

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Tour Auburn



This project only identifies a small number of historic sites relating to the Underground Railroad remaining on Cayuga County's landscape in the twenty-first century. They help tell stories of the remarkable people who committed their lives to freedom.

Harriet Tubman was Auburn's most famous freedom seeker. But, as a traveler on the Underground Railroad. She escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1849, she did not settle in Auburn until 1859, where she lived over 55 years. The Underground Railroad had been operating locally since at least the early 1830s. By the 1850s, Cayuga County's Black population numbered about 400 with half living in Auburn.

Several Quakers worked with a network that included the Vigilance Committee headquarters in Philadelphia kept by William Still and Lucretia Coffin Mott, who regularly sent travelers to Auburn and Cayuga County. Martha Coffin Wright, Frances and William Seward, and the Howland family in Sherwood were part of this local network.

The initial research study "Uncovering the Freedom Trail in Auburn and Cayuga County" was completed by Judith Wellman and others in 2005 as published by the City of Auburn's Historic Resources Review Board and the Cayuga County Historian's Office. This study identified over 100 documented connections in Cayuga County to the Under Ground Railroad.



1 Harriet Tubman Residence and Barn – 6056 South Street Rd. Fleming, N.Y. – (NTF) (NHL) (NHP) (P). Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1849 and returned south about 13 times to bring more than 70 people to freedom. In 1859, she purchased this 7-acre farm from Francis Miller Seward and husband William Henry Seward. The wood frame house burned in 1880 and replaced by Harriet's family with a brick house in 1883. The residence and barn are currently under restoration and closed to the public.

2 Home for the Aged at 180-182 South St. – (NTF) (NHL) (NHP) (P). Harriet Tubman purchased this building and the surrounding 25-acre farm at auction in 1896. She transferred it to the A.M.E. Zion Church in 1903 and in 1953 they opened it as museum. Check in at the Visitor Center for guided tour information.

3 Harriet Tubman Home Visitor Center – rear 180-182 South St. - (NTF) (NHP) (P). After decades of hosting successful annual Harriet Tubman Memorial Weekends celebrating Tubman's life and legacy, the A.M.E. Zion Church constructed a Library and a Visitor Center featuring educational panels and interpretive exhibits by Syracuse University archaeological excavations.

4 Elijah and Georgia Stewart House – 29 Richardson Ave. The son of Harriet Tubman's brother, James Stewart (nee Ben Ross, Jr.) and Catherine Stewart (nee Jane Kane) both freedom seekers, Elijah was born in Canada in 1856 and moved to Auburn in 1861.

5 Elliott-Stewart House - 31 Richardson Ave. (NTF). Thomas Elliott's escape from slavery is legendary. A friend of Harriet Tubman's, he fled in 1857 as part of a large group known as the "Dover Eight". Tubman's niece, Ann Marie Stewart, escaped slavery and married Elliott in Auburn in 1863. They built this small house in 1868 and raised their family here.

6 Stewart-Winslow House site – 33 Richardson Ave. Harriet Tubman's sister-in-law, Catherine Kane Stewart Winslow (nee Jane Kane) lived here with her children. She escaped with Tubman's brother, James Stewart (nee Ben Ross, Jr.) at Christmas in 1854, and settled in Auburn with their children after James died in Canada in 1861. She married Andrew Winslow and had one son, Albert. The house is no longer standing.

7 John and Mary Waire House – 35 Richardson Ave. John Waire, born c.1836 in Virginia, became successor to Morgan Freeman's barbershop and a well-known African American leader, trustee with Nelson Davis of the short-lived African Methodist Episcopal Church, hostler, barber, and real estate developer. The Waires built this house after 1871.

8 Philip and Mary Gaskin Elliott House - 34 Richardson Ave. Mary Elliott grew up across the street from this house, daughter of Thomas Elliott (Dover Eight) and Ann Marie Stewart. After she married Philip Gaskin, a barber, they lived here. Mary Gaskin Elliott and many Stewart relatives helped care for Tubman during her last year at the John Brown infirmary.

9 John and Millie Hollis Stewart site – 99-101 South St. Harriet Tubman's brother, John Stewart (nee Robert Ross) escaped slavery with Tubman's help on Christmas Day 1854, leaving his enslaved wife Mary and 3 children behind. He moved to Auburn with his parents, Ben and Rit Ross from St. Catharines, Canada, in 1861. He married Millie in 1864.

10 Belt-Gaskin House - 77 Chapman Ave. Born in Maryland, probably in slavery, Rachel and Thomas Belt built this house between 1868 and 1870. This house has been continuously inhabited by freedom seekers and their descendants.

11

William Henry Stewart, Jr., House - 64 Garrow St. William Henry Stewart (nee Henry Ross), Harriet Tubman's brother, escaped slavery with Tubman's help on Christmas Day 1854. After living in St. Catharines, Canada, he and his son, William Henry Stewart, Jr., moved to Auburn. William, Jr., and his wife Emma Moseby Stewart lived here in 1880, replacing the original home with this one about 1899.

12



Fort Hill Cemetery – 17 Fort Street – (NTF) (P). Opened in 1851, Fort Hill contains the graves of many freedom seekers and Underground Railroad supporters, including Harriet Tubman Davis, her second husband, veteran Nelson Davis; the Miller / Seward family; the Bogarts; the Wrights, and many Tubman relatives. Note: To find Harriet Tubman's grave, enter from Fitch Avenue and turn left to Tubman's gravesite, located beneath the large Norway Spruce evergreen tree.

13



Thompson Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church - 49 Parker St, – (NHL) (NHP) (P). In 1891, the congregation built a bigger church here, named after Henry Thompson, the first local AME Zion bishop. Harriet Tubman helped raised funds for its construction and attended services here. Harriet's funeral was conducted in this church on March 13, 1913.

14

John Henry Stewart, Jr., and Eliza Stewart House – 51 Parker St. John Stewart (nee Robert Ross), Harriet Tubman's brother, escaped slavery with Tubman's help on Christmas Day 1854 leaving his wife Mary and 3 children—John, Jr., Moses, and infant Harriet. After moving to Auburn, a family friend, John Bowley, rescued Stewart's sons and sent them to Auburn to be free.

15

Historic African American Settlement – 110-142 Osborne St. In 1837, Hagaman & Markham's Map of the Village of Auburn indicated "New Guinea," a "Negro Settlement," with seven houses, located on the west bank of the Owasco Outlet on Mechanic Street as it was known then.

16

Harriet and Nicolas Bogart House - 20 Miller St. Nicholas Bogart, "one of the oldest and best-known colored men in this State and a man of almost national reputation during the slavery agitation," and Harriet Bogart, an "inestimable and exemplary woman," were both born in slavery and worked for the Seward's. They bought this house in Harriet's name in 1857.

17

Lazette Miller Worden House – 2 Frederick St. The daughter of Judge Elijah Miller, Lazette grew up with her sister, Frances Miller Seward, at 33 South St. Lazette Worden built this house after her husband's death in 1856 on land she inherited from her father.

18

Rev. William Cromwell – 8 Francis St. Served as the pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church at 9 Washington Street from 1852 until about 1875. Rev. Cromwell was born in Maryland or Virginia and likely a freedom seeker. His wife Malinda was from Pennsylvania. They married in 1852 and settled here.

19



New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center – 23 South St. (P). Opened in 2018, this new facility illuminates the many connections Auburn and Cayuga County have to equal rights, abolitionism, and freedom. The Center offers an orientation to historic and cultural sites and information about guided tours by National Park Service Rangers.

20



William Henry and Frances Miller Seward House (Seward House Museum) - 33 South St. – (NTF) (NHL) (P). Judge Elijah Miller lived here until his death in 1851, sharing his home with his daughter Frances and her husband, William Henry Seward. On November 18, 1855, William Seward. noted in his diary, "the 'underground railroad' works wonderfully. Two passengers came here last night."

21



Cayuga County Courthouse - 152 Genesee St. – (NTF) (NR) (P). Site of two landmark trials relating to abolition and the Underground Railroad. In 1846, William Henry Seward defended William Freeman, a Black man accused of murdering four people, on grounds of insanity, an early use of this defense.

22



Westminster Presbyterian Church – 17 William St. – (NR) (P). Harriet Tubman and her family were closely associated with this church. The Central Presbyterian Society formed in 1861, church members met first on Genesee Street, where Harriet Tubman married Nelson Davis in 1869. This building was erected in 1870. Several church members supported publication of her first biography, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman (1869) by Sarah Bradford.

23

Site of Luke and Catharine Freeman House – 14 Court St. Born enslaved in Auburn, Morgan "Luke" Freeman (1803-63) was freed as a young man and became a gunsmith and barber. Beginning in 1834, he and his wife Catherine kept Auburn's major Underground Railroad station.

24



Cayuga County Historian's Office – 10 Court St. (NTF) (P). This office has volumes of research, documents, maps, photographs, and more related to the history of Auburn and Cayuga County, including slavery, the Underground Railroad, abolition, women's rights, and more.

25

Site of Derby and Miller Publishers – 115 Genesee St. In 1853, Derby and Miller published Solomon Northrup's best-selling book Twelve Years a Slave. Born free, Northrup was kidnapped and sold into slavery. In 2013, Hollywood adapted it into an award-winning motion picture. Morgan "Luke" Freeman's barbershop also kept an Underground Railroad station on the second floor of an earlier building here.

26

Northern Independent Newspaper – 113 Genesee St. Beginning in 1857, this site was the office of William Hosmer and the Northern Independent, a national abolitionist newspaper located in an earlier building on this site.

27



Seymour Library – 176 Genesee St. (NTF) (NR) (P). The library holds many volumes related to local history, including abolition and the Underground Railroad. Check with library staff for the History Room's research hours.

28

Abijah Fitch House - 197 Genesee St. Built between 1837-41 for Abijah and Lanah Fitch. Fitch was a keeper of an Underground Railroad safe house. The Fitches sold lots around Auburn to freedom seekers who established homes and families here after the Civil War.

29

Site of Martha and David Wright House - 192 Genesee St. (NTF). Martha Coffin Wright (1806-1875), sister of Quaker reformer Lucretia Coffin Mott, kept an Underground Railroad safe house here. In 1848, the sisters helped organize the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls. In December 1860, Martha wrote, "seven newly arrived slaves that Harriet Tubman has just pioneered safely from the Southern part of Maryland."

30

Site of African American Episcopal Church - 9-11 Washington St. Incorporated in 1838, the AME Zion Church met in a former school building constructed on this site in 1839. Rev. Eastup, was himself a freedom seeker from Virginia. His wife Maria was Native American.

31

Hosmer House - 29 Washington St. William Hosmer espoused a "doctrine of a higher law," arguing that slavery violated holiness and moral purity, "one of the most essential principles of the gospel." In 1861, Hosmer was part of a network who alerted people at the Tubman home of slave catchers.

32

Hornbeck Houses - 38 and 40 Jefferson St. Sebeo Hornbeck, probable freedom seeker from Maryland, settled here. Their daughter, Cornelia, married Stephen Murray, the first African American clerk in Auburn's U.S. post office.

33

Auburn Prison - 135 State St. George Washington escaped from slavery in South Carolina only to spend ten years in Auburn Prison. In 1854, he was about to be released and sent back to slavery under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Local biracial crowd of 200 people prevented his recapture and sent him to freedom in St. Catharine's, Canada.

34

Auburn Theological Seminary (Huntington House) - 11 Seminary St. Auburn Theological Seminary established in 1819 trained both black and white male students as Presbyterian ministers. In March 1834, Seminary students started one of the first U. S. antislavery societies. The Huntington House was built in 1861. In 1892-94, the Seminary constructed Willard Memorial Chapel at 17 Nelson Street, site of remarkable complete Tiffany interior with featured mosaics and stained-glass windows.

KEY
(NTF) - Network to Freedom Site
(NHL) - National Historic Landmark
(NR) – National Register of Historic Places
(P) – Open to the General Public – check for hours
(NHP) –National Historical Park

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