



Winter 2023-24

## In This Issue

<b>Network Leadership Message</b> .....	1
<b>NTF Member Accomplishments</b> .....	2
<b>New Listings in 2023</b> .....	3
<b>Retirement Announcements</b> .....	5
<b>Member Profile</b> .....	7
<b>Bob's Road Trip Across the NTF</b> .....	8
<b>Successful Symposium in Texas</b> .....	10
<b>Interact with your Network</b> .....	11
<b>Network Reminders</b> .....	12

## Network Leadership Message

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, I'm thrilled to share a year full of fantastic achievements and growth as your acting National Program Manager. Our team has been working hard to preserve and promote the incredible history of resistance to enslavement.

Over the past year, we've accomplished so much! We've expanded our network, strengthened

relationships with our partners, and added new staff. We've also discovered inspiring stories of courage and resilience, which have given us a fresh perspective on the history of the Underground Railroad.

You'll see some of our team's incredible accomplishments in this newsletter. We've expanded our reach to over 760 sites, facilities, and programs thanks to the dedication of our regional managers. We've also achieved significant milestones, such as organizing our physical files, acquiring commemorative plaques, and adding the first sites in Minnesota and Canada. Our 25th-anniversary video and Harriet Tubman Visitor Center event were also highlights.

Our project 'Claiming Freedom,' which aims to commemorate the freedom-seeking movement during the American Revolutionary Era, is doing very well. Our interns have received high acclaim for their presentations with the National Endowment of Humanities, and



Ka'mal McClarin, Acting Program Manager, Network to Freedom

we've added experienced team members to help us continue our efforts. We've also improved our interactive map and website, making engaging with our audience easier. Our social media strategies and new ventures, such as oral histories and a junior ranger book, have broadened our impact, thanks to the hard work of our Visual Information Team.

We're excited to expand our educational outreach and research capabilities, ensuring the Underground Railroad's legacy continues to inspire. Check out the following pages for a detailed account of our key achievements, events, and programs that shaped our year.

Thanks for all your unwavering support. Let's continue this journey together, honoring our past, celebrating the present, and shaping the future of the Network to Freedom.

## Member Accomplishments

We are thrilled to bring you exciting updates and accomplishments from the Network to Freedom highlighting significant milestones, new additions, and connections that have strengthened our commitment to preserving this essential part of our history.

### **New Philadelphia:** A Proud National Park Site

We are elated to announce that New Philadelphia, Illinois, has been designated as a National Park Site, marking a significant step in preserving the history of the Underground Railroad. New Philadelphia holds a special place as the first town founded by a formerly enslaved man, Frank McWorter, and its inclusion as a National Park Site ensures that its story will be preserved for generations to come.



### **Pilgrim Church in Minnesota:** A Trailblazer for Freedom

Pilgrim Church in Minnesota has made history by becoming the first Network to Freedom site in the state. This accomplishment is a testament to the dedication of local communities in recognizing and preserving the legacy of the Underground Railroad.

### **Salem Chapel:** A Canadian Milestone in the Network to Freedom

Crossing borders, Salem Chapel in Canada has achieved the distinction of being the first Canadian site within the Network to Freedom. This accomplishment extends the reach of our network, showcasing the interconnected stories of those who sought refuge and freedom on both sides of the border. Salem Chapel's inclusion highlights the truly international impact of the Underground Railroad.

## **Renewed Networking Opportunities and Connections**

Beyond physical sites, the Network to Freedom has experienced tremendous growth in networking opportunities and connections. Our dedicated staff and members have worked tirelessly to build bridges, share resources, and foster collaborations. This renewed sense of community strengthens our collective commitment to preserving and educating others about the history of the Underground Railroad.

These accomplishments underscore the importance of preserving the history of the Underground Railroad and recognizing the bravery of those who sought freedom.

## Newest Listings for 2023

It's fascinating to see the expansion of the Network to Freedom in 2023, with 32 new additions bringing the total count to over 760 listings across the United States, the Caribbean, and now Canada. This initiative is crucial in recognizing and preserving historical sites associated with the Underground Railroad and the fight against slavery. Here's a breakdown of the new sites and programs unveiled:

### Sites:

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#### California

Samuel D. Burris Burial Site, Cypress Lawn Memorial Park

#### Georgia

Frederica (Fort Frederica National Monument)

#### Iowa

James C. and Amelia Jackson Farm

Evergreen Cemetery in Fairfield, Iowa

#### Illinois

Bristol Congregational Church (Chapel on the Green)

Israel and Avis Blodgett House

#### Kentucky

Madison and Kitty Smith Burial Sites, St. Louis Cemetery in Louisville, KY

#### Maryland

Concord Historic Site

Malone's Methodist Episcopal Church (Malone's Chapel)

#### Massachusetts

Dr. Isaac Fiske House

#### Michigan

Henry and Elizabeth Hamer Burial Site, Royal Oak Cemetery in Royal Oak, Michigan

Michigan Central Railroad Depot Site

Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church

#### Missouri

Archer Alexander Burial Site, St. Peter's Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri

Greenwood Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri

Tower Grove House at Missouri Botanical Garden

#### Minnesota

Pilgrim Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minnesota

#### Nebraska

John M. Thayer House

#### New Jersey

Bethel A.M.E. Church in Greenwich, New Jersey

#### New York

Archive at the North Star Underground Railroad Museum

Douglass Family South Street Home Site

Montgomery County Department of History & Archives

#### Pennsylvania

Darby Friends Meetinghouse and School

Hosanna African Union Methodist Protestant Church and Cemetery in Lincoln, Pennsylvania

#### South Carolina

Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island

## Canada

Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal



## Programs:

### Florida

Back to Angola Program

### Massachusetts

The Underground Railroad in Boston: A Self-Guided Audio Tour

### Michigan

Wayne County Community College Underground Railroad District History Program

### New York

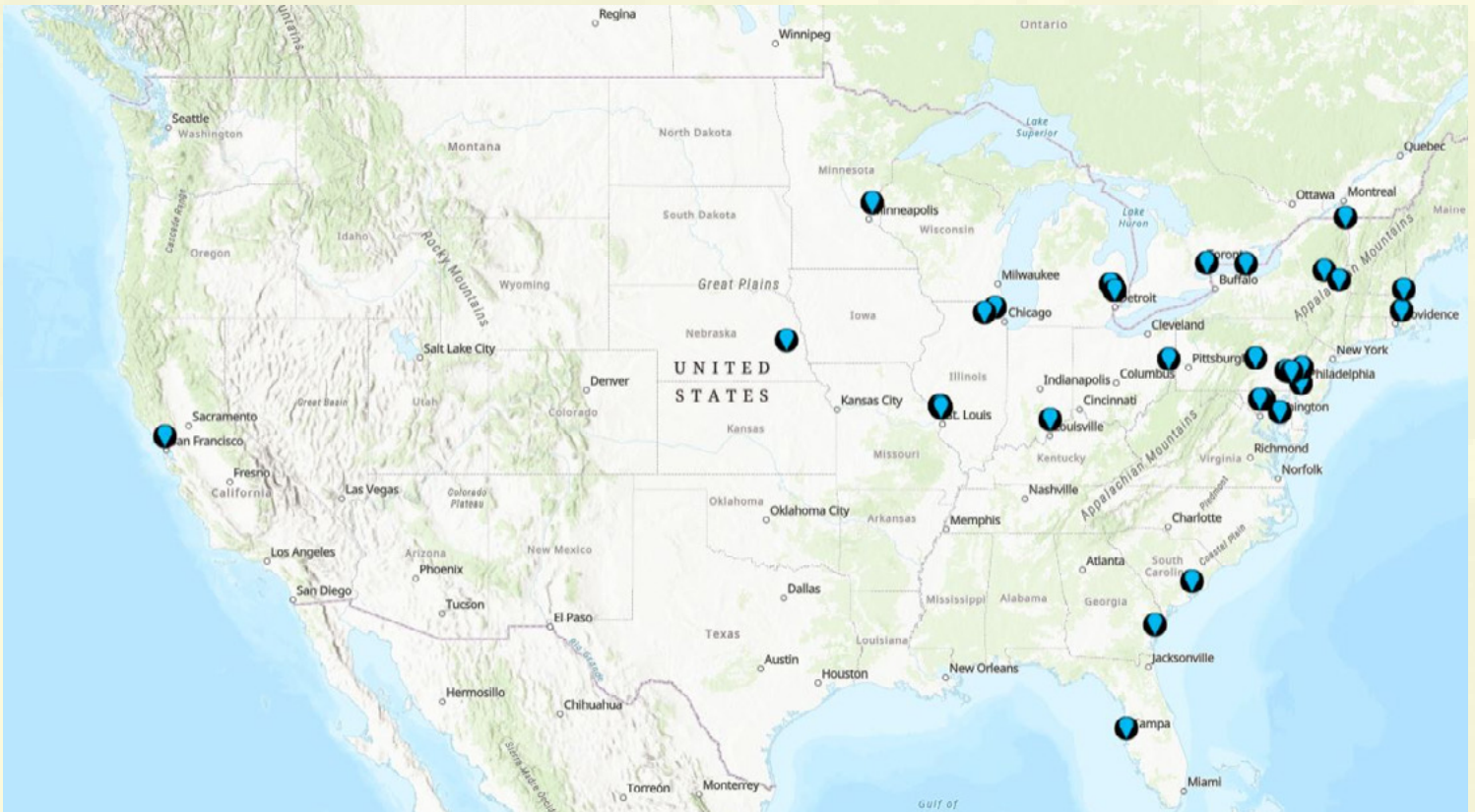
Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State

### Pennsylvania

House Divided Project at Dickinson College

### Washington, DC

International Underground Railroad Project



# Retirement of Diane Miller: 44 Years of Service

Written by Robin Krawitz

As 2023 drew to a close, it was time to reflect on the milestones of this pivotal year. The July celebration of the 25th anniversary of the program was also the announcement of the retirement of long-time national program director, Diane Miller. Although her tenure at the helm of the Network to Freedom Program was only part of her 44-year career in federal service, she navigated the program on a path to focus on the agency of the enslaved to claim their freedom.

Originally from the DC area, Diane began working for the National Park Service in 1984 after finishing her MA in African American history at the University of Maryland. She worked with the National Register and National Historic Landmark programs until the Network to Freedom program was established and she became the first program manager. She has led the program since the beginning, at first based in the Midwest Regional Office of the NPS in Omaha, Nebraska, and now from the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park in Maryland, where the program has been based since 2015. Diane received her PhD in History at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 2019. Her dissertation titled, "The Underground Railroad in Indian Territory" reflected her deep interest in the



history she worked on at her day job, as well as a connection to the Midwest and its specific history in this space.



During her tenure, she built the Network to Freedom up to where it is today, a program with a cadre of five regional managers covering the entire United States, a supporting network of three who provide data management, technical assistance, grant program management and public information. The Network has grown to over 700 listings of sites, programs and facilities across the country, including Hawaii and the US Virgin Islands. We thank Diane for her leadership and wish her all the best in her next chapter.

# Retirement of Sheri Jackson: 39 Years of Service

Written by Diane Miller

Congratulations to Sheri Jackson on her retirement from the National Park Service after 39 years of federal employment. Sheri came to the Network to Freedom (NTF) program in 2004. She has been a valued member of the team who always had a smile and remained unflappable. One of her strengths was engaging with community members and partners. Sheri became the voice of experience for newer members of the team, always stressing they should remember the “mom and pop” museums and sites.

Sheri came to the NTF after learning about the program from her friend Barbara Tagger, who worked on the Underground Railroad Special Resource Study and was one of the original NTF coordinators. Her earliest connection to the NTF was assisting the Family Heritage House Museum in Bradenton, Florida. Soon after, though, she became the Northeast Regional Coordinator. Sheri was a key member of the team working with Network partners in Maryland on the early development of the Harriet Tubman Byway and “Tubman country”. When the Southeast Regional Coordinator position became vacant, Sheri took the opportunity to move closer to family.

Her passion for education led Sheri to develop a highly regarded Junior Ranger booklet for the Southeast Region and work with several NTF members on educational projects. *Freedom Seekers, Stories of Courage and Resilience: The Underground Railroad in the Southeast* developed by Reflections of Manatee through a Network to Freedom Grant and with Sheri’s assistance, was designed for educators. It pulls together many of the stories represented by Network to Freedom members throughout the region and celebrates the resilience of the human spirit. Sheri’s favorite freedom seeker, Harriet Jacobs, epitomizes this quality having endured seven years in her grandmother’s attic during her journey to freedom.



# Network to Freedom Profile of New Member: Madison and Kitty Smith Burial Site

Written by Ned Berghausen



In 2020, I felt energized to revisit the troubling paper trail I discovered a few years earlier while researching family genealogy which indicated that my Kentucky Catholic ancestors had been enslavers. Up to that point I had put that knowledge out of mind. 2020 awakened in me a desire to reckon with this dark history.

Beginning this research quickly demonstrated the difficulties of Black genealogy. While searching for records, I visited St Louis Cemetery in Louisville and to section on the outer periphery that appeared to be an undeveloped field. It was, I would discover, a segregated section. Between 1867 and 1937, 1629 Black Catholics would be buried here and in another cemetery section.

Most of these burials were and are unmarked. A rare exception: a four-foot-tall obelisk belonging to Madison and Kitty Smith. A small reference in The Oregon Encyclopedia about their suffragette daughter suggested an Underground Railroad connection. Building on the work of that encyclopedia writer

(Jean Ward), a dedicated Indiana historian (Sheila Kell), and assisted by another amateur researcher (Linda Fitzgerald), I applied for the Smiths' grave and the cemetery to be listed in the Network to Freedom.

Before 1850, the Smiths had been living as free Blacks in Louisville, relocating when conditions became difficult. Their farm in Queensville, Indiana became a refuge for enslaved freedom seekers. A neighbor wrote of the Smiths, "as we lived only about 25 miles from the Kentucky line it was quite a frequent occurrence for slaves to run away and many of them came to our town. Near town there was a Negro by the name of Madison Smith who owned his own farm. These runaway slaves would go to his underground railroad to hide."

Their neighbor wrote a harrowing story: two fugitives sheltering on the Smiths' farm were recaptured by their enslaver and marched off in shackles and back into bondage across the river. In circumstances like these, the Smiths risked being enslaved themselves or suffering violence or prosecution for their work in the freedom struggle.

The Smiths maintained their connection to the Black Catholic community in Louisville, and after their death they were buried in St. Louis Cemetery. Like many Blacks, the memory of their efforts was forgotten, and overshadowed by white abolitionists. It has been an honor to bring their story to light and see them recognized. I have come to recognize that the freedom struggle was a community effort (as is the work of researching and telling these stories!) and that there are at least 1637 more stories of Black Catholics that until now were unmarked and lost to history.



*Ned Berghausen is a religious studies teacher at Assumption High School in Louisville, Kentucky, and a permanent deacon at St. Agnes Catholic Church*

# Road Tripping Hallowed Ground

Written by Bob Nelson



It seemed like a good idea at the time: Let's get photos and video of every Network to Freedom site in America and make the coolest interactive map ever. Shouldn't be that hard, right?

For one, Christina Cargill, our GIS guru had already done the hard part by creating an online-accessible map on which she pinned the location of every single Network to Freedom member site. More than 760 locations! When you zoom in and click on any one of those pins, you'll see the name and address of the site along with a few paragraphs – taken from the heavily researched and vetted applications for each site -- about the people or events being commemorated at the location, or the UGRR-related program or facility there. Check out her herculean accomplishment here:



Awesome. But it needed something. Call it the beta version – a remarkable but incomplete test run. We want this thing to be beautiful, depth, and accurate enough to make you want to take a trip to explore the expansive Network to Freedom, then go again. So let's do that. Lets take some photographs!

Such a thing should be in my wheelhouse. I've spent a lot of time on the road over three decades as a newspaper reporter and photographer. In my current part-time duties with the Network team, I'm basically tasked with bringing some media-world savvy to the program. Have a veteran storyteller help tell the story, was Diane Miller's basic idea in bringing me on through the Experience Worker Program.

Working on projects for the Network to Freedom was a thrilling proposition for a particular breed of nerd. I've spent obsessive evening hours outside of work and parenthood researching and writing about those men and women – Black, White, and Indigenous – with the courage and unwavering moral compass to combat the institution of slavery. I've always loved a rowdy true story in which our better angels battle our worst instincts. Whether it's 2023 or 1853 – doesn't matter. Heroes are timeless, good deeds ever-instructive. And to me at least, telling the stories of those with the courage, fortitude, and vision to resist slavery through escape, and telling the stories of those who risked life and livelihood to aid those efforts, feels as relevant in modern America, and as necessary to tell, as any current story.

So, on October 9, as fall colors crept down from Canada, I stuffed my car with camera gear, clothes, and Trail Mix and drove five miles north to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Then northwest to Ferry Hill Plantation over the line in Maryland, where I took several photos, pinned my position in Google Maps, then, using nothing more than an iPhone 14 on a small gimbal, filmed a 30-second clip intended to give viewers a sense of the site and the surrounding landscape.

Then to Rockland (where James Pennington labored prior to fame), then back through the Blue Ridge to Catoctin Furnace, and on up to McAlister Mill Site near Gettysburg, where I twisted my knee for the first time trying to get just the right shot of a small waterfall. Then off to Menallen Friends Meeting House, William and Phoebe Wright Burial Site, and, as the Golden Hour saturated autumnal colors in rural Pennsylvania, Kaufman's Station at historic Boiling Springs.

The plan was to hit about one hundred Network



to Freedom sites while meandering generally west from Western Pennsylvania, up to Lake Erie, around to Detroit, over to Chicago, up to Milwaukee, down and across through western Illinois, across Iowa to Eastern Nebraska. Four days out, four days back, is what I imagined. But standing in Boiling Springs in the remains of the day with only eight sites photographed and videoed, the math didn't work. I panicked. I had underestimated how much time this would take! This is impossible. Dumb idea. I'm going home.

But, I wanted to see the Cumberland County Courthouse in Carlisle, so I'd at least go up there before giving up. I raced the sun and barely won. The light was funky with billowing clouds over the historic structure, so I slipped a polarizer on my lens, and shot a three-frame HDR bracket. It turned out! This is fun! Before the buzz of perceived accomplishment had faded, I had Hotwired a room two hours to the west near the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site. I was making great time!

If you've read this far, you surely know the feeling -- the monomaniacal research dives into countless rabbit holes; the volunteering countless hours cleaning up some old building or some forgotten cemetery, or writing some application or research paper when -- if you're like me -- you really hate writing. Over and over again I ask, Why am I doing this? I'm lazy and cynical 90 percent of the time, yet I'll happily drive through rain, sleet, and Chicago traffic on the off-chance I can get a few more people interested in the lives of people long dead and, in most cases, forgotten.

Well there's the issue right there, isn't it? We believe the stories of those who resisted state-sanctioned inhumanity shouldn't be lost, deserve to be saved, must be told now. All that obsessive good energy has led to priceless new scholarships revealing the breathtaking sweep of that resistance heading in all direction long before the 1830s and even 1619. Over the last 25 years, obsessive good energy has led to a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program now 760-plus members strong spanning well beyond the footprint of organized efforts of Northern Black and White Abolitionists known as the Underground Railroad. Collectively, the stories of these 760-members are an epic tale bigger than



any book currently written. It exists mostly because of obsessive volunteers. We wrote this epic together. Now let's work together to get this epic to the public.

You need inspiration to push on? Not a day passed without a revelation or three -- moments that recharged the Will, expanded the knowledge bank, made the ridiculous seem less so. James Pennington, Josiah Henson, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abby Kelley Foster, Stephen and Harriet Myers -- they stood right here! What a joy to finally see the Rankin home perched above the Ohio River Valley -- the North Star dressed in maroon brick. To finally come upon the tombstone reading "Levi Coffin" or "John Todd" or "Ruth Cox Adams." To walk in John Brown's footsteps in eight different states. To see the already great work preserving the Underground Railroad story in states like Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, and Kansas. All the hard work was worth it!

The photos and videos from the 211 sites visited look pretty good. Winnie (Christina Cargill's preferred name, so remember that) is uploading them to the ArcGIS system now. We've bagged about 50 more already. We'll hit the road again in Spring. Hopefully, we can unveil it as a Christmas present this year.

But try it out for a day trip before then. I promise: If you're a sucker for a lively tale of right brawling wrong, you'll find it well worth the drive.

# Successful Symposium on Freedom Seeking in San Antonio!

Written by Dan Ott

On September 15, San Antonians turned out to learn more about the history of Freedom Seeking in their city as a crucial stop along the Underground Railroad SOUTH to Mexico. In collaboration with the San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum (SAAACAM), the Network to Freedom



Caption: Dr. Maria Hammack shares her research mapping freedom seeker origin points and destinations

co-hosted a symposium “San Antonio in the Flight & Fight for Freedom” at the Little Carver Community Center. Over the course of the day-long event, the symposium included six presentations and was attended by 80 community members.

Free to the public, the program featured a variety of presentations by nationally known scholars, local historians, students and community members, as well as a National Park Ranger. Including two key notes, Dr. Mekala Audain of the College of New Jersey, and Dr. Maria Hammack of the Ohio State University, both shared their research on stories and methods of Texas freedom seeking toward Mexico. Additionally, the program included presentations by freedom seeker descendants sharing oral history of their ancestors’ flight to freedom, student research on the dark history of San Antonio as a hub of slave catching and kidnapping, as well as an interpretive program from

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park about the history of mission San Jose as a station along the Underground Railroad. The symposium concluded with a lively audience-engaged discussion about how SAAACAM and the community could work with the Network to Freedom program to continue elevating the history of freedom-seeking in San Antonio.

Stories of freedom seeking in Texas to Mexico, like those shared in San Antonio, go a long way in nuancing our understanding of the Underground Railroad in American History. Importantly, they highlight the historical reality that not only was Texas a slave society and state, but also that refugees from slavery sought freedom in Mexico as early as 1829 when slavery was largely abolished there. If freedom seekers could make it to Mexico, allies there (including the Mexican government) often provided them with opportunities to work, in some instances granted them property, and made them citizens. At times, Mexican allies, (including the Mexican Army) resorted to armed defense to protect freedom seekers from slave catchers and posse who crossed the international border from Texas into Mexico to re-enslave people. There are many documented histories in Mexican archives of such encounters, suggesting a very different Underground Railroad experience in Mexico than in the free states of the North. Scholars estimate that perhaps as many as 4,000 freedom seekers made their way across the Rio Grande River before the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865.



Caption: Symposium presenters participated in a group Q&A with the audience at the end of the event. From left to right, Deborah Jarmon (CEO SAAACAM), Dr. Mekala Audain (College of New Jersey), Dr. Maria Hammack (Ohio State University), Dan Ott (Western Regions Coordinator NTF), Sandra Ogogor (Trinity College), Jady Evans (St. Mary’s University), William Bozic (San Antonio Missions National Historical Park).

# Interact with Your Network to Freedom

## Share Your Feedback

The Network to Freedom Program is looking into a partnership opportunity with the American Association for State and Local History for the NTF to provide museum and non-profit professional development technical assistance and trainings for NTF members.

This organization is highly regarded for the assistance it provides to community-based historically-focused organizations to help them achieve their goals and make their work more relevant to their communities. Example training and webinar topics that may be apart of this this partnership could include: community engagement, stewardship of collections, preservation of historic structures, organizational management, organizational governance and development, and successful historical interpretation/education, among others.



We would like your feedback about your organization's interest in this type of technical assistance. For more information about the program under consideration, and to provide your feedback, please email the Network to Freedom at [network\\_to\\_freedom@nps.gov](mailto:network_to_freedom@nps.gov) with subject line: "Technical Assist Program Feedback."

## Share Your Story

We invite you to share your personal stories of how you became a part of this incredible community. Whether you joined to preserve a significant site, connect with like-minded individuals, or contribute to the educational mission, your journey is unique and inspiring.



If you're interested, submit your story along with any photos or memories that highlight your experience. We may feature your story on our social media channels or in future newsletter features. Your narrative can inspire others and further enrich the tapestry of the Network to Freedom. Send to [network\\_to\\_freedom@nps.gov](mailto:network_to_freedom@nps.gov)

# Network to Freedom Reminders and Appreciation

As we embark on a new year, we want to keep you informed about upcoming opportunities and express our heartfelt appreciation for your outstanding contributions in making 2023 an amazing year for the Network to Freedom.

## 2024 Photo Contest: Capture the Spirit of Freedom

Get your cameras ready! We are excited to announce the 2024 Network to Freedom Photo Contest. This is your chance to showcase the essence and story of your listing through the art of photography. Stay tuned for detailed guidelines and share your unique perspective on this important part of our history.



**2024 Photo Contest**  
January 2024 - May 31st 2024

We are excited to announce our Network to Freedom Photo Contest!



To enter, please submit a recent photo that encapsulates your mission for your NTF Site, Facility, and Program. This can be a recent photo of the site, a recent event, and a short description of the story behind the photo. For bonus points, you can post about your entry on social media and tag us with this tag.

#NTFMEMBERSTORY



**Cancellation Passport Stamps**  
Requests due March 31, 2024

Visitors of Network to Freedom Sites can add a rubber cancellation stamp to their collection this year!

If interested, please include:

- NTF Member Name
- Contact information of person receiving stamp
- Address

network\_to\_freedom@nps.gov

Will arrive by Juneteenth



## Request for Passport Cancellation Stamps - Deadline March 31, 2024

A friendly reminder for all Network to Freedom sites: If you wish to be included in the Passport Cancellation Stamp program for this year, please submit your requests by March 31, 2024. This program allows visitors to commemorate their visit to your site, creating a lasting memory of the important history you represent. Don't miss out on this opportunity!

## Thank you for an Incredible 2023

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every member of the Network to Freedom for your hard work, dedication, and passion throughout 2023. Your commitment to preserving the history of the Underground Railroad has made a significant impact. The new sites, educational initiatives, and collaborative efforts have truly enriched our network.

As we move forward into 2024, let's continue working together to promote awareness, education, and the preservation of this vital part of our shared history. Your efforts are instrumental in ensuring that the legacy of the Underground Railroad remains alive for future generations.

Watch a 12-minute Compilation of our video celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzU8gAJTtYU>