

Peterboro NY Celebrates Emancipation Day of Ancestors

June 11, 1925, the *Madison County Leader and Observer* reported that the Citizens Club of Peterboro had decided to hold its first annual Emancipation Day on August 6. Rev. J.H. Harris of Oneida gave a fine address to the club: "I am very glad to have this opportunity of calling your attention back to the event of 306 years ago. There is no higher honor that can be conferred on any than to know where they are. In my mind, the white man should know by this time where the negro stands by what he has undergone and what he is now undergoing. Yet he possesses a spirit of willingness without murmuring a word and without moving one arm of rebellion and yet the negro stands ready at any bugle call for the protection and safeguard of American government."

The *Madison County Times* (Chittenango NY, July 17, 1925) announced that the Citizens Club would "sponsor an emancipation celebration on August 6 with a program of music, speeches, sports, and dancing." The *Oswego Palladium* reported on August 8, 1925, "With gratitude heartfelt more than 600 Negroes of Central NY made a pilgrimage yesterday to the Gerrit Smith mansion in Peterboro, where appropriate exercises marked the celebration of the first Emancipation Day.... Gerrit Smith Miller grandson (of Gerrit Smith) showed the visitors a permanent memory of the gratitude of the slaves whom his grandfather helped. It was a massive volume containing the names of 3000 negroes who had passed thru Peterboro."

With this historical background the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark held its first Emancipation Day in 2010 to replicate elements of the 1925 Emancipation Day. With COVID's interruption to the annual event in 2020, the Emancipation Day committee is planning the 11th Annual Peterboro Emancipation Day for Saturday, August 7, 2021. The event will begin at 10:00 a.m. with *Assembly, Announcements, and Song* followed by the annual processional to the Peterboro Cemetery with two wreaths as past generations had done. One wreath is for a gravestone that reads *Born a slave. Died free*, and the second wreath is for the humble grave of Gerrit Smith.

At 1:30 p.m. Susan Goodier PhD will present *Black Suffragists* interactively with Zoom. At 2:30 John R. Kaufman-McKivigan PhD will present on *Frederick Douglass in Peterboro*. At 3:30 Harry Bradshaw Matthews will describe his studies on *Black Family Histories*, after having spoken briefly about the U.S. Colored Troops before the processional.

Emancipation Day will take place at the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark, 5304 Oxbow Road, Peterboro NY 13134. Small group entries to the Laundry will be scheduled throughout the day to provide first time viewing of the partially stabilized building, and to collect ideas for further renovations and interpretive exhibits of Peterboro's Black Americans. The exterior exhibits of the Estate are open from dawn to dusk for those who respect property and COVID protocol. For more information and updates: www.gerritsmith.org, info@gerritsmith.org, and 315-657-8461.



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In the Gerrit Smith Estate Carriage Barn at 1:30 p.m. Susan Goodier PhD will present *Black Suffragists* interactively with Zoom. At 2:30 John R. Kaufman-McKivigan PhD will present on *Frederick Douglass in Peterboro*. At 3:30 Harry Bradshaw Matthews will describe his studies on *Black Family Histories*, after having spoken briefly about the U.S. Colored Troops before the processional.



Small group entries to the Gerrit Smith Estate Laundry will be scheduled throughout the Emancipation Day to provide first time viewing of the partially stabilized building, and to collect ideas for further renovations and interpretive exhibits of Peterboro's Black Americans.



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