

Stephen Myers of Albany NY to be Inducted to Hall of Fame

Stephen Myers will be inducted into the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum (NAHOF) in Peterboro NY during Induction Weekend October 21 – 23, 2022. NAHOF is pleased that this Induction weekend for Myers, Robert Everett, and Calvin Fairbank will go forward after being postponed twice due to coronavirus. Paul Stewart nominated Myers on behalf of Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany NY.

Stephen Myers was a Black activist in connection with the Underground Railroad and African American rights in general. He was born in New York State and raised in New York when it was a slave state working on progressive abolition. He was himself a person who had been enslaved in New York State. He wrote in the Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate newspaper for which he was the principal agent and key writer. As early as 1831 he was assisting fugitives from enslavement to make their way to Canada. He was also active in 1827 with a group of little-known significance called the Clarkson Anti-slavery Society. As time went on he was involved in organizing and serving as a delegate to many of the Colored Men's Conventions of the 1830s to the 1860s, to secure African American rights. He was involved in voting rights campaigns through the NYS Suffrage Association, was involved in organizing a school, sued Albany Schools over segregation, organized an economic development project, visited refugees in Canada, and recruited soldiers for the US Colored Troops. He spoke around the country and shared the podium on many occasions with Frederick Douglass and other notables of the abolition movement. He was well known for organizing publications and newspapers for the cause of the African American community. Myers' work with the Underground Railroad was assisted by New York City's Sydney Howard Gay of The National Anti-Slavery Standard. Additionally, Myers received fugitives referred to him from Philadelphia, New York and Boston. He was the father of five children. His wife Harriet Myers was a key element in his activism as she maintained the home front while he was working Hudson River Steam ships as a Steward, speaking around the country, and attending meetings. His letters to Judge William John Jay in the 1850s offer unusual insight into the often-secret workings of the Underground Railroad in general and Albany NY in particular, revealing financial dealings, operations and donors. Stephen Myers died in 1870 after having been born and raised in enslavement, freed, crusaded against slavery, and lived to see the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U. S. Constitution passed as a capstone to his life's work.

The Induction Weekend begins Friday, October 21 at 7 pm with a *Musical Tribute to Rev. Robert Everett* with Welsh music and Everett poetry readings. On Saturday morning October 22 at 10 o'clock there will be a guided tour of the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark. At 11 o'clock the Hall of Fame and Museum will open, followed at 12:30 by the Annual Meeting of Members of NAHOF.

The Abolition Symposia begin at 1:30 pm with a presentation on Rev. Robert Everett, followed by the Calvin Fairbank presentation at 2:30 pm. The program for Stephen Myers at 3:30 pm will be presented by Paul and Mary Liz Stewart, researchers and founders of URHPCR. Paul is the author of this nomination. Mary Liz is the executive director of Underground Railroad History Project which owns and manages the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence in Albany.

At 5 pm the Peterboro United Methodist Church will serve a 19th C. Antislavery Box Dinner planned in March to be prepared in case of coronavirus spikes. At 7 pm the nominators of the inductees will publicly nominate each inductee with seconds accepted from the banner sponsors. Upon voting approval from the audience, the Hall of Fame Banners will be unveiled for each new inductee.

Sunday morning at 7:30 am at the Canal Town Museum in Canastota, registration for the *Abolitionist Freedom Walk* will open. At 9:00 the landing of 104 delegates driven out of Utica October 21, 1835 for attempting to establish the New York State Antislavery Society will be reenacted and an interpretive sign in honor of those abolitionists will be unveiled. The Freedom Walk will commence at 9:00 with a 10:30 re-enactment and sign unveiling in Clockville to present the activities of the abolitionists along the way to Peterboro. This inaugural short walk will return to Canastota. with plans for a complete 2023 nine mile walk all the way to Peterboro. At 1:00, back in Peterboro, a re-enactment and a sign describing the October 22, 1835 arrival of the NYS Antislavery Society delegates in Peterboro will be presented. The public is invited to the free reception directly following, to commemorate the 187th anniversary of the event. The Abolitionist Freedom Walk is supported by the Erie Canalway IMPACT! Grant Program.

At 2 pm Sunday, October 22 Stephen Myers' role in the Stephen and Harriet Myers' Florence Farming and Lumber Community / Association located in Florence, Oneida County NY will be explained. The Florence Community was a small 19th Century settlement of both freedom seekers and free blacks who established a communal farmstead in Florence which was established around 1845. It was intended to create a community where free blacks could own land and farm. Local abolitionist and philanthropist Gerrit Smith bought the land and by 1849 there were roughly 80-90 families who called Florence home. For a little over twelve years this small community flourished. After 1860, the Florence Farming Association ceased to exist and the community disbanded. The program presenter Jessica Harney has been a Social Studies Teacher at Camden High School for the last 18 years. She teaches MVCC Dual Credit US History and NYS History, Global History and Psychology as well as advises several school clubs such as Odyssey of the Mind, Amnesty International Club, and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance Club. Where her personal interests, classroom experiences, and volunteerism intersect, she has found herself conducting research on the Florence Farming Association. She volunteers with the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, serves on several Underground Railroad advisory boards, and is a member of historical societies in the Oneida County area.

At 2 pm on Sunday, October 23, J.H. Justin Schlesinger, the great, great, great grandson of Calvin Fairbank, will present *The Old House Under the Elms -- The Fairbank House*.

The Abolition Hall of Fame Inductions are held on the weekend closest to the anniversary date of the inaugural meeting of the New York State Antislavery Society held in Peterboro October 22, 1835. The public is encouraged to participate in any or all of the activities. Sponsorships of a banner to support an inductee are due September 15th. Registration for the weekend events and the 19th C. Dinner are due September 15st. Registration forms and updated information are available at nahofm1835@gmail.com, 315-684-3262, www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org,

The National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum is located at 5255 Pleasant Valley Road, Peterboro NY 13134. The Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark is located at 5304 Oxbow Road, Peterboro NY 13134 with its exterior exhibits are open dawn to dusk.



Stephen Myers by artist Melissa Moshetti 2020



Paul and Mary Liz Stewart, Nominators of Stephen Myers to the Abolition Hall of Fame



Florence Farming Association Sign from the Pomeroy Foundation



Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, home of the Underground Railroad Education Center, 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany, NY 12210