn't prohibit the infliction of moderate punishment. Whippings and lashings were common for major infractions, including insolence to a master, but severe punishment was not allowed for minor infractions.

Slaves were indentured to their masters for life. Even the death of the master didn't release the slave. As a part of the master's estate, the slaves were divided along with all other property. Slaves were considered so valuable that in some states land was sold to pay off debts of the estate before slaves were sold.

A few slaves paid for their freedom with the little money they earned from outside work, but it was impossible for most slaves to buy themselves out of bondage.

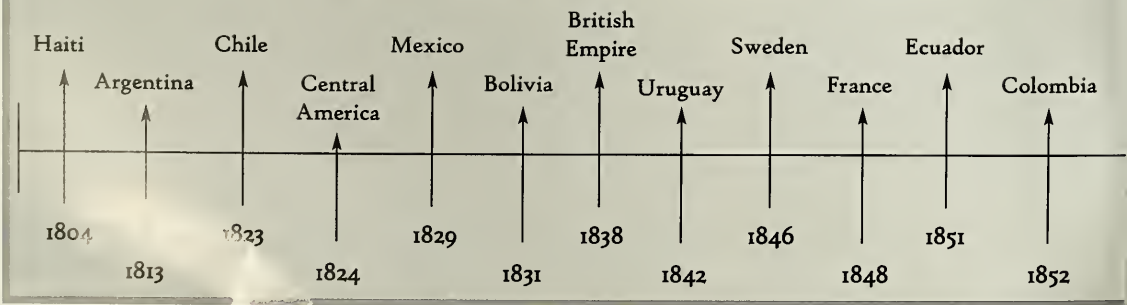
The laws of the time didn't regard blacks to be citizens of the United States. They couldn't own property, purchase alcohol, marry Whites, purchase guns, make legal contracts, or vote.

Thousands of slaves turned to the abolitionists of the North and the network of people and safe houses that comprised the Underground Railroad to escape inhumane treatment.

Escaping slaves typically had to travel hundreds of miles to reach freedom. Their escape routes ran through woods, over fields, and across swamps and rivers. They often traveled at night to avoid detection, using the North Star to navigate. On clouded evenings, moss was their guide, as it grows on the north side of trees. Since they could carry little food, they had to make their journey weakened by hunger. They sometimes traveled on coaches, trains and steamships, but most often by wagon or on foot. Most runaways were 16- to 35-year-old men. Women and children escaped, but were more often captured.

To communicate without being found, slaves used songs and signals. Operators notified runaways of the stations through signals, such as brightly lit candles in the window or by strategically shining a lantern in a front yard. They also used spiritual songs, which contained coded messages. Some songs included "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Steal Away to Jesus" and "Go Down Moses." A more traditional song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd," is a reference to the Big Dipper, which points to the North Star. Each song related to a time or a route

Slavery Abolition Timeline



on which to escape. Using these clues, slaves would follow the path toward safety and the nearest "safe house." Once there they received food, water, money and a place to rest until it was safe to travel again. However, conditions in these houses were often poor, but runaways would sacrifice in order to obtain freedom.

Runaway slave Harriet Jacobs wrote in her book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, of the conditions she withstood: "It seemed horrible to sit or lie in a cramped position day after day, without one gleam of light. Yet I would have chosen this, rather than my lot as a slave."

Runaways also employed disguises, often dressing in clothes of the other gender. Fair-skinned Blacks passed as Whites, and others pretended to deliver messages or goods for their masters. Journalist Frederick Douglass used a disguise by posing as a sailor while making his escape from Maryland to New York. Henry "Box" Brown, with the help of underground assistance, went as far as to ship himself by train, packed in a crate, from Richmond to Philadelphia.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 made escaping more difficult. The law demanded the return of runaways, and proclaimed that federal and state officials as well as private citizens had to assist in their capture. Even free Blacks were in jeopardy, for slave catchers would attempt to kidnap any Blacks and sell them for profit. Even states that were free of slavery were unsafe; Blacks were forced to go to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean.

Runaway slaves who found safety behind Union lines were considered "contrabands of war" and worked for the Union army.

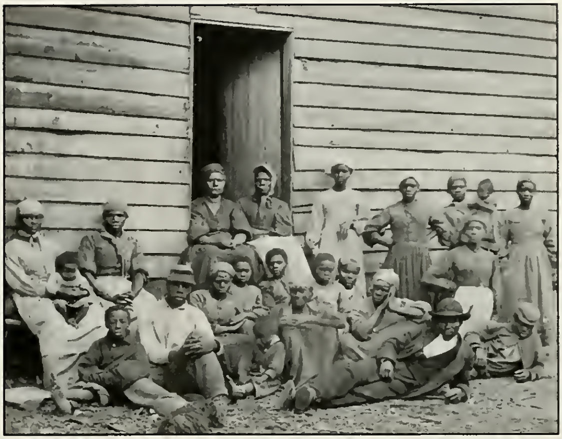


Photo Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-DIG-cwpbce-01005

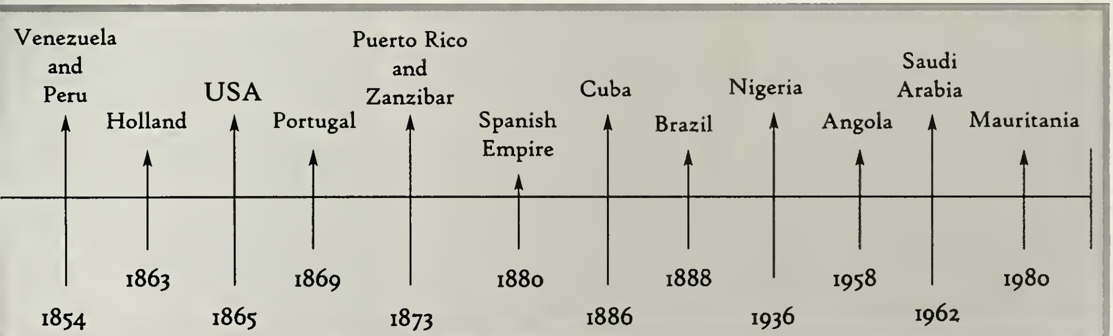
The Underground Railroad led to freedom for thousands of slaves. But abolitionists won their greatest battle with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865, which ensured that forever after "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude . . . shall exist within the United States."

The principle of the Underground Railroad has outlasted the end of slavery. It was later used in the 1960s for anti-war activists and young draftees escaping to the Canadian border, and again for battered women escaping their lives of abuse. The paths and principles of the Underground Railroad have paved the way for others seeking refuge from their lives of hardship, neglect, and abuse. ■

[Contributing to this story was Jon J. Strine. Additional information can be found at: www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/.

Also see The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania by Charles L. Blockson, or the video, Safe Harbor a Main Street Media Production.]


$100 REWARD!
RANAWAY
From the undersigned, living on Current
River, about twelve miles above Doniphan,



Timeline prepared by Dennelle Catlett

Journey of a Slave

by Dana Nagy


TO BE SOLD, on board the Ship *Banse-Island*, on tuesday the 6th of *May* next, at *Apsley-Ferry*; a choice cargo of about 250 fine healthy

NEGROES,

just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast. —The utmost care has already been taken, and shall be continued, to keep them free from the least danger of being infected with the SMALL-POX, no boat having been on board, and all other communication with people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the SMALL-POX in their own Country.

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction # LC-USZ62-41678

"One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both, and, without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us into the nearest wood."

And so began the journey of a young boy named Olaudah Equiano, as described in his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African.* The year was 1756, and Equiano was 11 years old.

Almost 20 million other Africans, like Equiano, were kidnapped from their villages, reasons why unknown to them, and forced to march to the west coast of Africa where European coastal forts were set up. Only half survived these death marches.

"The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo," Equiano wrote. "These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, when I was carried on board."

The potential slaves now had to endure a journey across the Atlantic Ocean, known as the Middle Passage because it was the middle leg of a three-part journey for the Europeans on the ship. A typical Atlantic crossing took 60 to 90 days, but some lasted up to four months.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the number of Africans making the Atlantic crossing peaked at about 60,000 to 70,000 per year. Of the estimated 10 million who survived the death marches, it is believed that 10 to 20 percent of them did not survive the ocean journey, according to "Africans in America," a PBS documentary.

Having been taken out of the only life they knew, most Africans felt hopeless about their future.

"When we found ourselves at last taken away [from the African coast], death was more preferable than life," Ottobah Cugoano wrote in his narrative, *Enslavement of a Native of Africa*, "and a plan was concerted amongst us, that we might burn and blow up the ship, and to perish all together in the flames."

Fear and ignorance plagued the thoughts of the Africans.

"I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me," Equiano said of his surroundings when he was on board the ship. "Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged

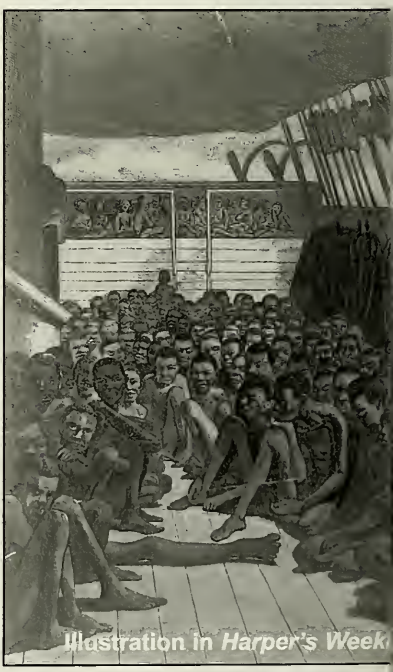


Illustration in *Harper's Week*

my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country."

Sometimes fear of the unknown outweighed even the will to live.

"Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much happier than myself," Equiano said of the many Africans who had died aboard the ship and were thrown overboard.

Also persuading many Africans to die rather then continue were the conditions aboard the slave ships. Slaves often traveled the Middle Passage in a deck within the ship that had less than five feet of headroom. With 300 to 400 people packed within a tiny area with little ventilation and, in some cases, not even enough space to place buckets for human waste, smallpox and yellow fever spread quickly.

"The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us," Equiano said of the ship's conditions.

"The air soon became unfit for respiration," Equiano wrote, "from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died."

The slaves who survived the crossing were about to complete their journey; they were now to be sold. Once in America, most slaves went to the West Indies, but approximately 400,000 went to the colonies.

"Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening," Equiano recalled of the evening he reached Barbados. "They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there." Still, fear of the unknown overtook the Africans, many thinking the white men were going to eat them.

"At last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us," recalled Equiano. "They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people."

Slavery was nothing new to them; it existed for centuries in many parts of Africa, but it differed vastly from the slavery that developed in Europe and the Americas. African slaves could marry, own property, and after a certain number of years of servitude were set free, wrote Basil Davidson in *The African Slave Trade*. African slavery also never passed from one generation to another, and it lacked the racist belief that Whites were masters and Blacks were slaves.

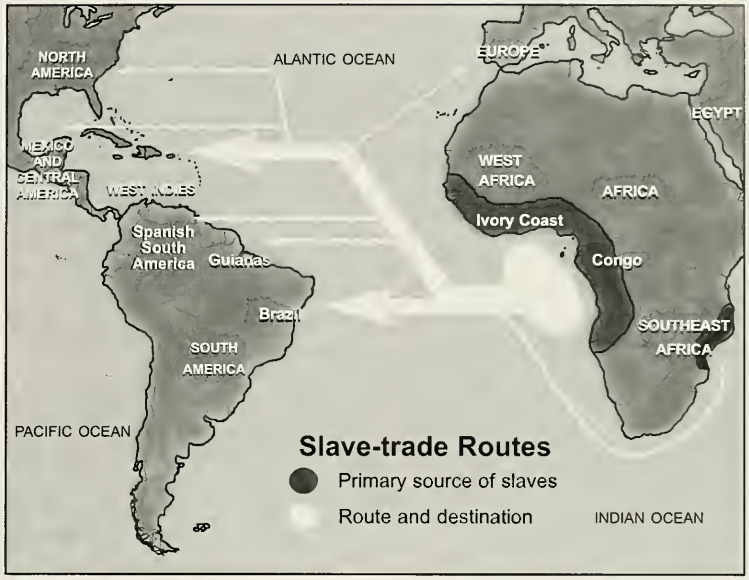


Illustration by Mary-Jayne Reibsome


Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-USZ62-41678

Equiano purchased his freedom in 1766, by careful trading and saving. His owner, a Philadelphia Quaker named Robert King, allowed Equiano to buy back his freedom since he had raised the same amount that King had himself paid.

Equiano went to England and became involved in the movement to abolish the slave trade, an involvement that led him to write and publish his autobiography in 1789. "Tortures, murder, and every other imaginable barbarity and iniquity are practiced upon the poor slaves with impunity," Equiano wrote. "I hope the slave trade will be abolished. I pray it may be an event at hand."

He died in 1797, 41 years before Great Britain abolished the slave trade and more than six decades before the United States banned slavery, a goal which he fought so hard to achieve. ■

[For more inforation, see The African Slave Trade *by Basil Davidson, and* The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society, *Robin Law.]*

Freedom's Friendly Faces

Conductors on the Underground Railroad risked their freedom to help thousands escape their lives of slavery

by Michelle Johnson Sorber and Joe Marsicano

Seventeen runaway slaves from Kentucky had filed into the Levi and Catherine Coffin's kitchen in Newport, Indiana, late one night in 1826. Outside, fifteen slave-catchers arrived at Coffin's house, hell-bent on capturing the runaways.

The Southerners called Coffin a "nigger thief." As they passed his house, one slave-catcher gestured and said "There's an Underground Railroad around here and Levi Coffin is its president."

Coffin, like many abolitionists, helped slaves escape their lives of servitude. They were the "conductors" of the Underground Railroad. Conductors aided escaped slaves and transported them to "stations" often located 10-20 miles apart. They were mostly Blacks and former slaves but many Whites, predominately Quakers, assisted runaways.

The Underground Railroad's effort included thousands of abolitionists who secretly moved hundreds of slaves north each year. About 100,000 slaves escaped from the South between 1810 and 1850. Approximately four million remained in slavery on the eve of the Civil War in 1861.

Runaway slaves traveled the Underground Railroad at night and rested during the day to avoid being captured.

"Once the slaves got off the plantation it was like a foreign country," says Dr. Jeff Davis, assistant professor of history at Bloomsburg University. "They wandered around and were helped by conductors, who gave them directions to the next station."

Conductors hid escaped slaves in their homes and usually transported them using wagons with false bottoms. A wagon containing slaves hidden underneath was called "a load of potatoes." Slaves were also transported by train and boat and given money for better clothes to avoid unwanted attention. The escape money was raised by Vigilance Committees that opposed slavery.

Captured slaves were generally branded with an "R" for "runaway," then sent to the Deep South, a place few slaves escaped because working conditions were so severe.

William Lloyd Garrison
(1805-1879)

Frederick Douglass
(1818-1895)

Henry David Thoreau
(1817-1862)

Illustration courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division # LC-US-262-288-60 (original in Cincinnati Art Museum)

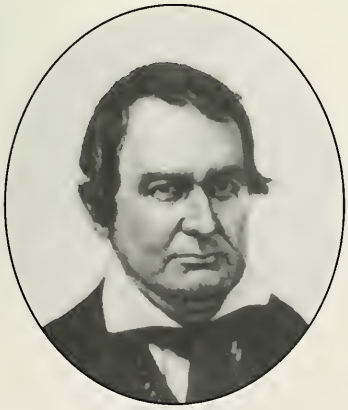
Illustration by Charles T. Webber, 1893, of slaves between Underground Railroad stations

"In a slave state a slave may be punished by their master in any way they wanted," Davis says. "Usually the worst type of punishment for a slave was being put back into slavery."

Because of the secrecy of the Underground Railroad and punishment for helping a slave, few conductors were known. Conductors faced hefty fines and possible imprisonment if caught. A few conductors kept records of escapes. Levi Coffin was one of them.

Coffin, a North Carolina Quaker moved from Kentucky to Newport, Indiana, in 1826. His eight-room Federal style brick home served as a safe haven for runaway slaves on their trek to Canada. Slaves were concealed for several weeks until they had enough strength to continue their journey.

"We knew not what night or what hour of the night we would be roused from slumber by a gentle rap at the door. That was the sig-



Gerrit Smith
(1797-1874)

Harriet Tubman
(1819?-1913)

Susan B. Anthony
(1820-1906)

nal announcing the arrival of a train of the Underground Railroad," he wrote in his autobiography, *The Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (1876).

"It was never too cold or stormy, or the hour of the night too late for my wife to rise from sleep to provide food and comfortable lodging for the fugitive," he wrote. "This work was kept up during the time we lived at Newport, a period of more than twenty years."

The Coffins went to Cincinnati in 1847 and opened a wholesale warehouse. The new store provided merchandise to other abolitionists. During the years the Coffins lived there, they continued to aid more than 1,000 runaway slaves through Ohio.

Coffin and his wife moved to England shortly after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. There he helped start the Englishmen's Freedmen's Aid Society. The society, like many freedmen's aid societies in America, assisted freed Blacks, raised money for them and gave them the materials needed to live an emancipated life. Throughout his years as a conductor, Coffin helped more than 3,000 slaves escape.

Coffin may have been the "President of the Underground Railroad," but William Still, a free-born Black man, was called the "Father of the Underground Railroad."

In 1847, Still became a clerk with the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia and later served as the secretary for the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, an organization that helped slaves seek shelter on their way to safe places in the North and Canada.

In an interview with an escaped slave named Peter, Still learned Peter was his brother who had been separated from his family at birth. The reunion with his brother led him to preserve the written accounts of every runaway he assisted.

Still's house was a haven for fugitive slaves and became one of the busiest stations along the Underground Railroad. According to his records, he helped 649 slaves escape.

Possibly the most famous conductor was Harriet Tubman, a former slave who escaped in 1849.

Wagons were used to transport escaped slaves in secret compartments surrounded by cargo.

After her escape to Philadelphia, Tubman worked to help others escape. She saved her wages as a hotel dishwasher; when a sufficient amount was secured, she disappeared from her home and appeared on a dark night at the door of a Southern plantation cabin.

Tubman led slaves to freedom by following the North Star through mountains and rivers, lying concealed in the forests as her pursuers passed her by. She usually chose a Saturday night to start her "train," because a day would pass before a runaway advertisement could appear.

Lucretia Mott
(1793-1880)

Levi Coffin
(1798-1877)

Catherine Coffin
(1803-1881)

Although illiterate, Tubman's intelligence was as sharp as the crack of a plantation owner's whip. The sound of a horse galloping in the dark called for quick concealment by the side of the road; the cry of a baby slave meant an extra dose of paregoric so the child would lay in a stupor in its mother's arms.

She was also a master of disguise. On one occasion, she disguised herself by pretending to read a book. As two slave-catchers approached her, Tubman overheard them say, "This can't be the woman. The one we want can't read or write."

Tubman also possessed fearless courage. If a slave wanted to go back, she would point her revolver and say, "Dead Negroes tell no tales; you'll be free or die." A finger on the trigger and a threat was all they needed.

Tubman claimed never to have lost a life. "I nebber run my train off de track and I nebber lost a passenger," she told Sarah Bradford, author of *Harriet Tubman; The Moses of Her People* (1869).

Plantation owners offered a reward of $40,000 for her capture. "She seemed wholly devoid of personal fear. The idea of being captured by slavehunters or slaveholders, seemed to never enter her mind," William Still said in his book, *The Underground Railroad* (1872). Tubman made 19 trips to the South, helping over 300 slaves.

During the Civil War, Tubman became a nurse and a spy for the Union army. In 1908, with the help of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Tubman established a home for sick and needy Blacks in Auburn, New York. In 1911, she moved into the home herself.

She died of pneumonia in 1913 at the age of 93. Her final two years were spent in good health at the home, sitting with visitors and telling stories about her adventures.

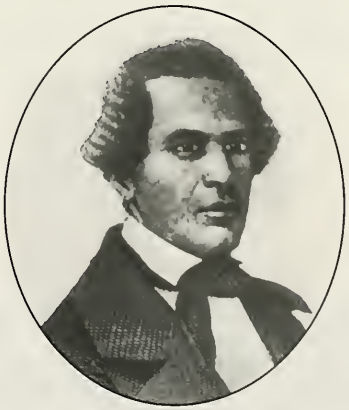
Photo courtesy of Levi Coffin House and Waynet

Located in the Levi Coffin house, a secret door used to hide slaves was was concealed by placing a bed in front of the opening.

William Goodridge, a conductor from Pennsylvania, used his wealth and his business to help runaways. Goodridge owned a confectionery that sold candy, jewelry, and wigs as well as a barbershop on Centre Square in York. He traded animal hides with local tanneries and started York's first newspaper distribution business.

Becoming involved with the Underground Railroad was a great risk of Goodridge's wealth. His home housed a substantial number of fugitive slaves and was constantly monitored by slave-catchers. In order to safely hide slaves, Goodridge hid the fugi-

Salmon Portland Chase
(1808-1873)



William Wells Brown
(1814-1884)

William Still
(1821-1902)

The Levi and Catherine Coffin House, located in Newport, Indiana, was used to house runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad.

tives in a straw-lined trench in the back of his home and a small secret room in his basement.

When the Confederacy invaded York in 1863, Goodridge and his family fled to Minnesota. Slave-catchers attempted to kidnap him but were unsuccessful. He remained in Minnesota until his death in 1873.

In Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, politician and prominent abolitionist Elijah Pennypacker (1802-1888) used his home, the White Horse Farm in Schuylkill Township, as a station. In 1839, Pennypacker ended his career in politics in order to fully devote himself to the anti-slavery cause. He became active in several organizations and spoke widely against slavery. In 1840, he opened his home as a major stop on the Underground Railroad. Hundreds of runaway slaves, coming from neighboring counties and Delaware, were directed to the White Horse Farm. Pennypacker personally transported slaves from his home to Norristown and other points to the north and east. It is said that no slave was ever apprehended in his care.

Other Pennsylvania leaders were the Johnson Family of Philadelphia. The Johnson House, a National Historic Landmark, is one of the key sites of the abolitionist movement in the area. Between 1790 and 1908, the house was the residence of five generations of the Johnson family. The third generation was active in the abolition movement during the 1850s. Along with their spouses, Rowland, Israel, Ellwood, Sarah, and Elizabeth Johnson were members of the American Anti-Slavery Society and the Germantown Freedman's Aid Association. Through their ties to these groups the brothers and sisters became involved in the Underground Railroad and used their homes, along with homes of nearby friends and relatives, to harbor slaves on their journey to freedom.

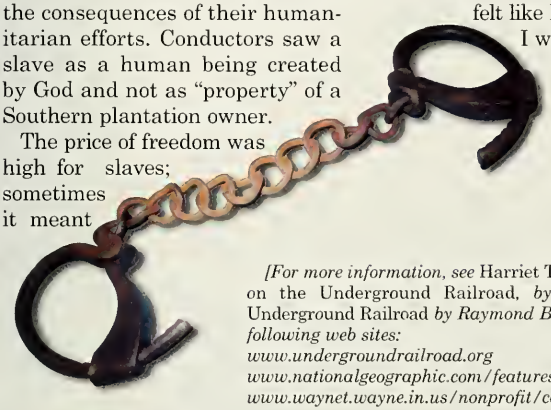
Another stop on the Pennsylvania path was Oakdale, the home of Isaac and Dinah Mendenhall, located in Chadds Ford. The two were leading abolitionists who helped form the Society of Progressive Friends at Longwood in 1853. Oakdale was the first stop north of the Delaware line and provided temporary shelter. A distinct feature in Oakdale is a concealed room, built between a walk-in fireplace and the west wall of the carriage house and entered through a loft that Isaac built for the escaping slaves.

Another leader was Dr. F. Julius LeMoyne (1798-1879) of Washington, Pennsylvania. His home, the LeMoyne House built in 1812, and was a center for abolitionist activity in southwestern Pennsylvania, and today is a National Historic Landmark. In 1834 LeMoyne joined the Washington Anti-Slavery Society and was the organization's president from 1835 to 1837. After his term he was commissioned by the American Anti-Slavery Society to be its regional agent. The tightly-knit free Black communities in southwest Pennsylvania helped slaves escape and developed a network that White antislavery activists, like LeMoyne, joined. His correspondence from

the 1840s included letters from individuals asking for aid and thanking him for his assistance in getting them and their friends and relatives out of the South.

Many conductors continued to assist escaped slaves, knowing the consequences of their humanitarian efforts. Conductors saw a slave as a human being created by God and not as "property" of a Southern plantation owner.

The price of freedom was high for slaves; sometimes it meant their lives. Tubman compared her freedom to being in heaven, "When I found I had crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees. I felt like I was in heaven, I was free." ■



[For more information, see Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad, *by Ann Petry*; The Underground Railroad *by Raymond Bial. Also see the following web sites:*
www.undergroundrailroad.org
www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/
www.waynet.wayne.in.us/nonprofit/coffin.htm.]

The Bucktown Village Store

Preserving the Past

Owners save site of Harriet Tubman's first act of defiance

Story and photos by Christine Varner

Susan Meredith's face lights up when she starts talking about Harriet Tubman. "She's my hero," says Meredith while standing inside the Bucktown Village Store, located near Tubman's birthplace in Dorchester County, Maryland. She and her husband, Jay, own the store, known as the site of Tubman's first act of defiance.

While working the fields as a young woman, Tubman saw a fellow slave go into the store. She also saw the overseer of the plantation approaching the store. Knowing the slave would be punished if he was caught at the store without permission, she went to warn him, but it was too late; the overseer was already there. He ordered Tubman to hold the disobedient slave for a whipping, but she refused. "As the slave ran to the door, the overseer threw a two pound metal weight at the boy," says Meredith, tossing a similar weight back and forth in her hands. "It missed him, and it hit Harriet in the forehead."

That blow to the head caused Tubman to fall into a coma; it took several months before she was able work. "They carried me to the house all bleeding and fainting. I had no bed, no place to lie down on at all, and they lay me on the seat of the loom, and I stayed there all that day and the

next," Tubman later recalled as she dictated her story to Emma Telford in 1911. While she eventually returned to work in the fields, she never fully recovered from the injury. For the remainder of her life, she was subject to blackouts, often while leading escaped slaves to freedom.

While time has erased many of the buildings associated with history, the Bucktown Village Store remains. Walking through the doors of the Bucktown Village Store is like walking through a portal to the past. The floorboards creak, and the smell of years gone by greets guests as they enter. The light blue paint on the shelves and counters is chipped and worn with age. Antiques fill the shelves throughout the store, some of which date to when Tubman was a slave. Old wooden packing crates, bed warmers, and wooden casks are just a few of the items on display.

A brick, believed to be made of layered marble, adorns the counter. "After the slaves were freed, one of Thomas [Meredith's] slaves made it and gave it to him in appreciation of being treated with kindness through the years," says Jay Meredith. The brick has been passed down through the generations, and now sits in the store.

> *"They carried me to the house all bleeding and fainting. I had no bed, no place to lie down on at all, and they lay me on the seat of the loom, and I stayed there all that day and the next."* — Harriet Tubman

Believed to be built in the first quarter of the 19th century, the store was purchased by Jay's great-great grandfather, Thomas Meredith, sometime around the Civil War. "We believe he modernized it somewhat when he bought it," says Jay Meredith, "but it hasn't changed much since then." Thomas, the largest landowner of tillable land in the county, also bought "The Big House," which once belonged to Edward Brodess, Tubman's former master.

Pritchett Meredith, Thomas' father, also has a connection to Harriet Tubman. After she made her escape in 1849, she returned to Bucktown and helped Thomas Elliott and Denwood Hughes, enslaved by Pritchett Meredith, escape to freedom.

Two generations of Mereditths lived on the property. About 20 years after McKenny White Meredith, Jay's great-grandfather, died, the family sold the property and moved closer to town. Thomas Vickers Meredith, Jay's grandfather, and John, Jay's father, hunted the land throughout the years, and often took Jay with them.

"I knew then that [preserving this place] would be my destiny," he says. The Mereditths bought "The Big House" in 1998; in 2000, they acquired the store. They have since founded the Bucktown Village Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and promote the Bucktown heritage.

"We bought all this for the sole purpose of it not being destroyed," says Jay Meredith. "This area is known for having racial tension, and preserving this has given us an opportunity to build bridges and do our part to promote unity." ■

Susan Meredith, co-owner of the Bucktown Village Store, has helped preserve the 19th century store that was part of Harriet Tubman's life.

[For more information on the Bucktown Village Foundation, or to arrange a tour of the Bucktown Village Store, call 410-228-7650. Correspondence can be sent to Bucktown Village Foundation, P.O. Box 711, Cambridge, MD, 21613.]

Trap Doors AND False Walls

Station houses on the Underground Railroad

by Rachel Fiedler and Jonathan Gass

Secret entryway in the Irondale Inn

The sliding door on the roof of the Irondale Inn in Bloomsburg is the only entrance into the attic, and large "voids" found on the property suggest previous Underground Railroad activity. "There was no other way to get in the attic, we had to make one," says owner J.D. Davis. A tunnel still runs from the basement to the nearby railroad tracks, where it is believed slaves would ride the trains to Danville and on to Williamsport.

Throughout Pennsylvania are homes that hold ties to the Underground Railroad. Few accounts remain connecting these houses to runaway slaves. The tunnels, trap doors, and secret rooms may all have been hiding places, but many of the conductor's written records have long since been destroyed. Besides the physical structures, local tradition and family stories exist as the only other evidence of the station houses in Pennsylvania.

Just outside Bloomsburg in Espy, the home of Bill and Sara Hughes was a possible station house. Journalist and historian Ted Fenstermacher researched the house for a series of columns for the *Press Enterprise* based on the previous owner's "family legend." The original owners, Cyrus and Catherine Barton, had been abolitionists in the 1830's when the house was built. A three-foot crawl space is hidden behind a panel in the wall by the staircase "large enough for a man to fit in," says Hughes.

The use of houses along the Underground Railroad is known only by the evidence of secret rooms, trap doors, tunnels and their location in relation to the believed paths of the Underground Railroad. Most of the other records of stations regarding involvement have been destroyed and the stories have only been passed down through families and local residents.

Photo by Rachel Fiedler

Goodridge House, York

The route to freedom never would have existed without the help of those who provided shelter for escaping slaves. They allowed escaped Blacks to come into their homes as a place of refuge during their long journey. Many of these houses were located in Pennsylvania since the state is on most routes leading to Canada.

The trails mainly followed the rivers, coming up from Maryland and along what is now Interstate 83. Many of the slaves traveled to York and on to Wrightsville or York Springs where Quakers were the primary religious group. The trails also ran along the same lines as what are now Routes 30 and 116.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 intensified the need for smuggling centers to go undetected. The Act mandated that anyone caught harboring slaves or preventing their capture could be fined up to $1,000 and imprisoned for up to six months.

Conductors aiding slaves constructed hidden rooms and passages within buildings; in some cases, they dug tunnels to provide slaves with a safe passage. Only symbolic markers identified the houses used as stations. To this

day, station houses blend well into their surroundings, but lack of record keeping regarding Underground Railroad activity makes it difficult to positively identify slaves' hideaways.

Many of the houses were located in York, Lancaster, and Chester counties, along with other counties which bordered Maryland. The F. Julius LeMoyne House in Washington County was the first recognized National Historic Landmark of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania.

Dr. LeMoyne, an active abolitionist, was the president of the Washington Anti-Slavery Society for two years until he became its regional agent in 1838. He began his fight against slavery by speaking to the public, raising support, and allowing runaways to rest at his home.

Two members of the Society of Progressive Friends, an abolitionist group, lent short-term shelter for escaping slaves as the first stop north of Delaware in Pennsylvania. Isaac and Dinah Mendenhall housed slaves in their home in a concealed, square-shaped room, built between a walk-in fireplace and a west wall of the carriage house.

> *"Staircases between rooms were set up to confuse slave-catchers."*
>
> —Marilyn Cohick

Trap doors and false walls were common in the station houses. Such homes as Elmwood Mansion, home of York bank director Jacob Brillinger, had three trap doors in its attic that dropped down into back staircases for an easy escape route in case slaves' whereabouts were suspected.

Also in York County, William Goodridge, a freed Black, used both his home and his railroad business to move slaves north through the state. The hidden slave activity at his home was suspected and local slave catchers continuously kept watch on his house. "The slaveholders of the South would gladly have kidnapped him," wrote historian Israel H. Betz in a series of papers on station houses in the early 1900s.

In Goodridge's home were two locations for the slaves. There was a small secret room near the rear of his basement and a trench lined with straw underneath a building by the house. Goodridge also owned a variety store in York Centre Square where secret

Home of Bill and Sara Hughes, Espy

Photo by Christine Varner

panels were built into the walls and slaves were held until they moved to Philadelphia and further north.

One of the most active leaders in the Underground Railroad was Amos Griest, a Quaker who owned a large portion of farmland across the county. He and Goodridge worked together to aid slaves to freedom by hiding them among corn shucks between houses. Griest met runaways near Baltimore and guided them to his home and to a secret second floor room. From there they would travel in Goodridge's railroad cars to Lancaster County, through the Susquehanna Valley, New York, and into Canada.

In Philadelphia, Quaker Samuel Johnson hid Blacks in the servant's attic of his home which had a separate back entrance from the main house. There is only one account recorded of a slave almost being found, says Najah Taln, curator of education at the house. She says a sheriff came to look around and was stalled downstairs by the Quakers in a prayer meeting; meanwhile, the slave had a chance to escape onto a ledge outside of a window before the room was checked.

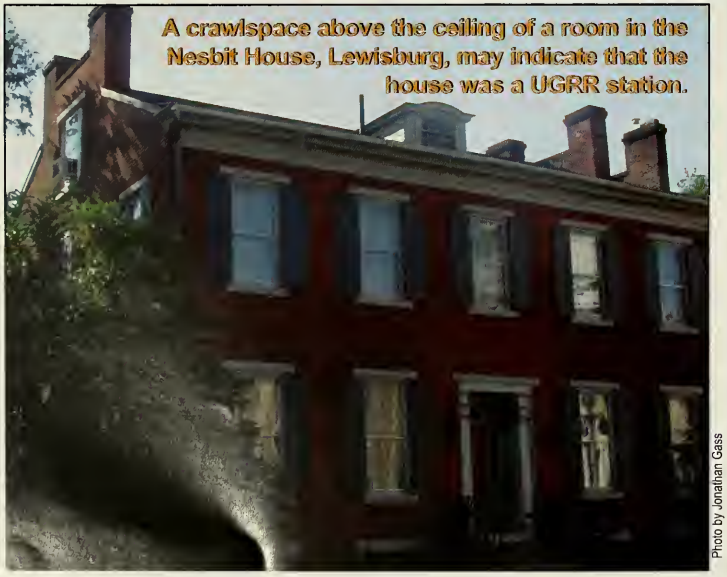
As the slaves moved north through the state there were still an abundant number of stations willing to house the Blacks for a night or two. The House of Many Stairs, located along Village Road in Pennsdale, is scarcely notable. The house received its name because of staircases between rooms set up to confuse and disorient slave-trackers. Marilyn Cohick, a neighbor, explains, "you could literally walk up and down and around and around the rooms all day" and never find a hidden slave.

There is evidence of a tunnel leading from the house to a small farm home at the other end of Pennsdale, which slaves would

The Lemoyne House in Washington County

Photo courtesy of Washington County Historical Society

travel until the slave-catchers were cleared. One of the staircases led to a second floor room containing a false wall and a secret chamber. This room's window also served as a lookout tower where conductors could scan for strangers to the Pennsdale area, says Cohick. Pennsdale served as a stop along the way to Williamsport, where slaves would be sent north via railroads and barges.



A crawlspace above the ceiling of a room in the Nesbit House, Lewisburg, may indicate that the house was a UGRR station.

Photo by Jonathan Gass

Three houses in Lewisburg may have been stops for runaways. Stories passed down through the owners of the Nesbit House tell of the use of a crawl space in what used to be a bedroom, says Richard Smith the current owner. A person could crouch in the small hatch, but wouldn't be able to stand up.

On the old Main Street, in the Robert Irwin House is a trap door that leads to a hole in the ground. Although it may have been used as a storage place, the area of the home and local tradition, allude to its use in escape routes.

The Rev. George Bliss, a professor at Bucknell University during the time of the Underground Railroad, used a stable on his property as a refuge. Bliss's daughter, Lucy, once mentioned the stable as "being used to hide 'contraband' until these fugitive slaves could be moved," says Doris Dysinger, curator of the university's archives.

The Governor Snyder Mansion

Photo by Jonathan Gass

The house at 17 Water Street in Lewisburg has a trap door in the kitchen thought to be a hiding place for runaways.

in Selinsgrove once had underground tunnels running toward a church and a small home along the Susquehanna River, possibly used by slaves. The current owner, Tom McNabb, says he never knew about any tunnels, but that "a few areas took a lot to fill" when a parking lot was paved. ■

[For further information see The Underground Railroad *by Charles L. Blockson;* Freedom Roads: Searching for the Underground Railroad *by Joyce Hansen and Gary McGowan;* Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom *by Virginia Hamilton and Leo Dillin;* The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania *by William J. Switala.]*

Decoding the Paths to Freedom

Photo by Christine Varner

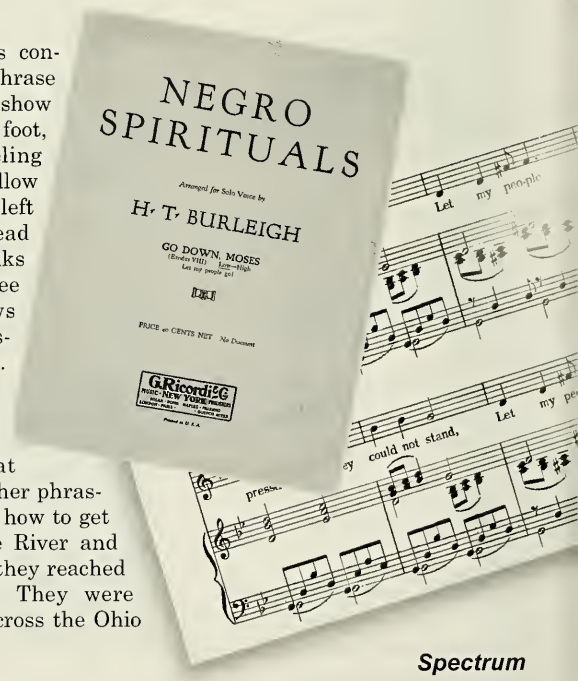
Lawn jockeys, weather vanes, and Negro spirituals helped point the way to freedom

by Patrick Higgins

Escaping slaves traveled in the dead of night. With no maps to guide them, they relied solely on their wits and their will to survive. From code songs to secret handshakes, escapees and those who aided them developed methods of communication to relay messages, ease fears, and protect themselves.

On the plantations, slaves sang while working in the fields. To plantation owners, this meant slaves were content and less likely to escape. In reality, many of the songs held hidden meanings and told slaves where to go once they made their escape.

"Follow the Drinking Gourd" is perhaps the best-known "code" song. The words "drinking gourd" referred to the Big Dipper and the North Star and told slaves to walk toward this constellation. The phrase "the dead trees show you the way, left foot, peg foot, traveling on" meant to follow the drawings of left feet on the dead trees on the banks of the Tombigbee River that flows through Mississippi and Alabama. These markings would designate the Tombigbee from rivers that flowed into it. Other phrases told runaways how to get to the Tennessee River and to follow it until they reached the Ohio River. They were then directed to cross the Ohio



where a guide on the Underground Railroad met them.

Another song, "Steal Away to Jesus," alerted other slaves on the plantation that an escape was imminent. The spiritual, "Wade in the Water," told escapees if they traveled in water, their scent would be undetectable to the bloodhounds that trailed them, says Dr. Charles Blockson, professor of history at Temple University.

Escaping slaves and those who aided them used special code words to communicate. The Underground Railroad was called the "freedom train" or the "gospel train." "Baggage" and "bundles of wood" referred to escapees, and Canada was called "Canaan" or "The Promised Land." "Shepards" encouraged slaves to escape, and "conductors" transported the slaves. A "station house" was a safe house, the "station master" was the keeper of the house, and a "stockholder" donated money to keep the operation running.

Messages were relayed using code phrases. The phrase, "the wind blows from the south today," alerted conductors of escapees in the area. "When the sun comes back and the first quail calls," signaled that early spring was a good time to escape. If slaves couldn't see the stars, "the dead trees will show you the way," reminded them moss grows on the north side of trees. They also looked for weather vanes on certain homes to point the direction to the next safe house.

Small cast iron statues on the lawns of many homes indicated safety or danger. The statues were usually a Black man with one hand extended. If it held an American flag, this indicated safety; absence of a flag signaled danger, says Underground Railroad historian Wilbur Siebert. Conductors told escapees the exact location of statues to avoid any confusion.

"Torches or lanterns were used on the banks of rivers like the Susquehanna to give signals to escapees," says Dr. Jeff Davis, assistant professor of history at Bloomsburg University. "One light meant it was safe to cross, and two lights meant there was danger ahead and not to cross."

The Underground Railroad frequently had spies who reported escapees, so a method of identifying them was devised. A token bearing the emblem of the Northern Anti-Slavery Society, a man kneeling with the motto "Am I not a man and a brother," was given to those who were certain not to be spies.

Conductors and runaways also used specific handshakes to identify themselves. Handshakes, based on Masonic rituals, were probably developed by William Lambert, a free Black from Michigan.

Some people believe quilts were used as a form of communication on the Underground Railroad. Quilts were hung in front of homes, and certain patterns relayed specific messages, such as what tools to pack and when was good time to escape, says Jacqueline Tobin, author of *Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad.*

Blockson, however, disagrees. "These escapees came from many different places in the south, could not read or write, and would not have understood the different patterns of code within these quilts," he says, also noting, "escapees traveled in harsh weather, like snow and rain, and the quilts would not have been able to withstand the tough weather conditions."

In addition to using coded messages and phrases, conductors developed covert means of transportation. According to the National Parks Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, runaways regularly employed disguises. Men often masked their slave status by dressing as laborers and pretended to be going to work; women dressed in expensive clothing to avoid recognition by slave hunters. It is believed one conductor staged a mock funeral procession of a caravan of wagons to disguise the movement of slaves.

It is clear slaves and conductors devised clever forms of communication and transportation. The Underground Railroad needed extensive planning to make it run smoothly, but the patience and perseverance of conductors and those they helped made the planning worthwhile. ■

[Contributing to this article was Christine Varner. For more information go to the National Parks Service website www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr/learn_b5.htm]

Photo by Justin Pelletier

THIS SIDE UP WITH CARE

Heartbroken and desperate, a slave ships himself to freedom

by Christine Varner

Henry Brown, suffering great injustice because of the bondage of slavery, went through great pain to achieve his freedom. In *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself* (1851), he states that his book will show "the beautiful side of slavery." The irony behind the statement that he was raised "under the benign influence of [a] blessed system" quickly becomes evident as he details his sufferings.

Born about 1816 in Louisa County, Virginia, Brown first served a master in the Barrett family, who treated him with relative kindness. When Brown was 13, his master became ill. When he and his brother were summoned to his master's deathbed, "we ran with beating hearts, and highly elated feelings, not doubting that he was about to confer upon us the boon of freedom, as we expected to be set free when he died," he wrote. Rather, the family was willed to Barrett's four sons, and the family was separated.

"My son, as yonder leaves are stripped from off the trees of the forest, so are the children of slaves swept away from them by the hands of cruel tyrants," wrote Brown, recalling the warnings of his mother when he was a child.

He was sent to live with his former master's son, William, in Richmond, Virginia. There, he worked in the younger Barrett's tobacco manufacturing plant. Under orders from his deceased father, Barrett was kind to Brown, offering him food, clothing, and an unspecified amount of spending money. John F. Allen, the overseer of the plant, was not so kind.

Brown relates the story of a slave who missed several days of work because of illness. Allen ordered some men to go to the slave's house and bring him to the plant. The man, terribly ill and hardly able to stand, was stripped to the waist and tied to a post. He was given 200 lashes, which Allen called "medicine that would cure him."

Brown complained that even on days when overseers didn't employ the whip, the fear of punishment was always present. He wrote of Allen and other overseers: "These men hardly deserve the name of men, for they are lost to all regard for decency, truth, justice and humanity, and are so far gone in human depravity, that before they can be saved, Jesus Christ, or some other Savior, will have to die a second time."

During his time in Richmond, Brown came to know a young slave woman named Nancy. In 1836, after seeking permission from their masters, they were married and had three children.

But in August 1848, his mother's words again returned. Brown was at work when he received word that his wife and children were in the local jail, where they were being held until they were sold the next morning. This shocked him since he paid his wife's master $50 every year so she would not be sold.

Brown pleaded with his master

Illustration by Peter Kramer, 1850

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-USZ62-1283

to purchase Nancy, "but no tears of mine made the least impression upon his obdurate heart," he wrote. He tried to convince two men he knew to purchase her, but they refused, telling him they didn't think it was right to own slaves. A Christian minister from North Carolina purchased Brown's wife. As she was led down the road, chained to the other slaves, Brown saw her. "I seized hold of her hand, intending to bid her farewell," he wrote, "but words failed me."

Immediately following the separation of his family, Brown was determined to free himself from slavery. "I had suffered enough under its heavy weight, and I determined I would endure it no longer" he wrote.

He knew it would be too risky to try to outrun the slave hunters, so he worked on a means of escape no one had ever tried before.

"One day, while I was at work, and my thoughts were eagerly feasting upon the idea of freedom . . . the idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself *up in a box,* and getting myself conveyed as dry good to a free state," he wrote.

Brown poured oil of vitriol on his finger to disable himself from work. He burned himself through to the bone, and the overseer had no recourse but to grant him a leave of absence. Taking his remaining $166, Brown took his leave and went in search of someone who might assist him in his escape. Samuel A. Smith, a White shoemaker, offered his help for the price of $86.

Smith arranged to have Brown shipped as freight along the rail lines to the office of the Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. A carpenter constructed a box measuring two feet high, eight inches deep, two feet wide, and three feet long. Brown spent 26 hours in the box with nothing more than a bladder of water to sustain him.

The box contained three small holes for air and was stamped "This side up with care." The workers were not concerned with this, and as a result, Brown spent a considerable portion of the journey upside down. In his narrative, he writes that he expected blood to flow from his burst veins while trapped in this position. Eventually, the workers set the box down for use as a stool, granting Brown a slight degree of comfort. "One half hour longer and my sufferings would have ended in that fate, which I preferred to slavery," he said.

More than a day after his departure from Richmond, Brown arrived in Philadelphia. The box was taken to the office of the Anti-Slavery Society at 107 North Fifth Street. There, William Still, along with his colleagues, finally freed Brown.

"I arose, and shook myself from the lethargy into which I had fallen," wrote Brown, "but exhausted nature proved too much for my frame, and I swooned away."

He recovered, and according to William Still's memoir, *The Underground Railroad*, published in 1872, Brown proceeded to sing a hymn praising the Lord for hearing his prayers. "He was then christened Henry Box Brown," wrote Still.

"O what ecstatic joy thrilled through every nerve and fiber of my system," wrote Brown. "Long had seemed my journey, and terribly hazardous had been my attempt to gain my birthright; but it all seemed a comparatively light price to pay for the precious boon of Liberty."

Upon hearing of Brown's success, Smith attempted to mail two other slaves to freedom.

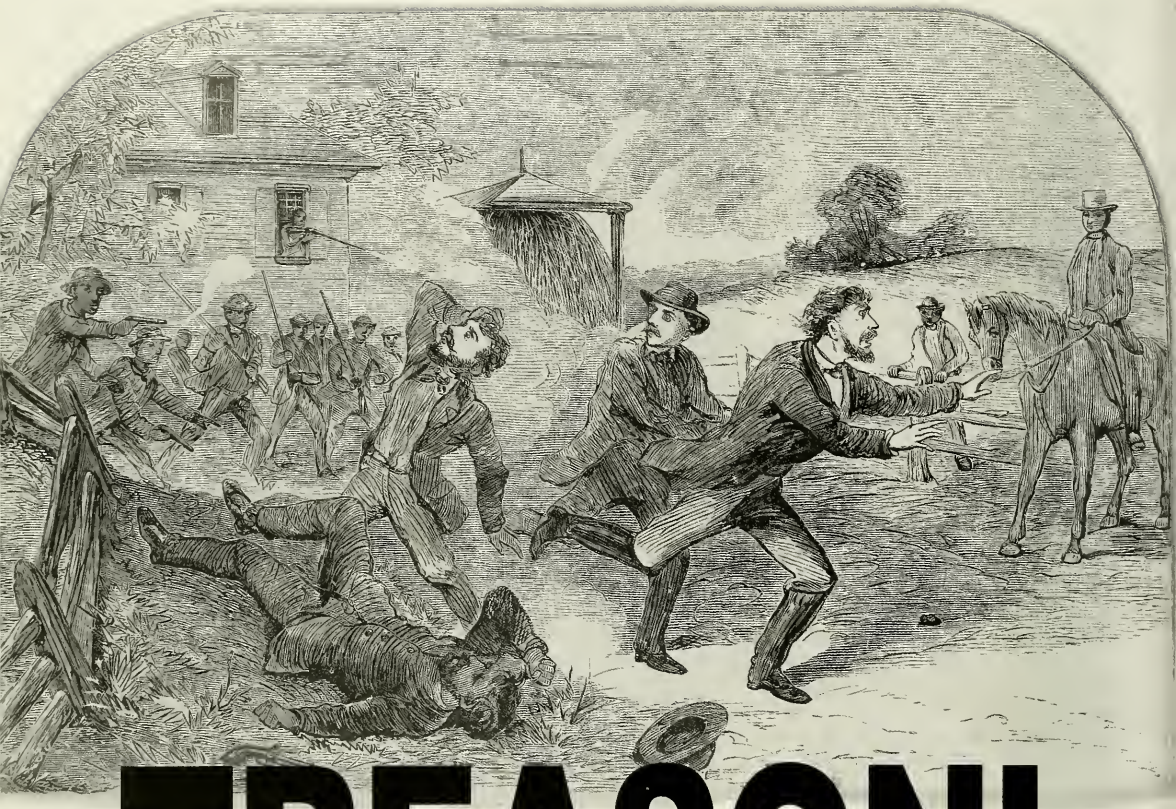
These attempts were thwarted, and "the heroic young fugitives were captured in their boxes and dragged back to hopeless bondage," wrote Still. Smith was put on trial, convicted, and sentenced to eight years in prison.

> ***"It all seemed a comparatively light price to pay for the precious boon of liberty."***
>
> **— Henry "Box" Brown**

Brown remained in Philadelphia for a short time, then made his way to Massachusetts. He traveled throughout New England and related his story at numerous anti-slavery meetings. He created a panorama, "Mirror of Slavery," that depicted his life as a slave and his escape. He exhibited the panorama in the free states until he fled to England when the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed, which required people to return escapees to slavery.

In England, he continued to speak against slavery. He was known to be living in Wales in 1864, according to the *African-American Registry*. No documents of his life after 1864 exist; it is unknown when he died. While not much is known about his death, his accomplishments while alive are forever etched in history. ■

[For further details on the life of Henry Box Brown and efforts to free slaves, see The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself, 1851, *and* The Underground Railroad, *by William Still.]*



TREASON!

In a small Pennsylvania town, the federal government brought to trial 38 men for helping slaves escape

by Rachel Fiedler

What began as a fight for freedom by escaped slaves escalated into the first armed resistance against slavery. Edward Gorsuch, a Quaker slave owner, believed the world outside slavery couldn't compare to the safety and security he could provide. The place was Christiana, Pennsylvania; the time, September 1851.

Two years earlier, four slaves had escaped from their plantation in Maryland and fled to Pennsylvania. In mid-September, Edward Gorsuch confronted his slaves in an attempt to reclaim them, but faced a bloody battle, one which he wouldn't survive.

In 1850, Congress had passed a law stating, "The judges of the Superior Courts of the Territories . . . shall grant certificates to such claimants . . . with authority to take and remove such fugitives from service or labor . . . to the State or Territory from which such persons may have escaped or fled." This was the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which bestowed the right to all slave owners to recapture their

escaped slaves. The enactment of this law provided Gorsuch with the legal authority to hunt down his escaped slaves and return them to his plantation.

It wasn't a sense of ownership that prompted Gorsuch to find his slaves, but a feeling of betrayal, disrespect, and loss of reputation. As a practicing Quaker, Gorsuch had treated his slaves well, and occasionally paid them for personal work; he believed his slaves had better lives than freed Blacks.

The four refugees had sought aid at the home of William Parker, a leader in the Lancaster Black Self-Protection Society, after escaping from Gorsuch's plantation. In his memoirs, *The Freedman's Story*, Parker describes how he fled to freedom as a teenager after beating his own master and began work on a farm in Christiana: "I was now at the beginning of a new and important era in my life . . . I longed to cast off the chains of servitude, because they chafed my free spirit." Parker rose to high status among Blacks in the area by becoming an avid, violent fighter against slavery. His defiance of Gorsuch and his party led to the outbreak of the riot.

Two days before the riot, Gorsuch gathered his son, Dickinson, his nephew, Joshua, and three other men, and went toward Christiana. Once in Pennsylvania the group received help from Marshal Henry H. Kline for the arrests of the slaves. Meanwhile at Parker's farm, a spy informed him of a party coming to capture the escaped slaves.

In Parker's account of the event, which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1866, he claimed Gorsuch and Kline threatened to burn down the house and would begin to shoot all those inside if Gorsuch's slaves were not turned over immediately. The White men entered Parker's home.

Kline and Gorsuch attempted to climb the stairs to reach Parker and a friend; according to Parker, "a pitchfork with blunt prongs" was thrown down at them.

It hit no one, but caused Gorsuch to retreat to the front lawn. Parker blames Kline for firing the first shots while Gorsuch's party stood by its story that the first shots came from inside the house after they fled to the front lawn.

Within moments of the first shots, an alarm sounded across the farm, signaling other Blacks and Whites to come to Parker's aid.

Parker insulted Gorsuch about his religion, enraging Dickinson and causing him to fire upon the Black man. Others began to shoot at Edward and Dickinson Gorsuch, wounding Dickinson; Edward Gorsuch, still able to fight, headed toward the main house.

Armed men surrounded Edward Gorsuch. "They were too late; the negroes rushed up, and the firing began," recounted Parker in his detailed account of the story. The men encircled the slave owner and violently beat him to death, said W.U. Henel, author of *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851*.

The nearly fifty Black men who fought against the seven White men from Maryland only suffered minor wounds, including Parker who was shot in the shoulder.

Photo courtesy of Moores Memorial Public Library

Samuel Hopkins and Peter Woods, two of the survivors of the Christiana Riot in 1851, returned in 1896 to the site where one died and two were wounded.

Courtesy of Moores Memorial Public Library

At William Parker's home, runaway slaves sought refuge. The fighting unfolded and ended in the death of a slave owner from Maryland.

Four of Gorsuch's men, along with Kline, fled during the outbreak of the riot and were unhurt, but Edward Gorsuch lay dead on the lawn; Dickinson, nearly dead, had eighty shots that pierced his body. However, the son survived his wounds. When Henel interviewed friends who knew Dickinson in his later years, they described his still visible scars, "Thirty-one years after he was shot—his body prepared for burial was 'pitted like a sponge' with the marks of the 'Christiana Riot.'" The Pownall family had tended to him in the immediate moments after the fighting and most likely saved his life.

Mixed feelings ran through the United States after word spread of a Black man's defiance of slave owners and the law. Only seven days after the riot, the *Pennsylvania Freeman* published a letter to Gov. William Johnson of Pennsylvania demanding justice for the murder which took place in his state.

The issue of treason still lingered in the aftermath of the riot. Thirty-eight men were charged with treason, including two of the White men who came upon the farm, Castner Hanway and Elijah Lewis. Parker and many other Black men there on September 11 had already fled to Canada fearing what would result once people found out about the Black resistance.

The U.S. and Maryland indicted Hanway with five specific charges, including that, "He, with a large number of armed persons forcibly prevented the execution of the United States Fugitive Slave Law and levy treason against the United States." A trial against those assisting Parker began on November 24, 1851.

Prosecutor John W. Ashmead appeared to have the court in his favor due to the Fugitive Slave Act. In the closing days, however, Judge Grier addressed the jury and declared, "That the persons engaged in it are guilty of riot and murder cannot be denied. But riot and murder are offenses against the State Government. It would be a dangerous precedent for the Court and jury in this case to extend the crime of treason by construction in doubtful cases." Fifteen minutes later, the jury returned with a verdict of "not guilty."

Although the Christiana Riot was the first recorded violent fight against slavery there still had been previous uprisings against White slave owners. Twenty years earlier on August 22, 1831 religious leader, Nat Turner led more than fifty others in the murders of fifty-eight Whites.

After seeing what he believed to be a sign from God, Turner gathered a group of men and killed his master, Joseph Travis, and nearly sixty other men, women, and children, reported the *Richmond Constitutional Whig* a day after the riot broke out. The Blacks' revolt lasted thirty-six hours until the militia came and the Whites' side was able to over-power the slaves. The *Richmond Enquirer*

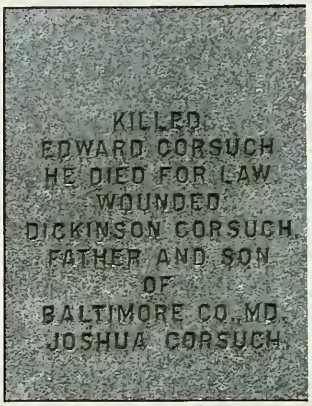
> *"I longed to cast off the chains of servitude, because they chafed my free spirit."*
>
> —William Parker

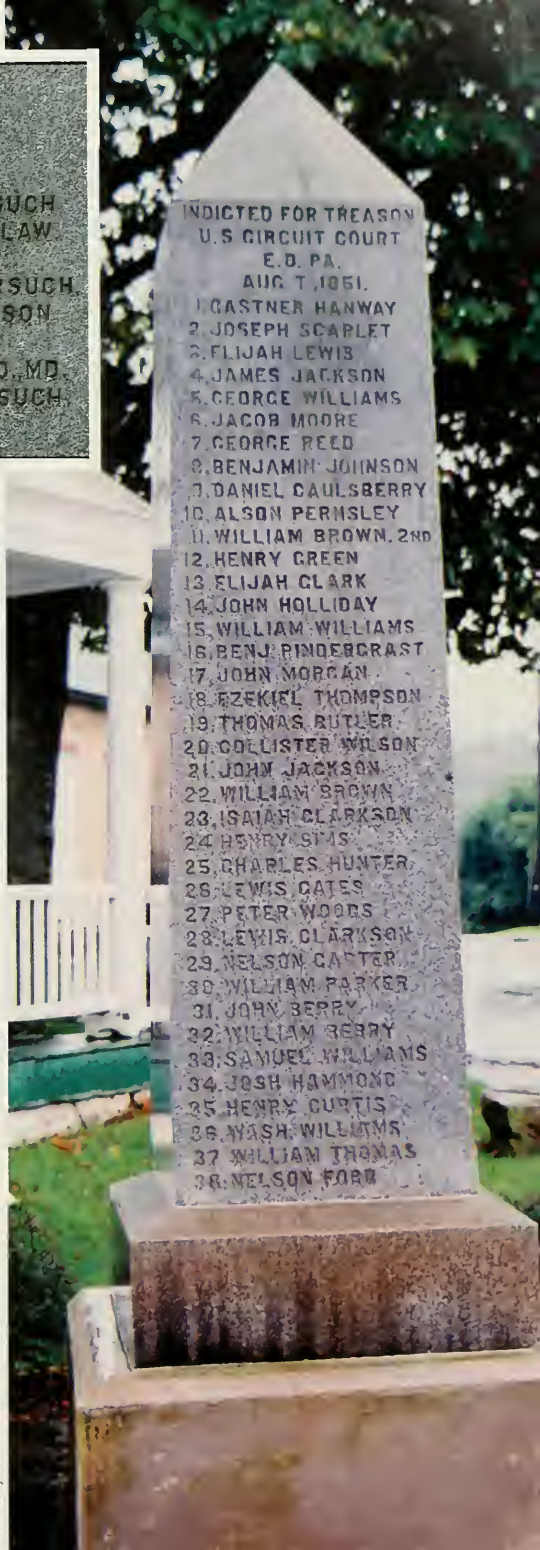
described the uprising as: "a parcel of blood-thirsty wolves rushing down from the Alps." The militia killed more than one hundred Blacks, not all of whom were involved in the overthrow.

During the fighting, Turner escaped, but was later captured by a farmer, stated the *American Beacon of Norfolk*. Turner was charged with rebellion and was hanged in November.

Decades before the Civil War, slaves started to slowly rally against their White slave owners in order to achieve freedom. The Christiana Riot and the Nat Turner Rebellion signified turning points in American history; they provided an example and a following for other Blacks to unite and fight against slavery. ■

[For further information see The Freedmans Story, *by William Parker;* The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851, *by W.U. Hensel. Contact Moores Memorial Library at 610-593-6683 or visit their web site at www.christinalibrary.org]*





The United States indicted 38 men for treason under the Fugitive Slave Act for assisting slaves in what became known as the Christiana riot. A monument, about nine feet tall, and a state historical marker commemorate the fight for freedom.

Photos by Rachel Fiedler

Peaceful REBELLION

Pennsylvania Quakers defied federal law to help slaves escape into the North

by Jonathan Gass

A reverent hush pervades the Society of Friends during unprogrammed meetings. Quakers silently contemplate their lives, speaking only when driven by a powerful conviction that the word of God was granted to them to benefit others. Their convictions prove a powerful force as they speak out to fulfill their duty to God by confronting the abomination of slavery.

Quakers settled in America, and predominately Pennsylvania, in the late seventeenth century, and quickly began fighting slavery. William Penn founded Pennsylvania as a haven from the persecution Friends faced in England, and a place of free expression for all people regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

Penn, a slave owner, did little to directly advance the freedom of Blacks, but the Quaker principles he embraced led the Friends to protest the institution of slavery in his home state. In 1688, a group of Quakers in Germantown became the first Americans to speak out against slavery. "Is there any that would be done or handled in this manner? [That is] to be sold, or made a slave for all the time in his life?" they wrote. They believed that slave traders were sinners, and forced sins upon others; they paid overseers to whip disobedient slaves, and drove slaves to adultery by splitting apart families, selling wives, husbands and children to separate owners.

The Quakers' struggle to abolish slavery continued until 1775, when they officially organized the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, the first abolitionist group in America. Under pressure from abolitionists, the Pennsylvania legislature enacted a gradual emancipation program in 1780, which prohibited slave-owners from purchasing slaves, and made all slaves born before March 1, 1780 indentured servants to be released at the age of 28.

Victory in Pennsylvania didn't calm the Quakers' passionate opposition to slavery, and many assisted the Underground Railroad to bring slaves from other states to freedom.

Millville, a village in Columbia County founded by Quakers in 1768, may have had a connection to the Underground Railroad. Some current members of the Millville Meeting claim slaves were hidden in Quaker homes or the basement of the Meetinghouse. Millville member Robert Mosteller says no direct connection to the secret Underground Railroad can be determined, though some history books cite Millville and Berwick as Underground Railroad sites.

Mosteller says Pennsdale Quakers assisted runaway slaves. Underground Railroad activity started in the village as early as the 1780s, continuing through the Civil War, according to Pennsdale Friends member Jane Keller.

The Quakers' belief in rigorous honesty created difficulty when slave hunters seeking to return runaways for bounty arrived. Keller explains that the conductors provided clever justification for their activities.

Photo by Jonathan Gass

Betsy Doan (right) and Sheila Lunger (left), members of the Millville Society of Friends Meeting, discuss Quaker beliefs about pacifism and the need to defend the nation. Quakers were vigorous in opposing slavery and in promoting peaceful resolutions to critical problems. They participated in American wars, often on the front lines as combat medics, but always as conscientious objectors.

"Blacks are equally precious and valuable, so when someone asked if they were hiding any slaves here, they would say, 'there are no slaves here.' They didn't consider them slaves, but free people," she says. "They believed they weren't really lying."

In order to keep some of the slave hunters at bay, Pennsdale conductors never contradicted a legend claiming the burial ground behind the Meetinghouse was haunted. "A sheep got caught in the fence, and was bleating all night," Keller says. "Someone said it was a ghost, and they just never said it wasn't one. It helped keep people away."

It is impossible to speculate how many slaves the Quakers assisted during the time of slavery; their fight to treat all people equally continues to this day.

In addition to combating racial and religious intolerance, Keller says some Quakers have turned their attention to incarcerated convicts. They demonstrate against the death penalty, and protect prisoners' civil rights, including the availability of proper medical care. Lack of public exposure for their cause hasn't made it any less valuable than their protests against military aggression and racism, she says.

"Quakers just love losing battles," says Keller, "but we have to keep fighting." ■

Route to Freedom

Anthony Cohen Retraces the Underground Railroad

by Christine Varner and Veronika Frenkel

The train pulled into Penn Station, New York City, about 6:30 p.m. on a hotter-than-normal day in May 1996. The baggage on the train included a wooden crate, 24" x 28" x 30". A cell phone, a small quilt, a water bottle—and a man—had been packed and smuggled on board the train about seven hours earlier in Philadelphia.

Anthony Cohen was soaked with sweat; the temperature rose to almost 100 degrees that day. He had just endured captivity in its purest sense—fear of being discovered; thirst; intense heat; exhaustion; all so he could better understand and appreciate the reward of freedom when the lid was opened hours later.

"It was crazy," says Cohen, sitting in the comfort of his office at the Menare Foundation, located in the Water's House at Pleasant Fields in Germantown, Maryland. "It was horrible and exciting at the same time. I'm claustrophobic, and I forgot that until I got into the box."

Cohen had wanted to know how a runaway slave might feel during his escape; his imprisonment on Amtrak was just one small segment of an 80[illegible]-mile journey from Maryland to Canada. This particular adventure mimicked how Henry "Box" Brown escaped slavery 150 years earlier, when Samuel A. Smith boxed up Brown and mailed him from Richmond to Philadelphia.

At one point, two workers on the train used Cohen's crate as a seat. "I couldn't clear my throat, I couldn't sneeze, I couldn't move," he says. "It gave me a real sense of the fear that Brown had when he made his escape."

Cohen, born in 1964, was raised in Montgomery County, Maryland. His paternal great-grandfather was born during the Civil War and adopted by a Jewish family. In order to learn more about his family's history, Cohen researched his genealogy, and traced 10 different lineages, including one that dates back 500 years. He also found he might be a descendent of a runaway slave, Patrick Snead.

This project triggered an inter-

Anthony Cohen was inspired to found the Menare Foundation after completing a journey to Canada that traced the routes of escaped slaves when they made their escape from the South. The word "menare" was used as a passcode on the Underground Railroad. Arnold Gragston, a conductor, used it when meeting and transporting slaves from Kentucky across the Ohio River.

Photo by Christine Varner

est in history, which he later pursued as a major at American University. "For one of my classes, we had to research a part of history that wasn't really documented," he says. "I chose the Underground Railroad."

From that decision evolved two lengthy expeditions northward and a career. In college, he had "no idea I would be doing the things I'm doing today."

Cohen pursued the history of the Underground Railroad in Montgomery County by delving into books and archives, gathering information from museums, historic societies, Realtors, and post offices, finding and visiting old stations, and talking to anyone who may have any information or connection to the secret operation. What Cohen found was "there is a type of void in the information."

In 1996, he expanded his investigation. "There is only so much you can learn from books," Cohen says, noting, "This was the best way to find primary sources; talk to descendents and get a feel for what is was like." With this, the idea to follow an old route to Canada was born.

There were community fundraisers and local media coverage. The National Parks Conservation Association set up a website, which included his itinerary and routes he would follow. A private donor provided a cell phone.

"From Washington D.C. I used foot, boat, rail, horse and buggy; any methods that would have been used during the time of slavery," says Cohen. "No cars, no motorcycles."

His first night of lodging was pre-arranged, but for the rest of the journey he relied on people reaching out to him. "I got a couple who had seen me on TV and had started following in their car until they found me on the road," he says. They introduced themselves and told him they wanted to put him up for the night. Cohen explained he had to walk to their house; he couldn't accept a ride. The woman walked with Cohen to the house while her husband went ahead with the car. From then on, every night for the rest of the six-and-a-half weeks, except one night when he checked into a hotel in Rochester, New York, he had people putting him up the entire time. "Word of mouth, Internet, phone; it was like the Underground Railroad just unfolding," he recalls.

"No matter how inspiring the story of the Underground Railroad is, it's about survival. You go to places where history took place; that's where you capture the nuance."

—Anthony Cohen

A typical day in Cohen's journey involved covering between 10 and 25 miles, investigating safe houses and tunnels, reading through public records, and sometimes, lecturing for schools or organizations. From Sandy Spring, Maryland, through Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, Cohen followed various routes, trailing old maps, sites, and paths. They were as intricate as alleys from house to house within a town, and obvious thoroughfares such as a stagecoach route to Baltimore, a train line that Frederick Douglass had used to escape, and the Erie Canal towpath in northern New York.

While traveling through Pennsylvania, one of Cohen's stops was the Pine Forge Academy near Pottstown, which is run by Black Seventh Day Adventists. The campus sits on the former site of the Pine Forge; at the edge of campus is the old forge master's house. This was a safe house for escaped slaves traveling the Underground Railroad. "There is a place in the basement where bricks have been removed and there is actually a little tunnel that goes from the house to the center of campus to a little lid that lifts off," Cohen says, pointing out, "it's believed people, if the house was being searched, they could escape and get out."

Cohen also heard stories of racism at the academy. One student kept asking him if he had walked to the campus. She couldn't believe he walked through a small village that sits two to three miles outside of Pottstown.

Corn shucker at the Menare Foundation's plantation

Photo by Christine Varner

"She said, 'You didn't walk through there, did you?'" says Cohen. "I told her I did, and she said, 'Because that's where the Klan is.'" Cohen asked the students to explain, and that's when he heard different stories of racism.

One girl explained how she experienced prejudice while Christmas shopping. She placed a Santa Claus hat on her head, intending to buy it when she got done picking out some gifts. When she got to the counter, the cashier saw the hat on her head and called security. The student told Cohen the cashier said, "This nigger's trying to steal this hat." The police were summoned, but the girl was cleared. They understood she wasn't trying to steal the hat. Other students told of how they, too, were called "nigger" while in the store.

In another instance, some of the boys on campus were chased by cars and had racial slurs shouted at them. Cohen recalls hearing how every night all the buildings were locked down; it was the boys' responsibility to do this. Several times, he was told, there were cars with their lights out and engines running, parked on the service road that runs through campus. "When the boys would come to close up," says Cohen, "the cars would hit the gas and try to run the students down."

The students were laughing at these stories, and Cohen didn't understand why. "We know we're not 'niggers,'" they told him. They also explained they study hard, read the Bible, and know they are good people. "They said, 'We're not going to be distracted from our mission to get an education,'" says Cohen. "I thought that was pretty powerful."

For the most part, Cohen didn't experience racial hatred while making his journey. "We got one e-mail that said, 'Tell the Black guy to come to this address. We'll put him up for the night,'" says Cohen. "It wasn't signed by anybody, but it had an address. It just didn't seem healthy. That's one offer I didn't take up. The people who did this originally, I'm sure, faced worse," he says.

While he didn't experience much racial tension on his trip, he did run into other obstacles. Urban development had replaced forest and fields with shopping malls, highways, factories, and private properties. "Old routes I had mapped often dropped off or changed from their 19th century origins," he says. "I had to re-route often."

Sometimes progress reverses the effect on the original setting. Cohen explains that most people in the 19th century were ignorant of the environment and the damage they caused. Today, as more people are concerned, one finds restored green land and nature preserves where, in a slave's time, there was industry.

While traveling through Bird-in-Hand, Cohen met a Mennonite man who offered a ride by horse and buggy. "As a child, he knew his great-grandfather, a member of the River Brethren, who told him stories of transporting runaways," says Cohen. The man showed Cohen the route his great-grandfather took, which today connects Bird-In-Hand and Christiana.

Cohen reached Amherstburg, Ontario, six-and-a-half weeks after he first started walking, but understanding the cost of freedom overshadowed his sense of accomplishment. Like a slave who was fortunate enough to reach Canada, he was homesick, exhausted, and alone in a strange place. "No matter how inspiring the story of the Underground Railroad is, it's about survival," Cohen says. "You go to places where history took place; that's where you capture the nuance."

Two years later, Cohen was again walking an Underground Railroad trail, but this time he followed a more western corridor, starting in Mobile, Alabama, continuing through Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan to Windsor, Ontario. "A good, good portion we did on the Mississippi River,

Above left: The plantation house in the 1 plantation house today. When the restor serve as a living history farm that will h

a lot by land," he says. He spent 16 hours in a box when he smuggled himself from Memphis to Chicago.

At one point, his legs started cramping. "I either had to open the box and stretch my legs or scream," Cohen says. "Either way, I risked getting caught, but I had to do something." He chose to open the box and was lucky not to be discovered.

After arriving in Chicago, Cohen backtracked to Memphis

and continued the trip on foot.

By this time, Cohen's Menare Foundation, which works to document, preserve, and restore Underground Railroad safe houses and environments, was well under way. "Our work originated from the 1996 walk to Canada," says Cohen. "Once we started, I've never looked back."

In 1997, Cohen worked with Oprah Winfrey to help her prepare for her role of Sethe in *Beloved*, a movie based on Toni Morrison's book of the same name. For two days and nights,

0s before restoration began. Above: The on work is completed, the plantation will tours and educational programs.

she lived on a plantation and was given a taste of the hard life of a fugitive slave. After experiencing this, Winfrey was inspired to change the format of her show. "She was ready to call it quits with the show, but after this, she knew she couldn't give it up," says Cohen. "People had worked too hard in order for her to get where she was and she realized she couldn't just throw that away."

Currently, the foundation is restoring an old plantation in Seneca Creek State Park. Menare received a long-term lease through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Curatorship Program. In exchange for restoring the house and grounds, the foundation gets to use the premises rent-free.

Volunteers have been a big help in restoring the house. "People are excited to come and help," says Catrina Williams, director of development for the Menare Foundation. "The kids don't want to leave."

When Williams started with the foundation, she focused her talents on web design and research. "Since we started this project, I'm doing a lot more than just design and research," she says with a wry smile.

There are two fields for crops on the grounds; some deer make their way across with fawns on their heels. "Look at that," says Cohen. "That's beautiful."

Cohen explains that the 17-1/2 acre lot will be used to grow crops that were grown in the 19th century. "We're going to grow flax," says Cohen. "From that, we'll make all the interpreters' clothes. Nothing will be store bought." The other 22-1/2 acre lot will be used as a "market garden" and the products grown there will be sold to help finance the operation of the plantation.

"When people come, they'll till the fields with plows pulled by mules and horses. They'll harvest tobacco, corn, everything by hand, just the way it was done back then," he says. "We're going to have cows, chickens, sheep, goats, anything that would've been here at that time."

Williams notes that Montgomery County kept excellent agricultural records, and Cohen agrees. "We know who was planting what, when," he says. And with that information, the plantation will be as close to the real thing as possible.

Eventually, it will be a working farm, a piece of living history. "I'll be living here for the first year or so," says Cohen, "just to make sure everything is up and running smoothly." Besides Cohen, the interpreters who work there will also call the plantation house their home.

The foundation will hold demonstrations at the site, as well as host school groups and present educational programs. "This isn't going to be one of those museums where you can't touch anything. It's all going to be hands-on," says Cohen. "You get to play with stuff and get your hands dirty," he says.

Cohen plans to make a third trip in the spring and summer of 2004. His starting point this time is Savannah, Georgia, and he will attempt to follow the path of fugitive slave Patrick Snead to Canada. Snead left no record of his route to freedom, and Cohen knows it will be a challenge to document. "I'll be talking to white Sneads and black Sneads, and anyone else with a story, just to see what I can find out," he says.

Cohen has accomplished what few historians have been able to do—capture history as it transcends time. "History linked communities geographically," Cohen says. "History lives with people, basically in the heart and mind."

Until recently, the legacy of the Underground Railroad was largely overlooked. Station houses were left to decay. People and their stories were lost in the fog of history. Anthony Cohen has gone thousands of miles out of his way to recover what time has forgotten, and before he's done, he will have gone thousands of miles more. ■

[For further information on the Menare Foundation, visit its web site at www.menare.org or call 301-601-8700. Correspondence should be sent to: The Menare Foundation, 12535 Milestone Manor Lane, Germantown, MD, 20876.]

THE NORTH STAR.

RIGHT IS OF NO SEX—TRUTH IS OF NO COLOR—GOD IS THE FATHER OF US ALL, AND ALL WE ARE BRETHREN.

ROCHESTER, N. Y., FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 1848.

NO. 23.

WHOLE NO.—23.

Selections.

Communication.

PROGRESS OF POETRY.

ABOLITION'S NEWSPAPERS

Anti-slavery advocates appealed to the public through the media, but met resistance

by John Elliott and Christine Varner

The residents of Alton, Illinois, were furious. They surrounded the warehouse where the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy kept his printing press. With torches and guns, the men moved toward the building, determined to destroy Lovejoy and his press. On November 7, 1837, they succeeded. Lovejoy, a graduate of the Princeton University School of Theology, was dead at age 35.

Lovejoy's crusade began in 1833 when he began publishing the *St. Louis Observer*. Initially, his paper was devoted to Christian politics, but its focus changed after he witnessed the death of Francis J. McIntosh, a slave who was burned at the stake.

He became an ardent supporter of abolition, and his harsh editorials made him an enemy of slaveholders and their supporters. Enraged citizens believed the rights of free speech didn't extend to those who challenged the public peace.

Anti-abolitionist committees had been formed to stop Lovejoy; in July 1836, a mob destroyed his first press. "What a comment on the freedoms of our institutions!" he wrote in a letter to his brother dated July 30, 1836. "Though cast down, I am not destroyed, nor in the least discouraged; and am now busily engaged in endeavouring to make arrangements for starting the 'Observer' again," wrote Lovejoy. Fearing further violence, he moved to Alton, Illinois, and continued publishing the *Observer*.

Soon, the citizens of Alton turned on him. The warehouse containing his press was attacked several times; each time Lovejoy replaced a press, the mob came back and destroyed it, but he refused to be silenced.

In 1837, after his fourth printing press arrived, a mob again descended on the warehouse. In an attempt to burn Lovejoy and his supporters out of the building, the mob tried to set fire to the roof. This attempt was thwarted when Lovejoy and Royal Weller, one of his supporters crept out of the building, pushed over the mob's ladder, and ran back inside. The mob again attempted to light the roof on fire; Lovejoy and Weller again tried to knock over the ladder, but this time they were spotted and the mob fired upon them. Both Weller and Lovejoy were wounded; Lovejoy was shot five times. Weller survived; Lovejoy made it to the second floor before he died. Lovejoy's supporters had no choice but to abandon the building. The mob rushed in, seized the press, and threw it out the window, smashing it.

Fearing further violence, Lovejoy's supporters didn't retrieve his body until the next day. His funeral wagon was jeered as it made its way toward his house, according to the *Alton Observer*.

Following his death, churches began

supporting the abolitionist movement. Today, Lovejoy is regarded as the first martyr for both freedom of the press and the abolition of slavery.

Lovejoy, and other abolitionists, realized newspapers were a weapon in the war against slavery.

"These newspapers were started as a reform movement in the North and were made to expose the ills of the society and to make a change," says Dr. Jeffrey Davis, associate professor of history at Bloomsburg University.

Some people reacted negatively to Black papers, explains Dr. Walter Howard, associate professor of history at Bloomsburg University, adding that many abolitionist writers, especially Whites, were scorned by their communities and considered outcasts. Opposition was great in the North, where some felt that compromise was needed to deal with the issue of slavery. By the mid-1830s, newspapers in the South didn't even report on abolitionist issues. Some states made it a capital offense for editors to write about slavery, and in some places, people faced imprisonment for reading an abolitionist paper.

"I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard."

—William Lloyd Garrison

The Rev. Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm started the first Black-owned and operated newspaper in 1827, *Freedom's Journal*. In the first issue, Cornish and Russwurm declared, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentation in things that concern us dearly." The paper featured stories about successful Blacks and was the first newspaper that listed marriage, birth, and death announcements. While the life of *Freedom's Journal* was only two years, it inspired others to start abolitionist papers. By the start of the Civil War, over 40 such papers were being published.

On January 1, 1831, William Lloyd Garrison, a White abolitionist, published the first issue of *The Liberator*. He believed Blacks were the equals of Whites and worked to provide freed slaves with the means to return to Africa if they wished.

The Liberator's circulation averaged 1,500, but sometimes ran as high as 3,000. Garrison became known as one of the most radical abolitionists. "Garrison had the power to reach intellectuals and higher thinkers since he was White and expressing his views to a different class," Davis says.

During the Jackson administration (1829-1837), *The Liberator* was censored in the South. Each paper that crossed into the South was considered to have committed a libel, according to U.S. Postal regulations.

Through words, Garrison fought for the rights of slaves and free Blacks and supported women's rights. At one point, Garrison even burned a copy of the Constitution to protest slavery. *The Liberator* was published for three decades.

Perhaps the most famous abolitionist newspaper was *The North Star*. Founded in 1847 by Frederick Douglass, a former slave, *The North Star* influenced Whites and Blacks alike to join the anti-slavery movement.

Douglass originally worked with Garrison on *The Liberator* until they fell into a disagreement. Douglass believed the Constitution could be used to fight slavery, and Garrison, who believed the Constitution supported slavery, felt betrayed. Garrison attacked Douglass in an article in *The Liberator*; Douglass retaliated by starting his own paper and the two never reconciled.

The first issue of *The North Star* opened with a dedication to his fellow Blacks: "To Our Oppressed Countrymen: We solemnly dedicate The North Star to the cause of our long oppressed and plundered fellow countrymen."

Douglass exposed the horrors inflicted upon the Blacks and brought the secrets of White men to light. He sought to explain the destructiveness of slavery's injustice to all people. In *The North Star*, he wrote, "What you suffer, we suffer; what you endure; we endure. We are indissolubly united, and must fall or flourish together."

While his peers and friends praised *The North Star*, the rest of society was disturbed to find a paper edited and written by an ex-slave. They didn't believe a slave knew how to read and write, and this incensed many because the education of Blacks was illegal.

The paper was popular, but production costs were high; Douglass often used

"We wish to plead
others spoken for
been deceived by
concern us dearly

his own savings to fund the paper. In 1851, financial hardships led him to merge papers with Gerrit Smith. The newspaper was renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, and gave Blacks hope by displaying the skills of Black writers, highlighting the achievements of other Blacks, and providing information about abolitionist rallies and meetings.

"While the Right of Suffrage is conceded to thousands notoriously ignorant, vicious and drunken [Whites] a Constitutional denial to Black men, of Political Rights freely secured to White men is monstrously unjust."

—Horace Greeley

The paper was published weekly until 1860, when it became a monthly for three years.

"Douglass' ongoing battle against slavery made him one of the most powerful abolitionists during that time," Davis says.

James G. Birney, a former slave-holder turned abolitionist, founded the *Philanthropist* in January 1836. Prior to publishing the paper, he freed his slaves in 1834 and became vice-president of the American Anti-Slavery Society. He was ostracized in Kentucky; his anti-slavery writings were kept from the mail and he had a difficult time finding a printer for the *Philanthropist*. Frustrated, he moved to Cincinnati. Despite opposition, the *Philanthropist* became highly influential in the Northwest.

Horace Greeley, editor and publisher of *The New York Tribune*, used his position to speak out against slavery and was an advocate for women's suffrage and workers' rights. *The Tribune* was the most influential American newspaper during the antebellum and Civil War eras. Greeley's forceful editorials and public speeches were one of the main reasons why Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

Men dominated many of the abolitionist papers, but women also had a voice. Mary Ann Shadd Cary fled to Canada after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, where she became the first female newspaper editor while working for *The Provincial Freeman*. She attacked many of the Black churches in the United States and Canada for supporting slavery and urged Blacks to move to Canada.

At the start of the Civil War, Cary came back to the United States and recruited Blacks for the Union army. She established a school for Blacks in Washington, D.C. In 1870, she graduated from Howard University with a degree in law, making her the first female Black lawyer in the United States.

These abolitionist newspapers angered many, but at the same time showed the positive things Blacks were doing for the world, gave Blacks motivation, and worked to change views of the Whites. The cause for liberation created an environment favorable to free expression. This served to preview, and perhaps to inspire, social reforms in the future, and to prove that free expression as a means of fighting for justice benefits all people. ■

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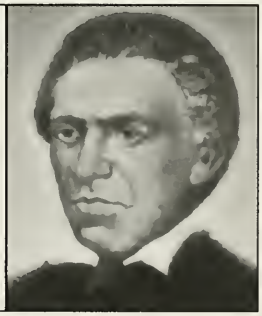
—John Russwurm



[Contributing to this article was Rosalie Yurasits. For further information, see My Bondage and My Freedom *by Frederick Douglas,* John Brown Russwurm: The Story of Freedom's Journal, Freedom's Journey *by Mary Sagarin,* I Will Be Heard: the Life of William Lloyd Garrison *by Doris Faber, and* Horace Greely and the Republican Party *by Jeter Allen Isely.]*

Contemporary Voices

African-American publications emphasize Black interests

by Michelle Johnson Sorber

Newspapers, just as in the antebellum era, are an essential part of the Black community. Those historical papers came into existence to denounce slavery as well as to give Black journalists, who were denied work on White-owned established newspapers, a place to practice their craft. Today, a half-century after the Supreme Court ordered desegregation, only 60 percent of all established newsrooms have at least one Black reporter, according to a survey conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Today Black newspapers exist to communicate current news through the eyes of the average African-American. "We just want to make sure Blacks get our piece of the pie," says Ulish Carter, managing editor of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Four Black publications circulate in Pennsylvania—the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, *The Black Suburban Journal*, and *The Lincolnian*. *The New Pittsburgh Courier* and *Philadelphia Tribune* were created to inform and educate Blacks on their rights; today they continue to support those civil liberties. We just want to "inform the African-American community of what's going on," says Carter.

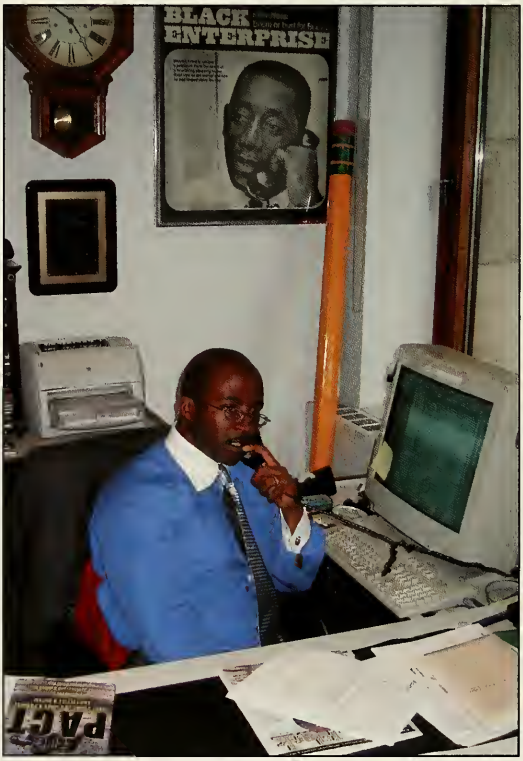


Photo by Adrew Wadium

Alfred A. Edmond Jr. is editor-in-chief of Black Enterprise, *one of the most successful magazines in the country.*

With a readership of 4.8 million there are 222 Black newspapers in the National Newspaper Publishers Association. "In the founding years of the paper [we] had to deal with 'overt raw racism'," says Irv Randolf, managing editor of the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

The two largest of Pennsylvania's Black newspapers concentrate on issues that directly affect Blacks, including culture, racism, government, business, education, police, entertainment, sports, the job market, and city business. "We cover [things] from an African-American perspective," says Randolf, "like how a presidential candidate can affect our community."

While both agree their local papers report on Black issues, those stories often aren't front-page news. The articles on the second or third pages of the Black newspapers usually end up at the back of local White newspapers, if at all. The local general circulation paper's yearly coverage of Black life is concentrated in Black History Month, says Randolf, while the Black newspapers "pay that much attention to the Black community all year long," Randolf says. "It's a difference in emphasis. We give [Black issues] more detail."

One of those special details is featured in the Sunday Edition of the *Philadelphia Tribune*. Of the African-American newspapers nationwide, the *Tribune* is the only one to produce a Sunday as

well as a daily edition. In each week's Sunday edition one African country is featured. Africa is mentioned by the other papers, says Randolf, "is in casualty figures."

The *New Pittburgh Courier* has also been instrumental for Black rights. Wendell Smith, who became the paper's sportswriter in 1938, used his column to denounce segregation in the major leagues. The *Courier* led the fight to get Blacks, like Jackie Robinson, into Major League Baseball, says Carter.

Black magazines also play a major part in communicating Black issues to their audience. The first Black magazine was published by W.E.B DuBois, who founded and edited *The Crisis* in 1910 as the voice of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1945 John Johnson founded *Ebony*, similar to *LIFE* but for the Black community. About the same time he also introduced *Jet*, a pocket-sized magazine containing similar articles and photographs to those in *Ebony*.

Edward Lewis launched *Essence* in 1970, aimed at Black women. Soon after, *Emerge*, which focused on college-educated Blacks began publication. Also in 1970, *Black Enterprise* was established. Today it is the leading magazine concentrating on Black business. "We focus on entrepreneurship, personal finance, career corporate success, and wealth building," says Alfred A. Edmond Jr., senior vice-president/editor-in-chief.

Edmond attributes the success of the magazine to Black Americans drive for knowledge. "African-Americans are hungry for the same thing [as whites]," he says.

With a circulation of half a million, *Black Enterprise* has proven itself as a valuable source for Black information. In November 2003, *Black Enterprise* along with Center City Productions, launched a television show called the "Black Entertainment Report."

The *Philadelphia Tribune*, the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Black Suburban Journal*, and the *Lincolnian* as well as almost 220 other newspapers and dozens of magazines continue the tradition first begun in 1827 by *Freedom's Journal*. ■

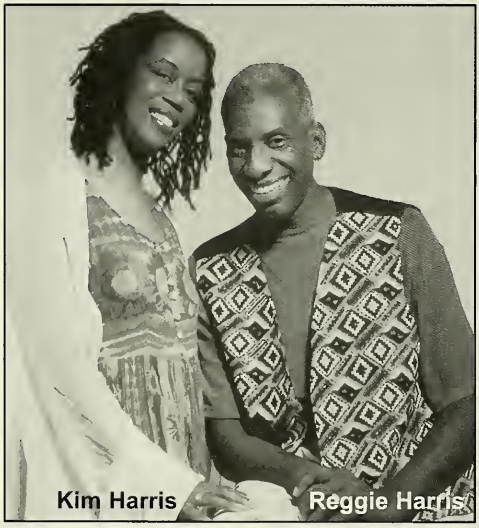
[Contributing to this article was Beth Krysztoforski.]

SING ALONG!

Kim and Reggie Harris use music and theater to tell the stories of the Underground Railroad

By Christine Varner

When Kim and Reggie Harris take the stage, people pay attention. Through songs and stories, the Harrises bring to life the saga of the Underground Railroad.



Born and raised in Philadelphia, the Harrises met in 1974 at summer camp and sharpened their musical skills at Temple University where they both were enrolled. They performed in coffeehouses, clubs, and other venues in the Philadelphia area; in 1976 they married and took their show on the road.

In 1982, the Harrises were asked to present an assembly for some schools in Philadelphia. They chose the Underground Railroad. "At that time, there was no way to know that our half-hour presentation of songs and stories would so greatly influence our lives and uncover such a vibrant treasure of material," says Reggie Harris.

In 1984, they released their first recording, *Music and the Underground Railroad*. The Harrises expanded on that first recording in 1998, and released *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*. "[These] songs reveal the hope, power, and ingenuity of an enslaved people who used their traditions, passion, and resources to express their faith, strengthen their relationships, and communicate important information that led many of them to freedom," the Harrises state in the album notes.

Recently, the Harrises completed the one-act opera *Friends of Freedom: An Underground Railroad Story*. The opera is based on life experiences and historical facts encompassing the Underground Railroad and the people who made such an operation possible and is available for production to opera companies.

In the past ten years, the Harrises have averaged over 300 shows per year. Their presentation "Music and the Underground Railroad" has taken them across the country and has won critical acclaim. They have performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., the Boston Folk Festival, the Keswick Theater near Philadelphia, and at hundreds of schools across the nation, where they entertain, enlighten, and inform audiences.

Besides their show about the Underground Railroad, the Harrises perform other programs, including "Dream Alive! A Celebration of Black History," which tells the stories of well-known Black historical figures such as Harriet Tubman and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as other Blacks who have worked for equality and justice.

Through song, poetry, and stories, they convey the story of the Underground Railroad and the struggle for Civil Rights in a unique fashion that leaves audiences with an experience they will not soon forget. ■

[For more information, call VNI Entertainment at (303) 814-1500 or visit the website www.kimandreggie.com].

SLAVERY'S VIRTUAL TOUR

by Michelle Johnson Sorber

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, overlooking the Ohio River in Cincinnati, will open in the summer 2004. With five permanent exhibits, the Freedom Center hopes to "educate the public about the historical struggle to abolish human enslavement and secure freedom for all people," according to Steve DeVillez, public relations coordinator.

Exhibits will take visitors on a journey of freedom, examining the conditions of slavery, abolitionists, and slave owners. The site will also take them on a virtual journey of escaping slaves fleeing to Canada, the "warehouses" used to house them before their trips further south, and the evolution of slavery and the journey to freedom from the pre-colonial period through the Civil War.

Also included in the tour is the impact of the international slave trade, following the journey of a slave seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad, the people involved in the abolitionist movement, and the continuation of racism after the abolition of slavery.

With the journey behind you the Freedom Center hopes you leave, "feeling uplifted and feeling [your] voice[s] does make a difference," says DeVillez.■

[Contributing to the story was Christine Varner. For more information visit the Freedom Center's website at: www.undergroundrailroad.org]

Her name was William

She was a soldier with a secret who enlisted in the army to make her own way in the world

by Nick Vargas

While enlisted in the United States Army, William Cathay carried within him a deep secret. Like the rest of his comrades in Company A, 38th United States Infantry, he awoke each morning at the sound of the bugle, carried his musket over his shoulder, marched in unison with his fellow soldiers and performed garrison duty. It was only his secret that made him different. William Cathay was actually Cathay Williams, the first documented African-American woman to serve in the United States Army.

Williams was born in a small cabin in 1844. "[M]y father was a free man but my mother a slave [and] I was born near Independence, Jackson County, Missouri," Williams said. Little else is known of her parents.

William Johnson, a wealthy plantation owner, owned Williams. At a young age, the Johnson family moved her from the plantation to their home in Jefferson City, Missouri. She described her-

self as the family's "house girl." At some point before the Civil War, William Johnson died.

In the summer of 1861, Union soldiers occupied Jefferson City and deemed Williams a free woman. A few months later however, she was forced to become a civilian worker for the 8th Indiana Union soldiers in Little Rock, Arkansas. "I did not want to go," she later said, revealing that [Colonel Thomas Benton] "wanted me to cook for the officers, but I had always been a house girl and did not know how to cook." She learned quickly and was present at numerous battles, including the Battle at Pea Ridge.

As her unit moved into parts of Arkansas and Louisiana, she watched the soldiers burn cotton fields and was in Shreveport when the Union captured Confederate gunboats and burned them on the Red River. After more than two years with the 8th Indiana, Williams was assigned to work for Gen. Phil Sheridan at Army headquarters in Shenandoah, according to historian Philip Tucker, author of *Cathy Williams: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier*. When Sheridan raided the Shenandoah Valley, Williams was the cook and washperson for his staff.

"By this time, she had become thoroughly militarized as a person. After her years of faithful service, Cathay was almost completely acclimated to military life as any hardened veteran in the ranks," Tucker wrote. "Plenty of good reasons existed to explain such a transformation since she had been first forced into service during the fall of 1861. One of the foremost of these was that military service was better than the life she had experienced under slavery," wrote Tucker.

On November 15, 1866, Williams, disguised as a man named William Cathay, enlisted in the Army at St. Louis and joined the 38th U.S. Infantry, Company A, commanded by Capt. Charles E. Clarke. According to the *St. Louis Daily Times* of Jan. 2, 1876, Williams said, "The regiment I joined wore the Zouave uniform and only two persons, a cousin and a particular friend, members of the regiment, knew that I was a woman. They never 'blowed' on me. They were partly the cause of my joining the army. Another reason was I wanted to make my own living and not be dependent on relations or friends." By signing her enlistment papers, Cathay Williams became the first female Buffalo Soldier. Today's military checks the background and medial history of all soldiers. Medical checks were not required at the time of Cathay's enlistment, according to Spc. Oneasha R. Sublett at Fort Belvoir battalion headquarters, in Fairfax, Virgina.

Civil War cannon balls

Cathay stood 5-foot-9 and was 22 years old at her enlistment. She was described by the examining surgeon as a man with black complexion, black eyes, and black hair. If the surgeon or recruiting officer found out Williams was a woman, they kept it to themselves. Because of the consequences of falsifying military documents, it is unlikely they knew the truth.

There is no record of Williams ever facing direct combat, but she apparently was a good soldier. "I was never put in the guard house; no bayonet was ever put to my back. I carried my musket and did guard and other duties while in the army," said Williams in her interview with the *St. Louis Daily Times*. Not only did she guard railroads and perform garrison duty, she also trudged through marches, including a 540-mile hike between Fort Harker, Kansas, and Fort Union, New Mexico. Because Williams wasn't singled out in the documented muster roles, she probably endured the marches as well as any man in her unit.

Williams was medically discharged on August 14, 1868. "Finally I got tired and wanted to get off. I played sick, complained of pains in my side, and rheumatism in my knees," she told the *St. Louis Daily Times*. "The post surgeon," she notes, "found out I was a woman and I got my discharge." At the time of her discharge, she had served two years of her initial three-year enlistment.

She later moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where she made a living by cooking and washing clothes. She married, but her husband robbed her and left with her horses and wagon. She had him arrested, then moved to Las Animas, Colorado. She worked as a laundress for a year before she moved to Trinidad, Colorado. The 1900 federal census for Trinidad doesn't list her. She may have left Trinidad or died prior to the arrival of the census-takers.

"On her own and defying convention, Cathay Williams shattered stereotypes of both sex and race while embracing a sense of both adventure and patriotism," wrote Tucker. Williams was not trying to make a point; she was merely trying to make a living. She survived the life of a man, and carved a place for herself in American history. ■

[Contributing to this article was Beth Roberts. For further information on Cathay Williams, read Cathy Williams: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier, *by Philip Tucker.]*

Sculpting Her Future

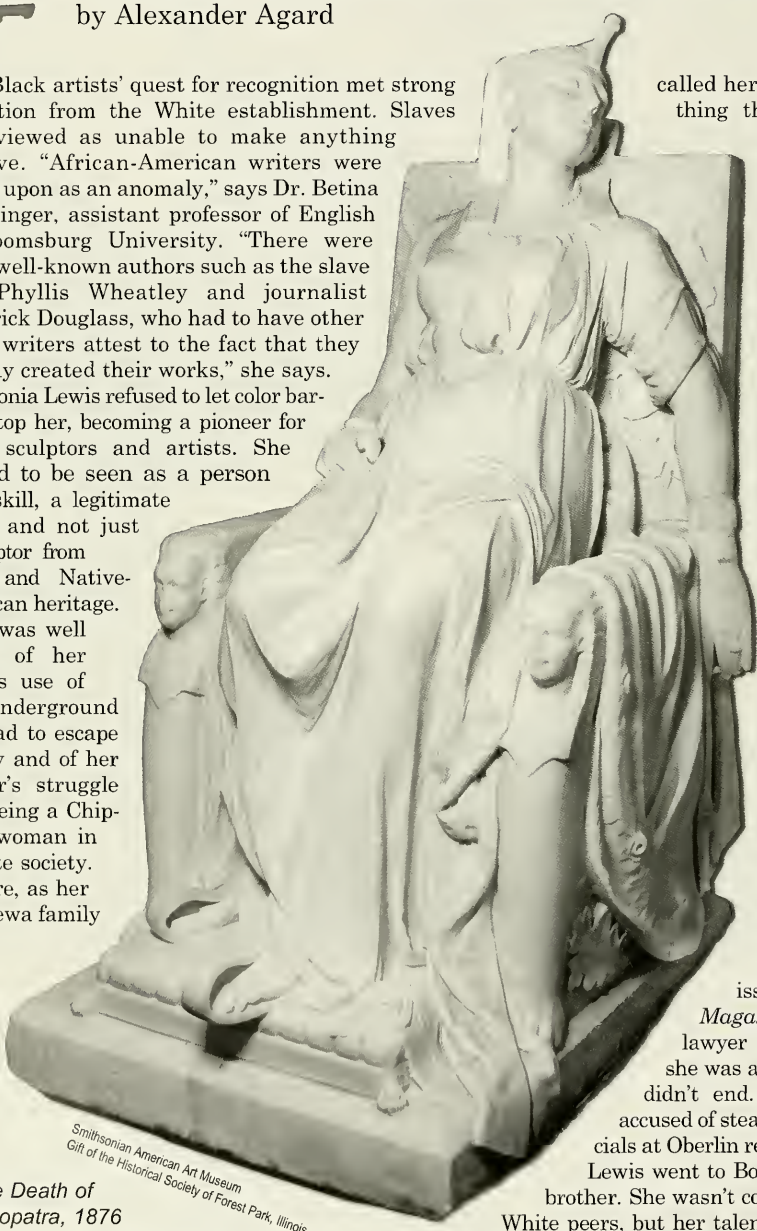
Edmonia Lewis overcame color barriers to prove herself as an artist

by Alexander Agard

The Black artists' quest for recognition met strong opposition from the White establishment. Slaves were viewed as unable to make anything creative. "African-American writers were looked upon as an anomaly," says Dr. Betina Entzminger, assistant professor of English at Bloomsburg University. "There were many well-known authors such as the slave poet Phyllis Wheatley and journalist Frederick Douglass, who had to have other White writers attest to the fact that they actually created their works," she says.

Edmonia Lewis refused to let color barriers stop her, becoming a pioneer for Black sculptors and artists. She desired to be seen as a person with skill, a legitimate artist, and not just a sculptor from Black and Native-American heritage.

She was well aware of her father's use of the Underground Railroad to escape slavery and of her mother's struggle with being a Chippewa woman in a White society. Wildfire, as her Chippewa family called her, needed an outlet, something that was colorblind and didn't remind her of the struggle.



Smithsonian American Art Museum
Gift of the Historical Society of Forest Park, Illinois

The Death of Cleopatra, 1876
Sculpted by Edmonia Lewis

The decision to become an artist was met with hesitation. Even those who believed in her thought her dream was impossible. Lewis confided in the Rev. Highland Garnet who, according to the *New York Times* of Dec. 29, 1878, told the young girl, "God bless you my little one; it is better to fail grandly than to succeed in a little way!"

Taking Garnet's advice, with financial help from her brother, she enrolled at Oberlin College in Ohio in 1859.

However, her time at Oberlin would be short. "Trouble came when she was accused of poisoning two White classmates. Awaiting the arraignment, she was abducted by a white mob and brutally beaten," wrote Stephen May in the September 1996 issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. With the help of lawyer John Mercer Langston, she was acquitted, but her troubles didn't end. A year later she was accused of stealing art supplies, and officials at Oberlin refused to let her graduate. Lewis went to Boston at the urging of her brother. She wasn't considered as gifted as her White peers, but her talent was undeniable. There she met abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Alfred T. Morris, Sr.

Poor Cupid, 1876
Sculpted by Edmonia Lewis

asked him for help. According to the *New York Times*, Lewis "asked for some clay and modeled a baby's foot for him." Garrison was impressed with her talent and arranged for her to study under sculptor Edward A. Brackett.

Lewis' first recognizable work came upon the death of Robert Gould Shaw, a White colonel in the Union army who led the all-Black 54th Massachusetts Regiment. She made a bust of Col. Shaw from memory, selling the plaster reproductions and using the funds to help Black soldiers.

With the money she earned from sales of Shaw's bust and assistance from White families, Lewis traveled to Rome and studied with other artists and sculptors. Rome was one of many European cities of choice for artists, especially Black artists trying to escape the racial hatred in America after the Civil War.

"I was practically driven to Rome in order to obtain the opportunities for art culture, and to find a social atmosphere where I was not constantly reminded of my color," Lewis told the *New York Times*. "The land of liberty had no room for a colored sculptor."

Rome offered her freedom and equality. There, she was judged on her merit and not on her race. "They treat me kindly here," she told the *Times*, "but it is with a kind of reservation." She wanted to do other things without the scrutiny of the uncompromising eye of racism. "I like to see the opera, and I don't like to pointed out as a Negress," she said.

Lewis achieved some claim in America; her biggest recognition came at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. In her interview with the *New York Times*, she described the art panel scrutinizing her work. "They opened the box . . . and then I heard the order given to place it in such and such a position." Being accepted brought Lewis to tears following years of struggle.

"Starting with Edmonia Lewis, a succession of Negro women sculptresses has graced the American art scene," wrote Allan Morrison in the August 1966 issue of *Ebony Magazine*. "In contributing to the arts, these women have spoken for the entire Negro race. Theirs is a contribution far greater than any words could ever convey."

Many details of Lewis's life remain unclear. The time, location and cause of her death remain a mystery. What is clear is that Lewis was a trailblazer for both Blacks and women. Through her struggle, Lewis not only achieved her dream but also helped countless others take a step toward theirs. ■

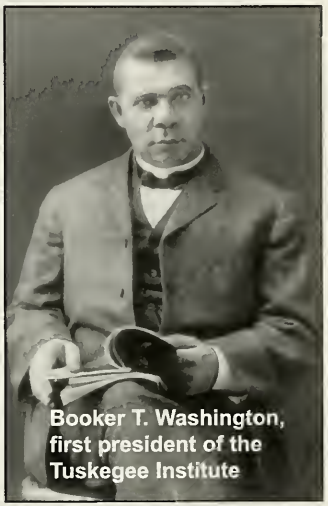
[Some of Lewis's works can be seen at the National Museum of American Art and Howard University Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and at Oberlin College in Ohio.]

Unlawful Minds

State policies denied education to enslaved and free Blacks

by Jonathan Gass

Blacks could be beaten and whipped for attempting to learn to read during the nineteenth century. White teachers could be fined or imprisoned. Dedicated educators instructed Blacks only in secret meetings, usually at odd hours, in an effort to escape detection of their illegal actions. Quaker Prudence Crandall won a court appeal to establish a school for Black girls in free Connecticut, but White mobs threatened her as well as her students until the school was shut down.



Booker T. Washington, first president of the Tuskegee Institute

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-USZ62-49568

Such resistance to educating Blacks was not unusual. Slaves were regarded as chattel, and unworthy of education in the 1800s. William Goodell in his 1853 study of the American slave code, wrote on education that the government "takes care to forbid it, as being inconsistent with the condition of chattelhood." A South Carolina law from 1740 explained, "suffering [slaves] to be employed in writing may be attended with great inconveniences."

These inconveniences included the threat of insurrection by slaves made aware of their basic human rights.

"The point is obvious. The true bondage was mental enslavement," says Dr. S. Ekema Agbaw, professor of English and director of the Frederick Douglass Institute at Bloomsburg University. A large population of ignorant slaves was more easily kept in bondage, he explains.

Free Blacks were included in the prohibition. A Georgia law of 1829 declared that teachers of free Blacks were to be fined or imprisoned, and the students to be flogged or fined at the discretion of the court. Similar statutes were passed in other Southern states. Slavery was not only about maintaining the physical service of field hands, Agbaw says.

Several institutions were established in an effort to provide Blacks with appropriate educations. While schools such as the Tuskegee Institute, initially under the direction of former slave Booker T. Washington, provided Blacks with vocational training, they were not as well-supported or respected as White institutions. Many of the institutions were established in an effort to keep Blacks segregated out of White schools.

The mental enslavement of Blacks continued under the guise of segregation until the 1950s in an attempt to prove "the superiority of one race," Agbaw says.

Substandard schooling still leads to some people's perception of the inferiority of Blacks, Agbaw says. Inner-city schools with limited funding lead to underachievement. Cyclical arguments rationalize the neglect of underachieving schools. Schools "need equitable funding or inequities will continue. Unequal funding leads to unequal education which leads to unequal opportunity," says Agbaw.

Traditionally-Black universities, such as Howard and Lincoln, established in the 1800s to provide Blacks with the opportunity to gain employment and opportunity along with their freedom, have suffered recently, he says. These prestigious institutions have produced great minds. Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison attended Howard University; Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Agbaw says these colleges' reputations have diminished as top-tier Black students have been lured from traditionally-Black schools to Ivy League institutions.

Cheyney University, founded by Quakers in 1837 to provide free Blacks with educational opportunities, has also suffered. The university, part of the State System of Higher Education, remains largely segregated, with a 94.45 percent Black student body. Whites "don't want to go there," Agbaw explains.

More effort must be made to equalize funding. "The vast majority don't understand the problem," Agbaw says. "It's a vicious cycle. Less funding leads to less performance." ■

"A Little SHOUT Now!"

The cornerstone of Mary Edgar AME church is now kept in Columbia County Historical Society.

Mary Edgar African Methodist Episcopal Church, located at 155 W. First St., the only Black church in Columbia County, was demolished in 1980.

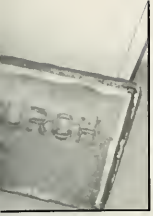


Photo by Johnetta Clarke

Faith provided comfort and strength to oppressed Blacks

by Johnetta Clarke

A pitcher of ice water rests on the podium as the minister presents his sermon to the congregation. Sweat falls from his face while members in the Goodwin Memorial Baptist Church, Harrisburg, give way to the holy spirit as it captures them. Members praise Jesus while speaking in "tongues," as people feeling close to God.

"As a child I didn't know what the people were saying," says member Brandon Thompson, noting "my nana just told me to watch the spirit take over their body." Although few Black or White churches speak in tongues today, most Black congregations do speak out during services.

Ministers in Black churches usually have dedicated congregations who yell and praise God. They are jubilant, excited, and they talk back to the preacher when praising the Lord. The sermon usually relates to their life through a story or event that probably occurred recently. It's like a call and response. If the preacher says, "Can I get a witness?" the typical response would be "Yes!" "Praise the Lord!" or "Amen!" In most Black churches a pianist or organist with the accompaniment of drums or congas will play "shout music," fast paced music in which people move in the way they believe the Holy Spirit leads them. The rock song "Shout!" had its base in the Black churches.

Gospel music is the pure essence of expression; it has evolved since the days of the spirituals. Negro Spirituals were religious songs sung by Blacks during days of enslavement. Spirituals originally started with enslaved Africans singing songs that they made up using verses from the Bible that they heard in church. When listening to spirituals members say they can hear the pain and strength in the voice, the seriousness and passion that consumes their spirit.

Gospel music has influenced blues and jazz. In the early 1900s, blues and jazz then began to further influence gospel music. The rhythms of ragtime firmly entered many of the church performers' approach to existing and newer songs. Some traveling preachers began to harmonize with guitars and the pianos.

The early roots of gospel lead to some of the contemporary music heard today. "Modern music lovers, especially the younger audiences, require more 'bounce and groove'," says Phil Petrie, managing editor of *Gospel Today* magazine. "It seems that many [modern music lovers] are moved by urban contemporary sounds while others [younger audiences], stomp to hip-hop," he says.

The church historically was an important part of Black life. It gave them a place to participate in the social, economic, and political aspects of the community. And, it gave them a place to keep a part of their religious and cultural heritage. Most churches, South and North, from antebellum and decades after Emancipation, refused to allow Blacks to worship in their White congregations. Philadelphia and Lancaster were two of the first places where freed Blacks could attend church.

Richard Allen, a former slave and leader of the Philadelphia Black community, founded Mother Bethel AME in Philadelphia in 1787. Little Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, founded in 1818, was one of the first AME churches for Blacks. "Little Bethel was started in the North back when slaves were having church in other people's homes," says Addie Lee Jones, a current member of Little Bethel AME Church in Cairo, Georgia. "History tells us that a minister from up North came down South and preached encouragement to the slaves and Little Bethel has been making history since," she says. It was also a stop on the Underground Railroad.

"Slaves weren't allowed to be taught," says Dr. Gene Gordon, a lay minister of First Presbyterian Church in Shamokin. "Some churches allowed slaves to go to their church but they had to sit in the back," he says. Gordon tells about a grandmother who never

Photo courtesy of the Columbia County Historical Society

wanted to hear anybody read anything written by the Apostle Paul. When the minister preached he always said "Servants, be subject to your master's with all fear," which comes from I Peter 2:18.

Often, White ministers gave sermons and sometimes it was taken as a way to mentally brainwash the enslaved African. "Whiter than snow" is what the southern White minister would preach, indicating people are all born into sin but will be made whiter than snow and all sins will be forgiven once they step into those pearly gates. Enslaved Africans thought they were sinful because they were Black. They also believed they would be free if they were baptized and accepted Jesus into their life.

On May 19, 1868, Robert Cathcart and his wife, along with numerous others, bought land in Columbia County. In 1870, after having settled into their new home, Cathcart, with the help of friends and Bloomsburg ministers, built the first Black church in Bloomsburg, Mary Edgar African Methodist Episcopal Church, named after a woman who helped support the church. The church was located at 155 West First Street near the north side of Jefferson Street. The first pastor was the Rev. John Henson, a former slave. He received help from other churches in the area to enable his congregation to reside in the original building, a one-story, tin and wood structure with three bays. There is a local legend that says the White ministers were eager to help the Blacks build and finance their own church so they would not integrate White services.

"My great-grandfather went to that church," says Trudi Norce, an employee of Columbia County Registry Recorder of Deeds and Wills. "He was White, but a lot of his friends went there," she says. "He had businesses over there, so they always went to that church."

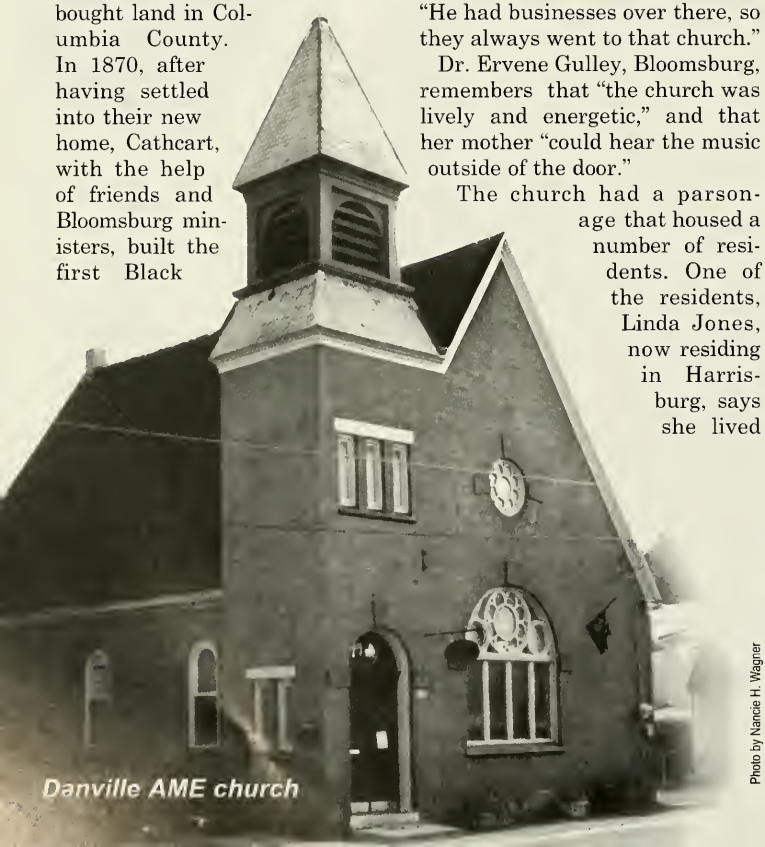
Dr. Ervene Gulley, Bloomsburg, remembers that "the church was lively and energetic," and that her mother "could hear the music outside of the door."

The church had a parsonage that housed a number of residents. One of the residents, Linda Jones, now residing in Harrisburg, says she lived there most of her life. "My mother would get the church ready for the minister that day and I remember setting out the communion cups and everything. I stayed at the church most of my life," recalls Jones. Assimilation of the few Black families into the town's White churches led to the financial demise of the AME church. The land was bought by the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings (PAB) Project, made possible by a grant from the William Penn Foundation. Demolition of the church began on November 10, 1980. Hawthorne Heights Townhouses, a housing project for low-income families, now occupies the area.

Danville, in Montour County, also had an AME church. This church also helped support the pastor that went to AME church in Bloomsburg. On December 19, 1911, William H. James of Berwick purchased the land, a corner on the south side of Walnut Street, then erected a brick building. At that time the Immanuel Baptist Church stood there, which later became AME Church of Danville on April 10, 1914.

"I never went to the AME church, but I do recall it being segregated," says Jeff Willoughby, Danville. "As a child I remember asking my mother if we could go to that church, and she said that the church was for Negroes," he recalls. "I didn't really understand what that meant since I was so young," he says. One of the early pastors was Rev. W. T. Watson. The church held bazaars, fairs, and other forms of entertainment to help raise money.

"In 1875 there were 200 Negroes in Danville. [By] 1936 there were only nine families," wrote Robert Phillip Bomboy, author of *Danville: The Bicentennial History*. "Industries brought Negroes to Danville, but always



Danville AME church

Photo by Nancie H. Wagner

Dr. Gene Gordon is the commissioned lay pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Shamokin, and also a member of the First Presbyterian Church, Bloomsburg, both predominately White churches. Dr. Gordon, who grew up and worshipped in a Black Church in Brooklyn, says that the absence of Black churches in the region is because there are few Blacks in the area.

after the boom they moved away," he pointed out.

The church was located at 118 Walnut Street. The church was sold by president, Rev. Arthur L. Maura on September 12, 1990 for $12,500. Nancie H. Wagner, owner/instructor of Studio Brick for the finer arts, the building known for its silhouettes, bought the land and has been open since November 15, 1990.

Black churches had been a safe haven during enslavement; more than a century later, they created the foundation during much of the Civil Rights movement, with Black preachers playing critical roles to energize Blacks and Whites to seek social justice. Ministers were regarded as forces that acted upon the mass consensus of their congregations. However, the Black working class provided the real leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

"The church, during the Civil Rights movement is similar to the South when slavery was a part of America; the only thing that slaves had was God," says Presiding Elder Kristopher T. Halsey of the Unity Temple Worship Center, Philadelphia, "so they would have meeting places, and hum or sing songs that only they knew, which would keep their minds off of what they were going through." The role of leadership in Black churches was a natural extension of their structure and function. The Black church served not only as a place of worship, but also as a community to solve disputes, a support group, and a center of political activism.

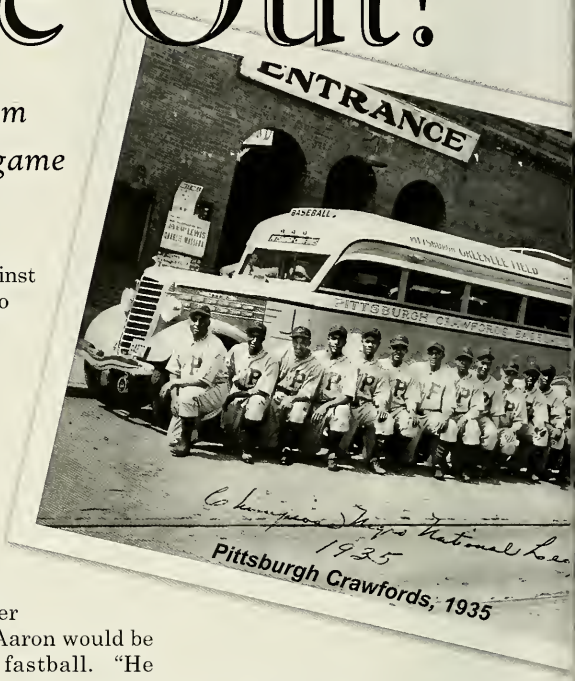
The people, not the processes, won the significant gains of the Civil Rights movement. Against incredible odds and at great risk, thousands of activists in the modern freedom struggle won victories that touched their own lives as well as those of their neighbors and future generations.

The assimilation of Blacks has reduced, but not eliminated, the need for Black churches. But the church, whether in Montgomery, Alabama, or Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, was the base that assured not only a cultural and ethnic identity, but the foundation for social protest to awaken all Americans to the need for racial and religious tolerance. ■

'They're Out!'

Black baseball players, segregated from major leagues, played for love of the game

by Mark Ensminger



Bill "Ready" Cash of Philadelphia is full of fond memories from his playing days in the Negro baseball leagues. He says he remembers playing in Birmingham, Alabama against a team with a 16-year-old kid playing centerfield. "I was at second when the batter hit a long fly ball to dead center," says Cash. "I tug up for third base when this kid throws a bullet and nails me all the way from the centerfield wall." That kid was Willie Mays.

As a catcher for the Philadelphia Stars from 1943 to 1950, Cash competed against many of the Negro League's biggest stars, some of future major league fame.

"I remember catching against an 18-year-old Hank Aaron," Cash says. He says he called for the pitcher to throw a slider because he knew Aaron would be gunning for a fastball. "He bailed away before the ball hooked and was called out on strikes," recalls Cash.

Photo courtesy of Bill Cash

Cash was born on February 21, 1919. The following year, Andrew "Rube" Foster founded the Negro National League (NNL), the first organized all-Black baseball league. The Philadelphia Stars were members in the NNL (1934-1948) then joined the Negro American League (1949-1950).

Former Negro Leaguer Jackie Robinson, a UCLA graduate and Army officer in World War II, was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers in October 1945 and played for their minor league team, breaking the color barrier in the White-only ranks of Major League Baseball. Robinson faced opposition, including hate mail and death threats. His acceptance by the players and fans was hardly immediate.

"When Jackie got to play in the Major Leagues, we thought everybody had a chance," says Cash, "but you'd be surprised at how much prejudice was still going on."

Cash was signed by the Chicago White Sox and played in their minor league system in 1951, but broke his leg in Evansville, Indiana, and never made it back on their roster.

"I made $500 a month. That was idiot money to a major leaguer. That was what they were given on a road trip as spending money," Cash says.

In order for a Negro League team's survival, heavy traveling was required.

"We left Philadelphia for a 28-day road trip. We only had two drivers for the bus and I had to drive from 2 to 7 a.m. the first

day. At 4 a.m., the dashboard light came on because of motor problems," he recalls. "The Ford Motor Company put a new motor in twice and put it in wrong both times," he says.

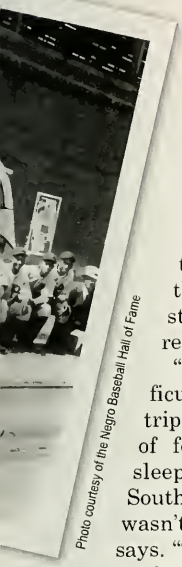


Photo courtesy of the Negro Baseball Hall of Fame

This 1949 road trip took the Stars from Philadelphia through Indiana, four Texas cities, Alabama, Memphis, and Chicago, ending with a doubleheader in Philadelphia. "Our families met us at the game because there was no time to stop home first," he recalls.

"Road trips were difficult. For the whole trip, we only got a total of four hours of 'bed sleep' because in the South staying in a hotel wasn't an option," Cash says. "The rest of the time we slept on the bus."

He remembers that when the teams went down South, "we caught hell." When players went to change into their uniforms in a dressing room, they were told, "No niggers are allowed in this dressing room." They had to change under the stands, he says.

"Up North, it was different. We stayed in hotels and ate at nice restaurants," says Cash. "In the South, the restaurant would tell us to come around back if we wanted something to eat. Gas stations would tell us that we couldn't use their bathrooms. So we would say we weren't going to buy any gas, and they would tell us, 'Come in, just don't let anybody see you,'" he says.

In the winter, players "barnstormed," traveling into Mexico, South America, and Puerto Rico for games. This guaranteed them a 12-month paycheck and a chance to play in locations where baseball ability was cherished, regardless of skin color.

"In Mexico, they treated us like kings. They appreciated us," says Cash.

Cash played against New York Yankee great Don Larson on one of the team's trips to Mexico. "I told Larson, 'Don't try to throw your fastball past these boys; they can play.' He said, 'No nigger is going to tell me how to pitch.' Then we hit two homeruns off fastballs to win the game," Cash recalls.

"Sometimes it was tough, with the racism and all the traveling. But we made the best of it," Cash says. "I played baseball all day, and then worked as a machinist at Westinghouse from 12 till 8 a.m. I had a family to support, but I loved the game."

Through it all, the Negro League players persevered. Today, memories of prejudice and discrimination sit on the backburner of Bill Cash's mind, pushed aside for countless proud tales from baseball's other league.

"Playing against Josh [Gibson] was a treat," says Cash. "At our place, the left field fence was 405 feet to the foul line. There was a 20-foot high fence, and about 25 rows of bleachers. Josh hit the back of the bleachers at least four times," he recalls. "He hit a ball out of Yankee Stadium one-handed. That man could hit." That man never made it to the major leagues. ■

[Justin Pelletier and Christine Varner contributed to this article.]

Put Some South In Your Mouth

Souse meat and chitterlings—the other white meat

by Johnetta Clarke

What do black-eyed peas, chicken wings, shrimp, crab legs, beef sausage and ham shanks have in common? They may be dishes we've all eaten, but *together*?

During the New Year, Southerners like to put it all together and call it black-eyed pea gumbo. The peas represent good luck, and collard greens represent money in the New Year. It's just one of many soul food dishes.

Soul food originated when Black slaves were given food scraps on the ships bringing them to the Americas. Each region soon began to develop its own taste; each African dish took on some of the qualities of the region's native food.

Louisiana's Cajun, Creole foods, and the Carolina's Spanish culture introduced dishes that included tastes of African culture.

As railroads expanded after the Civil War, Black cooks could be found working in train kitchens. Wealthy and middle class Whites and Blacks in large cities also hired Black cooks. Many Blacks left the South hoping for greater opportunity and perhaps less racism in the cities of the North taking their recipes with them.

Chitterlings are one of the best-known forms of Soul Food. Most people pronounce it as "chitlins." Many cultures eat chitterlings; the Mexicans eat them in a spicy, tomato-based soup, the Hungarians use them as casing and stuffing for sausages, and Andouille sausage is made from chitterlings and tripe. Chitterling sausages are also a delicacy in France and can be found in certain Asian dishes.

How do you describe a dish that tastes so good to some but has such a revolting aroma? It's hard not to turn up your nose, for the stench is powerful. Chitterlings are the large intestines of a pig. Cleaning and soaking chitterlings are important. It's a food that most people either love or hate, similar to liver. However, chitterlings have a huge role in history and in Southern American culture.

When served with hot sauce, ham, macaroni & cheese, collard greens and sweet potato pie, life couldn't get any better! Chitterlings were served to slaves as the discards of the pig after their White masters took the best parts. Ham, bacon, pork chops, and loins were delicacies compared to what the slaves received; their portion usually consisted of the ears, feet, and chitterlings. Some people see them as offensive, since it was originally fed to slaves. Southern Whites eat it with all types of spicy juices with side dishes of corn bread and tasty vegetables, like fried corn or okra.

Another dish is "souse meat," the remainders of a pig that people choose not to eat. The pig feet, ears, tail, and head all combine to make this dish. When it's finished cooking, it's grayish-brown and solid. It's traditionally eaten on bread, sometimes toasted, with mustard.

> "Soul food is something that reinforces our identit

While most Americans were feeding black-eyed peas to their

cattle, Blacks were boiling up the inexpensive pea with a little rice and a scrap of souse meat and creating a soul food delicacy.

Soul food is now a celebration of the culture in which people have taken traditional means of cooking and seasoned it with the food variety available today.

"I just do what I do," says Thaddeus "Sugar" Howell, head chef and owner of Sugar Daddy's in Easton. "At my restaurant I use my own blend of spices, and we sell all of your typical southern, Caribbean, and popular American dishes." Sugar says that everybody comes in to dine on the traditional foods like collard greens and macaroni and cheese. He says he also sells a lot of Caribbean foods, including beef patties and salt fish.

"I remember watching my grandmother in the house cooking soul food," he recalls, noting, "it was then that I knew that I wanted to own my own restaurant, especially since there weren't any in Easton."

People from the tri-state area dine on the sultry cuisine at Warm Daddy's in Philadelphia. "Young, old, White and Black, we get all types of mixed crowds," says Bill Jones, the owner's nephew. "Soul food is something that reinforces our identity with race and culture," says Dr. Irvin Wright, Bloomsburg. "It will always be a link to our past, which is a part of our legacy."

Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, a Southern cuisine writer and cook, tells of being 20 years old in Paris in 1959, and seeing a yam in a market on the Rue Monge. She asked a Senegalese woman how she prepared it. "Well, today I am going to purée them, but you can roast them, you can make a tart out of them, you can fry them, you can cook them with a little butter and sugar," the woman said. It was then Grosvenor realized that soul food truly has a history. Grosvenor has written many books and often writes introductions about soul food for cookbooks.

"Soul food recipes, like folktales, are handed down by word of mouth," says Kathy Starr author of *The Soul of Southern Cooking*. "My Aunt Zipporah never owned a cookbook, but she could cook the black off a skillet and the white off rice."

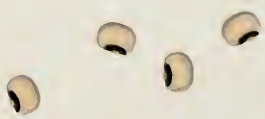
At Columbia and Montour County supermarkets, it's hard to find a lot of southern dishes, especially chitterlings. "The closest thing we have is pig feet in jars," says Joanne Frank, manager of the Bloomsburg Weis. "There is no demand here, but if you need it, we can order the food for you," she says.

Although the demand and availability for soul food is limited, that doesn't mean local soul food eaters are missing out. "We order some of our soul food because we have always run them, our market just doesn't have the space to carry everything," says Tom Woodring, store manager of the Bloomsburg Giant.

Soul food is now recognized as "good times" food. Black people have reclaimed its origin and with it can truly express creativity with limited resources. Soul food reveals a time when all people can come together and embark on memories. Soul food is a labor of love, which goes beyond good old wholesome cooking. ■

Photo by Jonathan Gass

ith race and culture."—Dr. Irvin Wright



Blackface and White Eyes

The World of Entertainment and Racism

From barrooms on showboats to 3,000 seat auditoriums, burnt-cork actors and comedians, speaking with exaggerated dialect, played for audiences in both South and North, rural and urban, although most performances were in the urban North.

In any given minstrel show, White performers blackened their faces with burnt cork, exaggerated their lips and eyes by spreading white greasepaint around them, put a black sheep's wool wig on their heads, dressed in garish costumes and performed skits that portrayed Blacks in buffoonish stereotypes that led audiences to believe Blacks perpetually sang, danced, stole watermelons, didn't know "proper" English, were essentially lazy and stupid, and declared their undying love for their "massuh."

The minstrel show was developed in the 1840s; by the Civil War, it was known around the world as a respected form of family entertainment. American minstrelsy, probably influenced by similar shows in England, influenced both burlesque in the late 19th century and vaudeville in the 1920s.

For Whites, "the minstrel shows provided a joyful release of tension, a chance to laugh at the foibles of others," says Walter Brasch, social issues journalist and author of *Black English and the Mass Media*. He says the Whites could "laugh and enjoy themselves and leave the performance secure in the belief that although they had their own problems, there were others who looked, acted, and talked different than they did, who were even more pretentious and stupid than they could ever be." As long as the Black was depicted in grotesque and distorted images, says Brasch, "the Whites could be secure in their own insecurity."

The first minstrel group was probably the Virginia Minstrels; the company included four members, who sang, acted and played instruments. The banjo, tambourine, fiddle, and the "bones," a musical instrument that was designed to appear that it was African in origin, were common in minstrel shows. The fiddler was a Northerner, Daniel Decatur Emmett, who would later write "Dixie," a song he claimed was never meant to be any nation's anthem, and which he said was an "embarrassment." The Christy Minstrels, and innumerable other companies, expanded the show to include solo and duet dances, one-act comedies, innumerable dialect songs, and humorous stump speeches, in which the actors would comment upon, "everything from the grossest absurdities to pseudoscientific explanations of the universe," says Brasch. But, there were also "profound social comments about the nation, its politics, and its attitudes toward slavery."

Several states prohibited Blacks from sharing the stage with Whites, but some companies secretly placed them into the ensemble. Light-skinned Black men regularly wore blackface makeup to look darker. In spite of these demeaning setbacks, minstrelsy provided Black performers their first professional stage outlet.

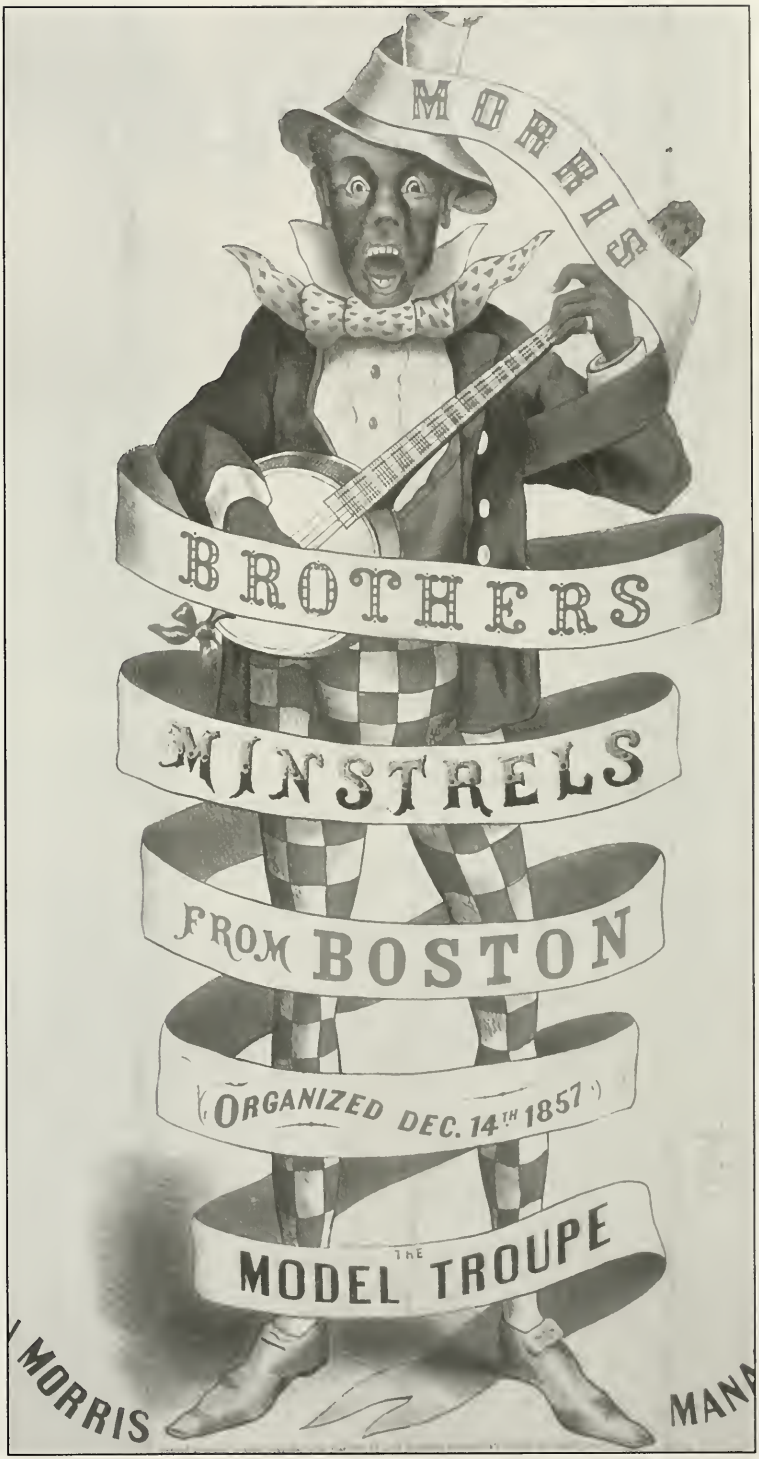
Minstrel shows continued to be popular well into the film age, with innumerable "Sambo" and "Rastus" characters continuing the stereotypes. The first two *Uncle Tom's Cabin* films, based upon the Harriet Beecher Stowe antebellum classic that incited a nation, had no Black actors; the third re-make, in 1914, finally had a Black.

While D.W. Griffith, the medium's first great director,depicted the Ku Klux Klan as heroes in the epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915), Black actors were struggling to get their films made. From 1910 to 1955 there were as many as 1,100 special theatres that catered specifically to Black audiences. Segregation made a visible market for films made by Blacks. The budgets for these films were much lower than the major studio "B" pictures because of the limited audience. But in spite of these problems, Black filmmakers, with limited financing, were allowed the freedom to make the kind of films they could never make in Hollywood.

In 1929, as the film industry began its transition to "talkies," *Hallelujah!* and *Hearts of Dixie* became the first major features with all-Black casts.

Blacks weren't always segregated in cinema. Sometimes they were dropped into mainstream films; if they weren't playing slaves or servants, they were usually relegated to playing shuffling bug-eyed stereotypes. Only a few were able to transcend the stereotype. Among them was Hattie McDaniel, who played the nursemaid Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*. McDaniel, who would win the 1940 Academy Award for best supporting actress, didn't attend the film's premiere in Atlanta. The theater was segregated.

—MIKE SULLIVAN with Jonathan Gass and Christine Varner



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Disappointme

Former slaves expected freedom and opportunity in the North; instead, they found intolerance

by Karen Andzejewicz

She awakened aboard the boat that had carried her to freedom. It was her first glimpse of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. She had finally made it to the free states of the North. It had been the most treacherous journey of her life, planned during her seven years in hiding. Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897) no longer had to call herself a slave, but she would soon face the reality that the North was not all she believed it would be.

Jacobs and other escaped slaves traveled North expecting to find equality and support from their White neighbors. Although they may have been against slavery, most Whites in Pennsylvania didn't want to associate with former slaves. They didn't want them to go to their schools, work the same jobs, or shop at the same places. Most of all, they didn't want them in their neighborhoods.

After escaped slaves made it to the North, they still had fear of being recaptured. Pennsylvania's location, close to the Mason-Dixon Line, the boundary of the Northern and Southern states, aroused constant fear in ex-slaves.

Once the freedom seekers crossed the imaginary Mason-Dixon Line, "there were some elements of freedom, but they still weren't free," says Dr. Charles Blockson, professor of history at Temple University and author of *The Underground Railroad of Pennsylvania.* "There were slave catchers, there were Black spies and White spies that would turn them in," he says.

Many former slaves were forced into hiding because of the Fugitive Slave Law stating escaped slaves were still "property" of their White owners if they were to be caught in the North by slave catchers. Harriet Jacobs had to leave her home and her job several times in fear of her former owners finding her.

In 1926, when the Ku Klux Klan was at the height of its power, the federal government allowed a Klan parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.

nts of Liberty

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction # LC-USZ62-59666

"Again I was to be torn from a comfortable home, and all my plans for the welfare of my children were to be frustrated by that demon Slavery," Jacobs wrote.

Jacobs' relentless former master, "whose restless, craving, vicious nurture roved about day and night," was constantly in search of Jacobs; it was impossible for her to live in peace and freedom in the North. She was forced to leave "the friendly home where I had hoped to find security and rest," she wrote. Her fear of being recaptured caused her to live, "in a state of anxiety. When I took the children out to breathe the air, I closely observed the countenances of all I met," she wrote.

Jacobs' primary objective in writing her narrative, "was to protest against the Fugitive Slave Act," says Dr. Betina Entzminger, Associate Professor of English at Bloomsburg University. Jacobs was also "trying to stir them [Northerners] to action, make them aware of the racism and make them take action against what was going on in the South," Entzminger explains.

Most Pennsylvanians had ambivalent feelings about slavery. "They didn't care about the institution one way or the other," says Dr. Jeff Davis, associate professor of history at Bloomsburg University. They viewed the economic standpoint of slavery rather than human rights. The aristocratic South was getting more control, scaring Northerners, according to Davis. Racism has thrived in Columbia and Montour counties for centuries. "In Columbia County many citizens sympathized with Southern slave owners . . . Paid slave catchers searched Columbia County, not only for Fugitive Slaves, but also to kidnap free Blacks who had been citizens of the county for years," wrote Charles Blockson.

Many Whites in Columbia County refused to serve in the Union army because of their strong anti-abolitionist sentiments. "Taking into account Columbia County's war weariness, and racist attitudes toward Blacks, it was not surprising to see growing opposition to serving in the war," says George Turner, BU professor emeritus of history and author of *Civil War Dissent in Columbia County, PA*. Many people had sympathy for the Confederates here, says Dr. Walter Howard, associate professor of history at Bloomsburg University.

A Columbia County resident, writing a letter published in the June 7, 1862, issue of the *Columbia Democrat*, noted he was "pained to learn that Gen. Hunter has declared the slaves free in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida; and

that he is forming negro Brigades out of them . . . The effect of bringing negros into service will not only give them rights of citizenship contrary to a decision of the Supreme Court, but will have a tendency to degrade our White soldiers." It was reflective of the anti-Union nature of the county. The letter also noted, "We cannot acknowledge ourselves so weak as to need their assistance . . . it gives Blacks a fearful power, and the end will be rebellion on their side . . . they are not fit for citizens, nor the right stamp for soldiers."

An ex-slave, J.W. Henson told of his experiences in the county with a speech at the Methodist Church in Bloomsburg, printed in *The Columbia Democrat* on December 13, 1895. "I have found kind friends in Bloomsburg—I will never forget their kindness," he wrote, but his experience was rare.

He noted many former slaves weren't so lucky. "If a slave was caught up North, they would take him, chain him and send him back. I saw it done in Danville, I have seen men and women chained together, led on the turnpike to Baltimore, where they were put in a pen like cattle," Henson said.

In her narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Jacobs wrote, "We had escaped from slavery, and we supposed ourselves to be safe from the hunters. But we were alone in the world, and we left dear ties behind us; ties cruelly sundered by the demon Slavery."

Most escaped slaves, like Jacobs, "imagined that it would be like entering a different world where, because it was a free state, they would be entirely free," explains Entzminger. She says, "A lot of them were disappointed to discover there was racism still going on in the North."

Before arriving in Philadelphia, Jacobs wrote, "I had heard that the poor slave had many friends in the North." However, soon after landing she found that "those who passed by looked at us with an expression of curiosity," rather than one of friendliness.

The first shock of discrimination came to Jacobs when she was refused a train ticket for a first class car out of Philadelphia. In her autobiography, she wrote, "Supposing I had not given him money enough, I offered more. 'O, no,' said he, 'they could not be had for any money. They don't allow colored people to go in the first-class cars.' This was the first chill to my enthusiasm about the Free States . . . It made me sad to find how the North aped the customs of slavery."

"But we were alone in the world, and we left dear ties behind us; ties cruelly sundered by the demon Slavery."

—Harriet Jacobs

Northern racism was evident nearly everywhere Jacobs went. However, "Racism was far worse in Pennsylvania than in New England," according to Douglas Harper, Chester County historian. "This was because of a lot of economic ties to the South, as well as a lot of Irish in the city who were competing for the same jobs," Harper says.

Jacobs wrote that her son, Benny, who was learning a trade, "was liked by the master, and was a favorite with his fellow-apprentices." However, "one day they accidentally discovered a fact they had never before suspected—that he was colored!" Inheriting his looks from his white father made it difficult for others to see any African features. However, once it was discovered that his mother was Black, "this at once transformed him into a different being." Some of the apprentices were Americans, others American-born Irish, Jacobs wrote, "and it was offensive to their dignity to have a 'nigger' among them."

The Irish considered free Blacks to be a threat. They competed for the same low-paying jobs. "The Irish were the strongest anti-Black group of the time; there were a lot of Irish in this area, which is the reason there were so many anti-Union, pro-Confederate here," says Howard.

Even Abraham Lincoln, born in slave-owning Kentucky, believed Blacks were inferior to Whites. Lincoln stated during his debate with Stephen A. Douglas in a campaign for an Illinois Senate seat in 1858 that he was not, "nor have I ever been in favor of making voters of the Negroes, or jurors, or qualifying them to hold office, or having them to marry with white people . . . while they do remain together, there must be a position of superior and inferior, that I, as much as any other man am in favor of the superior position being assigned to the white man."

Horace Greeley, influential editor-publisher of *The New York Tribune*, criticized Lincoln's administration and demanded that he emancipate the country's slaves. Lincoln responded to Greeley's charges in a letter dated August 22, 1862, stating

that he would do anything necessary to save the Union. "What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union," Lincoln wrote. Soon after, he enacted the Emancipation Proclamation. While he may not have felt that Blacks were equal to Whites, he considered the interests of the country.

Greeley's opposition to slavery did not stem from desire to preserve the Union. "When the South seceded he wanted Lincoln to completely let them go," says Howard. He didn't want them to be considered part of the country anymore, because the politics of the South conflicted with his beliefs and values, Howard says.

> *"If a slave was caught up North, they would take him, chain him and send him back. I saw it done in Danville."*
>
> —J.W. Henson

"The thing to remember is that by today's standards, every White person in America was probably a racist," Harper says. "They didn't have the word 'racism' because it was believed that Whites were naturally superior. Only a few people, not including Abe Lincoln, could get over that," says Harper.

Jobs offered to Blacks were limited. Most Black women could only find menial jobs as cooks or nannies. Black men were usually at "the lowest level" of laborers. They "carried dirt and bricks to the building. They worked in non-skilled professions, anything that wasn't organized," says Harper. "There was actually less exclusion of Blacks when slavery existed in Pennsylvania" then at least "they were skilled workers," Harper explains. Pay was usually well below what Whites earned for similar work.

When Harriet Jacobs worked as a nanny for a wealthy White family who cared for her deeply, she wasn't permitted to eat with them while accompanying them on vacation. She wrote of when she sat down with the child and mother to eat, "a young man came to me and said in the blandest manner possible, 'Will you please to seat the little girl in the chair, and stand behind it and feed her? After they have done, you will be shown to the kitchen where you will have a good supper'." Jacobs didn't believe she would experience such treatment in a society that was anti-slavery. "This was the climax!" she wrote, "I found it hard to preserve my self-control, when I looked round and saw women who were nurses, as I was, and only one shade lighter in complexion, eyeing me with a defiant look, as if my presence were a contamination. However, I said nothing."

The racism Jacobs and others encountered didn't end when the Civil War ended.

According to *The Columbia Democrat* of January 2, 1902, an article noted how "John Jackson was in love with a white woman and has been taking electrical treatment in an endeavor to change the color of his skin." When there were no results, Jackson "drank carbolic acid and died in great agony," the article stated.

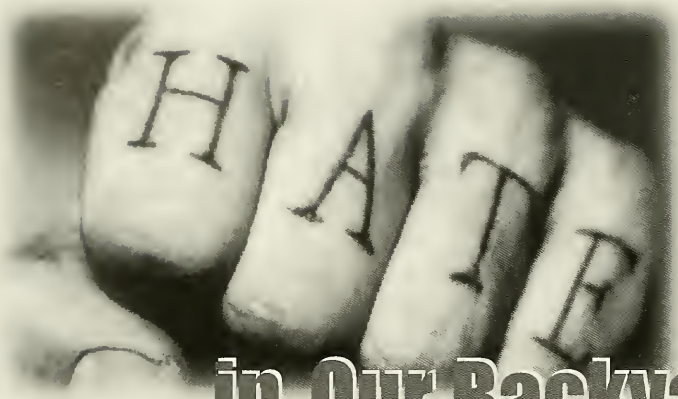
In a letter dated May 8, 1936 from the Rescue Hose & Ladder Co. No. 2, Bloomsburg, a Black man, Arthur Rux, was denied membership because, "There is a motion on the books which prohibits persons of the colored race joining this company." His one-dollar application fee was returned and the issue was dropped.

Historically, hate was found largely in hate groups in addition to personal opinion and discrimination. The forming of the Ku Klux Klan originally didn't drastically affect the rest of the country. Originally formed as a group during Reconstruction, the group's goal was to prevent Southerners from being taken advantage of. The group, however, lost much of its power; after a short run of about ten years, the group fell apart.

However, it wasn't until a widespread revival in the 1920s that the group became an influence in Pennsylvania. Klan members were appearing all over the country, this time with a much more violent message. Klan activity in Columbia County sparked a renewed racism. The Klan in the 1920s besides being anti-Black was anti-Semitic and now anti-Catholic, says Howard. "This is why it was very strong in Pennsylvania because so many new immigrants were Catholics, it was an acting out against them," Howard says. It was ironic since the Catholics had once been forceful in their opposition to Black rights in the North.

Cross burnings in West Berwick were common until the late 1940s. "This was part of the anti-immigration prejudice," says Howard. Those of the first immigration wave from Eastern and Western Europe didn't want new people to settle here and were not very welcoming to newcomers. ■

[Contributing to this article were John Elliot, Jonathan Gass, Matt Caterinichia, and Christine Varner. For further information, see: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl *by Harriet Jacobs (writing as Linda Brent).*



in Our Backyard

It may be more subtle, but racism still exists in Columbia and Montour counties

by Karen Andzejewicz

Isabel Tarr received a letter in 1997, filled with racist jokes, profanity, and threatening her life. The letter was signed, "White supremecy [sic] forever."

Tarr, 61, recalls a long history of racism in Bloomsburg. She vividly remembers the racism she and her family encountered during her childhood. She says she had to go through back doors in restaurants and wasn't allowed to swim in the public pool. She had to go to the dentist and beauty parlor after hours because of her race.

Tarr's first memory of racism was when she was three years old; her mother took her and her older sister to get ice cream at Engle's Restaurant, which used to be on Iron Street in Bloomsburg. She says they went in and sat down—"the waitress came over and told us, 'We don't serve niggers'." The young Isabel didn't understand what had happened. "I knew something was wrong; my mother was very, very quiet and she just held our hands really close. She then explained to me how things were," she remembers.

The attitude in the area toward Blacks was, "As long as you know your place there won't be any problems," says Tarr. She wrote a letter to the Chamber of Commerce in 1993 addressing the town's problem with racism: "Any Black permanent resident can tell of going to a store downtown or at the mall and the salesclerk walks past you, waits on a customer who came in after you, and when they do wait on you, they question if you know how expensive the items you asked for are, and then drop the change in your hand rather than touch your skin."

Tarr's experience isn't isolated. A Black female middle school student received similar letters in 1995, filled with references to the Ku Klux Klan, threatening her and her family's safety, according to Dr. Irvin Wright, director of the Equal Opportunity Program of Bloomsburg University. One of the letters states, "You're putting your life on the line. So why don't you just leave us alone. You're getting a lot of people irrational. I'm watching you. Be careful . . . protect your friends and family." The girl's family has since moved out of the area.

Unwelcome Signs

The Blacks, and most Whites, of Columbia County were shocked when Klan leader Robert Wilkinson planned a mass recruitment rally in the Bloomsburg area in 1982. The *Philadelphia Tribune* pointed out several incidents BU students experienced on and off campus, including racial slurs, harassment in public stores, and notes on bulletin boards threatening their lives.

Marcella Woods, coordinator of minority affairs in Residence Life at Bloomsburg University, says she received a cold welcome her freshman year at Bloomsburg University in 1981. She says as she moved into her dorm room a man handed her father a KKK business card and flyer telling people to support White Supremacy. She believes they were using them as a "scare tactic." Instead of unpacking her bags and returning home, Woods stayed to show that racism couldn't prevent her from living her life.

"Students still feel physically threatened here,"

says Woods. She has been a staff member at the university since 1991 and says racism still prevails in the area. The Monster Truck Rally held at the Bloomsburg Fairgrounds every July is an example. "People decorate their trucks in Confederate flags and racist paraphernalia, she says. "If you are a Black college student, you cannot go into town that weekend. They spit on you, they terrorize you," she says. Woods says since about five years ago when the town banned the parade that took place each year, the incidents have lessened. However, she believes if the town really wanted to put an end to racism, the rally at the fairgrounds would be banned.

Bloomsburg Mayor Charles "Chip" Coffman says this is the first time he has ever heard of such incidents taking place at the Monster Truck Rally. "It depends on the way you look at the Confederate flag," he says. Some people look at it and see it as a symbol for racism, others look at it and see it as a historic part of the past. If people are getting harassed then something needs to be done to make a change," he says, noting he goes every year but has "never seen anything like this happen. If it is happening, I would not condone it and I know there is no mayor who would have condoned it."

There is actually very little organized racism in Columbia County, according to the Anti-Defamation League. Because the Black population is so small, there are not a lot of hate groups around to act against it. "The fact that most people are ashamed of their racist feelings is a big difference. The Klan and people like that are considered to be the lunatic fringe now," says Douglas Harper, a Chester County historian.

Jerry Wemple, a bi-racial professor at Bloomsburg University, was born and raised in the Bloomsburg area. "When I was young and growing up, most of the Black people in the area were migrant workers; therefore, that was the stereotype back then," he remembers. Wemple doesn't believe there is anywhere in the United States without racism. "Around this area it is some level of ignorance because there is not a high African-American population. People then rely on stereotypes," he says.

At the beginning of his teaching career, Wemple taught in Johnstown. While he was there, he noticed many Confederate flag license plates. "I found out that those license plates were a membership symbol for members of the KKK in the area," he recalls. "When I see them in this area, they really bother me."

To many, the Confederate flag represents "White domination over African Americans," according to the Anti-Defamation League. "When I see symbols such as the Confederate flag," says Woods, "I see all the hard work done 40 years ago [in the Civil Rights era] and see that we have only changed such a small part."

Tension at Bloomsburg University

In February 1992, a White male confronted a Black female student on a street with racial slurs and threats, according to an article in *The Voice*. The following month, someone allegedly burned a cross on the steps of the administration building at Bloomsburg University. This incident may have been in response to the hiring of a Black woman as the university's director of police, according to Dr. Mary Harris, professor of educational studies at Bloomsburg University and member of the Bloomsburg University Community Task Force on Racial Equity. The Black Cultural Society offered escort services for students who didn't feel safe walking around at night after the incident occurred. During that semester, the Klan sent letters to certain faculty members. "There has been a climate of racism and prejudice lately," university president Dr. Harry Ausprich told the student newspaper.

Isabel Tarr, 6, (left) and her sister, Elizabeth, 9, in 1948.

The university now requires students to take two diversity courses. "A lot of students who come to Bloomsburg come from rural locations where they might not be exposed to diversity," says Kendra Branchick, student member of the Board of Trustees. She says in the university setting students can "broaden their horizons by exposure to diverse cultures." Some believe that students do not use the knowledge they acquire in their diversity classes in everyday life. These courses have "some impact, but the outcome would be better once people use what they learn and share it with others." says Johnetta Clarke, president of the Black Cultural Society. "We're not hearing about it," she says, "if

we were you would have more people going to the cultural diversity events."

Bloomsburg University was slow to change into a racially diverse institution. Although there were a few Blacks and Jews in the student populations during the university's first century, it wasn't until after the Civil Rights Act, introduced by President Johnson in 1964, that more attempts were made to bring Black students to campus. It wasn't until 1971 that the university hired its first Black faculty member, Dr. Walter Simon, as director of the Education Opportunity Program and art professor.

The University was "one of the most segregated schools in the country when I came here in 1965," remembers Anthony Sylvester, a retired Bloomsburg University history professor. In 1983, the federal Office of Civil Rights directed all 14 state colleges and the university to desegregate or face federal penalties.

People would try to justify the lack of minorities on campus by saying, "there are no Blacks in this area," Sylvester recalls. "It was very uncommon to find ethnic people in the faculty," says Sylvester. "I knew faculty who argued they were not racist, but saw no reason to get Blacks [and other minorities] on campus," he says. He remembers Black students saying that they sensed racial attitudes, but that "the faculty response was the students were hypersensitive."

Sylvester may have been the first Catholic and Italian professor to come to the university. While he says he experienced minor prejudices because of this, he says it was very small in comparison to the discrimination of the Blacks. "They were scared," he says of the Black students in the 1960s, "they had to be tough to survive here." Sylvester recalls one experience when a Black student was downtown and a man who had Nazi symbols tattooed on his fists made comments to her. "She did not want to go downtown anymore, it really upset her," he remembers.

John Walker, director of admissions at the time, says the university tried numerous ways to bring Black students to Bloomsburg. "We tried getting a lot of advice from people of color, went to the inner city and talked with the parents; however, sending their sons and daughters to a predominantly White, very conservative culture was scary to them," he says, "People would follow them around stores, and think they were stealing."

Walker recalls how the Black students of the early 1960s were extremely patient. "We talked to them about being pioneers. I remember one girl coming up to me and saying, 'I don't want to be a pioneer, I don't want to have to fight a battle." She transferred to Howard University.

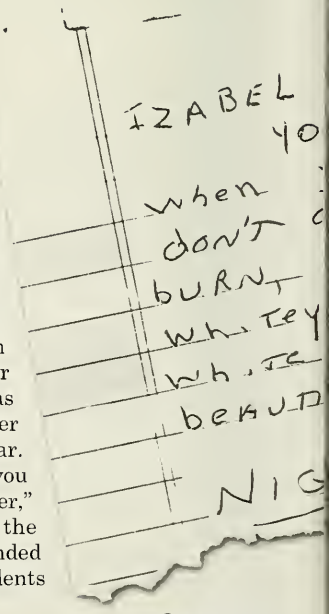
When more Black students started coming to the college, there were "a lot of rumors in town about them," recalls Walker. Harvey Andruss, the president of the university at the time, felt it was a good idea to house them all on campus together, which was a kind of subtle way of separating them and keeping them out of the way for the White students, says Walker.

Every year efforts were made to try to recruit Black students to campus; however, every year there would be incidents in town that discouraged Black students from coming, says Walker who retired in 1993 as vice-president for institutional advancement.

"For a long time, we talked about a critical mass, so there would be enough students of color for a comfort level; however, we were never able to get completely there by the time I left ten years ago," Walker says.

Jim Percey, retired BU political science professor, had come to the university in 1965. He recalls numerous occasions when Black students were discriminated against in town. "When I came here, a graduate student had been refused accommodations in town because she was Black," he says. The administration didn't do anything to help her out, so Percey let her stay at his house. "She ended up getting so disgusted that she went back home," Percey recalls. Black students would go downtown to get their hair cut, and the barber would refuse, saying he didn't know how to cut Black people's hair; restaurants refused to serve Black patrons.

Percey recalls one incident where he was sitting at a bar waiting for a friend in the late 1960s. "A Black guy came into the bar and the owner wouldn't even look at the man," he says. The man left after not being served. Percey says he then asked the owner about it and he replied, "I don't serve niggers in my living room." After Percey told him this was illegal, he was told never to come back to the bar. "I'm coming back in and you better consult your lawyer," Percey says he told the owner. Percey then rounded up about 10 Black students



and they went back and sat down at the bar. The owner "took one look at us and served us; he must have spoken to his lawyer. We desegregated Frank [the owner] that day," he says.

In the late 1960s, the college started discussion groups to improve relations with the Black students and the rest of the college. In an informal meeting in 1968, the problem was addressed; the faculty were not relating to the Black students, according to a column published in *The Voice*. "A problem arises when the students are Black and White because a White teacher can't relate to the Black students, just as the Black teacher can't relate to the White students," the article states. The article showed the nature of the college—both Whites and Blacks viewed the other with suspicion, and both claimed segregationist attitudes.

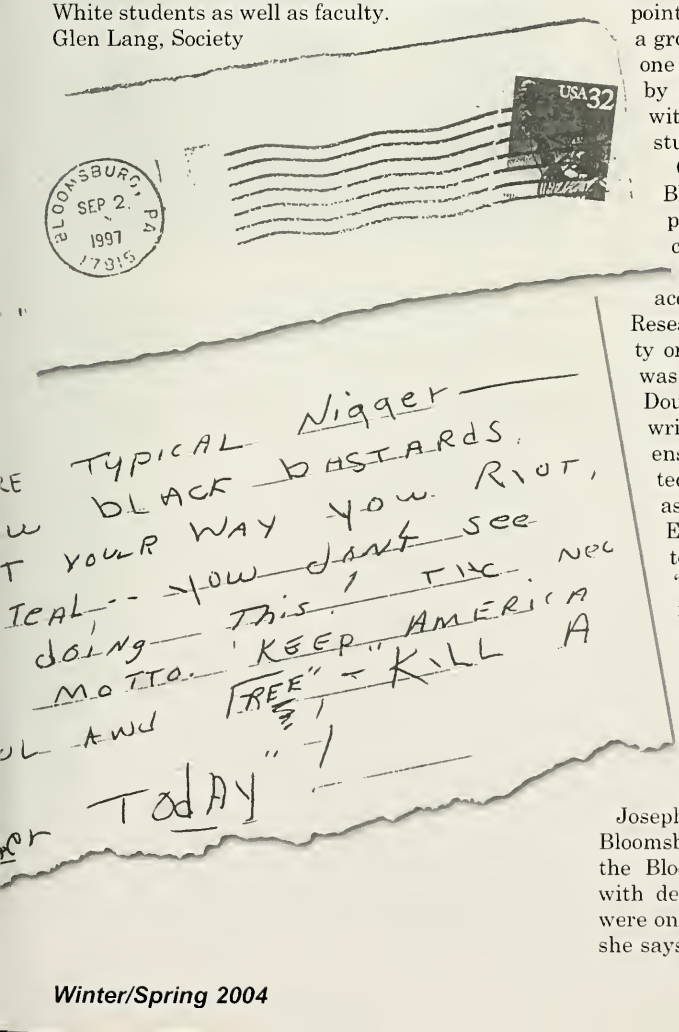
In 1971, the Black Student Society formed to try to improve the relationships between Black and White students as well as faculty.

Glen Lang, Society president, according to *The Voice*, "expressed concern over the failure of most college faculty members to present a realistic and true picture of the racial problems that beset American society in general and the Bloomsburg campus in particular."

By 1973, "there were only three Black faculty and only eleven Black students and no Hispanics at Bloomsburg University," according to Dr. Walter Howard at Bloomsburg University.

At Bloomsburg University, few groups of friends are racially integrated. Blacks tend to eat together in the Scranton Commons; they tend to join an all-Black fraternity or sorority. Their actions, some say, leads to the belief that Blacks not only are "clannish," but also foster the separation of races.

"If they [Blacks] sit together, people think they're being separatists. It is just a comfort level, you sit with people like you," says Marcella Woods. She points out that White students wouldn't sit with a group of Black students either. "If there is not one other table open, and I am sitting at a table by myself, White students will not sit down with me," she says. She points out that many students still feel, "If I don't have to why do it."



Currently the Black student population at Bloomsburg University, is 309 students (3.77 percent), 120 Hispanic students (1.45 percent), 69 Asian students (0.83 percent), and 15 Native American students (0.18 percent) according to the Office of Institutional Research. Partially because of the lack of diversity on campus, the Frederick Douglass Institute was formed. "Our goal was to use Frederick Douglass, a man who taught himself to read and write at age 12, in an environment where enslaved African-Americans were not permitted to learn, as an example for our students to aspire for academic learning," says Dr. Steven Ekema Agbaw, professor of English and director of the Institute. He says the program is for "students who want to engage with others from multi-racial, multi-ethnic backgrounds, and who want to improve their chances of succeeding at the university." The students live together and take classes together. He says every year about 38-40 students join the program.

Incidents in the Area

Josephine Brown Johnson, 85, valedictorian of Bloomsburg High school in 1936, graduated from the Bloomsburg State Teachers College in 1940 with degrees in biology and history. While there were only two Black students when she graduated, she says, "Everyone got along very well." After she

graduated she became a wife and mother. Once her children were in high school, she applied for a job in the laundry room at the Bloomsburg Hospital, even though she had a degree. "There were no African-American teachers at that time, so I never applied," she says. She doesn't know what would have happened if she had applied in the Bloomsburg area. She applied down South, "but the opportunities were so bad, I didn't follow it up," says Johnson. "Sometimes when I look back, I think of how I could have done something with my degree, I think my race might have had something to do with it," she says. The head of the hospital, once seeing that Johnson had a degree, promoted her to executive housekeeper.

Isabel Tarr's sister, Elizabeth Tarr Demby upon graduating from Bloomsburg University with a degree in education in 1960, was told when she applied at the Bloomsburg School District by the superintendent, Jay Clare Patterson, "Bloomsburg is not ready for a Black teacher." To this day the school district still has not hired a Black teacher. There are also no Black teachers in the Danville, Southern Columbia, Northwest, Millville, or Benton school districts. In Central Columbia School District there is one.

The population of Columbia County, as of the 2000 Census, was 64,151; the Black population of the county was 514, about 0.8 percent; Montour County, with 18,236 residents, had only 183 Black residents about 1 percent. The national average is 13 percent.

John Walker says, "It's like the national scene; while things have improved, we still haven't solved all the problems."

In 1999, Bloomsburg Town Police were charged with the use of excessive force, malicious prosecution, and racial discrimination in the arrest of Thomas Hughes, a former Bloomsburg resident who now lives in North Centre Twp. Hughes, a Black male and a prison counselor, called the police to report some college students who were leaving a bar. He accused them of kicking over some trashcans on his property. He got into an argument while waiting for the police to arrive; while trying to hold back one of the students, he was punched in the face. However, the police pinned down Hughes and arrested him for disorderly conduct, mischief, and harrassment. "Racism isn't only about hate, it's also about assumptions. I think a lot of assumptions were made that night. The police assumed that I didn't own that house and assumed that we weren't the ones who called them," says Hughes.

Hughes says the police weren't willing to listen to him the night of the incident. "The police believed the college students because they felt more comfortable talking to them, because they looked like them. This isn't a cafeteria where you sit with the people you feel comfortable with; they are the authority and can't behave that way," he says. All charges against Hughes were dropped. The Town then brought an additional charge, which was also dismissed. His countercharge against the town police was settled out of court for $100,000. There is no bias-motivated violence and intimidation training required by law for law enforcement and personnel in Pennsylvania, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Photo byJustin Pelletier

Dennis Coombe, Lehighton, sells clothing accessories with Confederate flags on them at fairs and flea markets throughout Pennsylvania. He has been coming to the Bloomsburg Fair for 18 years. "They are real popular, especially buckles and belts. Nobody has ever been bothered by them," he says.

Bloomsburg Chief of Police Leo Sokolowski would not comment on the Hughes case. He says only that diversity training is required for certification as a police officer. Bloomsburg apparently does not require more than this. Of almost 800 hours of required training by the state, only eight hours are devoted to diversity issues; officers certified before 2001 didn't need to pass this requirement.

Some people in the community "have reached out toward people of color, but on the other hand, we still have a segment of the population that remain resistant to the integration of people from different backgrounds," says Irv Wright. Racism now, he explains, is "kind of subtle, it happens in employment, in terms of denying people opportunities, it happens in other subtle ways in that if you create enough tension and stress a person will leave a job." Racism also happens "in the social setting," Wright

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Fighting Integration

Racists call for unity among all Whites

Tom Metzger, director of White Aryan Resistance (WAR), says he doesn't have a problem with other races, he just wants race separation.

"We believe whole-heartily in race separation, not just white and black, but of all races," Metzger says.

Metzger, a television repairman from Fallbrook, California, founded WAR in 1983.

He says he has been involved in brawls and riots; he claims he has survived a half dozen assassination attempts.

Metzger says he wasn't raised a racist. "In the community I grew up in, it was 99.9 percent white," he says. "There was no need to be racist. I picked up my racism through observation and especially when I was in the armed forces."

Metzger, who joined the Army in 1956 at age 18, says he was shocked at the number of Blacks who were in basic training with him.

"We weren't like these people," he said. "Black soldiers were always trying to get the white women into bed and that was very offensive to me."

Despite Metzger's openly racist views, in 1980, he won the California Democratic Primary in a Southern California Congressional District, but lost in the general election. In 1992 he ran for U.S. Senate, but received only 2.8 percent of the votes in the primary.

WAR's website, (www.resist.com), is stocked with racist information and numerous cartoons portraying Mexicans, Blacks and Jews as animals rather than human beings.

"Those illustrations are meant to be brutal," he says, noting "not every single Black is portrayed in those pictures, but I have seen my fair share of those that do look like those cartoons."

Despite Metzger's claim to be "The godfather of the skinheads," some Pennsylvania residents believed there wasn't enough "unity and cooperation" in the skinhead movement. In 2001, five men from Harrisburg formed the Keystone State Skinheads (KSS), an organization that claims it is "helping to preserve, advance, and educate the White culture of the state of Pennsylvania."

KSS has six chapters, which together create a "brotherhood of Skinheads that have the capability to answer the call for support or to crush our enemies." It describes itself as a "non-violent group" that is "working to secure an existence for people of European descent."

KSS states it is "seeking moral and responsible individuals to counter the degenerate and decaying values that are sweeping across America." Its website (www.keystonestatesskinheads.com) displays racist tattoos as well as T-shirts that spell "RACIST" across the front.

Racist T-shirts, however, are not for every White supremacist. Some don't feel comfortable with the term. "It's just a buzz word that discourages people from expressing themselves," says Kirk Weaver, 44, Shamokin, who has been associated with skinheads in the past. As a single father of two, Weaver says he no longer has time for skinheads. Weaver prefers the term "separatist" over "racist."

"I don't hate anyone because the color of their skin, I'm just smart enough to realize that we have always been separated, and for a reason," he says.

Unlike Metzger, an atheist, Weaver's beliefs are routed in his interpretation of the Bible. "I'm commanded by God to enlighten others that the separation of races is inevitable and will come about only through a higher power," says Weaver.

"I'm willing to take the chance that people will think I'm a fool," says Weaver, who foresees Biblical chaos. "It may be next week or five hundred years from now, but if you are white, you wouldn't want to be in Harlem, for example, or your throat will be one of the first to be slit," he says.

Violence against other races prior to the arrival of the "higher power" is not something that Weaver advocates. He says, "Violence just plays into the hands of the media and allows them to attach fangs and horns to us."

Weaver says he's interested in sharing his message with anyone, but his priority is his children. "My duty as a Caucasian is to raise my children properly," he says.

"I teach them the most important thing: to occupy, multiply and have dominion over the Earth," says Weaver. ■

—Beth Roberts

[Contributing to this article was Matt Caterinicchia.]

(Continued from page 72)
says, "a Black male could be in a bar socializing with a White female, and that could create a source of tension." And in one case, George Carter, a Black 2003 graduate of Bloomsburg University, and a friend were walking down Lightstreet Road in Bloomsburg when a truck passed and the driver and several passengers yelled racist remarks. "There wasn't anything I could do about it because they were driving by in a truck," Carter says. "I was enraged."

Carter recalls numerous occasions where the local townspeople of Bloomsburg had given him strange looks. "Sometimes when you are around these 'townies', you receive weird looks because you are Black. You know what they're thinking," he says.

When LeighAnn Campbell came home to Shamokin with a Black boyfriend they "received a lot of strange looks and a lot of whispers," she says. Few interracial couples date in this area. "When we went to places like Princeton, no one even gave us a second glance, because it was accepted as normal," she recalls. Campbell was not immune to discrimination when going home to her boyfriend's house in New Brunswick, New Jersey, either. "There it was kind of reversed, because I was a White girl going out with a Black man in a predominantly Black area. Again people were staring at us," she says.

In the summer of 2003, concerns over a religious summer camp aroused residents in Numidia, leaving some with the impression that racism was to blame. Thomas and Corazon Castillo wanted to turn their farm into a religious summer camp for children from New York and New Jersey. They met opposition filled with racist sentiments. During a town meeting held in July one woman asked if the camp would be for "inner-city" kids. Many believed she was asking if they would be minority children. In a letter to the editor in the *Press Enterprise*, Bloomsburg University's Task Force on Racial Equity wrote, "Those remarks indicated ugly stereotypes and prejudices about all inner-city residents."

In the "30 Seconds" column , in which readers can anonymously say anything they wish, were numerous examples of intolerance and racism regarding the summer camp. "I think it's a great idea NOT to let them come in the area, because we have enough foreigners already in the area, and it would get way out of hand of not being able to trust people you live by. I live in that town and have these people coming from New York, New Jersey, all over . . . steal things and raise Cain," said a Slabtown man in response to the summer camp.

A Catawissa man called "30 Seconds" saying that it is "way off base to call the people of Numidia racists and bigots." However, he continues, "there's a time and a place . . . they need to make guidelines so that the people in the community are protected."

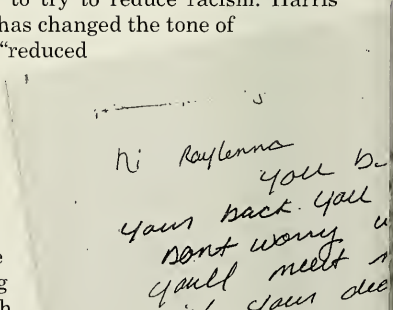
It's Not Only Blacks

Other groups also experience discrimination. "Now we have the incidents of Hispanics coming to the area, the comments that used to be made about Black people are being directed to them," Tarr points out.

When David J. Thompson Mailing, Bloomsburg, hired several Hispanics in 2000, there was an anti-Hispanic backlash in the community. "There were unhappy people, because they felt we were bringing Hispanics to the county," an executive from the company says, who asked not to be identified. "They were mostly coming to their families," she says. She indicates that the company is trying to put these incidents in the past. In the *Press Enterprise's* "30 Seconds" column were calls to protest "illegal immigrants." There was a "fear of the unknown" when Hispanics started coming, "but now our employees have assimilated very well," the executive at the company says.

At Berwick High School in 2002, several students wore white T-shirts to symbolize White supremacy, according to Mary Harris. A group of White students had an argument with a group of Hispanic students. A teacher heard that White students planned to wear white T-shirts to represent hatred against Hispanics, says Harris. Since then, the Bloomsburg University Community Task Force on Racial Equity has been working with a diverse group of students to try to reduce racism. Harris says the program has changed the tone of the school; it has "reduced name-calling and bullying."

Every other Friday fifty students are chosen to discuss diversity issues. Now, all races at the school are talking and socializing with one another, says Harris.



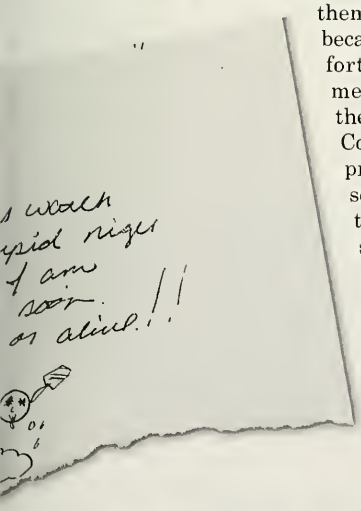
Gays and lesbians are also targets of discrimination and prejudice prevalent in this area and other areas across the coun-

try. Dozens of anti-gay comments are also published in the *Press Enterprise's* letters to the editor and in the "30 Seconds" column. In a September 11, 2003, letter to the editor, Evy Lysk of Benton, a frequent caller to "30 Seconds," wrote, "I don't think homosexuals should be getting special rights, marriage isn't supposed to be for Adam and Steve, Mommy Madonna isn't supposed to be kissing girls on the mouth, and homosexual bishops aren't supposed to be leaders in churches, preaching to anyone about sin . . . I see this gay train coming and all it's going to do is divide this country."

Dr. Terry Riley, professor of English and advisor of Free Spirit at Bloomsburg University, says that rural areas tend to change more slowly than urban areas. "Small things like differences in race and sexual orientation become minor in big cities, but stick out in rural areas like Columbia County," he says "This area is coming around, but slowly; there are positive signs."

In the past anti-Semitism has been seen around the county. Today, however, incidents are less frequent. "Occasionally there appear anti-Semitic letters in the *Press Enterprise*, but that is the extent," says Dr. David Greenwald, associate professor of sociology at Bloomsburg University. He says that since he came to the university in 1970, he cannot remember any major incidents. "It's all done behind our backs," says one prominent Jew, who asked not to be identified, "but we still hear of comments, and attitudes are slowly changing."

"Very often students are not willing to identify themselves [religiously], because they feel uncomfortable about comments made about them," says Dr. Gloria Cohen-Dion, associate professor of political science and advisor to Hillel, a Jewish social and cultural group at Bloomsburg University.



Letter sent to a fifth grade student at Bloomsburg Middle School on April 5, 1995.

She mentions the letters in the *Press Enterprise*—"we try to keep it very calm; however, the Anti-Defamation League heard about it and sent a letter to the newspaper," she says.

The letter was directed to both the community and the newspaper.

"When races have been separated and kept apart, there is an awkwardness when they get thrown together," says Dr. Christopher Armstrong, professor of sociology at Bloomsburg University. Some students may think, "I don't know who these people are, but these people over here look like me, so I want to spend time with them. And I don't think it's conscious," Armstrong says. Class differences offer one explanation. "A lot of our working class kids come from families, with a fair amount of prejudice, and there are a lot of lower-class Black kids from the inner-city, so they don't have much in common," says Armstrong. Another problem is provincialism. "A lot of kids think the whole world is like the world they come out of. They're limited by their class background, so when they get to college they realize everyone isn't just like me. The poor Black kid who has rarely been out of his Black neighborhood may also be among Whites for the first time," says Armstrong.

Racism often stems from ignorance, says Armstrong. He points to people "who see the world in terms of black and white, in terms of right and wrong. I think that's what really perpetuates racism the most. Whites and Blacks have been kept apart for a long time. If you can live together with people, you can find out that they're not too much different than you are."

"When you have an all White police force, and all White government, and most of the teachers are not diverse in this area, you have the same people with the same ideas," says Tarr.

Hope For the Future

What can be done to make a change? Irv Wright believes, "One thing we could do is to ensure that our curriculum in the K-12 sector of education includes people from diverse backgrounds."

Schools are set up to reinforce the identity of the majority, says Wright. "Once administrators and teachers of the school district agree to open up the curriculum and open up to be more sensitive to hire people from different backgrounds, then we will start doing things that make a difference," says Wright.

Wright believes to help stop the cycle of racism, "hopefully our parents will be a little more open and they will talk about treating people as individuals and showing respect," to their children. "Once we get to that point, I think we will go a long way in making a difference in our society." ■

[Contributing to this article were Matt Caterinicchia, John Elliot, Jonathan Gass, and Christine Varner. For more information visit www.adl.org or call (215)-568-2223.]

ACRES of Difference

Revisiting the Civil Rights Struggle

by Beth Roberts

"The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was the turning point in the consciousness of the American people," says civil rights documentary filmmaker Sean Devlin. "Many people from the movement believed that the work they had done had taken hold in America," he says. "They moved onto other things in their lives, and many of them now regret not doing more to keep the movement and the education alive," Devlin says.

Today's students are only being taught a short digest of the movement, Devlin says. Veterans from the civil rights era are concerned that the significance of the movement and the people involved will be forgotten by future generations.

In 2001, Devlin decided to address the situation. He left NBC, where he had made 18 civil rights documentaries for "Time and Again with Jane Pauley," to found the Brooklyn-based American Civil Rights Education Services (ACRES) which provides civil rights education programs for high school students, who can earn college credits. "I decided I wasn't going to listen to anyone who said I was crazy or a dreamer. I took a lesson from the movement, never take no for an answer," says Devlin.

ACRES not only teaches students about civil rights, but takes the participants on a 10-day, five state expedition of the South, where they not only visit important historical sites from the movement but also meet with movement veterans who Devlin says are "vital, vibrant, and vertical."

While on the ACRES Freedom Trail, students and teachers meet James Meredith, the first Black student at the University of Mississippi. They take a walking tour of Selma, Alabama, with voting rights veterans Joanne Bland, Lawrence Huggins and Annie Lee Cooper. They visit Mason Temple, the site of Dr. Martin Luther King's final "mountaintop" speech, and they march across the same Edmund Pettus Bridge, where civil rights activists had once been gassed and beaten during the "Bloody Sunday" march in 1965. The ACRES Freedom Trail also visits numerous Southern universities where the sit-in movement developed.

Dr. Bernard LaFayette is one of the "vital, vibrant and vertical" veterans who believes what ACRES does is unique because the students can see the U.S. in a different light. "It gives them an opportunity to learn that in our democracy, when conditions exist, people can organize, use the force in their souls, their speech and their vote to make changes," he says.

Denise Hughes, 18, an ACRES alumna from Brooklyn,

Photo provided by Sean Devlin of ACRES

While on the Freedom Trail in April of 2003, ACRES participants visited James Meredith's place of business in Jackson, Mississippi.

New York, had the opportunity to meet with LaFayette at a Southern diner in April 2002.

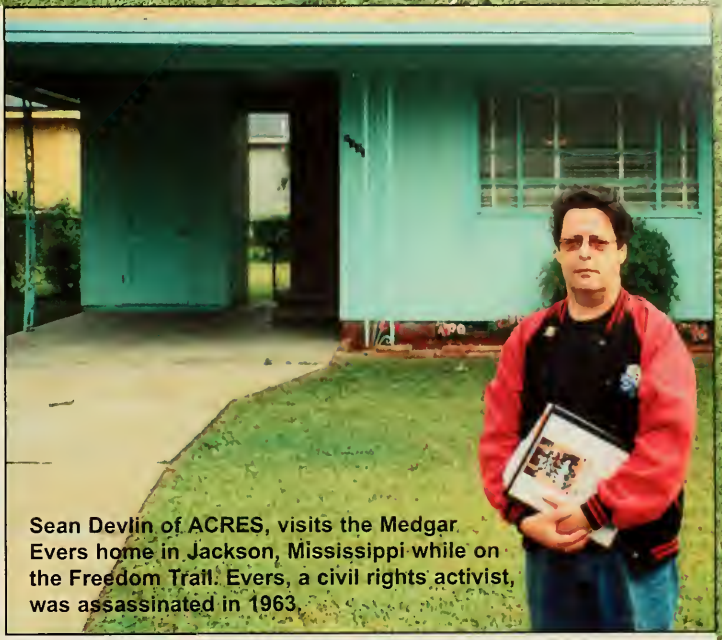
"We talked to Dr. LaFayette about everything going on in the world; violence, racism and how to deal with our own personal dilemmas," she says. "The discussion lasted so long they closed the diner and kicked us out." Then, LaFayette and the ACRES students moved their conversation to the parking lot.

"He was giving us everything on his ideas, what he learned from Martin Luther King Jr. and what he wanted us to take home with us. It was just a beautiful thing to just be in a parking lot with such an inspirational person," Hughes says. "It all clicked for me when Dr. LaFayette said it."

And there is a lot to be said while on the Freedom Trail. The students' bus is equipped with a microphone open for anyone. "We had amazing discussions on the bus, it was our forum to have any kind of debate we wanted. We talked about what it was like being Black and the kinds of racism that still exist," says Hughes. "People got loud and fired up, they dug into issues and that was the fun of it. We talked about how we wanted to bring our experience back home with us to share what we learned," she says.

Hughes also finds the lack of civil rights education in the school system to be "rather sad," which is one of the reasons she is majoring in Elementary Education at Susquehanna University.

"A lot of young kids think history isn't important. They don't realize that the people from the civil rights movement have done things for them directly, and that they are still alive and here for us to learn from," she says.



Sean Devlin of ACRES, visits the Medgar Evers home in Jackson, Mississippi while on the Freedom Trail. Evers, a civil rights activist, was assassinated in 1963.

The civil rights education provided by ACRES is not just about understanding the history, but also "about relationships between the changes that took place and the changes that still need to take place," says LaFayette.

ACRES has provided scholarships for 320 students since its founding in 2001. Three more expeditions are currently being planned for the spring and summer of 2004. The goal of ACRES, says Devlin, is to create a civil rights curriculum that will be accessible to every district in the nation. Its motto is "an ACRE in every community."

Funding for ACRES is made possible by donations made by many groups and organizations, some of which are ABC Inc., AOL Time Warner Inc., the New York City Department of Education, New York State Legislature, Sony Music Inc., and the United Federation of Teachers. ■

[For more information about ACRES contact Sean Devlin or Reginald H. Bowman, ACRES Board Secretary, at 563 8th St., No.4R Brooklyn, NY 11215 or by phone at 718-768-1365.]

> *"People from the civil rights movement have done things for us directly, and they are still alive and here for us to learn from."*
>
> —Denise Hughes

It's Tough to be a Black Hero

Illustration courtesy of American International Pictures

►They're Black detectives; sex machines to the chicks.

►Their names weren't only their business, but also their pleasure.

►They're far out chicks in wild dashikis that blew our minds.

►They're the heroes of Blaxploitation, urban heroes who made their marks in movie theatres and grind houses in the 1970s.

by Mike Sullivan

The Blaxploitation genre may seem negligible, like some kind of misguided fad, but the films were action-packed, exciting, and never took themselves too seriously.

Fans of the genre disagree on when the movement started. For some, it began in 1965 with the Sidney Poitier thriller *The Slender Thread*. Others claim it began in 1971 with *Shaft*, while still others say it started in the late 1930s with jazzy all-black musicals, like *Harlem on the Prairie*. Considering that most Blaxploitation films dealt with private detectives subverting "The Man's" world from within, it's more than likely *Shaft* was the film that kicked off the Blaxploitation craze.

Contrary to most social critics' opinions, the films weren't just about action. The genre spanned everything from comedy (*Car Wash*) to horror (*Blacula*) to heartfelt drama (*Cornbread, Earl, and Me)*. The films delivered exactly what their audience wanted.

"Blaxploitation" was coined by Junius Griffin, former head of the Hollywood chapter of the NAACP, who used the word to lambaste the films he felt were "violent and simpleminded." *Super Fly* was one of the films relentlessly targeted by Griffin. His criticism of Blaxploitation smacks of hypocrisy since he was a press agent who, weeks before his accusation, failed to get the *Super Fly* account from Warner Bros.

Many historians consider the films nothing more than a footnote in film history, but the Blaxploitation movement is more than just unstoppable private detectives or pimps with hearts of gold.

The soundtrack from *Shaft* influenced countless film and television scores, not only in how the score was arranged, but also in how the film was marketed. Independent films like Melvin Van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Badass Song* influenced the dark, gritty style not only of urban action thrillers, but also of Oscar-nominated fare like *Requiem for a Dream* and mainstream successes like *New Jack City*.

The Blaxploitation movement finally gave Blacks a chance to play leading characters instead of suffering through bit roles and token walk-ons. The work of actors Fred Williamson, Pam Grier, and Jim Brown are still noted for their charismatic and gutsy performances. Blaxploitation films also gave Blacks an opportunity to write and direct, most notably screenwriter Oscar Williams who was behind the blockbuster hit *Black Belt Jones*. Former *Hogan's Heroes* co-star Ivan Dixon directed the darkly satirical urban revolution film *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, a film that still has a large fan-base today.

The Blaxploitation movement came to an end because of repetitive plot lines and increasingly cheap production values. Pioneering blockbusters, like *Jaws* and *Star Wars,* also contributed to Blaxploitation's demise. Smaller pictures like *Hell Up in Harlem* just couldn't compete with monster sharks and Wookies. The urban action thrillers didn't have the crossover appeal the studios were looking for.

Attempts to revive the genre, most recently John Singleton's *Shaft* remake and Malcolm D. Lee's satirical *Undercover Brother*, have been unsuccessful. With Hollywood's love of empty demographically approved snoozers it's possible that Blaxploitation will never be revived, but thanks to the advent of DVD, future generations will be able to view classics like *Coffy* and *Dolemite* with a new sense of respect and titillation. ■

A Bloomsburg Student Is . . .

A Learner

More than 30 percent of Bloomsburg students are ranked in the top 20 percent of their high school class. This fall, four freshmen were valedictorians and two were salutatorians.

A Citizen

Last year more than 3,000 students contributed 50,879 hours of service to the community. Community service projects ranged from helping area children with their school work to providing food for the needy at the Bloomsburg Food Cupboard.

A Leader

Sixty percent of incoming Bloomsburg students participated in student government, honors programs or athletics while in high school. Many participated in more than one of these activities.

Learn more about Bloomsburg:

Undergraduate Admissions: (570) 389-4316
Graduate Studies: (570) 389-4015
Continuing Education: (570) 389-4420
The World Wide Web: www.bloomu.edu

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