

African American Abolitionists: No Longer Lost to History

by Michele Sullivan, Ph.D.

Few chapters of American history capture the public imagination like the Underground Railroad (UGRR). The drama of fugitives risking their lives for liberty emblazons the UGRR in the minds of a wide audience. The most widespread belief is that the Quakers in South Eastern PA. were the abolitionists who helped the poor and helpless fugitives.

The Kennett Underground Railroad Center (KURC) sponsors URR heritage tours. I became extremely interested in this history and volunteered to help KURC by guiding heritage tours. To prepare for tours, I read a number of books, among the most important being R.C. Smedley's *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of PA* (1883) and William Kashatus's *Just Over the Line* (2002). A more recent work is Manisha Sinha's *The Slave's Cause: a History of Abolition*, winner of the 2017 Frederick Douglass Book Prize.

I was surprised when I read in Smedley's book : "It is a notable fact that nearly all who (thus) assisted the fugitive to freedom were members of the Society of Friends" (p. 34). It was perceptions such as this that biased the understanding and subsequent research of African American abolitionists.

I suspected that R. C. Smedley simply wasn't providing the full picture. I further suspected that women and African Americans involved in the UGRR probably hadn't been given enough recognition for their work. So, with KURC Board member and graduate student in history Megan Delmar, I began digging more deeply into the Chester County records. I read newspapers from the 1800's in the Chester County Historical Society. Close reading produced a number of names of possible black abolitionists not seen in other literature. Megan then took those names and dug through the Chester County Archives to obtain more in-depth information.

Within a short time we had the names of many dozens of

African American abolitionists and at least some information about how each participated in the UGRR.

The research confirmed our hypothesis: the local underground railroad system was not confined to Quakers.

Among the most interesting facts: there were at least three different UGRR systems, all white, bi-racial, and all African American. We learned from slave narratives and other historical references that a great number of African American churches were crucial places of refuge and assistance in Chester County and many other states and counties throughout the United States. African American communities were also destinations for many fugitives throughout free states. Bucktoe in New Garden, PA. was one.

Another surprising discovery was the increasing and remarkable white hostility towards blacks in the "free" state of Pa. The Colored Conventions (1830+) were an outgrowth of whites' desire to send African Americans back to Liberia (The Colonization Society), as were racial riots and the destruction of African American property and churches. African Americans were far from passive in their response.

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Kennett Underground Railroad Center Open House

Please join us on Sunday, March 4, 2018, from 2-4:00 pm, for an Open House at Kennett Friends Meeting, 125 West Sickle St., right off North Union in Kennet Square. We will introduce ourselves as Board members and volunteers and explain what projects we are working on, both as a group and individually. We will make brief presentations on current research, tell a few stories of the local UGRR, and answer any questions. There will be light refreshments and activities for children. If you think you will attend, please contact us by Thursday, March 1, by phone (484)-544-5070, or email info@kennettundergroundrr.org.

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Many self-help groups began, community leaders became politically active, and wide-spread efforts were made to educate blacks at all age levels.

It might be interesting for readers to learn about two African American abolitionists in Kennett Square area. Levi and Harriet Hood married and settled in Wilmington, DE. in 1813. Later they moved to New Garden, PA where they helped establish the African Union Church where Rev. Hood served as minister. The Hoods' adult son, Levi, Jr. wrote in *Village Record* (10/19/1858) that his father's



Above: Michelle Sullivan researching the graveyard at Hosanna AUMP Church located at Lincoln University.

The Hoods rented a farm from the Jackson family, Quakers. The Hoods had 12 children and because the family was poor, all children were educated at township expense until they reached 12 years old. (PA Poor School Children's Index 1810-1842.) The program ended in 1842. While Levi was not literate, Harriet was. Because of their commitment to have their children more adequately

educated, she arranged with local Quakers to provide room, board and education and/or training in exchange for her children helping with household or farming tasks. This arrangement was made for each child.

In 1847, Harriet is recorded as a member of an "Assistance Committee," dedicated to staging a fair to raise funds for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, an abolitionist newspaper, reported that Ms Hood spoke at the 12th Annual Meeting of the Pa Anti-Slavery Society on Oct. 25, 1849. Her presence was all the more remarkable given the meeting was largely attended by white men. MS Hood also worked on Resolution No. 4, which stated, "...the American Church, as a body, being in league with the oppressor, is an enemy to the slave..." (*PA Freeman*, Vol, VI, Issue 43, p. 2.) She demonstrated a strong independent character and routinely travelled by herself to give anti-slavery lectures.

Partly as a result of the Hoods' commitment to successful education of their children, Levi J. W. Hood Jr. became the 17th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church in N. Carolina and was regarded as "...a major religious and political leader of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries". (Martin, *For God and Race*, p. 21) Several of their children became ministers including a daughter.

With the help of Meghan Delmar (who moved to Texas a year ago), we have uncovered many examples of African American abolitionists in this region. We have found patterns of UGRR operation that refute the well-meaning but oversimplified conclusions of 19th C historians such as Dr. Smedley. But there is more to be learned! If you have an interest in furthering this work of discovery, contact KURC and Dr. Michele Sullivan, and we can get you started on pushing the "trackless trail" ever further.

Scheduled KURC Bus Tours for 2018

These two-hour tours take place on the third Sunday of each month. They begin at 2:30 at the Brandywine Valley Tourism office on 300 Greenwood Road, outside Longwood Gardens.

May 20

June 17

July 16

August 19

September 23

October 21

For more tour information and to register using Eventbrite, please visit the Events Section on our Facebook page or website. Registration can also be made via email or voice message.

Private tours may also be arranged.

Contact us by phone (484)-544-5070, or email info@kennettundergroundrr.org.

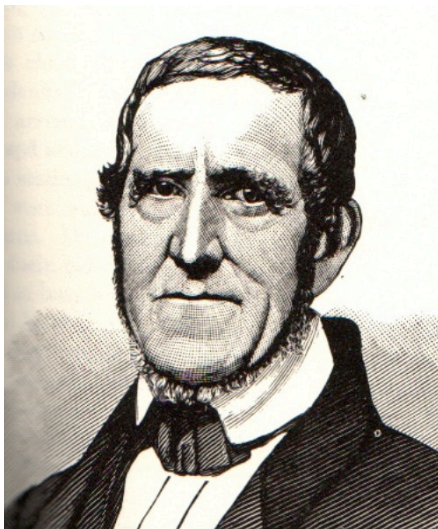
Abraham Lincoln's Quaker Roots Traced to the Barnards of Chester County

In celebration of this month's Presidents' Day weekend, KURC is reprinted this abridged version of the 2016 article for the Annual Chester County Day newspaper, by KURC volunteer **Loraine Lucas**

Abraham Lincoln knew he had Quaker ancestors in Pennsylvania since his great grandfather John Lincoln and his great grand half uncle Abraham married Quaker women. John (born 1716 in N.J.), married Quaker Rebekah Flowers, of Chester County, PA.. John's half-brother Abraham married Quaker Anne Boone, first cousin of Daniel Boone.

Rebekah Flowers Lincoln was the granddaughter of Quaker Richard Barnard, who arrived in America about 1682 from Wiltshire, England. Richard settled in Chester County and many of his descendants spread into the Kennett Square area, several of them notable abolitionists.

Four of Abraham Lincoln's prominent Quaker abolitionist Barnard relatives were the Barnard brothers Eusebius (1802-1865) (*see below*) and William (1803-1864), their cousin Simon Barnard (1802-1886) and William's son Vincent Barnard (1825-1871).



In the mid 1840's a series of "conferences" were conducted at Marlborough Meetinghouse to discuss openly whether to leave the Society of Friends for some more open and activist society. The issue came to a head in 1852 when William Barnard invited Oliver Johnson, a radical abolitionist Progressive Friend from New York state who

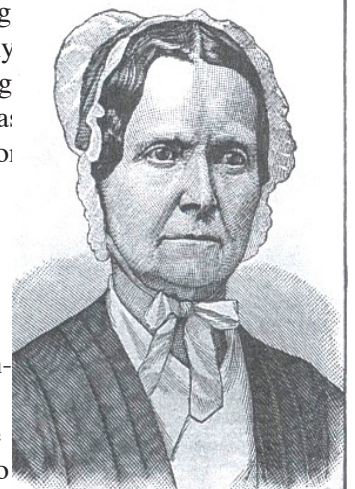
had relocated to eastern Pennsylvania, to speak at Marlborough Meeting. The conservative faction at Marlborough arranged for the arrest of Johnson for disturbing the quiet of their meeting. This episode became known as the "Marlborough Riot." Soon after this, in 1853, fifty-eight women and men left their original meetings and created the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends based on moral accountability and "practical righteousness." The annual meetings, held from 1853 to 1940, were a beacon to reformers throughout the United States.

John and Hannah Cox sold a piece of their property for the building of the Longwood Progressive Meetinghouse. The cornerstone for this new building, to be used for "moral, literary and scientific purposes," was laid on September 3, 1854 and the new building was dedicated on May 19, 1855. These local Quaker founders had been the core of the anti-slavery movement in Chester County for the previous twenty years and actively involved in the Underground Railroad. A handful of like-minded reformers from Philadelphia and Thomas Garrett of Wilmington, DE also joined in the call.



June 20, 1862, the Longwood Progressive Friends Meeting sent a delegation consisting of three men and three women to visit the White House. The three men in the delegation were William Barnard (Lincoln's third cousin once removed, although not aware of their Quaker relationship), Thomas Garrett (a prominent abolitionist from DE) and Oliver Johnson (*see above*). The three women were Alice Eliza Hambleton, Dinah Mendenhall (*right*) and Eliza Agnew. The delegation, all ardent supporters of the Underground Railroad, presented a "Memorial" (a petition) to President Lincoln urging him to issue orders of widespread emancipation. Lincoln was gracious to his visitors but he did not quickly yield to their reasoning Lincoln had disappointed many abolitionists already by placing the preservation of the Union as a higher value than the abolition of slavery.

However, just over month after the meeting, on July 22, Lincoln shared with his cabinet the first draft of what was to become the Emancipation Proclamation. In September, 1862 he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, to



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The mission of the Kennett Underground Railroad Center is to preserve the heritage and engage the public about the historic abolitionists and freedom-seekers of this area and beyond.

Donate to KURC

Many of you receiving this publication have donated in past years to the Kennett Underground Railroad Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We hope you and our other readers will consider making a donation this year, mailing them to the address below.

Contact information:

- info@kennettundergroundrr.org
- P. O. Box 202, Kennett Square, PA 19348
- 484-544-5070 • **Look for us also on Facebook**

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take effect January 1, 1863. Could the Longwood Progressive Friends delegation have had an influence on one of the most important decisions in American history?

Other items relating to Lincoln in Chester County

- The first biography of Abraham Lincoln, written by John J. Lewis, the son of Chester County abolitionist Enoch, was published in West Chester on 2/11/1860 by *The Chester County Times*. It was republished in newspapers throughout the country to introduce Lincoln as a candidate. It helped launch his campaign, which eventually got him elected the 16th President of the United States.
- In 1861, on the way to his inauguration, President Lincoln's train passed through Chester County.
- "The Ballad of Abraham Lincoln" was written in 1869 by Bayard Taylor, a 19th C. American poet from Kennett Square. In December, 1863, Taylor was in Washington,

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Join us as we celebrate

National Harriet Tubman Day

Saturday, March 10, 2018

10:00 am – 11:00 am
Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
FREE
Proclamation by Mayor Purzycki.
Harriet Tubman educator Patricia Lewis lecture and children's activity.
Sponsored by Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation and M&T Bank.

11:30 am – 12:30 pm
Tubman-Garrett Park on the Riverfront
FREE
Local artist and community advocate Eunice LaFate,
Folk Art & Freedom Workshop
Sponsored by Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation and Delaware Humanities.

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Delaware History Museum - *The Underground Railroad in Delaware*
FREE
City Council resolution read by City Council President Hanifa Shabazz.
Walk in the footsteps of freedom seekers and discover the brave men and women, both enslaved and free, who made this region one of the most successful routes to freedom in the years before the Civil War.

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
The Baby Grand - Women of Consequence
\$15 per/person
For tickets please visit:
<https://www.thegrandwilmington.org/productions/215-women-of-consequence>.

Free shuttle from 6th & Shipley Colonial Parking lot. Shuttle will only make one loop.

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for a series of lectures on the topic of Russia, its. Lincoln attended Taylor's lecture, was impressed, and wrote him a letter of admiration. Later Bayard published his "Ballad," one of the earliest poems about Lincoln, prepared especially for children.

- Founded in 1854, Ashmun Institute was the nation's first degree-granting Historically Black College. It was renamed Lincoln University in 1866 after President Lincoln.

Frederick Douglass: Birthday Celebrations --and Thoughts about Chains



by Terence Maguire

All across the country, and within Chester County, America is saying Happy Birthday to the most widely known and perhaps most widely admired African-American of the 19th C. --Frederick Douglass (shown above as a young man in his 20s; on p. 6, in his 50s). Like almost all those born into slavery, Douglass never knew his exact birthday, or even the year; so he chose February 14, 1818. A man who re-invented himself after achieving freedom, he felt he had the right.

And why should we of Chester County not celebrate our connection with the ardent abolitionist, matchless orator, and eloquent writer? He was a frequent and welcome visitor. Though Douglass was often physically attacked before or after his speeches--and once mistakenly left for dead--those assaults were elsewhere.

Chester County Historical Society, with the technical guidance of the Let's Build a Time Machine Company, has created and made available "The Frederick Douglass Tour," a downloadable--and free!-- app for both iOS and Android phones and tablets. It covers the full range of his frequent visits to Chester County. His first appearance here occurred in Willistown, in 1843, during an anti-slavery speaking tour with some famous abolitionists. He gave a passionate oration in 1863 at what is now the Chester County Historical Society, urging Black Americans of West Chester and the surrounding areas to enlist in the Union Army. In Avondale he was part of a post-Civil War celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865. He visited and spoke a number of times at West Chester Nor-

mal School (now WC University); and in fact of the many hundreds, perhaps thousands of speeches he gave during more than 50 years of his life, the very last was in West Chester, on February 1, 1895, less than three weeks before his death in Washington, D.C.

West Chester University is also home to the Frederick Douglass Institute, whose mission is "to maintain the legacy of the great abolitionist, orator, and statesman Frederick Douglass before the campus community, local community, region, and the nation through the highest quality of academic programming that promotes excellence in scholarship, teaching, and institutional advancement." The WCU Institute is the flagship of fourteen other such institutes of the Pennsylvania State University System.

One of the most exciting aspects of Chester County's celebration of FD's birthday is the Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Frederick Douglass Lecture Series, dealing with the great man's influence on society and in particular on education. Dr. DeBaptiste, the first African-American mayor of West Chester, donated \$50,000 to sponsor a series of speakers who will commence this October at the University. As Dr. DeBaptiste was quoted in *Vista Today* in mid-February of this year,

"Many African-Americans have made lasting contributions to our society. If we do not tell their stories, they will be forgotten.

"Douglass's history is both awesome and inspiring. I am pleased that the university has been very receptive to this important lecture series." We look forward to the first lecture, by Dr. James Trotman, a Douglass biographer.

It is instructive to think of Douglass and his influence in our country during this current time, in which we have seen a resurgence of overt racism, sometimes masked as a reaction against "too much political correctness." So many stories of his struggles, his challenges, and his achievements are worth dwelling on. In the remainder of this article, I would like to focus on one of his most profound and less well-known understandings: the corrosive and deeply harmful effects of the slavery --on white people.

Let there be no misunderstanding. Douglass's eloquent oratory and writing exposed, as few others ever did, the horrors that slavery inflicted on unfree black people and even free blacks. However, in a number of passages during his first book, he shows remarkable insight into the ways in which the institution of slavery degraded and demoralized those who thought they were the masters, the mis-

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tresses, the superior beings of the South. (All quotes below are from his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Dover Thrift Editions, Toronto, Canada, 1995; originally published in 1845).

At the age of seven or eight, young Frederick left the Lloyd plantation that had been his "home" and was brought to be the slave of the Auld family. "And here I saw what I had never seen before; it was a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions...the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld." Frederick was dumbstruck. "My new mistress proved to be all that she appeared when I first met her at the door--a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings." She even started to teach Frederick to read, until he husband discovered the fact and strongly condemned the effort. Douglass ascribed her kindness and basic humanity to the fact that, before now, she had never had a slave and "had been dependent upon her own industry for a living." She didn't mind being looked in the face (a grave impertinence) and was kind to other slaves as well.

"But her kindly attitude did not last. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands...That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon" (pp. 18-19).

In Chapter IX of *The Narrative*, Frederick, now an adolescent and under a different master, was encouraged to see

his then master go off to a religious revival, hoping that he might come home kinder and even possibly to free his slaves. He was brutally disappointed. The man came back having "found religious sanction for his cruelty." He would whip his slaves savagely while quoting scripture--"he that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes" (p. 33). Later he wrote, "For of all the slave owners whom I have ever met, religious slave holders are the worst...the meanest and basest, most cruel and cowardly of all others" (46).

Eventually, in 1838, Frederick managed to escape with the help of a free black woman, Anna Murray, whom he married in New York. He later obtained work in New Bedford, Mass, as a dock worker; he had been one in Baltimore for his last "master." In New Bedford, he was amazed at what he saw: a thriving economy, solid prosperity, a readiness for hard work by both white laborers and their black counterparts, no grinding poverty and dissolution among the lower classes. He writes, "I had somehow imbibed the opinion that, in the absence of slaves, there could be no wealth." He expected to find in the North, "a rough, hard-handed, and uncultivated population...knowing nothing of the ease, luxury, pomp and grandeur of Southern slaveholders...[but the people of New Bedford] looked more able, stronger, healthier, and happier than those of Maryland." He "was gladdened by a view of extreme wealth, without being saddened by seeing extreme poverty" (pp. 66-67).

Slavery in the South, Douglass could see, had created an ethos in which hard work and earnest effort were things to be avoided, even ashamed of; the goal of the successful Southern white was to arrive at the point where all physical labor would be done by slaves. The work ethic was replaced by a non-work "ethic." And what motivation did slaves have to work hard, except to avoid the lash?

Roughly contemporary with Douglass, the famous Lord Acton of Britain, wrote in 1887, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Could there be a greater illustration of this maxim than the institution of American slavery? The corruption of a once-sweet woman, of religious teachings, of an entire economy and society--all stemmed from the Southern embrace of slavery.

Douglass's *Narrative* is a scathing indictment of the cruelty of Southern whites and the injustice of their society. Though he wastes little sympathy on them, his narrative also illustrates the resulting moral degradation of Southern slaveholders. Douglass once wrote, "No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck." The 13th Amendment, in theory (though not in practice), removed the chain from the ankle of the former slave; many Americans, however, still wear that chain of "white superiority" around their necks.

