



*There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story inside you.*

- Maya Angelou

PROVIDENCE RESEARCH GROUP PRESENTATION

Ken Park and Sam Lemon made audio recordings during the course of the investigation. Photographs taken of the cellar room on July 22, Aug. 5, and Aug. 19, 2017 by Sam Lemon, using Android cell phone camera.

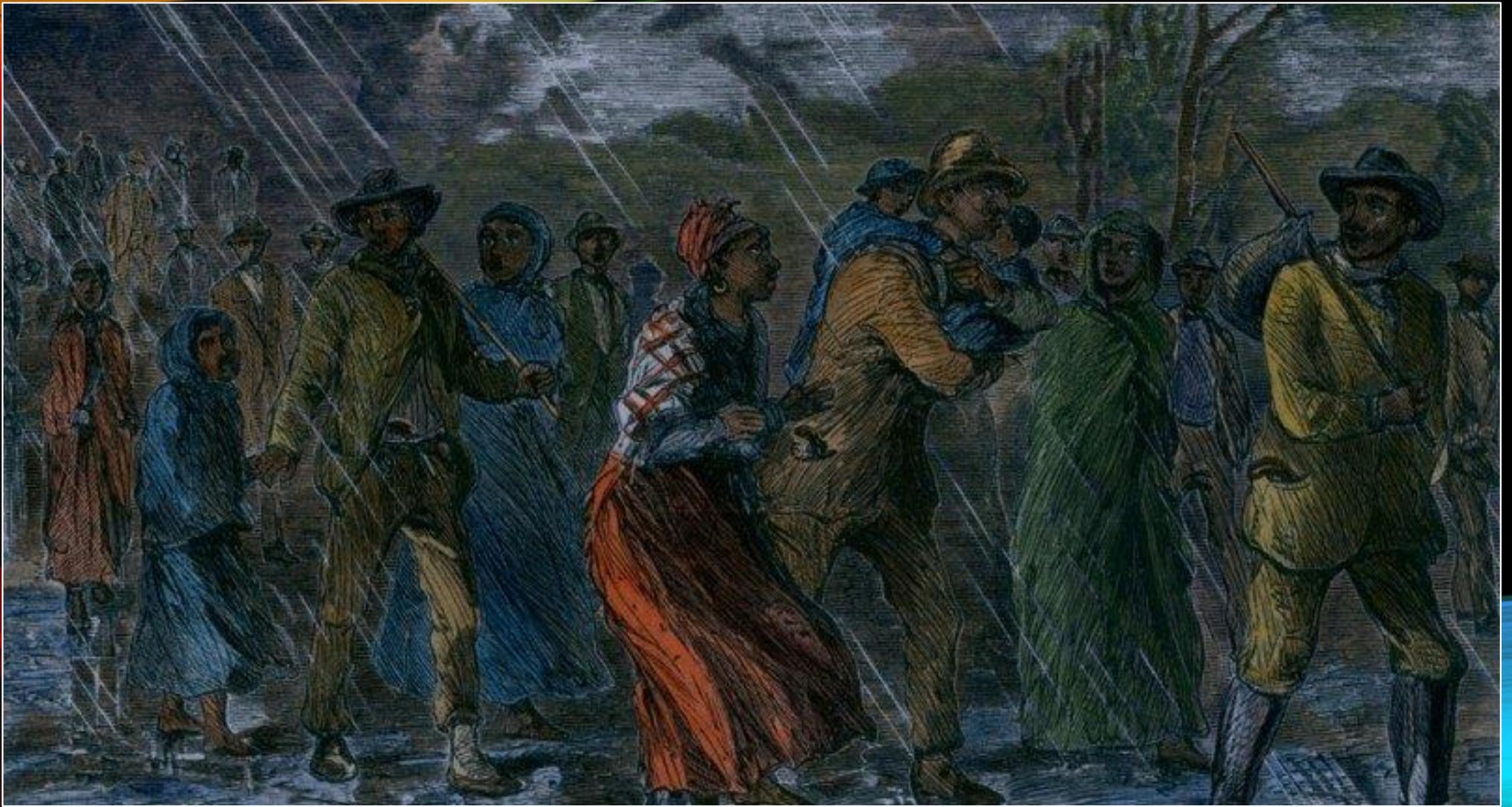
Presented Sunday, June 9 2018
Providence Monthly Meeting



Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad, by Paul Collins



Winter was a favorable time to escape trackers and dogs.



Rainstorms and inclement weather help to cover their tracks.

The Quakers are considered the first organized group to actively help escaped slaves. George Washington complained in 1786 that Quakers had attempted to “liberate” one of his slaves.

Quaker abolitionist Isaac T. Hopper set up a network in Philadelphia in the early 1800s, that helped slaves on the run. At the same time, Quakers in North Carolina established abolitionist groups that laid the groundwork for routes and shelters for escapees.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, established in 1816, was another proactive religious group helping fugitive slaves.

(Source: History.com)



1st mention of the UGRR was in 1831 when slave Tice Davids escaped from Kentucky into Ohio and his owner blamed an “underground railroad” for helping Davids to freedom.

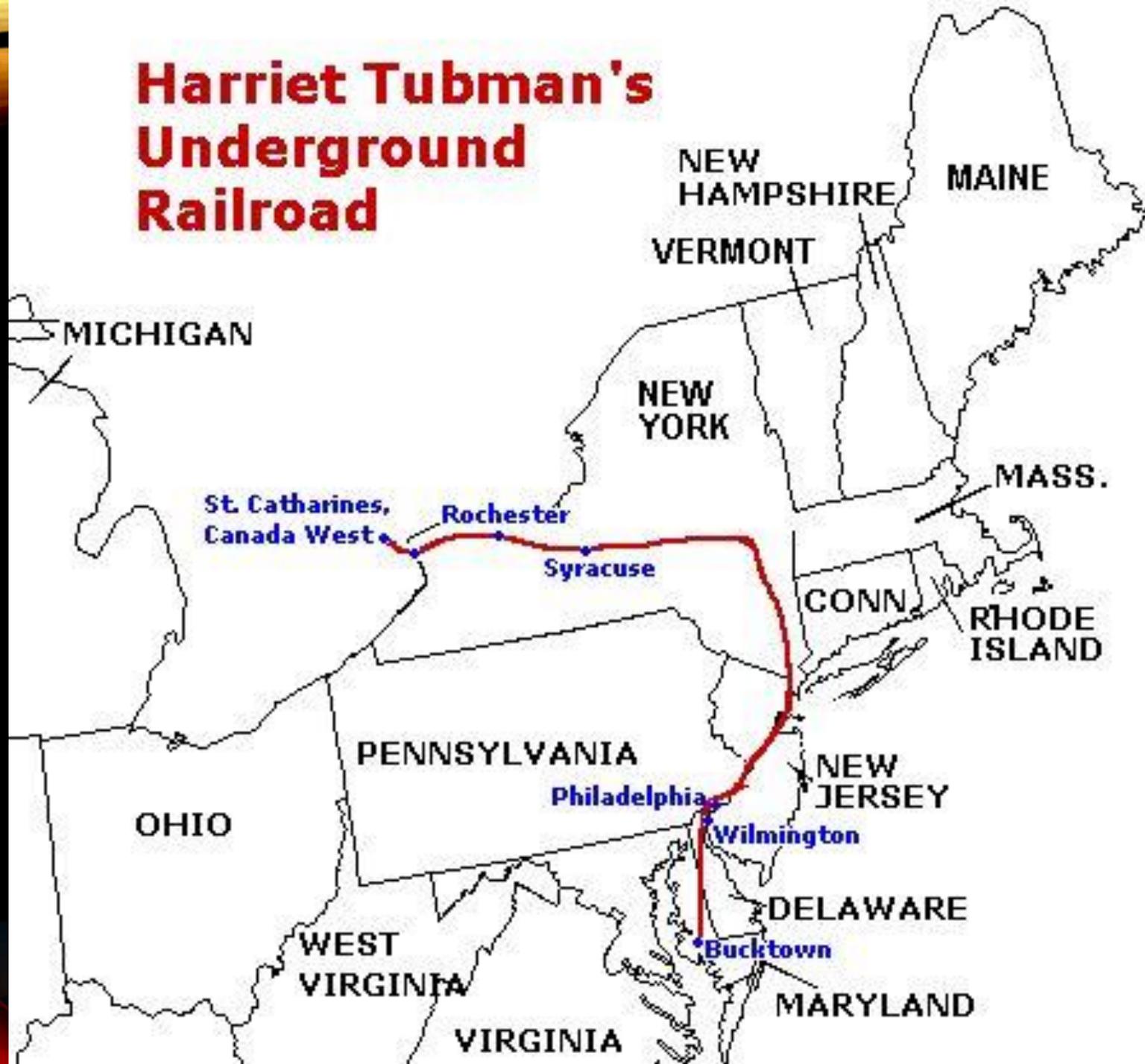


L-R: Harriet Tubman
(Araminta Ross)
Thomas Garrett,
William Still,
Graceanna Lewis.

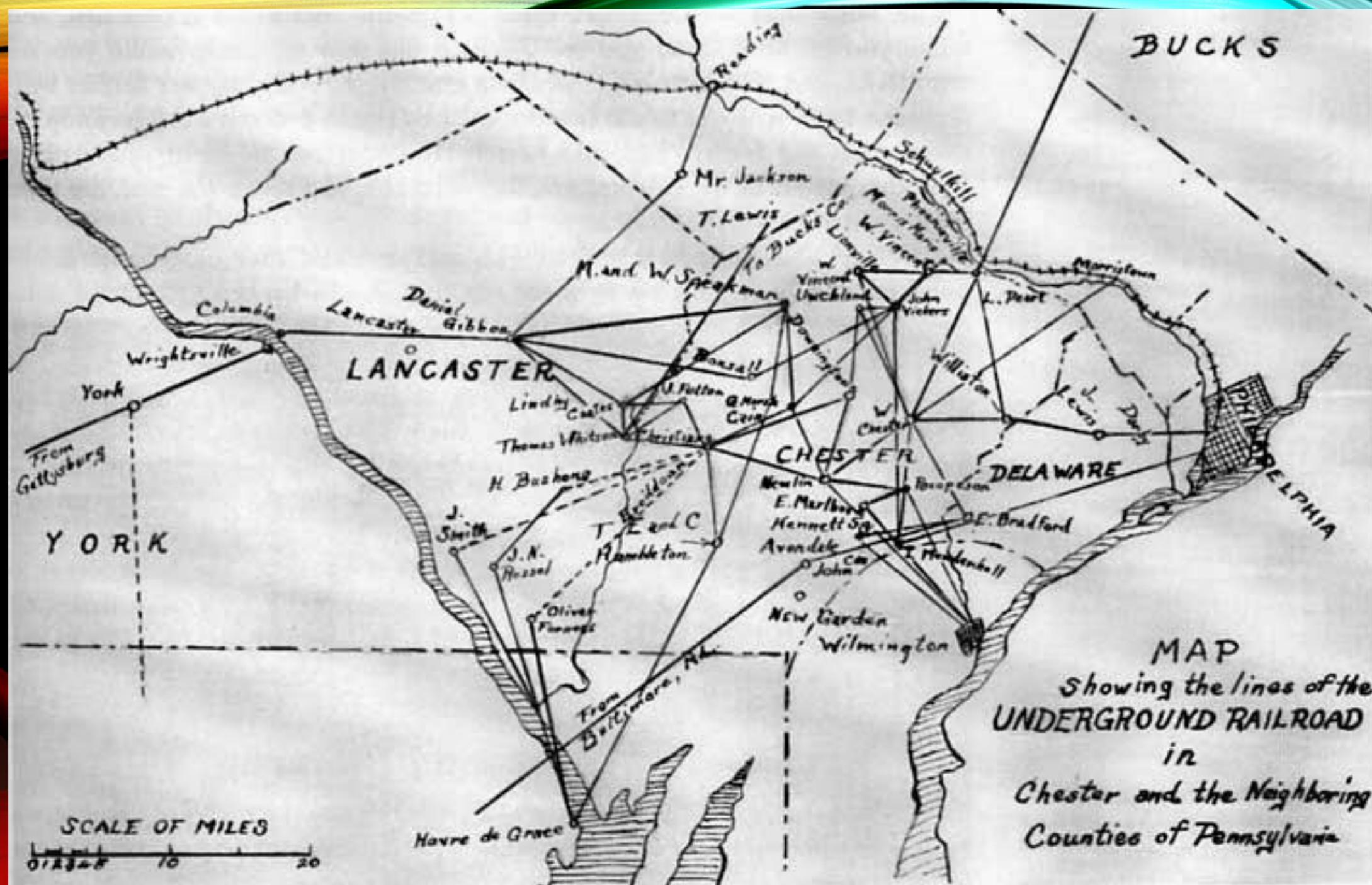


Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad

UGRR map showing Harriet Tubman's usual route



UGRR
map
showing
local
routes
from
Delaware
and
Maryland
through
eastern
Penna.



MAP
Showing the lines of the
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
in
Chester and the Neighboring
Counties of Pennsylvania

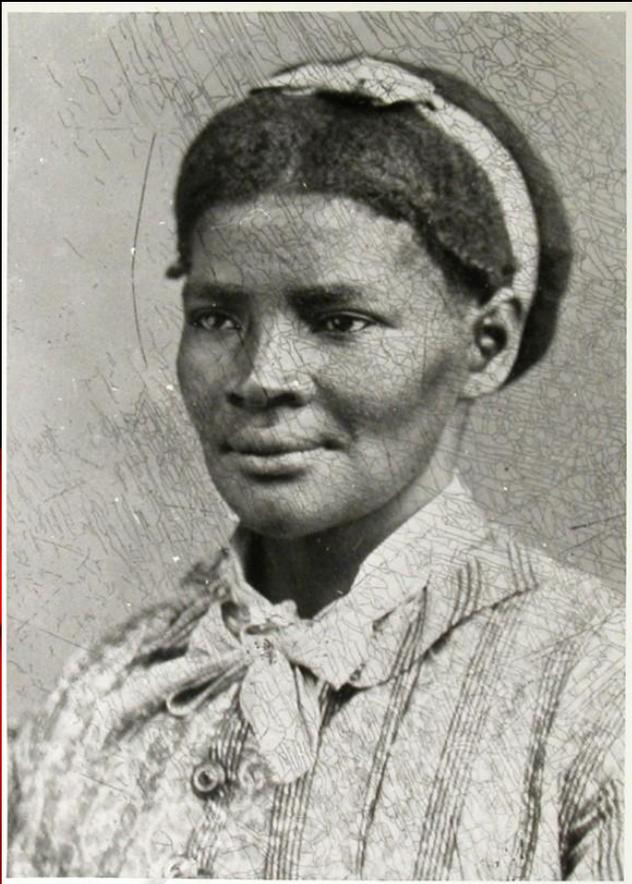
SCALE OF MILES
0 10 20



There were 132 known UGRR agents in Chester County alone that included 82 Quakers and 31 blacks.

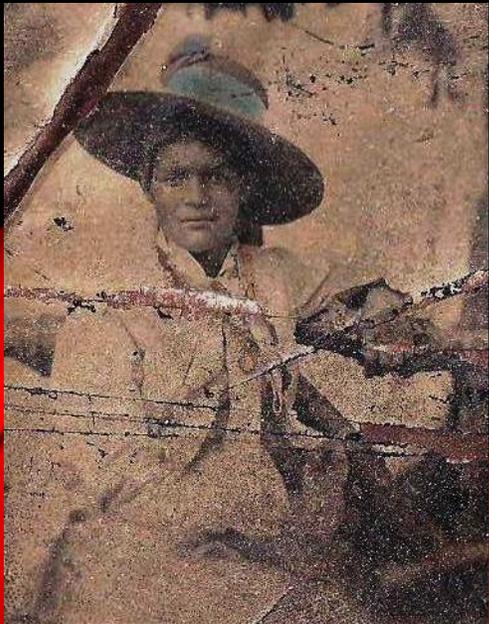
Underground Railroad map from the Kennett UGRR Center

My great-great grandparents **Cornelius Ridley and Martha Jane Parham**, escaped separately from Virginia plantations, reunited in Media during the Civil War. They were given refuge by **Isaac and Elizabeth Smedley Yarnall** of Providence Monthly Meeting.



(L-R) Martha Jane Parham's children: Rachel Ridley was 2 yrs. old; and George Washington Ridley (shown below with his children later in life) was 9 yrs old when they arrived at Providence with their mother.

Gravestones of William Still, Chairman of the Vigilance Committee of the Penna. Anti-Slavery Society in Phila.; and Cornelius Ridley and Martha Jane Parham, buried about 30 yards apart at Eden Cemetery, in Collingdale, PA.



THE INVESTIGATION OF THE UNDERGROUND ROOM

- The investigation began with Ken Park and conversations he had with fellow Friends Bill Belanger and Amy Betts.
- Ken contacted me, knowing I'd be interested. The group began to meet & discuss the matter. Melissa Hickey, Pat Coiner, Mary Gabel and others joined us after the first "visit" to the underground room.
- We made three "visits" to the underground room: Saturday, July 22, 2017, August 5th and August 22nd 2017. Photos were taken with my cell phone, and Ken and I made separate audio recordings.
- We also met a number of times in the graveyard, to conduct additional research on the possibility of unmarked graves there.
- We then wrote notes and reflections of our respective experiences.
- We discussed and reflected on the matter for nearly a year before deciding how to share the results of our research with the Meeting.

GEOGRAPHIC POINTS OF THE UNDERGROUND ROOM

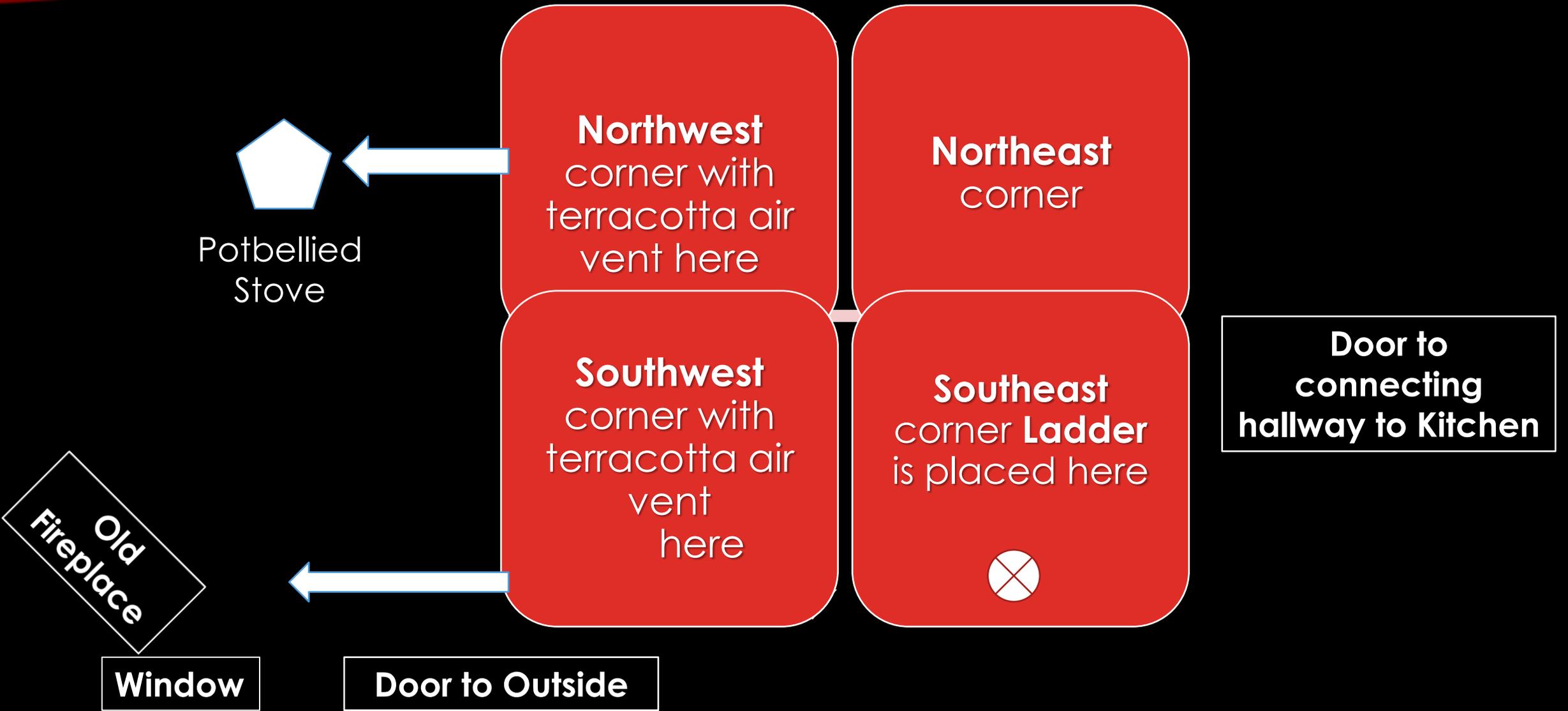


PHOTO TAKEN JULY 22, 2017



• **Northeast Corner**

PHOTOS TAKEN AUG. 5, 2017

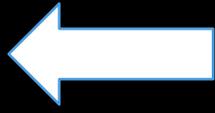
• Northeast corner





**PHOTO
TAKEN
AUGUST 5,
2017**

- Northwest corner under the air vent leads directly toward the pot-bellied stove.
- **This is NOT a face.** It is pieces of white or silver paper or debris.



Terracotta
air vent which
leads toward
the old
fireplace

**PHOTOS
TAKEN
AUGUST 5,
2017**

- Southwest
corner
at air vent





**PHOTO
TAKEN
AUGUST 5,
2017**

- Southeast corner under the hatch with Co-Clerk Ruth Leach standing next to the ladder
- **Note:** Faces were only seen in photographs of the Northeast and Northwest corners of the room.

PHOTOS TAKEN AUGUST 22, 2017 • Northeast corner



PHOTO TAKEN AUGUST 22, 2017

SOUTHWEST CORNER



The brave, gentle spirits we encountered...





Kieffer appeared to a Friend to be a boy about age 7 - 10 years old. Proud, had a big smile and all his teeth. A belt was holding up his pants. His pants were a size too big – and slightly too short. Medium to light brown skin. Smiling as he puffed his chest out and threw his hands to his sides -- he wanted us to know he was a “big boy.” He slept and died under the tree in the graveyard (under hay) because he was too sick to join the others in the hiding room. He was a friendly, light-hearted boy.



“Aunt” Mary appeared to a Friend as being roughly 55 - 65 years old. She was petite, humped over a bit like she was older. She was wearing a sheath dress, off-white in color. A scarf was wrapped around her head with the knot tied at the front-center. She was funny and animated. Her skin was a medium brown. She was a feisty, outspoken older woman who smoked a pipe.



Jeremiah Walker did not die at Providence, but continued on to Boston where he got a job in the mills and married an Irish woman. He made a joke about having an appropriate last name, since he “walked here” from down South.

A person of this description appears on the U.S. Census for 1870 and 1880. Others by that same name – possibly his sons or grandsons, appear on subsequent censuses. It is also possible that those listed may be different people and unrelated to him.

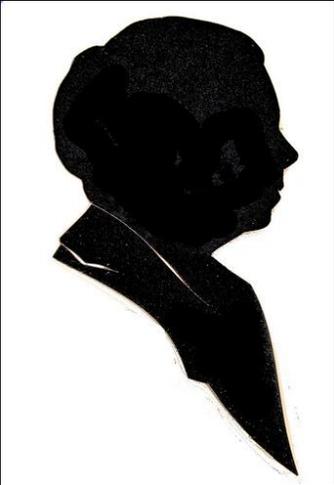


Cassandra was also captured in a photograph in the hiding room. She had been a weaver, and appeared to a Friend to be in her late 20’s. She wore a colorful African dress and head dress. She was grieving and angry that her baby was taken from her. Her skin was very dark. She was also petite in stature. A Friend explained to her how she might find her baby. Cassandra did find her baby, surprised at how all grown up he was now. That made her happy.

RUNAWAYS WE BELIEVE PASSED THROUGH PROVIDENCE



Jacob Mansfield is the male captured in the photograph in the hiding room. He was surprised to have his picture taken. He said he had seen a photograph once before. He appeared to a Friend as being in his early 30's, with medium to dark brown skin, stocky, and strong. He was quiet and friendly. Said he was known for being very strong and a good builder. Well respected in his community. Built not just on his own plantation, but was loaned out to others for building. Said he had been a carpenter and "was good at building things."



Bessie was a portly, brown skinned woman of medium height who appeared briefly and sat next to a Friend in Meeting one Sunday this Spring, then left "to go find her children."



William Anthony appeared to a Friend to be in his early to mid 20's, and about 6 feet tall with dark skin. He was tall and thin, and angry about how he lived and died; and at being separated from his wife. He said he had been shot in the leg while escaping and was in great pain. He escaped but then died here of gastro-intestinal illness from drinking "bad water" along the way. It was a very painful, horrendous death. Because of his fever he was hidden in the graveyard where he died.



Mary Isabell appeared to a Friend as being between 65 - 75 years, and about 5 ft., 4 in. tall. She was thin, and liked to wear a scarf on her head with the knot in the front. She had medium brown skin, and wore a long dress with an apron in the front. She was an elder and a healer. She was practiced in the laying on of hands to heal others. She was known to help people stay calm in the mist of terrible, dangerous situations. She was diplomatic. Her community worried about her age in making the journey. She was possibly from a plantation in Maryland, and may have met Harriet Tubman. She acted as the spokeswoman for the group, and had a message she wanted us to share with the Meeting. She said that Andrew Jackson had been the previous president, but didn't know who the current president was when they escaped.

A MESSAGE MARY ISABELL WANTED US TO SHARE WITH OTHERS

“Carry the Light of God with you at all times. Know that all men, women, and children are the truly the Light of God. Even the ones that don’t want to hear ...people in society that don’t want to hear messages of healing and peace can still hear it, even if you don’t think they are hearing it.

Be strong. Be loving at all times. That... that’s the Power, to be loving at all times. Honor the people who have traveled through here. Honor their spirits, like you are doing. Find out as much as you can about them so they are never forgotten. You have witnessed the pain, both in that room and on this land.

That pain of death needs to always be honored, even though we move into the Light, into the spirit world, the pain of death symbolizes the pain of all people who have been pushed down upon. That is the pain -- that when one person is pushed down upon, all people are pushed down upon.” - Mary Isabell

A MESSAGE MARY ISABELL WANTED US TO SHARE WITH OTHERS

Additional commentary from the Providence Friend who received Mary Isabell's message.

This is still happening. People are not yet free. And that's what she knows to be true and that's what she wants her message to be. That you can't push down upon anybody without hurting everybody. [This message] is why she wanted to fight for freedom and to know that all people should be free.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS -- SOME SUGGESTIONS:

1. Consider the underground room to be a kind of religious shrine.
2. Consider having the room excavated to see if there are archaeological artefacts in the dirt floor, like buttons or eating utensils.
3. Conduct documentary research: e.g. diaries, runaway slave posters, etc.
4. Consider hanging a commemorative plaque in the hiding room.
5. Consider installing a plexiglass window over part of the room, add a light.
6. Consider a memorial stone in the graveyard, in remembrance of those former runaways who passed through Providence or may have died here.
7. Hold a memorial meeting to commemorate the former runaways and the members of Providence Meeting who helped them on the road to freedom. Possibly scheduled around Thanksgiving, Easter, or Juneteenth (June 19th)



“Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty we are free at last.”

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.