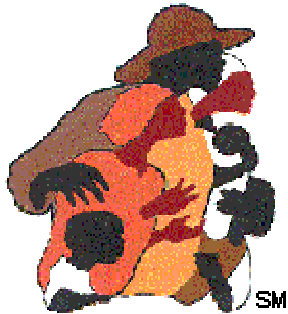


Spring 2009



# Freedom Seekers: The Friends of Freedom Society

The Ohio Underground Railroad Association

B.J Gray , Editor

Vol 4 Issue 1

## Plans Underway for Summit 2009

Plans are underway for the 2009 Friends of Freedom Society Summit, which will be held in Hudson, Ohio, on October 16 and 17. The sessions will be held at the Hudson Public Library.

During this year, the town of Hudson is commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of John Brown. The theme for the Summit is, Freedom : The Ultimate Price and will highlight John Brown and the raid at Harper' s Ferry.

During the Saturday session, Cary Steele, former Friends of Freedom member, will present information about Underground Railroad sites in Hudson and surrounding areas.

Another session will be presented by an architectural historian, who will share what to look for when documenting Underground Railroad sites.

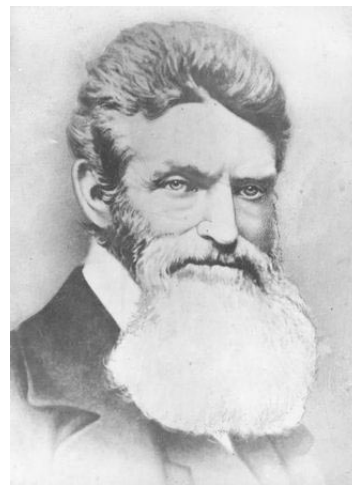
Dr. David Lucas, a professor at Ohio University and his students, who have been researching Underground Railroad sites in Lawrence County, will present their research findings.

The keynote speaker is to be announced later. The registration fee for the event is \$75.00.

Updates for the Summit will be posted on the FOFS website at : [www.ohioundergroundrailroad.org](http://www.ohioundergroundrailroad.org).

Lodging for the Summit will be available at The Clarion Inn which is located on route 8. The cost of a room for double occupancy is \$72.00 and will include a breakfast buffet. Triple occupancy rooms are \$82.00 and quad occupancy rooms are \$92.00 . Meals at the Summit will be on your own.

For more lodging information call The Clarion Inn at 330-653-9191.



**John Brown**

## Hudson, Ohio

The town of Hudson, Ohio was founded about 1800, by David Hudson. Hudson, a stockholder in the Connecticut Western Reserve Company, surveyed the area in 1799, then returned with his family in 1800 and established the settlement.

Hudson was the first settlement in what is now Summit County. David Hudson was a colonizationist and abolitionist. Colonizationists favored sending freed slaves to Africa.

Many of the settlers were members of the Congregationalist Church and Hudson soon became the center of Congregationalist thought.

Owen Brown and his very large family settled in the area . and actively

participated in UGRR activities.

His son, John, raided the arsenal at Harper's Ferry.. John planned to arm the slaves in the South, so that they could free themselves.



### John Parker Lives!!!!

John Parker was born a slave in Norfolk, Virginia, and at age 8 was sold at auction in Richmond, Virginia. He was forced to walk in a coffle of slaves to Alabama, where he became a slave of a doctor. While enslaved he learned the skills of the ironworking trade.

John bought his own freedom from the doctor, but the doctor refused to set him free. So, John freed himself by running away to Cincinnati, Ohio on the UGRR.



He later settled in Ripley, Ohio, where he built his home, established an ironworking business, married and raised a family.

Parker brazenly and boldly crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky, where he set about helping slaves to runaway. He rowed them across the Ohio River to Ripley in a tiny skiff, then they were helped by the Rankin family, the Collins family, as well as, the people who lived in the Africa Hill settlement.

This amazing Underground Railroad conductor, still lives through the talents of Anthony Gibbs.

Gibbs has presented John Parker to the John Clem Elementary School in Newark, the Mansion Day School, New Beginnings Christian School, in Columbus, the Tussing Elementary, School, Heritage Elementary School, in Pickerington and the Maryland Avenue School, in Bexley.

Frederick Brown, another son, built cabins in the woods near the settlement of Hudson, where he hid fugitives until it was safe to take them to Lake Erie. The Lake was just 24 miles to the north. Fugitives were helped by others at Lake Erie to make their way into Canada.

Owen's daughters and their husbands, hid fugitives in their homes and transported them to other places of safety.

In addition to UGRR activities, Hudson citizens placed much value on education. Hudson's schools became known for their excellence. David Hudson was responsible for the founding of Western Reserve College. The college was the only institution of higher learning in the northeastern region.

Anthony will present a full day's program to all eighth graders in Sidney, Ohio and to all grades three through five at Wickliffe Alternative School in Upper Arlington during the month of May. Anthony's website is : [www.historicimpressions.org](http://www.historicimpressions.org)

For more information about John Parker read: [His Promised Land: Autobiography of John Parker](#)





## Washington Court House Teacher Receives National Award

Paul LaRue, former FOFS member and Summit presenter, has received the 2009 Time Warner National Teacher Award.

In addition to receiving a \$5000.00 grant for Washington Court House High School, Paul will be honored at a gala in Washington D.C., on June 3, 2009.

The National Teacher Award recognizes teachers who effectively use cable TV programming and develop winning classroom projects.

Paul teaches junior-senior advanced history classes at Washington C.H. High School. Each year his class selects a project to research and document.

Paul and his students have thoroughly researched the Underground Railroad activity in Fayette County and have produced two booklets that published the results of their research.

Other projects include the research and restoration of the grave sites of the 39 soldiers that served in the United States Colored Troops and are buried in the Washington C.H. Cemetery.

Another project researched the Gist settlements of Brown and Highland Counties and yet another project interviewed and recorded the oral histories of the veterans of World War II.

Paul and his classes partnered with the National Park Service to do an archeological dig at the site of the Augustus West house on Barrett Road. Augustus West, a former slave, was responsible for helping runaway slaves by providing food and shelter for them as they passed through the area between Greenfield and Washington C.H.

Paul's history class maintains a website at : <http://www.washingtonch.k12.oh.us/mapsite/>

Congratulations to Paul LaRue for his excellent work with the youth of Fayette County.

## Mel Reid Participates in Inaugural Parade

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the filming of the award winning movie, "Glory." The movie depicts the United States Colored Troops (USCT) and the efforts of black men to defend the Union. The film is considered to be one the best Civil War movies ever made.

Mel Reid and his fellow re-enactors participated in this landmark movie. Reid and company can be seen during one of final scenes which shows the battle against the Confederate held Fort Wagner.

For the last 20 years, Reid has lectured

on the USCT and has given many performances depicting a soldier in Company A of the Massachusetts 54th aka the "Glory Brigade."

Most recently, however, Reid had the high honor of participating in the inaugural parade of President Barak Obama. Reid says that in spite of the bitter cold, he does not have words to describe the emotions he experienced as the "Glory Brigade" passed the reviewing stand.

Reid ends each of his presentations with the following message:

*"I proudly wear a Union Army uniform, not only to represent the 200,000 plus African American men, who fought for freedom during the Civil War, but my uniform uniquely represents the very last stop on the Underground Railroad."*



Photo Courtesy of Ben Hawley

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## **Staton Home Possible UGRR Site**

Deborah Staton and her husband purchased a house in Bellbrook in 1995. She learned from local history books and other reference material that the house had served as the parsonage for a Methodist Episcopal Church from 1850-1934.

She found there was split in the Methodist Church in 1828 and from the split the Methodist Protestant Church was established. The new church was considered to be “radical” in their beliefs. The parsonage was built some time after 1842.

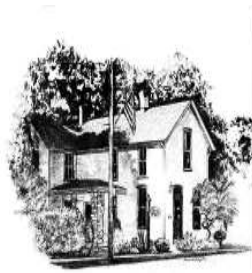
Deborah learned of its possible UGRR involvement during a walking tour of historical places.

The house meets the age requirement,

has religious connections to abolitionists and is near to the UGRR sites in Xenia, Yellow Springs and Springboro.

Deborah is in the process of following leads given her by her son and by the local historical society. She is also seeking advice from others who have thoroughly documented their UGRR sites.

Good luck to Deborah in her quest to find the truth about the history of 23 N. Franklin Street.



## **Freedom Seekers: the Book**

**Marla Jones continues her efforts to find funding for the reprinting of the FOFS book, Freedom Seekers: Ohio and the Underground Railroad.**

**The book, which told the story of the UGRR in the 12 regions of Ohio, was written by the various regional coordinators and edited by James Caccamo.**

**The last copies of this immensely popular book were sold two years ago, but the Society continues to receive requests for the book.**

**Contact Marla, at 614-889-2977, should you have any ideas that might help her in the quest for funding.**