

Annual Peterboro Watch Night Commemorates Emancipation Proclamation

Retired Naval Commander Owen Corpin of Peterboro has once again planned for an Emancipation Proclamation Watch Night commemoration on Tuesday, December 31, 2019 at the Smithfield Community Center, 5255 Pleasant Valley Road in Peterboro NY. The event begins at 11:00 a.m. with a tour of the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, and Navy Service stories shared by Corpin, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. At noon a lunch will be provided followed by Peterboro heritage announcements for 2020, songs, the Watch Fire behind the Center, and the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.

President Abraham Lincoln presented his first draft of his Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet for critique and revision on July 22, 1862. Lincoln's next submission of his *Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation* was presented again to his Cabinet on September 22, 1862 announcing that in one hundred days the federal government would free all enslaved people in the states rebelling against the Union. Anticipation was high as to whether Lincoln would, indeed, issue the Proclamation in one hundred days. People watched through the night of December 31st 1862 for the issue of the Proclamation. President Lincoln did issue his signed final draft on January 1, 1863. As a wartime Executive Order, the *Emancipation Proclamation* freed the slaves in the seceding states. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which addressed the abolition of slavery in the United States, was proposed January 31, 1865 and ratified on December 6 of 1865.

In 1864 Lincoln donated his *Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation* of September 22, 1862 to the Albany Relief Bazaar to be raffled to raise funds for the Union war effort. Gerrit Smith of Peterboro bought one thousand tickets at one dollar each, won the document, and donated it back to the Relief Bazaar to raise more money. At that time the New York State legislature bought the Proclamation for one thousand dollars and placed it in the New York State Museum. The final signed *Emancipation Proclamation* issued on January 1, 1863 burned in the Chicago Fire October 8, 1871 which made the September 1862 *Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation* the only Proclamation document in Lincoln's own hand. The facsimile of this treasured document will be on display during the Watch Night event.

Peterboro welcomes the public to commemorate President Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* and Gerrit Smith's role in the preservation of the document. Admission is free. Dress warmly! For information 315-750-6561, 315-750-2437, nahofm1835@gmail.com.



Commander Owen Corpin looks on as Jan DeAmicis, Chair of the Oneida County Freedom Trail, takes a turn reading Abraham Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* during the watch fire at the December 31, 2018 Watch Night program in Peterboro.



Volunteers read Abraham Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* during the watch fire at the December 31, 2018 Watch Night program in Peterboro



Max Smith, a co-chair of Peterboro Emancipation Day, sings a slave song at the December 31, 2018 Watch Night program in Peterboro.



Commander Owen Corpin spins Navy stories after lunch during the December 31, 2018 Watch Night program in Peterboro.

