

Peterboro NY Announces Tenth Annual Emancipation Day Plans

Descendants of freedom seekers from slavery, and the public, will congregate for the tenth year in this 21st C. to commemorate the 19th Century emancipation in the ways that the generation before celebrated in the 20th Century. James Corpin, Carrie Martin, and Max Smith, Co-Chairs of the Tenth Annual Peterboro Emancipation Days, have announced the schedule for Saturday, August 3 and Sunday, August 4, 2019. Reception and registration will open at 9:30 a.m. followed by the morning assembly at 10:00 am at the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark, 5304 Oxbow Road, Peterboro NY 13134. Thanks to professional photographer Jim Demerest, the annual group picture will be taken in front of The Laundry, the center of African American stories on the Estate. Folks then either walk or ride in the processional to the Peterboro Cemetery to lay a wreath at a gravestone which reads *Born a slave. Died a free (wo)man*, and one also at the humble grave of the wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith.

After lunch at 1 p.m. the group convenes at the Smithfield Community Center, 5255 Pleasant Valley Road, Peterboro NY 13134 for *The Three Harriets*. Confusion through the years about three African American women associated with the Gerrit Smith Estate will, hopefully, be dispelled by programs on each of them. Theatre goers became intrigued with Harriet Powell with the success of the play *Possessing Harriet* (Powell) written by Kyle Bass which debuted in October 2018 at Syracuse Stage and will be produced again at the Franklin Stage Company in Franklin NY in July. The Gerrit Smith Estate has arranged a coach to the play on Saturday, July 13 for those who want to see the play again or for the first time. At 2 p.m. a PowerPoint program will describe how Harriet Sims Russell got to freedom in Peterboro and what her family did in their lives in Peterboro. At 3:00 p.m. an account of Harriet Tubman's times spent in Peterboro will present the famous conductor on the Underground Railroad as one of the folks at the estate.

This year the Emancipation Day Committee will provide a tombstone for an unmarked grave in the Upper Lisle NY Cemetery. The extensive research to find the graves of all of Harriet Russell's children came to closure for Donna Burdick, the Town of Smithfield historian, when she found Harriet's "lost daughter." The public is invited to join with the Upper Lisle cemetery staff and the Peterboro group at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 4 in the Upper Lisle Cemetery for the ceremony and the reunion of descendants of Harriet Russell.

The public is encouraged to attend all or part of the Emancipation Day programs. Admission is a donation. In 2019 the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark is open weekends from 1-4 p.m. until August 25th, and the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum is open from 1-5 p.m. on weekends until Labor Day. Both sites are open by appointment and for tours. Contact 315-280-8828, info@gerritsmith.org, and nahofm1835@gmail.com.



2017 Emancipation Day Processional to the Peterboro Cemetery to lay wreaths at the grave of a person "Born a slave, Died a Free (Wo)man," and at the humble grave of wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith.