

Underground Railroad: The Escape of Harriet Powel

The afternoon of the Tenth Annual Peterboro Emancipation Day will feature presentations on three African-American women who escaped slavery on the Underground Railroad: Harriet Powel, Harriet Russell, and Harriet Tubman. Starting at 1:15 at the Gerrit Smith Estate, 5304 Oxbow Road, Peterboro NY 13134, JJ Citron and Norm Dann will present a PowerPoint program on Harriet Powel, a young mixed-race woman owned by the Davenports of Mississippi who were visiting Syracuse. Tom Leonard, a free African-American waiter, indicated to Powel that he could help her escape. Powel was hidden in many places along the Central New York Underground Railroad, with her last stop at the Gerrit Smith Estate in Peterboro NY where she was introduced to Elizabeth Cady (Stanton). Citron and Dann will present the biography of Powel including her early life, her years in Kingston, Ontario, after her escape, the recognized escape locations on the Madison County Freedom Trail, and remarks on the Kyle Bass' play *Possessing Harriet* that has created great interest in Powel since the debut at Syracuse Stage in October 2018. The play was commissioned by the Onondaga Historical Association, which has the reward bulletin for Powel in its collection. The Smithfield Community Association in Peterboro has seats available for a program, coach ride, and a production of the play in Franklin NY on Saturday, July 13, 2019. (Call 315-28-8828)

JJ Citron is the Colgate University Upstate Institute 2019 Fellow at the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum in Peterboro. Citron is a senior with a major in Peace and Conflict Studies. Norman K. Dann PhD, Morrisville State College, *professor emeritus* is the author of eight books on the history of Peterboro.

At 2:15 pm Donna Dorrance Burdick, Smithfield Town Historian, will present a PowerPoint program which will describe how Harriet Sims Russell got to freedom in Peterboro and what her family did in their lives. (On the following day, August 4 at 12:30 pm a gravestone will be installed for Russell's daughter Emily at the Upper Lisle Cemetery.) At 3:15 pm August 3 Kate Clifford Larson PhD will provide an account of Harriet Tubman's times spent in Peterboro which will present the famous conductor on the Underground Railroad as one of the folks comfortable in Peterboro.

Registration for Emancipation Days will open at 9:30 am Saturday, August 3 followed by the morning assembly at 10:00 am at the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark, 5304 Oxbow Road, Peterboro NY 13134. Following the annual group photo, folks will 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.

The public is encouraged to attend all or part of the Emancipation Days programs. Admission is a donation. In 2019 the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark is open weekends from 1-4 pm. until August 25th, and the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum is open from 1-5 pm Saturday through Thursday until August 15, and on weekends 1-5 pm August 17- September 1. Both sites are also open for special events and by appointment for group tours. For information: 315-280-8828, info@gerritsmith.org, and nahofm1835@gmail.com.



Gerrit and Ann Smith's home in Peterboro NY where Elizabeth Cady (Stanton) met Harriet Powel in the attic as Powel awaited transport to Canada for freedom.