

12th ANNUAL PETERBORO NY WATCH NIGHT for EMANCIPATION

*On the night of December 31, 1862, enslaved and free African Americans gathered, many in secret, to ring in the new year and await news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. Just a few months earlier, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the executive order that declared enslaved people in the rebelling Confederate States legally free. However, the decree would not take effect until the clock struck midnight at the start of the new year. The occasion, known as Watch Night or "Freedom's Eve," marks when African Americans across the country watched and waited for the news of freedom. (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, *Historical Legacy of Watch Night*)*

For the twelfth year, Owen Corpin, graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, retired United States Naval Commander, and a descendant of an enslaved family that found refuge in Peterboro has created and will host the 12th Annual Peterboro NY Watch Night on Sunday, December 31, 2023. Corpin intends to return to a pre-COVID format with an event beginning with free registration at 11:00 am Sunday, December 31, 2023 at the Smithfield Community Center, 5255 Pleasant Valley Road, Peterboro NY 13134. The National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum will be open and Commander Corpin will share military stories. A light lunch will be served (soup, sandwiches, and pastries).

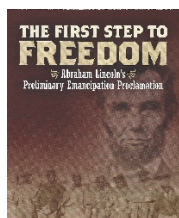
At 1:00 pm Watch Night will be described and Gerrit Smith's connection with the earlier 1862 document will be explained before visitors proceed (drive or walk the short distance) to the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark at 2:00 pm to ignite the watch fire and read President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

The public is encouraged to participate. As Frederick Douglass expressed December 31, 1862: *It is a day for poetry and song, a new song. These cloudless skies, this balmy air, this brilliant sunshine are in harmony with the glorious morning of liberty about to dawn up on us.* (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, *Historical Legacy of Watch Night*)

For more information: www.NationalAbolitionHallofFameandMuseum.org, www.PeterboroNY.org, 315.308.1890. For status of the program, due to weather, call 315.308.1890 after 1 p.m. Saturday, December 30, 2023



Reading the Emancipation Proclamation by artist J.W. Watts in 1864 (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture)



Pamphlet for Exhibition Designed by New York State Museum explaining that (I)n 1864, Lincoln donated the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which raffled it off at the Albany Relief Bazaar to help raise money for the Union war effort. Abolition Gerrit Smith won the raffle after buying 1,000 tickets at \$1 apiece. Smith then sold the document to the New York State Legislature, with funds going to the Sanitary Commission. The legislature, in turn, deposited the document in the New York State Library, where it remains today. (www.nysm.nysed.gov/ep)