



Freedom Seekers

*Friends of Freedom, P.O. Box 360661,
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www.ohioundergroundrailroad.org*

Volume 1, Issue 2

A Letter from the Interim President

To FOFS Members:

It seems impossible that 2006 is nearly gone! While the year has been a busy for FOFS members individually, it has been a quiet one for the organization as a whole. Due to the low a membership participation at the quarterly meetings, most of the organization business was taken care of by the FOFS Executive Board.

The FOFS/OURA- My Family website has been renewed for another year by the administrator, Art Thomas. I encourage the membership to check in periodically and participate in the site. We extend our thanks to Art for his work.

There are tentative plans to hold a 2007 Summit at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, Ohio. FOFS member Matt Matthews will serve as one of the coordinators.

Finally, I wish a Happy and Blessed Holiday Season to all.

Sincerely
Beverly J. Gray
Interim President

Virginia FOFS Member Invited to Speak

John Ogden, FOFS member from Alexandria, VA, was invited to Chesterhill, Ohio as the guest speaker for the Multicultural Genealogical Center in October. He presented Ada Woodson Adams with a painting titled "Follow the Drinking Gourd" in memory of Alvin Adams. The painting will be displayed in the

MGC research Library when it is completed in Chesterhill.

John's speech covered William Steel and other prominent abolitionists of southeast Ohio including Monroe, Noble, Belmont and Washington County activities on the Underground Railroad. He shared original information discovered in records of the Steel family in Portland, Oregon and explained how the family relationships aided in providing assistance to escaping slaves. There were considerable discussions on the tri-racial families of the Ohio River Valley and how they are related and where to locate information and records.

Ohio FOFS Members Continue Their Work

Ohio FOFS Members continue to be very busy in spreading the word of the Underground Railroad. John Mattox is no exception. The following gives us a glimpse of John's activities.

Oct. 2005. The Homestead Museum located on the Bob Evans Farm in Rio Grande, Ohio, hosted a special exhibit called Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad. This exhibit which was open for the entire season of 2005, highlighted the slavery movement from the capture of slaves in Africa, to the auction block, to slave labor and attempts at rebellion and escape, to the rise of abolitionism and the development of the Underground Railroad. The poignant text, artifacts and photographs brought this important story to life for the visitors. This exhibit was put together by the Bob Evans Farm Homestead Museum, the Friends of Freedom Society, Inc., the Underground Railroad Museum, Flushing, Ohio and the Wayne National Forest. In Jan 2006, Ray Mckinnis and Gale Leslie of the Bob Evans Farm presented the display panels from the exhibit to John Mattox and the UGRR Museum, where they remain on display.



February 2006 was almost non-stop. Because of Black History month, every organization within a 100 mile radius needed a speaker. Some of the highlights of February were presentations at: McIntyre, Ohio, one of the first slave settlements (1829) in Ohio, several schools, a host of scout troops, 4 churches and 2 presentations at Belmont County Correctional Facility, St. Clairsville, Ohio, and Eastern Ohio Correction Center, Wintersville, Ohio.

From February to June a project called “Follow the North Star,” supported and funded by the Belmont County Tourism Council took place at the UGRR Museum, Flushing, Ohio.

March 15 A program and exhibit titled “African American Presence in the Ohio River Valley” was held at Ohio University Athens. The project manager, Dr Vibert Cambridge prompted students to research three specific topic: work, school and everyday life for African Americans.

April 3 and 4 50 students, their advisor, Dr Pencil McCray and other visitors from the Ethnic College Counseling Center, Inc., in Denver, Colorado, visited the Underground Railroad Museum. John Mattox, the curator, welcomed the group and addressed their questions. After which, he guided a tour to many sites in Ohio and West Virginia. Midway in the tour they stopped at Burris’s Café on Wheeling Island for a “Down home meal”. A good time was had by all. This was part of a tour that traveled from Denver to North Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, Ohio and West Virginia to visit 16 “Historically Black Colleges”, in an effort to emphasize the importance of higher education.

Mar 5 The fifth annual lecture on the UGRR and black history was hosted at Mars Middle School, Mars, Pennsylvania for 7th 8th and 9th graders.

May 9 Dr. Mary Watson, Denver Colorado, who is writing a book on the UGRR, visited the Museum as part of her research project. She was interested in the (so called) history of the UGRR quilts.

May 25 Guided a tour for Christ United Methodist Church, Cleveland, Ohio. The tour included sites in Belmont and Jefferson Counties as well as Captina African Methodist Cemetery settlement of free African Americans in Belmont county in 1825.

June 13 The Trial Lawyers Blackstone Club, of Wheeling, WV hosted a program centered around the Fugitive Slave Bill of 1850. John Mattox was the main speaker.

June 20 West Virginia Days at Independence Hall, Wheeling WV. The history of Statehood for West Virginia 1863...with slavery being one of the political discussions.

July 18 A bus tour with Bethany Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. The tour included sites of interest in Wheeling, WV, Martins Ferry, Ohio and the UGRR Museum, Flushing, Ohio.

Aug 13 The August meeting of the Zane Trace Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution took place at the UGRR Museum, followed by a tour of the premises. The topic of interest was a slave cabin containing household items, period clothing, working tools and a secret hideaway.

Aug 14 The Belmont County Genealogical Society held its August meeting at the Flushing UGRR Museum, followed by a tour of the facility.

Aug 26 The second annual bus tour, from Franklin County included 30 Seniors under the supervision of Director Monique Mapp toured the UGRR Museum and Captina Cemetery.



Sept 26 The A. D. White Research Center Society, Avella, Pa. presented the first in a series of cultural lectures in memory of recently deceased board member, Anthony Valenti. John Mattox was the guest speaker. The topic was the UGRR in the Middletown' Pennsylvania.

The highlight of my year was being a facilitator for the Wheeling YWCA 100th Anniversary celebration. This was an on going program involving many, many people of importance in which Author, Toni Morrison; Renowned Composer, Richard Danielpour; Wheeling Symphony conductor, Andre Smith; Wheeling Symphony Director, Susan Hogan; Historian and Curator, John Mattox; Opera Singer and Understudy, Tracy Luck and the YWCA staff collaborated to present the story of the Escape of Margaret Garner.

For more information visit our website at: www.ugrrf.org. or the UGRR Museum at 121 High St, Flushing Ohio. Follow the signs on Interstate 70, exit 208, or Phone 740-968-2080

Ohio University Campus Days

The Ohio University Department of African American Studies and the Multicultural Genealogical Center of Chesterhill held their Community and Campus Days, October 12-17, 2006.

This annual event, now in its fifth year, was created to partner the Ohio University Campus with the surrounding communities, showcasing the multicultural and multiracial heritage of southeastern Ohio.

The event's theme focused on the music of the Ohio River Valley and the surrounding Appalachian region, with special emphasis on the music of the Underground Railroad

This year's Alvin Adams Memorial Lecture entitled "The Cultural Underground Railroad" was delivered by Ohio University Associate Professor of Telecommunications Arthur Cromwell.

Continuing with the Community and Campus Days, the little village of Chesterhill was treated to a performance by the Heritage Chorale of Cleveland, Ohio. The Chorale performed Negro Spirituals telling the history of a people who were enslaved but had the tenacity, strength and faith for a better life. The Heritage Chorale provided entertainment as well as an educational experience for all who attended the event giving a performance that would not soon be forgotten. The music, the dancers and the telling of the history of the people and the songs were well received.

The Heritage Chorale, under the direction of Sylvia Perry, consists of 37 entertainers with diverse backgrounds and educational achievements, but they all had one thing in common: passion for the songs and passion for keeping the past alive by uplifting their ancestors in through their voices.

Remember to renew your Friends of Freedom Membership between December 31, 2006 and January 31, 2007. Memberships should be sent to Cathy Nelson, FOFS Membership Chairperson, P. O. Box 360661, Columbus, Ohio 43236. The Annual Membership is \$35.00.



Columbus Seniors Enjoy UGRR Sites

Monique Mapp reports:

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Underground Railroad Study Group is dedicated to learning about the underground railroad. Classes provide an opportunity to learn of the history surrounding this time period. Each month the class visits local sites .

On May 15th the Study Group visited Henry Burke of Marietta where he guided a tour of the area.

On August 21st, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Underground Railroad Study Group traveled to Flushing, Ohio to visit The Underground Railroad Museum. John Mattox, curator and FOFS Historian, personally gave the group a historical lecture on the Underground Railroad and then led a tour of the museum, which was later followed by a tour of local historical sites.

On October 2nd the CRPD UGRR Study Group traveled to Chillicothe to tour this historically important city. Beverly Gray, Vice-President of the FOFS presented an informative and delightful tour . Not only did she present a lesson in the local Underground Railroad history, but also in early Ohio statehood history. Beverly has invited the group to Adena to study the beginnings of Ohio History. There are already plans in the works for next year.

If you have a local tour in your area please contact the CRPD UGRR Study Group through Monique Mapp at 645-3106 we are working on our 2007 calendar.

State Coordinator Nelson Attends Heritage Fair

Cathy Nelson, Friends of Freedom founder and OURA Coordinator attended the Annual African American Heritage Fair held at Second Baptist Church Columbus, Ohio in September

where the FOFS UGRR quilt was displayed. This church has long been recognized for its involvement in the Underground Railroad movement in Ohio.

In October, Cathy was the featured speaker at Clinton, Ohio during a daylong conference on the UGRR.

Cathy and her committee planned a wonderful tour for the year, "Heading North." Even though the response from membership was low, hopefully this tour can be taken at some future date. The tour generated interest from WBNS 10TV in Columbus, Ohio who was interested in recording the tour.

Cathy is also serving as membership Chairperson so please contact her for your membership renewal.

