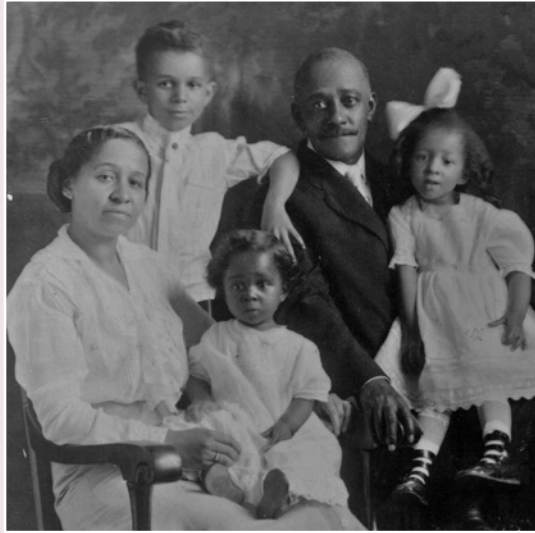
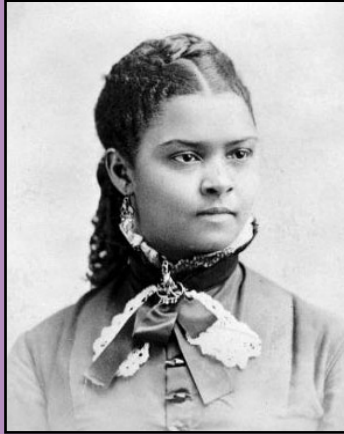


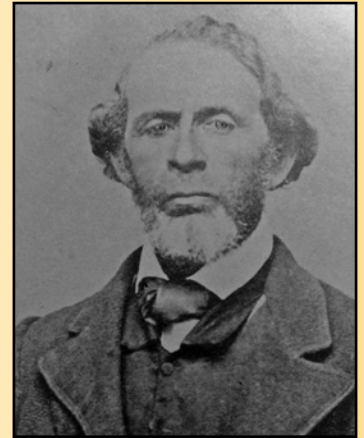
# The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

Mary Henrietta Graham, born in 1858 in Ann Arbor, was the first Black woman admitted to the UM and the first Black person to graduate in 1880.



David Thomas operated a barbershop on Main Street in 1925 serving customers of all races.

Asher Aray was a man of mixed-race descent who owned a farm in Pittsfield Township and was active in the Underground Railroad.



## TIMELINE: 1993-2014

Community Collaborations • Exhibits and Displays • Events and Programs



## African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

### 2014 Board of Directors

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There is a wealth of information about the African/American experience in Washtenaw County and special attention needs to be given to past and present day aspects of African/American life and lore in Southeastern Michigan by collecting, documenting, and sharing with the community at large the ongoing contributions of this population to the development of Washtenaw County. For example, historical research shows that initial settlers and future generations created pockets of abolitionism and safety for freedom seekers in Washtenaw County. "The Underground Railroad is a subject worthy of fresh examination and reevaluation as our nation struggles to understand the complexities of its heritage."

The AACHM is dedicated to the collection and preservation of Black history in Washtenaw County. Our goal is to be the community resource and repository for the documents, artifacts and other items of historical importance from the African/American community. Our vision is to share these stories (that might not otherwise be told) of local families, businesses, churches, or organizations with the larger public at the 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum site.

In 2006, we were given an opportunity for a permanent home. The location is 1528 Pontiac Trail (This is the Polhemus House which was moved from 411 East Washington Street where it was built in 1848). We are in a partnership with THE MOSAIC FOUNDATION (of R. & P. Heydon), and Richard Mitchell of Mitchell and Mouat who served as architect for the project. Mitchell and Mouat prepared the necessary petition materials and presented its plan to the City Council so as to change 1528 Pontiac Trail zoning from a Single-Family Dwelling District to PUD (Planned Unit Development District). This was approved by City Council on October 6, 2008.

Once we were given this opportunity to have a permanent home, we begin asking individuals, organizations, businesses or faith-based institutions to be Legacy Leaders by making a gift of \$ 1,000 (or more) to secure 1528 Pontiac Trail as a permanent home for the AACHM. All Legacy Leaders will be recognized on our Donor Wall and have an archival box with their own family's history at the Museum.



*Securing a permanent  
Home to preserve the past,  
Enrich the present and  
Sustain the future.*



## *Why is it important to document and preserve local African American history?*

**Because preserving the historic and cultural heritage of a community,  
reinforces a sense of place, purpose, identity and continuity.**

The presence of African Americans in Washtenaw County history has often been limited, scattered and sometimes altogether absent. It is up to the people who have and know the history – and the people who collect it – to do what we can to preserve, document and connect our communities. As we work to open a permanent home at 1528 Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor it becomes ever more apparent of how important this museum is, the needs it will meet and the purpose it serves.

Whether it's your mom's wedding dress, childhood classroom memorabilia, books, documents, photos or Papa John Easley's Barber Chair... the AACHM's goal is to document it and preserve a digital record for future generations. This database will be the most comprehensive digital collection of African American historical and family artifacts and the owners.



PHOTOS: Top-"Papa John" Easley at work in his barbershop on Ann Street, Ann Arbor 1947 (Source: Mel Chatman, [ellisfamilystory.com](http://ellisfamilystory.com))  
Bottom-Adams School 1907 (Source: Ypsilanti Historical Society via [southadamstreet1900.wordpress.com](http://southadamstreet1900.wordpress.com))

## Historical Objects Inventory (HOI)

Some of the Items we are interested in:

Letters  
Photographs  
Dolls  
Diaries & Journals  
Local or Family Obituaries  
Area Newspaper Articles  
Property Deeds  
Yearbooks  
Furniture  
Tools  
Toys & Games  
Lace & Linens  
Clothing & Accessories  
Kitchenware  
Pamphlets  
Books  
Posters  
Manuscripts  
Scrapbooks  
Family Bibles  
Account Books  
Organization Programs  
Household Items  
Church Programs  
Church Documents  
Video and Films  
Military Items  
Uniforms  
Oral Histories  
Transcripts  
Business History  
Paintings & Prints



The AACHM is conducting an Historical Objects inventory to locate and identify historical materials written, owned, generated by, or related to African Americans in Washtenaw County, living or deceased, from the 1700s to the present. The project goal is to identify, document and archive the physical items and oral histories that tell the story of our presence in Washtenaw County. One of the results will be a detailed inventory report of these historical artifacts that will be available for study, research and keeping a community memory.

The community is invited to contribute photos, documents, artifacts and other items that tell the history of your family, organization, church, business or African American Washtenaw County connection to be entered into an Historical Objects Inventory (HOI) database. These items and objects will be documented, scanned or photographed (at no charge) and returned immediately to the owner. With your participation, this database will become the most comprehensive digital record of Washtenaw County Black American historical items and family artifacts.

If you have items to donate now, the AACHM has archival space available to accept immediate donations of items that fit our scope of collections. For more information call 734-761-1717 or email [aachmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:aachmuseum@gmail.com)

We are scheduling community scan days in 2014




## 2013 Programs • Collaborations • Exhibits




(L-R)  
 Thomas Myers  
 Anthony Stewart  
 Jonathan Royce  
 Lola Jones  
 Charles K. Campbell  
 Mark Miller

The spotlight was on young artists and writers and creative adults who work with kids on June 23 at Washtenaw Community College. Highlights included a film viewing, author readings and meeting the presenters, their families and the community.



Please join us, bring a friend and support the Museum

# Youth Focus on the Arts Creative Expression!



**Sunday June 23, 2013  
2-4 pm**

Washtenaw Community College  
 Morris Lawrence Building, Room 150  
 4800 E. Huron River Dr.  
 Ann Arbor, MI

**You are invited to meet, mix and mingle with some talented artists and authors**

<b>Charles K. Campbell</b> – Author and director of short film, "The Boy With No Joy"	<b>Anthony Stewart</b> – Painting
<b>Gary Hopkins</b> – Graphic design	<b>Jonathan Royce</b> – Author, "Detective Dwayne Drake and the case of the Alphabet Thief"
<b>Mark Miller</b> – Painting and ceramics	<b>Lola Jones</b> – Author, "Children's Choices"
<b>Thomas Myers</b> – Drawing and painting	

**Tickets are \$20 / Students \$5 - You can also pay at the door  
 Call 734-819-8182 for tickets or email [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com)**

The AACHM was established in 1993 to collect, preserve and share the history and heritage of the Black community in Washtenaw County. We are currently housed in the David R. Byrd Center on Lohr Road and raising funds to establish a permanent home at 1528 Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor in 2014. The Museum needs and appreciates your membership and support as we move forward to the next phase of the 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative. [www.aachmuseum.org](http://www.aachmuseum.org) or find us on Facebook

**The AACHM is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, contributions are tax deductible**

**“Focus on the Arts” October 20th**

The October 20 Focus on The Arts program displayed the works of Gregory Sipp and Travis Erby at the Gladwin Barn in Ann Arbor. Both artists are very talented, and we really enjoyed having an opportunity to see and talk with them about their work. Musical artistry was provided by the equally talented Albert Marks.



Travis Erby greets Frederick McCuiston



Gregory Sipp speaks with a guest  
Photo credit: djwcreativeservices@comcast.net



Albert Marks

**UM Exhibit “Race in this Place” - AACHM Kiosk**



“Race in this Place” was an exhibit at the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History through July 7, 2013. The AACHM kiosk display was part of the exhibit and board members participated in activities and panel discussions.



## 2013 Underground Railroad Tours



**Underground Railroad Tour for Ann Arbor Rotary** Twenty-four members of the Ann Arbor Rotary (some are pictured here with Tour Docent Deborah Meadows and president Joyce Hunter) were part of the Underground Railroad Tour on Sunday, October 13.

### April-October

### Journey to Freedom UGRR Tours

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes, hidden places, determined citizens and self-liberated people of color seeking freedom. Over 220 people took the tour during our 12th season. The AACHM provided several private family and group tours in 2013.


2013 Underground Railroad Bus Tours of Washtenaw County

# Journey to Freedom

**A handful of families kept a secret that freed thousands**

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes, hidden places, determined citizens and self-liberated people of color seeking freedom. Two essential routes to Detroit and ultimate safety in Canada crossed in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

**Discover the role Washtenaw County played on this docent guided bus tour by the exteriors of local and nationally-known Underground Railroad landmarks, sites and homes.**




**Make Reservations for the Tour Date of Your Choice**

2013 Tour Schedule
Sunday, April 28
Sunday, June 23
Sunday, August 11
Sunday, October 6

Please call our tour docent Deborah Meadows at 734-819-8182 or email: [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com)

**Individual and Group Rates**  
All costs are payable on the day of the tour  
Individuals: \$20 Groups: With their own transportation: \$200  
Those without transportation are encouraged to call no later than two weeks in advance so that bus reservations can be arranged. If there are less than 15 passengers reserved two weeks prior to a scheduled date, that tour will unfortunately have to be canceled.  
Tours depart from Washtenaw Community College parking lot, (in front of the Industrial and Tech Building). Parking is free.

*Journey to Freedom is an official tour of the US Department of the Interior National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*



Presented by The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

# AACHM

Rosemarion **Blake**  
Russell **Calvert**  
Lydia **Morton**  
Willis **Patterson**  
Johnnie Mae **Seeley**

*Discover what these five individuals witnessed, experienced, shared, and contributed to build the community we live in today.*


**African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County**  
in collaboration with the  
**Ann Arbor District Library**  
Invites you and a friend to the

## Living Oral History Project Premiere

**Sunday, September 22, 2013**  
**2:00 – 4:00 pm**  
Traverwood Branch, Program Room  
3333 Traverwood Drive, Ann Arbor

This event includes the viewing and an opportunity to speak with those interviewed. The video interviews will be available for viewing and download on the Library website following the premiere.

Light refreshments will be served.

 Like us on Facebook

**AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF WASHTENAW COUNTY**  
PO Box 130724 • Ann Arbor, MI 48113 • 734.761.1717  
[www.aachmuseum.org](http://www.aachmuseum.org) • email: [aachmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:aachmuseum@gmail.com)



Rosemarion Blake



Russell Calvert



Lydia Morton



Willis Patterson



Johnnie Mae Seeley

## Living Oral History Project Debuts to a Great Reception

The Living Oral History premiere was a huge success on September 22, 2013 at the Traverwood Library. Rosemarion Blake, Russell Calvert, Lydia Morton, Willis Patterson, and Johnnie Mae Seeley were interviewed for Phase I.

Please view the entire set of interviews at [www.aadl.org/aachmvideos](http://www.aadl.org/aachmvideos). This project is an on-going collaboration with the Ann Arbor District Library and the AACHM. If you know of individuals who have lived most or all of their life in

Washtenaw County and would like to be interviewed, or should be interviewed, (including yourself) contact Joyce Hunter at 734-769-1630. We want to document and share this living community history.



## **November Legacy Fund Presentations and Donations**

We have continued to make presentations to potential donors. We saw the benefit in 2012 as Legacy donations increased. Our partnership with the Mosaic Foundation strengthens our resolve and ability to succeed in the 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative: Securing a permanent home to preserve the past, enrich the present and sustain the future. The opportunity to work with Clements Library as we begin collections work has been presented.

## **December 1 17th Annual Dinner & Jazz Fundraiser**

Guests enjoyed another incredible performance by Ron Brooks with Betty Joplin as guest vocalist and musicians Tadd Weed, George Davidson and Vincent Bowen. This event kicks off the holiday season on a festive note. Proceeds benefit the Museum's Annual Fund. We featured a lobby display with the beautiful photographs taken by Chandra Ervin from the previous year that the guest were able to take with them at the end of the night.

**The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County**  
invites you to our fundraiser

**17TH ANNUAL EVENING OF**

# **DINNER & JAZZ**




**RON BROOKS & FRIENDS**  
*Featuring* **BETTY JOPLIN**

**Sunday Evening**  
**December 1, 2013 | 5-8 PM**  
**Polo Fields Washtenaw**  
**2955 Packard Road, Ypsilanti**

**Call 734-971-7819 for  
Tickets & Reservations**

Mix & Mingle • Cash Bar	Tickets \$50
Dinner Buffet • Live Music	

[www.aachmuseum.org](http://www.aachmuseum.org)  
email: [aachmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:aachmuseum@gmail.com)



PHOTOS BY CHANDRA

TADD WEED

VINCENT BOWEN

GEORGE DAVIDSON

## 2012 Programs • Collaborations • Exhibits

### AACHM EXHIBITS:

#### January 6 – February 3 **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

The Museum has an exhibit commemorating the life and contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the wall and in the display case of the lobby of the Pittsfield Township Administration Building, at Platt and Michigan Avenue.

#### February 6 – March 2 **Local Families Kept the Secret**

This exhibit highlights the history of the Underground Railroad and the role that black and white citizens living in Pittsfield Township, Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor played in this network of secret routes and hidden places.





**2012 Underground Railroad Bus Tours of Washtenaw County**

# **“Journey to Freedom”**

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes, hidden places, determined citizens and self-liberated people of color seeking freedom. Two essential routes to Detroit and ultimate safety in Canada crossed in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

**Discover the role Washtenaw County played on this docent guided bus tour by the exteriors of local and nationally-known Underground Railroad landmarks, sites and homes.**

**A handful of families kept a secret that freed thousands**



## **2012 Tour Schedule**

**Sunday, April 22, 2-5 PM**

**Saturday, May 26, 10 AM-1 PM**

**Saturday, July 7, 10 AM-1 PM**

**Sunday, August 5, 2-5 PM**

**Sunday, September 2, 2-5 PM**

**Sunday, October 7, 2-5 PM**

## **Make your reservations now!**

Please call our tour docent Deborah Meadows at 734-819-8182 or email: [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com)

### **Individual and Group Rates**

All costs are payable on the day of the tour

Individuals: \$20 Groups: With their own transportation: \$200

Those without transportation are encouraged to call no later than two weeks in advance so that bus reservations can be arranged. If there are less than 15 passengers reserved two weeks prior to a scheduled date, that tour will unfortunately have to be canceled.

Tours depart from Washtenaw Community College parking lot, (in front of the Industrial and Tech Building). Parking is free.

*Journey to Freedom is an official tour of the US Department of the Interior National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*



Presented by The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

**May AACHM Gets a New Logo**



**African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County**

Vladimir "Jojo" Otchere: was the winner of the AACHM logo contest. He was a senior at Skyline Hlgh School and excelled in graphics and photography.

**August 26 Focus on the Arts: Authors**



**Front row: Bev Tyler, Joyce Hunter and Bev Jenkins**

*Photo: Phyllis Perry - pepstar27@yahoo.com*

"Focus on the Arts: Authors" took place on Sunday, August 26th, 2012 at Washtenaw Community College. The room was captivated by authors Karen Simpson, Edith Eddins, Debbie Taylor, Beverly Jenkins, as they read from their books. It was an eloquent combination of magical realism, children's fiction, historical romance and healing through God's love. Moderators Bev Tyler and Deborah Meadows provided thoughtful and insightful introductions. Next in the series is "Focus on the Arts: Mixed Media and will take place on Sunday, October 21.



# AACHM

African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

## **Focus on the Arts: Mixed Media**



**Featured  
Artists**

*Darcy Bowden* – Printmaking

*Dr. James Lee* – Pastels

*Shari Tellis* – Handcrafted Jewelry

*Beverly Buchanan* – Paintings/Sculpture  
(work will be on display)

**Sunday, October 21, 2012, 4-6pm**

Gladwin Barn • 4105 W. Liberty St • Ann Arbor, MI

Tickets are \$20 / Students \$5

Call 734-819-8182 for tickets and information  
or email [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com) • [aachmuseum.org](http://aachmuseum.org)

The AACHM is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and donations are tax deductible


**December 4 16th Annual Dinner & Jazz Fundraiser**

The AACHM annual fundraiser has proven to be a popular community event. This year we were able to announce two major financial gifts to the "1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative".

Guests enjoyed another exquisite performance by Ron Brooks with Betty Joplin as guest vocalist and musicians Tad Weed, George Davidson and Vincent Bowen. Proceeds benefit the Museum's Annual Fund that supports our program and operating expenses. We featured a lobby display with the beautiful photographs taken by Chandra Ervin that the guest were very happy when they learned the prints were a gift they could take with them at the end of the night.

*You are invited to kickoff the Holiday season on a Jazzy Note!*

African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County



**16th ANNUAL** Evening of Dinner & Jazz

Sunday, 5-8 PM  
December 2, 2012  
Polo Fields Washtenaw  
2955 Packard Road, Ypsilanti

Tickets \$50  
Mix & Mingle • Cash Bar  
Dinner Buffet • Live Music  
[www.aachmuseum.org](http://www.aachmuseum.org)

**RON BROOKS & FRIENDS**  
*Featuring* **BETTY JOPLIN**

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE **AACHM 1528 PONTIAC TRAIL MUSEUM INITIATIVE**

**AACHM**



## **April-October Museum on Main Street Exhibit Collaboration**

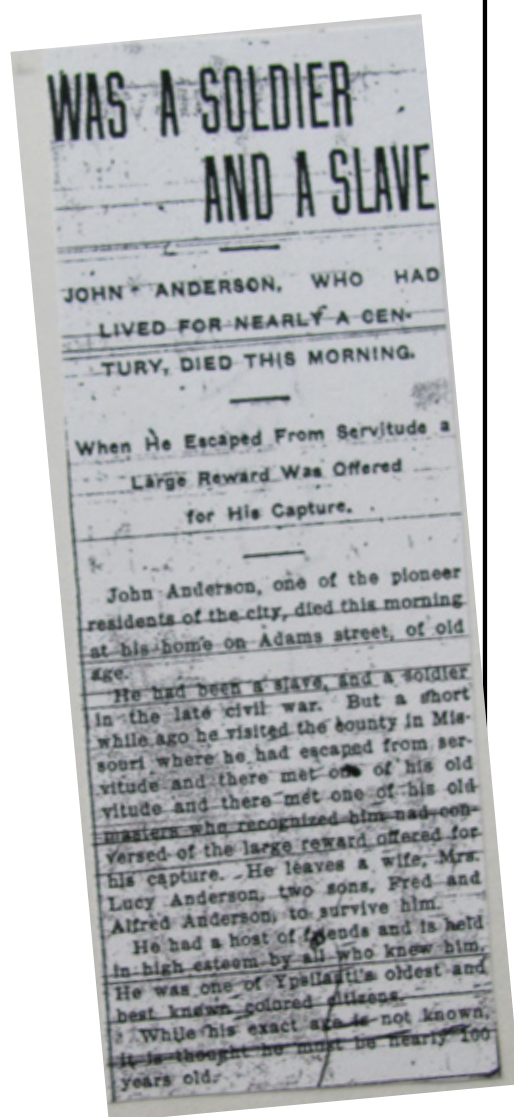
The Washtenaw County Historical Society, Museum on Main Street had a Civil War exhibit up. The AACHM contributed a display about the local soldiers of the 102nd US Colored Troops and their role in the Civil War.

## **February 24 Civil War Talk**

The VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System invited the AACHM to participate in their program "African Americans and the Civil War" as the guest speaker and we distributed an 8-page handout about the topic.

## **June 4 Community Engagement**

We participated in the Downtown African American Festival that celebrates the heritage of the black business district at Fourth and Ann Streets, and the black residential communities that surrounded it. The Museum's display was about local soldiers of the 102nd US Colored Troops, and how they served this country in spite of the difficulties. And how they returned home to face continued discrimination.



**USCT** United States Colored Troops

## **Soldiers of Liberation**



UNION SOLDIERS FROM THE STATE OF MARYLAND 4TH USCT

*"Let the black man fight for his freedom  
and no power on earth ... can deny that  
he has earned the right to citizenship."*

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

*This is an official Tour of the National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*

### April-October

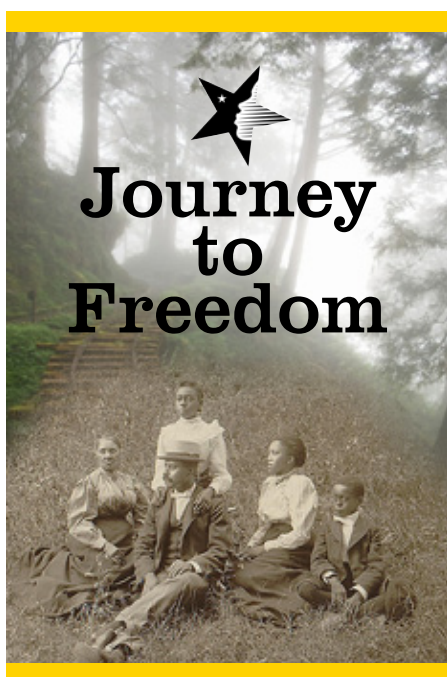
#### Journey to Freedom UGRR Tours

The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes, hidden places, determined citizens and self-liberated people of color seeking freedom. Two essential routes to Detroit and ultimate safety in Canada crossed in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Discover the role Washtenaw County played on this docent guided tour by the exteriors of local and nationally-known Underground Railroad landmarks, sites and homes.

Over 180 people took the tour during our 10th season. A new feature was added - Highland Cemetery on River Street in Ypsilanti. It is a final resting place where black and white soldiers are buried together, up the street from the Thompson Block, a Civil War barracks that served as the temporary home of the First Michigan Colored Infantry.



*The Thompson Block, located at the northeast corner of Cross and River streets, began life in 1861 as a barracks for local Civil War soldiers. The barracks were initially home to Michigan's First Infantry and also eventually became temporary home to the First Michigan Colored Infantry.*



### June 18 Community History Preservation

The AACMH had an Underground Railroad display at the NAACP Juneteenth festival. Our goal was to interest people in taking the summer tours and encourage discussion about our local history around the tour sites and neighborhoods. People are eager to share their stories and we are working to be the institution that collects and preserves these stories. A \$5,000 grant has allowed us too begin that work of collecting.





*Securing a permanent  
Home to preserve the past,  
Enrich the present and  
Sustain the future.*



## **December 4    15th Annual Dinner & Jazz Fundraiser**

Sunday, December 4, 2011 at Polo Fields Golf Club Washtenaw was our annual Fundraiser. Guests enjoyed an outstanding jazz performance by Ron Brooks with Betty Joplin as guest vocalist and musicians Tadd Weed, George Davidson and Vincent Bowen. Proceeds benefit the Museum's Annual Fund that supports our program and operating expenses. We featured a lobby display with the plans designed by Dick Mitchell of Mitchell and Mouat Architects, Inc.

## **November    Legacy Fund Presentations Continue**

We have continued to make presentations to potential donors. We saw the benefit in 2011 as Legacy donations increased. Group presentations included The Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor, The Rotary Club of Ann Arbor and several African American fraternities, sororities and clubs. Many of those organizations have made a \$1,000 Legacy Leader Gift or pledged one. Our partnership with the Mosaic Foundation strengthens our resolve and ability to succeed in the 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative: Securing a permanent home to preserve the past, enrich the present and sustain the future.



**SCHOOL HOUSE ON TRAVER ROAD** This is a researched site on our UGRR tour. Built by the Beckley brothers in 1839, the schoolhouse was open until 1857. Children of color were able to attend. There is a trap door leading to a small room in the basement that is believed to be a hiding place. Participants had an opportunity to see the trap door leading to a hidden chamber in the basement and experience that space for themselves.

### **October 8 Neighborhood UGRR Tour**

We had over 130 people take the tour during our 9th season of “Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad Tours of Washtenaw County. As an expression of appreciation for the neighbors in our Pontiac Trail community, we invited them to take the Northside, Lowertown, Kerrytown and near West Side tour. This tour has several UGRR sites, historical churches, buildings and houses, with 1528 Pontiac Trail at the center.

### **November Legacy Fund Presentations Begin**

In order to raise the funds for a permanent home we had to tell our story. The Development Committee created a presentation and packet of information for potential donors. \$1,000 Legacy donations began to come in as people learned more about our mission, goals and progress.

### **December 5 Dinner & Jazz Fundraiser**

Sunday, December 5, 2010 at Polo Fields Golf Club Washtenaw was our 14th Annual Fundraiser. Guests enjoyed a holiday-themed jazz performance by Ron Brooks with Betty Joplin as guest vocalist. Proceeds benefit the Museum’s Annual Fund that supports our program and operating expenses.





## June 5

We participated in the Downtown African American Festival that celebrates the heritage of the black business district at Fourth and Ann Streets, and the black residential communities that surrounded it. The Museum presented an historical display focusing on the years 1920-1940 with photographs and excerpts from some family's memories who lived in the neighborhood during those years.

*Water color artist Bernice Orr painted this picture of the David R. Byrd Center when she lived across the street. In July, her family donated it to the AACHM where they hope it finds a home on our permanent walls at 1528 Pontiac Trail.*

## June 19

We participated in Juneteenth, the annual NAACP Festival held at Wheeler Park in Ann Arbor. Juneteenth or June 19, 1865 is considered the date the last slaves in America were freed. Although the rumors of the freedom were widespread prior to this, the actual emancipation did not come until General Gordon Granger sailed into Galveston Harbor, Texas and issued General Order No.3, on June 19, almost two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which had become official January 1, 1863. The AACHM had a display about Albert Wheeler, for whom the park was named and the story behind Juneteenth. We had several positive conversations about the history of our community. It is an opportunity to introduce the Museum to a wider community.



## Display at The David R. Byrd Center

The panels that were up at the Ann Arbor District Library are now in the office and on the second floor of the Byrd Center.





# Journey to Freedom



An Official Tour  
of the National Park Service,  
National Underground  
Railroad Network to Freedom

## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BUS TOUR OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

There were no trains or tracks on the Underground Railroad. It was a series of meeting points, secret routes, transportation and safe houses. It was a network of free-born blacks, white abolitionists and former slaves that formed an underground resistance and helped thousands find freedom in the north. There are more than 32 documented sites located throughout this region of Washtenaw County and you will see some of them on **Journey to Freedom** guided bus tours. Choose from two 3-hour tours in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti/Pittsfield Township. Or a 2-hour non-stop tour through all 3 communities.

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM** guided bus tours are available between April and October, tickets are \$20 each. Groups, churches or schools with their own transportation are most easily accommodated.

**JOURNEY TO FREEDOM TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS**  
Presentations and talks for schools, organizations and groups can be scheduled year round.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** contact Deborah Meadows at 734-819-8182 or email [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com).

**TRAVEL AGENTS ONLY:** Call the Ann Arbor Convention & Visitors Bureau at 734-995-7281, ext. 309

### ASHER ARAY AND HARWOOD CEMETERY

Asher Aray was a prosperous farmer and *station master* of mixed descent who regularly helped large numbers of slaves to freedom. Aray family members are buried in the Harwood Cemetery in Pittsfield Township, alongside the White Harwood family. William Harwood was an abolitionist and one of the founders of Ypsilanti.



**BROWN CHAPEL** African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Ypsilanti in 1843. It is the oldest Black church in Ypsilanti and the second oldest in the state of Michigan.



**GUY BECKLEY HOUSE** Rev. Guy Beckley was a *conductor* on the Underground Railroad and well established in Ann Arbor as a minister, lecturer, and active in the antislavery movement. He published an abolitionist paper, *The Signal of Liberty*, edited by Theodore Foster, in 1841 from an office above the store of his brother, Josiah Beckley, across the street from the Anson Brown Building on Broadway (which today houses the St. Vincent de Paul store).



## February 18

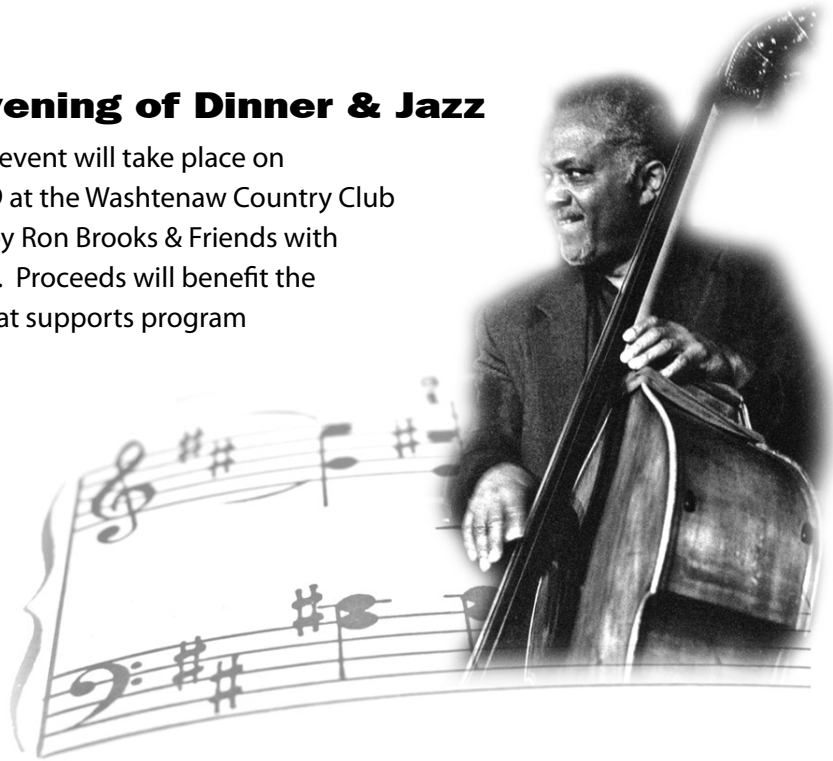
Deborah Meadows speaks at Albion College about the Underground Railroad in Washtenaw County. The program began at 4 PM to a capacity audience of students, professors, community members and local historians in Bobbitt auditorium on the campus of Albion College. The combination of facts, legends, Powerpoint technology and narrative story telling was a compelling mix. There were several questions, comments and stories that were shared afterwards.

The evaluations indicated that attendees “learned new things” or “found the presentation very enlightening” or “really enjoyed the warm and informed narrative approach of telling the history and the stories”.



### 13th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz

Our signature fundraising event will take place on Sunday, December 6, 2009 at the Washtenaw Country Club. Classic jazz performance by Ron Brooks & Friends with guest vocalist Betty Joplin. Proceeds will benefit the Museum's Annual Fund that supports program and operating expenses.



THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

## 13TH ANNUAL EVENING OF Dinner & Jazz!

*With* RON BROOKS & FRIENDS *Featuring* BETTY JOPLIN

Sunday Evening  
December 6, 2009 • 5-8 PM  
Washtenaw Country Club  
2955 Packard, Ypsilanti, MI

For tickets and reservations call Cheryl Ervin at  
734-971-7819 or email [info@aachmuseum.org](mailto:info@aachmuseum.org)  
Proceeds benefit the Museum's Annual Fund for  
program and operational expenses. Thank you!

MIX & MINGLE • DINNER BUFFET • LIVE MUSIC • CASH BAR • TICKETS- \$50



*CHANGES AT 1528 PONTIAC TRAIL – A beautiful copper roof adds a high level of historical refinement and quality that will last for many years to the appearance of the future home of the AACHM.*

This 160 year old historic home is located in a Northside neighborhood rich in multi-cultural history and diversity. 1528 Pontiac Trail is near other heritage sites vital to the early settlement of Ann Arbor, including some that are on our nationally recognized guided bus tour: *Journey to Freedom– Underground Railroad Tour of Washtenaw County*. It is the perfect location for a community museum, and your help is needed to make it happen.

We are asking 300 individuals, families, groups, organizations or businesses to make a donation of \$1,000 (or more) in support of the museum's efforts to establish a home where our history can be collected, documented, preserved and shared.

Contributions of every amount are welcome and appreciated, giving levels are on page 3. Legacy donations can be made in a variety of ways:

1. You can make an individual gift
2. You can join with other relatives and contribute in honor of your family, ancestors or a loved one.
3. Churches, organizations, fraternities, sororities, businesses, professional associates and even neighborhoods can give \$1,000 or more, as a group.

This a unique opportunity to have the names of your family, ancestors, business or organization become part of our local history. Call 734-761-1717 or email [info@aachmuseum.org](mailto:info@aachmuseum.org) for more information.

**All \$1,000 Legacy Donors will have permanent recognition in the Museum.  
Visitors for generations to come will know who made this opportunity a reality.**



**8th Season:  
"Journey to Freedom"  
Underground Railroad  
Bus Tours of  
Washtenaw County**

There were no trains or tracks, just footsteps of enslaved men and women escaping to freedom along the routes of the Underground Railroad. There are more than 32 documented sites located throughout this region of Washtenaw County. You will see some of them on these tours and discover the history and lore of the area and times.

The 2009 Tour season was a great experience. We offered tours for Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township. Participants were very engaged and added many interesting facts and stories about the role Washtenaw County played. Our passengers came from all walks of life; from elementary and middle school students, to U-M graduate students and staff, a Pastor of a local church, a History Professor, and members of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society. Evaluations from these tours have been favorable and recommendations have been adopted. Efforts to keep in contact with our tour guests has presented opportunities to share ideas as well as valuable historical information.

The Ann Arbor Visitor's and Conventions Bureau has been very helpful with promoting our tours. Dennis Doyle worked closely with our late president, Willie Edwards, to market the tours in their early development. Kay Seaser and Bureau President Mary Kerr, have expressed a sincere interest to continue promoting our tours to travel agents and visitors to our city.

UGRR Tours operate April-October. Lectures or visual presentations for schools, groups or churches can be scheduled year round. For more information call Deborah Meadows at 734-476-3158 or email [info@aachmuseum.org](mailto:info@aachmuseum.org).

The African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

MICHIGAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION TOUR

# Journey to Freedom



*An Official Tour  
of the National Park Service,  
National Underground  
Railroad Network to Freedom*

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BUS TOUR OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

**Friday, October 16, 2009 • 4 – 6 PM**

Bus pick up and drop off will be in front of the Michigan Union  
For information and tickets call Deborah Meadows at  
734-476-3158 or Marlys Deen at 734-904-1478.  
**Tickets are \$15 each.**

**Hear the Legends... Learn the Facts...**  
**Explore the History of the Underground Railroad**



# Journey to Freedom



*An Official Tour  
of the National Park Service,  
National Underground  
Railroad Network to Freedom*

**UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BUS TOUR OF WASHTENAW COUNTY**

**Sunday, October 18, 2009**

**Ann Arbor Bus Tour • 2 PM – 5 PM**

The tour bus departs at 2 PM from the front of the  
**INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY BUILDING** on the campus of  
**WASHTENAW COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
4800 E. Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor

**Tickets are \$15 each**

Park free in the WCC Parking Lot!  
Water and fresh apples will be provided on the bus.

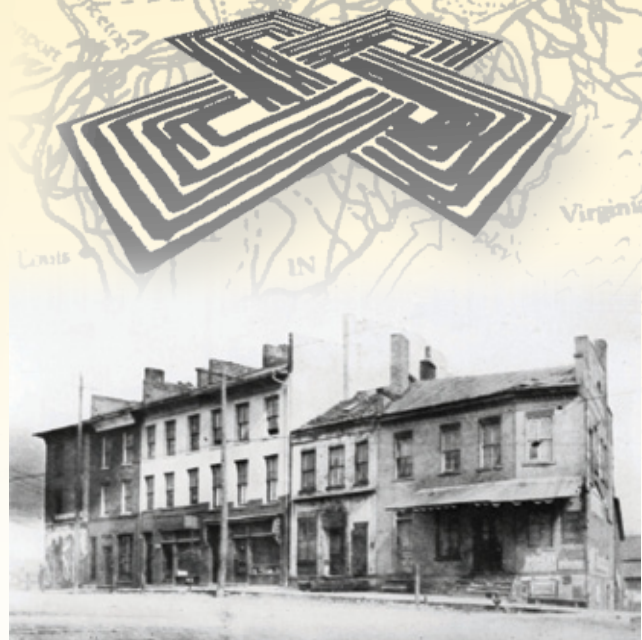
**Reserve Your Seat Today**

**Call Deborah Meadows at 734-476-3158**

**to sign up and for more information.**

**Or email [deborahmeadows2@msn.com](mailto:deborahmeadows2@msn.com)**

**Make checks payable to the AACHM.**



**THE HURON BLOCK** Guy Beckley published the Signal of Liberty in 1841 from an office above the store of his brother, Josiah Beckley, on Broadway, across the street from the Anson Brown Building on Broadway (which today houses the St. Vincent de Paul store).



**UNION CHURCH** This small brick structure appears on the 1854 map of Ann Arbor labeled simply as "Union Church." You will see the first Black Church in Ann Arbor located on High Street.



**GUY BECKLEY HOUSE** Beckley also assisted men and women escaping slavery from 1842 until he died in 1847.



# Images

Family | Friends | Community | 1920s – 1930s



## **Images: Family, Friends, Community - 1920s-1930s**

**September 3-October 14 Ann Arbor District Library**

Photographs of Black Americans living in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s convey the importance of family life, friendship and community. Such images, whether they are personal portraits of husbands and wives, sisters, school children, or members of a church choir, or capture parent and child interactions, offer a glimpse into the lives of a people. They reflect how African Americans saw and defined themselves. In a year in which the United States is ushering in a new era in its political and social history, this exhibit creates greater community awareness of the deep traditions that sustained and nurtured a people in generations past.

The African-American community was one of the fastest growing elements of Ann Arbor's population during the 1920s. The automobile sparked the creation of brand new industries, creating a great number of jobs, which increased the demand for housing. The building boom brought hundreds of workers to the city and many of the heavy laborers were African-American.

### **This exhibit is coordinated and presented by:**

- The African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County
- The Ann Arbor Community Center
- Another Ann Arbor, Inc

# FENCES

## by August Wilson

Winner of the New York Drama Critic's and Tony Awards as well as the Pulitzer Prize, this American classic follows one African-American family as they struggle through the 1950s. The story centers around Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball star who was excluded from the major leagues during his prime. He now works as a Pittsburgh garbage man and harbors a lingering bitterness that threatens his relationships with his wife and his son, who wants his own chance to play ball. FENCES explores the complicated relationships that hold families together-- and tear them apart-- in a powerful, moving story filled with humor, love, hope and triumph.

Featuring Lynch Travis, James Bowen, Shelia Slaughter, Michael Joseph, Christopher Hogan and Julian Gant.



*"One of the richest experiences I have ever had in the theatre. I wasn't just moved. I was transfixed."*  
-New York Post



# Benefit

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

### Tickets \$25

All proceeds from the sale of these tickets benefit the 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative to establish a permanent home for the AACHM.

We thank Performance Network for extending this generous fundraising opportunity.

**Saturday, May 16, 2009**

**3:00 PM**

Performance Network Theatre

120 East Huron Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Make checks payable to the AACHM

For more information call 734-662-3128



**Hear the stories... See the Sites... Experience the...**

The  
African  
American  
Cultural and  
Historical  
Museum of  
Washtenaw  
County

# Journey to Freedom!



*An Official Tour of the National Park Service  
National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*

## 2009 Underground Railroad Tour of Washtenaw County

### FOR RESERVATIONS OR INFORMATION:

- Shirley Vaughn: 734-996-0603
- Deborah Meadows: 734-476-3158
- Museum Office: 734-761-1717
- Email: [info@aachmuseum.org](mailto:info@aachmuseum.org)

Tickets are \$15 per person for groups with transportation and a driver, and payable by check or money order to The African American Cultural and Historical Museum (AACHM).

*Learn about the people and the building where the  
anti-slavery newspaper, "Signal of Liberty"  
was published from 1841-1848.*



## Choose from 4 Tours

### • Ann Arbor

Travel through Downtown, Kerrytown, and Lower Town and out Pontiac Trail to see the sites and homes of Underground Railroad Conductors.

### • Pittsfield Township

Stand near the grounds where stationmasters and their family members are buried.

### • Ypsilanti

Journey across Depot Town to the Thompson Block to a home where a prominent family chose to act in secret while they supported the Underground Railroad.

### • The Journey New!

A non-stop 2-hour tour through Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti hearing the stories and driving past the sites along the routes.

## TOUR DETAILS

- Each bus tour (approx. 2 or 3 hours) includes over 20 documented Underground Railroad activity sites.
- Groups, churches or schools with their own transportation are most easily accommodated. We can help arrange transportation for small groups.
- Underground Railroad Tours are available with weather permitting, April through November.
- Tours begin from Washtenaw Community College, in front of the Industrial Technology Building, unless other arrangements are made. See the map on the back of the flyer.

**TRAVEL AGENTS ONLY:** Call the Ann Arbor Convention & Visitors Bureau at 734-995-7281, ext. 309

# Celebrate Black History Month

WCC Students and the community are invited to this **FREE EVENT**

## Upholding The Legacy

Discover the role Washtenaw County played  
in the history of the Underground Railroad.  
Meet the descendants of one of  
our first families.

**Presentation, Poetry & Music!**

**February 12, 2009 - 4:00 PM**

**Morris Lawrence Building, Towsley Auditorium**

THIS EVENT IS SPONSORED BY



The African American Cultural and  
Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

The Ann Arbor  
Chapter of



Washtenaw  
Community College



## 7th Annual Tour Season

*Imagine learning the history you never knew existed about places you've driven past for years. Discover what role Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Washtenaw County and Michigan played in the Underground Railroad.*



The Underground Railroad Tour concluded at the David R. Byrd Chapel, in the Church of the Incarnation on Lohr. Rd. (L-R) Mary, an OLLI participant, Ms. A. Ann Tai (program coordinator for OLLI) and Tour Guide Deborah Meadows. The David R. Byrd Center, in the background, is the location of the African American Cultural and Historical Museum administrative office and small display area.

## UM LifeLong learning Institute Spring Course

Several participants signed up for a lecture and tour offered through Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, at the University of Michigan.

Sites included the Harwood home and cemetery, Starkweather home, Norris home, Beckley homes and schoolhouse, and a stop at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum.

## “Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad Tour

The Underground Railroad was a term used to describe the secret routes enslaved men, women and children took to gain their freedom. This network extended all the way from the deep South to states and territories where slavery had been prohibited. Those who escaped often obtained help and protection from free Blacks, Whites, Native Americans -- and other slaves -- who acted as conductors and provided food and shelter along the way.

In May of 1999, the AACHM decided that based upon certain archival evidence, there existed a detailed history of Underground Railroad Activity in Washtenaw County. The AACHM then commissioned and participated in a project to complete research and documentation for an Underground Railroad Tour. 32 historical sites in the County area were identified using state birth records, plat maps, and census records.

The result of this work led to the creation of “Journey to Freedom” an Underground Railroad Tour in 2002. The Tour is available from April-October and can be scheduled by calling 734-761-1717.



# Polhemus house eyed for museum

African-American history experts seeking a home

BY JO COLLINS MATHIS  
The Ann Arbor News

A local "museum without walls" that has existed for 15 years to promote African-American history has come up with a plan for its first home.

Board members for the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County are looking at the historic Polhemus house as a place to anchor the museum.

The house, now vacant at 1528 Pontiac Trail, was moved from its down-

town location at 411 E. Washington St. two years ago.

First, the land must be rezoned because the house is in a residential district, where museums are not permitted.

Ronald Woods, president of the museum, said the location is ideal because the city's north side played a role in the abolitionist history of Ann Arbor. Several neighboring houses are on the Our Journey to Freedom Underground Railroad Tour of

SEE MUSEUM, BACK PAGE

■ Significant events in black history within Washtenaw County, A12



FILE: THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

The Polhemus house sat on Washington Street near Division Street in downtown Ann Arbor for about 160 years. It was moved to its current location on Pontiac Trail in 2006.

## Events in black history

A sampling of significant events in black history in Washtenaw County:

- Circa 1817: Mary Aray, believed to be one of the first black people in Washtenaw County, settles in what is now Pittsfield Township.
- 1843: Brown Chapel AME Church is established in Ypsilanti. Union Church in Ann Arbor is established nearly a decade later. It is believed from documents and oral history that Bethel AME and Second Baptist Church, both in Ann Arbor, grew out of Union Church.
- 1872: Elijah McCoy designs his first invention, the lubricating cup, behind his house on Congress Street in Ypsilanti. The cup dripped oil onto a locomotive's axles, bearings and engine without requiring a stop.
- Late 19th century: Black-owned businesses in Ann Arbor begin to flourish, mostly along Ann Street. Among the business owners was George H. Jewett II, who owned a cleaning and pressing shop. Jewett was the first African American to play football for the University of Michigan in 1890.
- 1923: Dunbar Community Center, an activities center that became a focal point for Ann Arbor's black community, opens. It was later renamed Ann Arbor Community Center.
- 1923: Charles Eugene Beatty begins teaching at Harriet School (now Perry Child Development Center) in 1935. Beatty becomes the first full-time black principal in Michigan when he is named principal of Harriet School in 1940.
- 1954: Harry Mial becomes Ann Arbor Public Schools' first black classroom teacher when appointed to Jones Elementary School (now Community High School). In the mid-1960s, Mial challenges the district's lack of black administrators by filing a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. In 1968, Mial becomes a principal at Northside Elementary School.
- 1967: John Burton is elected the first black mayor of Ypsilanti.
- 1975: Albert Wheeler becomes the first black mayor of Ann Arbor.

Source: The African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County and The Ann Arbor News.

## MUSEUM FROM A1

# It would be open by appointment

Washtenaw County. Also, a good many black families from the South moved to Ann Arbor's north side in the 1950s and '60s, he said.

In addition to providing administrative space, Woods said, the new facility would allow space for displaying exhibits acquired or developed over the years. Artifacts to be shown could include tools, artwork, books and pamphlets. The building would also provide public meeting space for programming, lectures and public discussions. The museum would be open by appointment instead of having regular hours.

Changes to the building would include the construction of an elevator in the rear. In most other ways, the building would continue to look like a residential structure, said city planner Matt Kowalski.

The museum anticipates hosting two to three busloads of schoolchildren a week and is working with the nearby Bethel AME Church on John A. Woods Drive to secure permission to use church parking spaces for those and possibly other vehicles.

Planners are working to create language that would cover the possibility that traffic to the museum might increase significantly, to ensure that the neighborhood would not be negatively affected, Kowalski said.

The proposal could go to the Planning Commission this month.

Formed 15 years ago, the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County has sponsored exhibits and programs throughout the area but has never had a permanent exhibit space. For the past couple of years, the museum's administration has kept offices at the David R. Byrd Center on Lohr Road in Pittsfield Township.

In October 2006, the Polhemus house was moved from the East Washington Street site where it had stood for nearly 160 years to its new spot on Pontiac Trail. The Washington Street property, along with additional land, is being redeveloped.

The Greek Revival style house is one of a few pre-Civil War houses in the area. The house was built for Albert and Leah Polhemus and their family of six, and converted into apartments more than a century ago. Before its relocation, it had been used as office space.

The new owner is a company with principals that include Ann Arbor resident Peter Heydon, a philanthropist and advocate for historic preservation, city planning officials said.

"African American history is a slice of the greater history of America," said Woods. "But it's not just about African Americans. It's a slice that allows us to see the complexity of the American experience. It's America being played out on the terrain of Washtenaw County."

Jo Mathis can be reached at jmathis@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6849. Judy McGovern contributed to this report.





Photos taken in 11/5/06

### April 9, 2008

Mitchell and Mouat Architects drafted a site plan, which was presented to a small group of immediate neighbors at a meeting at the firm's offices.

### August 8, 2008

Moved by Commissioner Carlberg, seconded by Commissioner Potts "that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County PUD (Planned Unit Development Zoning District) and supplemental regulations and PUD site plan, subject of approval of necessary variances by the Zoning Board of Appeals." *A vote on the motion: **Unanimous***  
**Yeas:** Bona, Carlberg, Mahler, Pratt, Lowenstein, Westphal and Potts.  
**Nays:** None Absent: Borum Recusal: Commission Member Woods.

Dick Mitchell (architect on the project) "We intend to preserve the house's residential look and as much as possible of its original architecture. Landscaping plans include plantings, a wooden fence around most of the property, two rain gardens, and three rear parking spaces for staff on a textured paved surface that will double as a patio. Plans for the house itself include archival storage on the basement level, exhibit and meeting space on the first floor, and offices on the second floor."

Peter Pollack, Pollack Design Associates (the landscape architect involved in this project) presented two drawings of the site. "The museum activity and archival research can be accommodated in a residential building. We believe the context and specifics and use fit well with the neighborhood. He explained further the landscape buffering and the low intensity use of the building."

### September 8, 2008

*Approved on first reading:* Ordinance No. ORD-08-31 to Amend Chapter 55, Rezoning of 0.21 acre from R1C (Single-Family Dwelling District) to PUD (Planned Unit Development District), African American Cultural and Historical Museum, 1528 Pontiac Trail.  
**Recommendation: Approval - 8 Yeas and 0 Nays.**

### October 6, 2008

*Adopted on second reading:* A motion was made by Council member Sabra Briere, seconded by Council member Margie Teall, that the Ordinance be approved on First Reading. **On a unanimous yes voice vote, the Mayor declared the motion carried.**

## Strategic Planning

The Board and different committees have been meeting with a focus on plans for a possible physical location for the Museum. The 1528 Pontiac Trail Museum Initiative was started to establish the groundwork for securing a permanent home for the Museum.

## Collaborations

### **JANUARY-APRIL University of Michigan Museum Studies: Creating the Blueprint for a Living Museum**

The AACHM and the University of Michigan Museum Studies Program completed a successful 2008 collaboration. Working with the Museum were Helen Dixon and Monica Patterson, MSP graduate students whose efforts were supervised by Museum Studies Associate Director Bradley Taylor. After researching the background of the Museum, and drawing upon “best practices” in the museum field, they assembled five source books with concrete steps for implementing further the museum’s existing five-year Strategic Plan.

On April 9, Ms. Dixon and Ms. Patterson discussed their work “Creating the Blue Print for a Living Museum” before an engaged audience at the Museum Studies Proseminar program in the Eldersveld Room in UM’s Haven Hall. They cited their educationally beneficial experience in helping the Museum advance its mission in the county. They presented to the AACHM Board on May 17 at the David R. Byrd Center and gave us the five source books.

### **FEBRUARY Images of Local Black History**

The Ypsilanti District Library partnered with Ray Mullins to present “Images of African American Life in Washtenaw County on February 2, in the Community Room at the library on Whittaker Road. We had an exhibit on display, “Celebrating Ypsilanti’s Rich History and Heritage” with a focus on Brown Chapel and the Beatty family in Ypsilanti. AACHM board member Shirley Vaughn spoke about the importance of education and Board President Ron Woods participated in the panel discussion.

### **Black History Month Program at Borders**

Lola Jones, Carole Gipson, and Deborah Meadows were invited to speak to employees at Border’s Headquarters, in Ann Arbor, hosted by Merchandising executive, Ms. Andromedia Bowden and Ms. Patricia Blackwell of the African American Employee Action Group. Deborah presented on the history of the Underground Railroad in Washtenaw County, with special focus on the McCoy and Aray families of Ypsilanti, and Rev. Guy Beckley of Ann Arbor. Carole Gipson co-author of *Another Ann Arbor* followed with a presentation of the history of our local black community.

## 12th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz

Our signature fundraising event will take place on Sunday, December 7, 2008 at the Washtenaw Country Club featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet and guest vocalist. Proceeds will benefit the Museum’s Sustainability Fund.



## The Underground Railroad Tour: Season 6

### “JOURNEY TO FREEDOM” WASHTENAW COUNTY UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TOUR

Under the leadership of AACHM board members Shirley Vaughn and Deborah Meadows, the Museum has collaborated with several local organizations, making “Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad Tour a community-wide success. These are some of the groups who participated:

- The Ann Arbor Academy for middle and high school students enjoyed a living history presentation from sisters Karmen Brown and Patricia Whitsitt, and Tonya Blake. All three are local descendents of Pittsfield Township Underground
- An Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Underground Railroad tour was conducted in February for the senior citizens group at the Ann Arbor Community Center.
- Washtenaw County Heroes: Past and Present middle and high school youth from Ann Arbor’s Peace Neighborhood Center, and Ypsilanti’s Harriet Street Center, of Washtenaw Community College, Extension Service, at The Episcopal Church of The Incarnation.
- Ypsilanti Underground Railroad Tour was conducted for the Ann Arbor Chapter and the Ypsilanti Chapter of Jack and Jill of America. The tour included a visit to the Ypsilanti Historical Museum to view UGRR displays and other exhibits.



Underground Railroad Tour Guide Deborah Meadows with the Ann Arbor Chapter of Jack and Jill of America in front of the old Brown Chapel AME Church.

### “Journey to Freedom” DVD Project

We are working on a DVD documenting the story of the Underground Railroad with a focus on Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti sites on our tour. Once completed, the DVD will be made available to educational institutions, libraries and the general public.



*In September, The AACHM's Shirley Vaughn spoke before the Ypsilanti City Council on the historical significance of the Starkweather residence on Huron River Drive. The Council subsequently voted to accept an offer to acquire this important historical property, a site on the Museum's Underground Railroad Tour.*

## **Strategic Planning**

- The Executive Committee held a retreat focused on capacity building grants, site enhancement, facility planning and projection, advisory committee development, membership and annual giving.
- Board members took part in a Living History workshop series on technical aspects of museum work at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. The Symposium was coordinated and directed by Bamidele Demerson, an AACHM Founder and former Director of Education, Research and Exhibitions, at the Charles H. Wright Museum.

## **Collaborations**

**“Building the Beloved Community by Acknowledging and Preserving Our Past”** was a part of University of Michigan’s 20th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium program in January. The Museum discussed program and operations in panel collaboration with the UM Center for Afroamerican and African Studies. We also had an exhibit on display.

### **AACHM Collaborates with the University of Michigan Museum Studies Program**

Graduate students at the University of Michigan will help us map out a strategy for the next level of growth and development. Their support will be in the areas of fundraising, programs, collections and staffing. The students will produce a useful and practical document for the museum. Bradley L. Taylor, the Associate Director of the Museum Studies Program, believes this will be a unique and positive collaboration for both parties. The students receive small museum practical experience and we receive the benefits of their state-of-the art knowledge with community applications. The project starts in January 2008, and will extend through the University’s winter term.

## **11th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz**

**Our signature fundraising event** was held on Sunday, December 2, at the Washtenaw Country Club featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet. and Betty Joplin. Proceeds benefit the Museum’s Sustainability Fund. The weather was awful and the attendance was the 100 %.





### November 5, 2006

The Polhemus House was moved from 411 E Washington St, where it was built in 1848, through downtown and over the Broadway bridge to a new home at 1528 Pontiac Trail.

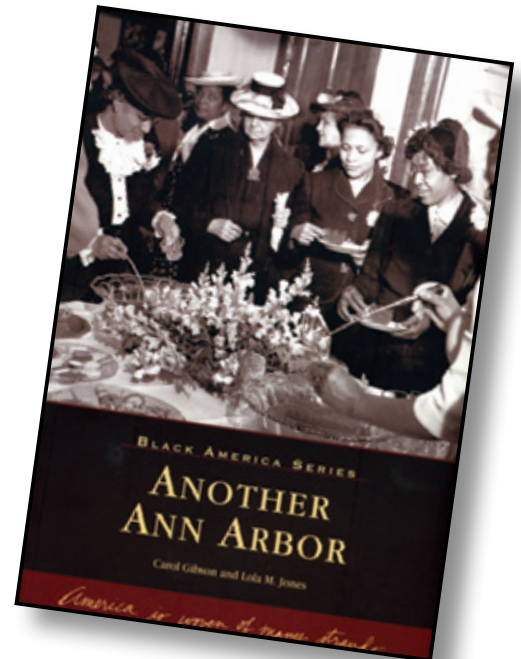
### Underground Railroad Tours Season 5

"Journey to Freedom" Washtenaw County Underground Railroad Tours and Programs included classroom presentations at area schools and other community organizations. Individuals, groups and families also took the tour.

### Museum Office at the David R. Byrd Center Serves as a Community Resource Center

The Museum administration office works to become a Community Resource Center at the David R. Byrd Center 3261 Lohr Road, Ann Arbor.

- We have a small room upstairs with a photo display of early African American residents in Ann Arbor during the 1920's-1930's.
- African American History resources including photos, clippings, articles and research.
- The research and papers from the late Willie M. Edwards. She was a former board president and the director of the Underground Railroad Tour project.
- The display cabinet in the living room displays images from *Another Ann Arbor*, the book written by board member Lola M. Jones and her daughter Carol Gibson published by Arcadia Publishing Inc.
- We currently have over 100 books about African and African American history, Michigan and World History
- We have the following exhibits stored onsite: The History of local African American Churches; An Underground Railroad Exhibit and a photo exhibit



### 10th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz

"Dinner & Jazz" the tenth annual building fundraiser was held at the Washtenaw Country Club featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet. Proceeds benefit the Museum fund to build sustainability.

## **Journey to Freedom Expands Area of Service: Season 4**

**June-August** The Ann Arbor Convention and Visitor's Bureau's marketing support increased the number of participants this year. "Journey to Freedom" Washtenaw County Underground Railroad Tour took small groups of 6-12 to over 32 sites. The tours are guided by Museum board members and associates.

- Local schools asked for a schedule and want to take the tour during the school year
- There were requests for brochures with more information about the sites
- A Black History Month Tour was also requested

## **The AACHM Administration Office Moves to Lohr Road**

**August** The Museum Board moves the administration office from New Center to the David R. Byrd Center. This location will house the office and some displays, artifacts and documents. The board meetings will be held here and the potential for some exhibit space is possible. The David R. Byrd Center had their annual Open House in the Fall and the visitors spent a lot of time looking at the Museum's exhibit and office displays.

## **9th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz**

**December 4** "Dinner & Jazz" the ninth annual fundraiser and friend-raiser was held at the Washtenaw Country Club featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet. Proceeds benefit the Museum fund to build sustainability.



"Star of Freedom" an original mixed media piece by artist Charles M. Young, was purchased by four Board Members and donated to the Museum



## Museum Votes to Move Office to Historic Farmhouse

**April** The Museum Board votes to explore moving the administration office from New Center to the David R. Byrd Center. This historic farmhouse was built in 1830 and restored and preserved by David R. Byrd, the late husband of museum board member Letitia Byrd. He was an architect, teacher, community activist and mentor.

## Cries & Whispers Exhibit Travels to Main Street

**May 15 & 16** "Cries & Whispers" AACHM Underground Railroad exhibit on display as part of "Wander Washtenaw", the Washtenaw County Historical Society Museum Tour. The Museum on Main Street, Ann Arbor

## AACHM Tour Receives National Recognition

**Journey to Freedom Underground Railroad Tour of Washtenaw County** was accepted as an official member in the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

## Journey to Freedom: Season 3

**June-August** "Journey to Freedom" Washtenaw County Underground Railroad Tour was also promoted by the Ann Arbor Convention and Visitor's Bureau. The Bureau helped us prepare the MACAA mini matching grant and the Rosebud Foundation grant. Both grants were funded to support the video version of the Underground Railroad Tour. This year's tour included 2 new exhibits from the AACHM. In Ann Arbor at the Museum on Main Street and an exhibit at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum. The 3.5 hour tours are guided by Museum board members and associates.

## 8th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz

**December 12** "Dinner & Jazz" the eighth annual building fundraiser held at the Washtenaw Country Club featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin. Ron Brooks received an award for his dedication, commitment and legacy of service to the Museum and the community of Washtenaw County. Proceeds benefit the Museum fund to build sustainability.



AACHM office will be moving to The David R. Byrd Center at 3261 Lohr Road, a historic farmhouse with room for displays, meetings and events.

## AACHM Celebrates Our 10th Anniversary

**“Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future”** The Museum has established a decade of tradition of quality exhibits, community programs and a nationally recognized Underground Railroad Tour “Journey to Freedom”.

## Founder’s Celebration

**May 4** Founder’s Celebration Dinner was held to acknowledge and honor the founding members of the museum at the Washtenaw Country Club, Ypsilanti

## “Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad Tour: Season 2

**June-August** Several more people, including some groups, took the tour the 2nd season and the majority of people who took the tour said they would recommend it to a friend. They went to 32 sites and buildings where anti-slavery supporters housed, fed, and guided slaves from the South to Canada. The 3.5 hour tours are guided by Museum board members and trained associates.

## 7th Annual Evening of Dinner & Jazz

**December 7** “Dinner & Jazz” the seventh annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise Jazz Club on Main Street, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin.



### AACHM Founders and Board Members

(Back Row L-R) Frederick McDonald, Bamidele Demerson, Shirley Vaughn, Dorothy Mack, Joyce M. Hunter, Linell Ransom Gloria Edwards, Sheryl White (Front, L-R) Shawn Martin, Cheryl Ervin, Zerilda Palmer, Patricia King, Shirley Martin, Beverly Tyler, Letitia Byrd, Lola M. Jones, Njoki Kamuyu, Bev Myers, Willie Edwards **Photo taken May 4, 2003**



# Independent Times

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Washtenaw County's Magazine For Ages 55 and Up

## Following The Local Stops Of The Underground Railroad

By Stephanie Kadel-Taras

Willie M. Edwards has been spending a lot of time driving lately. In recent weeks, she's been all around the residential neighborhoods of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, making sure that a 32-seat bus will be able to get down certain narrow streets and have room to pull over where needed. Mapping out a suitable route has been one of the last details in a four-year project to design a bus tour of Underground Railroad sites in the local area.

Sponsored by the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County, for which Ms. Edwards is board chair, the "Journey to Freedom" tours will run on six Saturdays this summer, beginning June 8. Two different three-hour tours are offered: sixteen sites in Ann Arbor or sixteen sites in Ypsilanti. The tours are the result of years of research about the Underground Railroad in Michigan, conducted by Ms. Edwards and other volunteers from the Museum, along with University of Michigan faculty and students involved in the Arts of Citizenship Program.

This research was just the kind of volunteer work that interested Ms. Edwards, who retired ten years ago from a forty-year career as a librarian for U-M and Wayne State University. "It's half work and half pleasure," she says of spending hours in the Bentley Historical Library and other historical archives, pouring over old letters, county histories, census reports, maps, and memoirs. Every other week, she brought her findings back to the team



Willie Edwards, board chair of the African-American cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County, has been busy mapping out a tour of the local underground railroad.

of researchers, and together they began to uncover significant figures, locations, routes, and events associated with Underground Railroad activities in Washtenaw County and surrounding areas.

It took this kind of dedicated research, because the history of such activities is as hidden as the freedom-seeking slaves needed to be. Michigan residents (whether free African

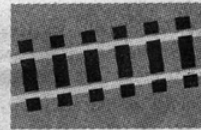
Americans or white abolitionists) who helped escaped slaves needed to keep a low profile about these activities, for their own safety as well as for those they assisted. Thus, they didn't often record their efforts anywhere, or tell others about them, even after the Civil War ended the need for the Underground Railroad. Evidence of the loosely connected and often spontaneous activities of local residents to

help freedom seekers had to be culled and compiled from many sources.

The bus tours will stop at important homes that are believed to have hidden fugitive slaves, churches and meeting houses that fostered the abolitionist movement, and historical markers that commemorate the efforts people made.

# Journey to Freedom

by Josh Steichmann



**T**hey came from the deep south of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama. They walked for miles barefoot, waded in rivers to throw off the dogs, and dreamed of a free life. They were escaped slaves, and Washtenaw County was the penultimate stop on the long pilgrimage to liberty.

The African American Cultural and Historical Museum has assembled the first tour of Washtenaw county's historic Underground Railroad sites. Giving visitors physical context for 16 local elements of the arduous trek, the tour reminds us of the history beneath our feet.

While slaves had been escaping and fleeing north since they were first brought to America in the early 1600s, the trickle became a flood in the 1800s. In 1836 the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society was founded in Ann Arbor. Five years later, Methodist Episcopal Reverend Guy Beckley and Theodore Foster began publishing *Signal Of Liberty*, a weekly newspaper that endorsed the abolitionist cause and trumpeted the aiding and abetting of slaves through an "underground railroad."

The phrase came about in 1830 as a slave owner described the flight of a slave by saying "It was as if he escaped on an underground railroad." This metaphor was picked up by abolitionists to refer to the network of

as we can learn most of them are profane swearers—Sabbath breakers—rum-drinkers..." (ibid.)

Churches were another important abolitionist meeting point. Both the Quakers (known as The Friends Society to members) and the Wesleyan Methodist church were active in the coordination of conductors and passengers, and to a lesser degree the Methodist Episcopalian church that Beckley was a member of. In fact, Beckley was taken to court by the Methodist Episcopalians for his too emphatic endorsement of Wesleyan Methodist doctrine on the issue of slavery. He won the case, but seceded from the church anyway. The Friends Society Meeting Hall stood on north State Street, and Beckley bought a house in that area to also be used as a church.

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopalian Church that now stands off of Pontiac trail (though during the time of the Underground Railroad it existed somewhere in the Fuller/Maiden Lane area) was an important spiritual and logistical touchstone for escaped slaves who did not know the community or which whites could be trusted. There was also a non-denominational African-American church on High Street, which is now a private residence. It stood about a block and a half away from the predominantly white churches on State Street.

While Ann Arbor was an intellectual focal point, Ypsilanti was a hub for the illicit transportation. Of the seven major routes that ran through Michigan, Ypsilanti was a prime stop on four of them. People like Mark and Justin Norris, whose house still stands on North River

**"...several thousand passengers passed through the stations of the Washtenaw County Underground Railroad, aided heroically by men and women all too likely to be forgotten."**

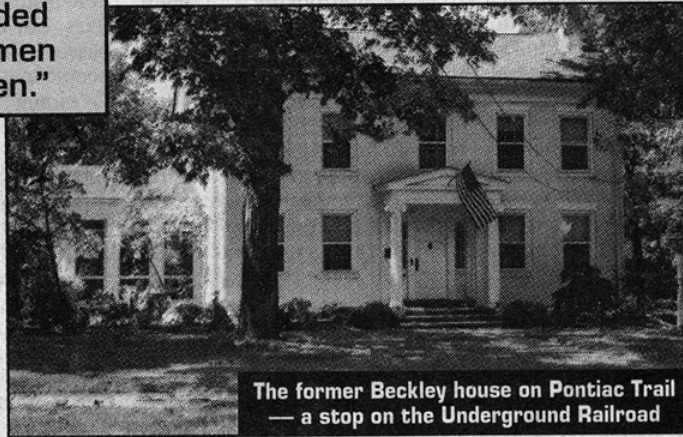
people willing to assist African Americans on their way to freedom. With a cant consisting of "conductors" and "stations," the Underground Railroad spoke directly to the emerging sense of connection drawn from this revolutionary invention.

Though some of the tour is vague due to a lack of written documentation and an inclination towards oral history in earlier African-American culture, some of the spots are well documented.

Guy Beckley's house still stands on Pontiac Trail. It contains a "curious space" near the fireplace that was used to conceal escaped slaves. The house is occupied now, so visitors can't take a tour, but driving by adds a strange physical connection to the heroic drama of history.

The former offices of *Signal Of Liberty* are also nearby, on the site of an office building on Maiden Lane. From this location Foster and Beckley coordinated abolitionist actions and openly flouted the Fugitive Slave Act of 1831 by publicly declaring their assistance in breaking the law.

And while prominent early Ann Arborites such as Robert Glazier and John Geddes both were members of the Underground Railroad, support was not universal. Beckley complains, "But some of our neighbors accuse us of being 'worse than horse thieves,' because we have given to the colored man a helping hand in his perilous journey," and then amusingly concludes that "But a word with regard to the character of our accusers: they are not always the most law abiding people on the earth. So far



**The former Beckley house on Pontiac Trail — a stop on the Underground Railroad**

Street in Ypsilanti, and George McCoy, a tobacco farmer sympathetic to the plight of slaves, were prime movers in the last leg of the journey before the freedom of Windsor.

While numbers vary, scholars agree that several thousand passengers passed through the stations of the Washtenaw County Underground Railroad, aided heroically by men and women all too likely to be forgotten without the efforts of the awareness-raising tour.

*Tours of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Underground Railroad sites, led by Oakland University professor DeWitt Dykes, are August 10 & 17. Two tours embark each day (one at 9am, one at 1pm). Each takes about three hours (including a stop for snacks) and costs \$25. Alternately, with some research, interested parties can create their own version of the tour and hit major sites at their leisure, and be able to include sites throughout southeastern Michigan. Contact the tour operators at 994-6513 for more information.* ■

August 2002 CURRENT 9



## Museum Strategic Plan Completed

AACHM 5 year Strategic Plan was completed, and approved at the April board meeting . The 5 year strategic plan was includes a vision statement, strategic goals, action plans and next steps.

## "Journey to Freedom" Inaugural Underground Railroad Tour

**June-August** The Underground Railroad was a term used to describe the secret routes enslaved men, women and children took to gain their freedom. This network extended all the way from the deep South to states and territories where slavery had been prohibited. Those who escaped often obtained help and protection from free Blacks, Whites, Native Americans -- and other slaves -- who acted as conductors and provided food and shelter along the way.

In May of 1999, the AACHM decided that based upon certain archival evidence, there existed a detailed history of Underground Railroad Activity in Washtenaw County. The AACHM then commissioned and participated in a project to complete research and documentation for an Underground Railroad Tour. 32 historical sites in the County area were identified using state birth records, plat maps, and census records. In partnership with Arts of Citizenship we conducted groundbreaking research on the Underground Railroad and on antislavery activism and African American community life in nineteenth-century Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

The result of this work led to the creation of an extraordinary journey on the 4th route of the Underground Railroad through Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. See over 32 sites and buildings where anti-slavery supporters housed, fed, and guided enslaved men, women and children to freedom. The 3.5 hour tours are guided by Museum board members and trained associates.

Funding for the Underground Railroad Project came from the Ford Motor Company, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the UM Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program, and the UM Diversity and Democracy Fund.

## Museum Receives Ambassador Award

**July 11** Museum receives the Ambassador Award from the Ann Arbor Convention and Visitor's Bureau at the 14th annual Recognition Dinner. The award is given in recognition of significant contribution and support to the growth and development of the hospitality, travel and tourism industry in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County. The Museum also received a Special Tribute from the State of Michigan which reads as follows

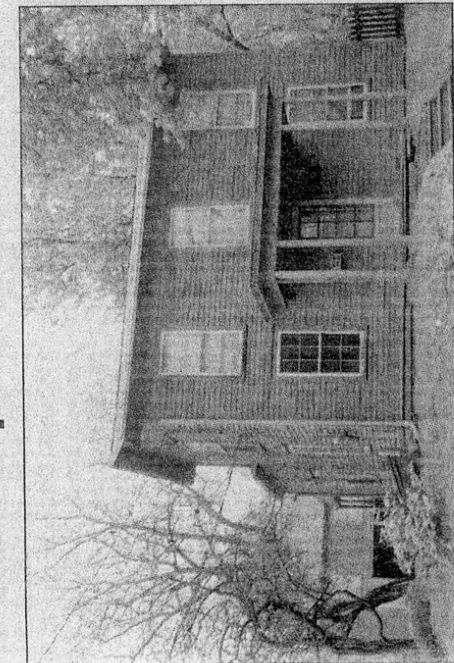
" Since 1993, Washtenaw County has been enriched by the African American Cultural and Historical Museum through its community education, its research projects and its unprecedented tour of the Underground railroad covering 32 sites in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. The community's cultural history is far stronger for the Museum's persistent championship of African American heritage."

*2002 Recognition Dinner, Ann Arbor*

## Evening of Dinner & Jazz

**December 8** "Dinner & Jazz" the sixth annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise Jazz Club on Main Street, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin.

# Museum plans summer tours of local Underground Railroad sites



LEISA THOMPSON, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS  
This house at 1317 Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor was a stop on the Underground Railroad, via which slaves were smuggled to freedom.

Journey to Freedom tour will visit 16 stops each in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti

BY JO COLLINS MATHIS  
News Staff Reporter

All aboard!

The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County will launch a first-ever series of bus tours to sites that once harbored slaves escaping to freedom.

Planners say this summer's Journey to Freedom Underground Railroad Tour will create a more vivid picture of

those who risked their lives and livelihoods during the abolitionist movement in the 1830s.

"The tour is a capsule of local history that reveals the extent of participation by those who believed slavery was an immoral system," said Willie Edwards, president of the museum, located now in an office in Ann Arbor. "And it also shows the degree to which a successful underground network to freedom operated on a local level."

Three-hour bus tours of Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti will explore 16 Underground Railroad sites in each city. Key stops will include the area formerly known

as the Huron Block in Ann Arbor, where "conductor" Guy Beckley published the Signal of Liberty newspaper, and the Thompson block in Ypsilanti's Depot Town, where underground "stations" once stood.

The Underground Railroad was a team of black and white northerners and southerners who illegally assisted slaves seeking freedom.

Suzanne Shaw, chairwoman of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, recently took a tour of some of the sites. "Without this kind of thing, we don't learn about each other," she said.

SEE RAILROAD, B3

## RAILROAD FROM B1

# Historic stops include churches, houses and an old school

The Rev. Jerry Hatter, pastor of Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church of Ypsilanti, said the time has come for Americans to learn more about this part of the nation's history.

"The thing that impressed me was the determination, dedication and passion our foreparents had in the pursuit of freedom and dignity," he said. "There aren't enough people committed to do that nowadays. It showed how God moved in situations where there was no hope. God made a way out of no way."

Guides will be docents and

tour guides from the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Historical Society, the Charles Wright Museum in Detroit and the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor.

Jack Kenny of 1317 Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor is happy to know his house is one of the stops.

"This whole part of town is historic and interesting," said Kenny. "I'm proud of the house and happy to be able to share it with other people."

Edwards said the tours, which do not include the interiors of buildings, are appropriate

for teen-agers and up.

Many of the Washtenaw County houses that harbored runaway slaves no longer stand, but tour guides will offer facts about the locations, the slaves and those who helped them. Among the stops are churches, houses and an old school.

Much of the information was gleaned from research by the University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship Program, which studied oral histories that recorded the role of Washtenaw County in the Underground Railroad.

Tours will be held June 8 and 15; July 13 and 27; and Aug. 10 and 17; they will be 9 a.m. to noon in one city and 1 to 4 p.m. in the other each day. There will be breaks in Depot Town and Kerrytown.

Tickets must be purchased one month in advance from Boersma Travel, 3368 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, or by calling (734) 971-0420 for reservations. Credit cards are accepted.

Jo Collins Mathis can be reached at jmathis@annarbornnews.com or (734) 994-6849.



## “A Different Image” Film Series

**September - December** This 21 film series about the African American experience was a collaborative effort with the museum, the Michigan Theater and UM Center for Afro-American and African Studies.

**September 9** “Bronze Venus” starring Lena Horne. A screening and reception to launch the film series “A Different Image” was held with all proceeds from ticket sales benefitting the museum.  
*Michigan Theater, Ann Arbor*

## “Midnight Journey” AACHM Major Traveling Exhibit


“Midnight Journey on the Underground Railroad” This major and impactful exhibit debuted in February 2001 in conjunction with the Ann Arbor Wild Swan Children’s Theater production of “Along the Tracks,” a dramatization of slave escape by Jeff Chastang. “Midnight Journey” allows visitors to touch the cotton and tobacco plants, feel the weight of a heavy iron kettle as well as the weight and pain of shackles. It also includes maps, period photographic canvas panels that tell the story of a people’s flight and fight for freedom.

The exhibit has traveled to:

- Rentschler Farm Museum in Saline (fall 2001)
- Ann Arbor District Library, with a series of related events (November 2001)
- Matthaei Botanical Gardens (winter 2002)
- Schools in Ann Arbor (spring 2002)
- Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site in Ontario, Canada, (summer 2002)
- Schools in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor (2003-04)
- Port Huron Museum of Arts and History, Port Huron, Michigan (summer 2003)
- Alfred P. Sloan Museum, Flint, Michigan, 2003
- Ypsilanti District Library (fall 2003)
- The Franklin Michigan, Historical Museum (spring 2004)
- Jackson, Michigan (summer 2004)

## An Evening of Dinner & Jazz

**December 4** The fifth annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise Jazz Club on Main Street, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin.



**Ann Arbor District Library**  
presents

**Quilted Journeys**

Local quilt artist  
**Karen Simpson**  
discussing how quilts were used by African-Americans in the fight against slavery

**Thursday, November 8**  
**7:00 - 8:30 pm**  
**Main Library**  
**Multi-Purpose Room**

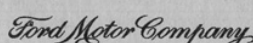


For information call  
327-4560.

Also visit the related November  
**Exhibit: Midnight Journey**  
about the history of the **Underground Railroad**  
**Main Library Multi-Purpose Room**

A canvas map is featured, with routes marked, so that visitors may follow the path through Michigan to freedom.

Midnight Journey is a collaborative project between the Arts of Citizenship Program of the University of Michigan and the African-American Cultural and Historical Museum.

This program is made possible by Ford Motor Company.

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# TALES IN FABRIC

## Passion for quilting weaves life's stories

By JO COLLINS MATHIS  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

It was her love of both horses and her African-American heritage that led Karen Simpson to develop a third passion — quilting.

About 10 years ago, the Ann Arbor resident saw a magazine photo of African quilted armor from Nigeria that pictured warriors on horses.

"The picture struck me so, I just had to have it," said Simpson. "I had quilted before, but I had never quilted anything like that. But I wanted that."

So she took a quilting class at the Ann Arbor Art Association, and turned that picture into a quilt she treasures today.

"It was like I was meant to quilt," said Simpson, a student financial assistant at the University of Michigan. "It's basically the ability to tell stories on fabric, and it tells the story of the life of the quilter, or something important about the quilter — something they have to get out. Instead of writing it, they put it in a quilt."

"You learn a lot about the quilter's family or community or what they're thinking from looking at the quilt."

Simpson has made about 15 quilts since then, including a "diversity quilt" she pieced together after asking about a dozen co-workers to make quilt squares reflecting their personalities.

"I didn't restrict it as to size or color, because I said part of diversity is that anybody can express who they are," she said.

Some were cross-stitched pieces. One was embroidered. Another pictured Jacob's ladder in black and white made by a boss who is color-blind.

Simpson enjoys teaching a class in African-American quilting at the Ann Arbor Education Center at Pioneer High, where she shows students that quilting can be

She also shared her passion for quilts during a quilting demonstration Sunday at the Ypsilanti District Library's Roundtree branch.

"It was fun," she said. "I generally tend to be a quiet person, but not about this!"

One of her quilts is called "The Lazy Gal" and is simply strips of cloth sewn together.

"It says that quilting doesn't really have to be that hard," she said. "It can be something quite simple, but it's still theirs and it still tells their story."

"Traditionally, it's a woman's way of telling her story. For a long time, it was the only way women could tell their stories about their lives."

She enjoys the fact that those who attend her six-week quilting classes include professional women who have quilted for years, high school students and people who have never sewn a stitch.

No one's given up because it was too hard. But there have been a few who quit because of the type of quilting she teaches.

"It's more about what they feel inwardly than following a pattern, and I've had several students who felt they could not do it — and that's OK," she said. "Some people need a formula, and that's fine, too."

Now that she's out of school — she recently received her master's in historic preservation from Eastern Michigan University — Simpson has time to quilt nearly every day. Most of her work is hand-pieced, although she will use the sewing machine for larger pieces.

She said the unique thing about African-American quilts through the years is the tendency to improvise.

"Or you take a pattern and basically tear it apart and do something completely different," she said. "It's almost like visual jazz or blues, where pieces play off each other but don't necessarily maintain the same pattern."



'For a long time, (quilting) was the only way women could tell their stories about their lives.'

— Karen Simpson



## **University of Michigan Research Partnership**

**“Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad History Project.** The museum and Arts of Citizenship continue the research on the Underground Railroad, antislavery activism and African American community life in nineteenth-century in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

## **Historical Heritage Sites Tour**

**April 9** Historical Heritage Site Reception and Tour was held in collaboration with the University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship Program to make the past come alive by experiencing over 15 sites of historical significance to the African American community in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County. Guests took brief bus tours around the Ypsilanti locations.

## **Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra**

**April 22** Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra concert was a collaboration with the University Musical Society. Proceeds from our ticket sales went to the Building Fund and guests enjoyed a pre-glow reception as well as swing dancing on the black & white dance floor at *Eastern Michigan University's Convocation Center, Ypsilanti*

## **An Evening of Dinner & Jazz**

**December 3 “Cuban Jazz Paradise”** the fourth annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise Jazz Club on Main Street, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin. This event is a way to let our members and donors we appreciate their support. It is as much a friend-raiser as a fund-raiser. The date was changed to the first week in December. This is also the first time in the new location of the Bird of Paradise on Main Street.

# African American Cultural & Historical Museum



NEWS PHOTO • ELLI GURFINKE

Cheryl Ervin, left, of the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County, and graphic artist Beverly Hills unveil a photographic display of sites important to the history of the African-American community in Washtenaw County.

## Stepping out into history, culture

■ The African American Cultural & Historical Museum has a tour and gathering to promote interest in historical African-American sites.

By PAMELA J. APPEA  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

When architect David Byrd restored an old Ann Arbor brewery back in the early 1980s, he stumbled upon what may have been a former site for the Underground Railroad.

It was an exciting find for Byrd and other community members who were interested in learning more about Washtenaw County's African-American history, Letitia Byrd, his widow, recalls.

Now home to a renovated apartment, the brewery's basement had an intricate underground network of chambers, Byrd said. The site also was

close to railroad tracks, and it seemed likely that escaping slaves may have stopped at the home on their way to Canada, she said.

Byrd shared stories about the old brewery, located at Fourth and Summit streets, with a few old friends at the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County's step-out event Sunday evening. Ypsilanti Mayor Cheryl Farmer and Ann Arbor Mayor Ingrid Sheldon were among about 50 people who attended.

The theme of the event, at the golf club at Ypsilanti's Marriott Hotel, was to promote interest in historically significant African American sites. The University of Michigan "Arts of Citizenship" Program, a co-collaborator of the museum's Underground Railroad Project, also sponsored the program.

Members of the African American Cultural & Historical Museum said several Underground Railroad sites in Washtenaw County are still standing. Many agree the old brewery could have been an Under-

ground Railroad site.

According to Ann Arbor News archives, documented Underground Railroad stations in Michigan included sites in Jackson, Dexter and what is now Scio Township. A route coming from Ohio also ran through Blissfield, Adrian, Clinton, Saline, Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, to Detroit. The Ohio trail is still known to Lenawee County residents as the Freedom Trail.

Byrd said the old brewery site has yet to be historically authenticated but pictures of the basement and the underground chambers still exist, she said.

Joyce M. Hunter, president of the African American Cultural & Historical Museum, said along with identifying Underground Railroad sites, the group aims to promote interest and awareness towards other significant people and places in Washtenaw County.

During an early evening bus tour of a select few

See TOUR, C2

## TOUR: Evening tour was just beginning

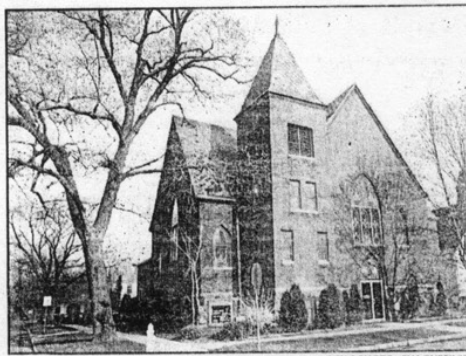
sites, through Ypsilanti's south side, community members passed by the Perry Child Development Center, named for Ypsilanti's first African-American dentist; the Ypsilanti Association of Women's Clubs, which members say is the only remaining African-American women's club in the state; and the old Brown Chapel, the oldest African-American church in Ypsilanti and the second-oldest AME church in Michigan.

Hunter said the evening tour was just the beginning for the 7-year-old museum, which was founded to promote "an awareness, an understanding and an appreciation of the black experience." The group plans to host similar programs to educate the public in the future, she said.

The museum newsletter, The NorthStar News, named for slaves who looked to the star on their way to freedom, keeps the organization's 100-plus members abreast of the museum's fund-raisers and other events.

Board members say one of their main goals now is secure a permanent site. The organization currently is based in a small suite at the NEW Center on North Main Street in Ann Arbor.

Having room to display exhibits



NEWS PHOTO • ELLI GURFINKE

The old Brown Chapel on South Adams Street in Ypsilanti is one of the buildings that has historical significance to African Americans in Washtenaw County.

would help the community learn more about Washtenaw County's African-American history, Hunter said. Hunter said that exhibits currently must be taken out of storage and carried from place to place.

"We need to have a site," said Shirley D. Martin, a founding board member.

Hunter, Martin and others hope to secure a permanent location with grants and personal donations, they said. They don't have a timetable for when this will happen, but the 22 board members say the sooner the better.

"We are serious about an African-American museum," Martin said.



## Museum Site Development

The Board strengthened the commitment to finding a site for the museum. The Site Committee began to look for a location with room for an administrative office, exhibits and displays and space for meetings and programs.

## University of Michigan Research Collaboration

**The Underground Railroad Project** The museum was exploring researching the Underground Railroad and Dr. David Scobey, Director of the University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship Program, had some students who were interested in a community-partnership effort on the same topic. On May 27 ground breaking research began on nineteenth-century antislavery activism and African American community life in the area. Staff, students, and community volunteers will assemble a traveling exhibit, "Midnight Journey," about local Underground Railroad stations

## Gullah Exhibit

**"Gullah History, Traditions and Culture"** An exhibit highlighting the history of Gullah culture including 10 traditional sweetgrass baskets during the month of April at the Library. *Downtown Ann Arbor*

## Gullah Festival"

**May 7 & 8** A community-wide festival to celebrate the unique and rich Gullah culture of South Carolina. Activities included an opening reception at the Ann Arbor Library, presentations at the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti schools, a seminar at the University of Michigan. Workshops were held on May 8th at the Ann Arbor Civic Center followed by a Gullah dinner and gala performance featuring Biza Sompa and the Bichi Bia Congo African dancers and drummers, Our Own Thing Chorale directed by Willis Patterson and Anita Singleton Prather, South Carolina storyteller.

## A Jazz Age in Paris

**October 24** the third annual fundraiser was held at the Bird of Paradise Jazz Club, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin.

The 3rd annual fundraiser was held in conjunction with "Jazz Age in Paris" an exhibit at the library from

**October 15-November 29.**

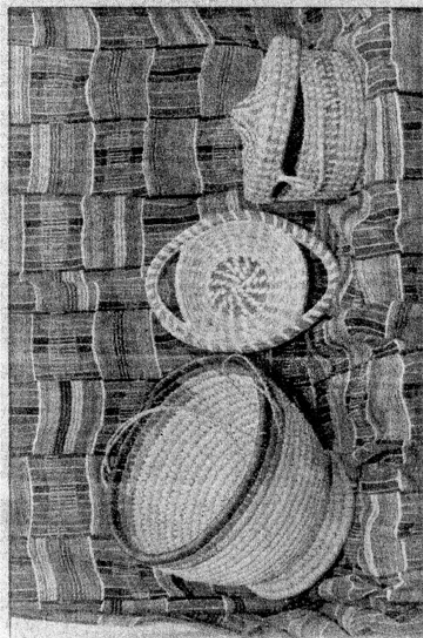
*Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor*

## Book Club Meetings

Museum Book Club meets monthly at Barnes & Noble, Bookstore, Ann Arbor.

Biza Sompa and the  
Bichi Bia Congo African drummers





NEWS PHOTO • LARRY E. WRIGHT  
Sweetgrass baskets can be viewed at the Ann Arbor District Library as part of the first Gullah festival in Ann Arbor.

# Festival celebrates survival, revival of Gullah culture

By ANNE RUETER  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

When Terri Johnson was growing up, she heard snatches of a language called Gullah when she visited her grandmother in Beaufort, S.C. But Johnson, now a pathologist at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, didn't know she was hearing echoes of her African heritage. "We heard Gullah, but we always thought it was kind of funny," she remembers.

Now Johnson has helped launch a festival here to celebrate Gullah culture, a link to Africa kept remarkably intact by the people of the coastal islands of Georgia and South Carolina.

"This just fell right in line with what we're attempting to do," says Shirley Martin of the African-American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County, which has organized the event. The museum, which hopes

someday to have a home for its collections, promotes events that raise awareness of African-American history and culture.

The festival May 7-8 will feature Gullah storytelling, crafts, films and talks. Most events are free and open to the public.

There's a fee only for Saturday's Gullah dinner followed by music and dance. An exhibit highlighting the history of Gullah culture, including 10 traditional sweetgrass baskets, is up at the Ann Arbor District Library now through the end of May.

Interest in Gullah culture has been building



nationally. Many have learned about it through the children's television show "Gullah Gullah Island" and books such as "Vibration Cooking, or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl" by Verla Mae Smart-Grosvenor.

"There really is a big movement," says Johnson. "Gullah" refers to tradi-

tional plant remedies, burial and other ceremonies, folk tales and a hybrid African-English language that islanders along the South Carolina and Georgia coasts have kept alive since the early 1300s.

Though in most cases slavery didn't allow

See GULLAH, B2

## CONNECTION

## Festival celebrates island culture with African roots

See Page B1



## GULLAH FESTIVAL EVENTS

Now through May 31

Exhibit of Gullah writings, photographs and crafts tracing the history of Gullah culture

Ann Arbor District Library, lower level

Friday, May 7

Storytelling presentations at Ypsilanti High School and Lawton Elementary School in Ann Arbor

5 p.m. — Welcome reception followed by 6:30 p.m. showing of "Family Across the Sea," a PBS documentary about South Carolina islanders who find parallels to their own Gullah customs when they travel to West Africa. Free.

Ann Arbor District Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave.

Saturday, May 8

1-4 p.m. — Workshops on Gullah basket-weaving by Jerry Taylor, African dance and drumming by Biza Sompia, history talks and films from visiting Gullah historians Alpha Bah and Cynthia Schmidt. Free.

Ann Arbor Civic Theater, 2275 Platt Road

5:30 p.m. — Gullah dinner of jambalaya, seafood creole, punch and dessert, followed by a gala performance featuring Anita Singleton Prather, South Carolina storyteller, Our Own Thing Chorale, directed by Willis Patterson, and Biza Sompia and the Bichi Bai Congo, African dancers and drummers.

Ann Arbor Civic Theater, 2275 Platt Road

Tickets are \$15 adults, \$10 students. Can be purchased in advance at Origins Gallery, 1671 Plymouth Road, (734) 662-9197, and the Ann Arbor Community Center, 625 N. Main St.

## Continued from B1

## GULLAH: Heritage survives

The festival offers a chance for African Americans to find links to their past, but it also will interest others, organizers say.

transplanted Africans to maintain their customs, thousands of first-generation African slaves who arrived in South Carolina around 1304-1307 brought a fresh infusion of traditions to the area, say Gullah historians.

Gullah healing remedies, basket-making and ceremonies from "praise houses" where island people resolved grievances are among the traditions scholars have traced to Africa. These survive, celebrated at festivals at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island and the Avery Research Center in Charleston, S.C. Speakers of Gullah use words of African and English origin. "Bidi-bidi," for instance, Gullah for small bird or chick, is derived from a Congo word, while "jiga," or "chigger" in English, comes from the Wolof word "jiga." Gullah speakers use grammar and pronunciation common in several West African languages, scholars have found.

Johnson won't forget the astonishment when they heard their grandmother speak Gullah to storyteller Anita Singleton Prather at a Gullah festival near Beaufort, S.C. last fall. She decided she wanted to bring that moment of connection with African

and provide the festival's featured entertainment Saturday night. Also up from the Beaufort area will be Jerry Taylor, who will demonstrate sweetgrass basket-making Saturday afternoon.

People are encouraged to bring their children to all the events, says Martin, who has helped organize the event. The festival offers a chance for African Americans to find links to their past, but it also will interest others who may not be aware of the rich Gullah cultural tradition, she says.

Johnson has seen her daughter eagerly learn Gullah words and her son cook Gullah dishes at school. She hopes other African-American young people will come to the festival. "It gives me a very strong sense of pride in my African-American



**March 28**

**Genealogical Workshop for Beginners** introduced families to the exciting discovery of their roots and family origins in a 2-hour session. *Bethel AME Church, Ann Arbor.*

**April**

**\$10,000 Grant from the Mosaic Foundation.** The Foundation had been following the Museum and has been a contributor since the beginning of our organization. The museum received a \$10,000 challenge grant which we had to match to receive and started the museum development fund. The match was donated by AACHM Board Members

**May**

**"Women's History Exhibit"** Collaborative effort with the Library to showcase the contributions women of all colors have made to Washtenaw County, Michigan. *Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor*

**May 16**

**Genealogical Workshop for Beginners** introduced families to the exciting discovery of their roots and family origins in a 2-hour session. *Community Church of God, Ypsilanti*

**October 25**

**"An Excursion into the Life of Ida B. Wells"** presented by her grand-daughter Alfreda M. Duster-Ferrell. Ida B. Wells was a newspaper writer with a long career of fighting for legal, educational, social and political justice. She was one of the 40 founders of the NAACP. *Community Church of God, Ypsilanti*

**November 1**

**"A Caribbean Night in Paradise"** the second annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise, featuring the Ron Brooks Quartet with vocalist Betty Joplin. *Bird of Paradise Jazz Club, Ann Arbor*

**November 18-21**

**"A Huey P. Newton Story"** this stage presentation is a collaboration with the museum and the University Musical Society. *U-M Trueblood Theatre, Ann Arbor*

**Monthly**

Museum Bookclub meets monthly at *Barnes & Noble, Bookstore, Ann Arbor.*

## March 16

**"Harlem Swings"** A film of classic jazz performances by Cab Calloway, Nat King Cole, Lionel Hampton and Sarah Vaughn. The film was introduced by legendary jazz great and club owner, bassist Ron Brooks. *Bird of Paradise Jazz Club, Ann Arbor*

## October 26

**"Ellington in Paradise"** the first annual building fundraiser held at the Bird of Paradise. Ron Brooks, George Davidson, Jim Lee and Vincent York performed after dinner. *Bird of Paradise Jazz Club, Ann Arbor*

## October 30

**"New Eyes for Ancient Gods: Yoruba Orisa in Contemporary Art"** Opening reception for a collaborative exhibit featuring over 25 works of art by 10 contemporary African American artists, curated by Earl Jackson and Bamidele Demerson. The exhibit runs October 20-December 19. Washtenaw Community College, Ypsilanti

## Monthly

Museum Bookclub meets monthly at Barnes & Noble, Bookstore, Ann Arbor.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1997

# West African lore inspires WCC's 'New Eyes' exhibit

By JOHN CARLOS CANTU  
NEWS SPECIAL WRITER

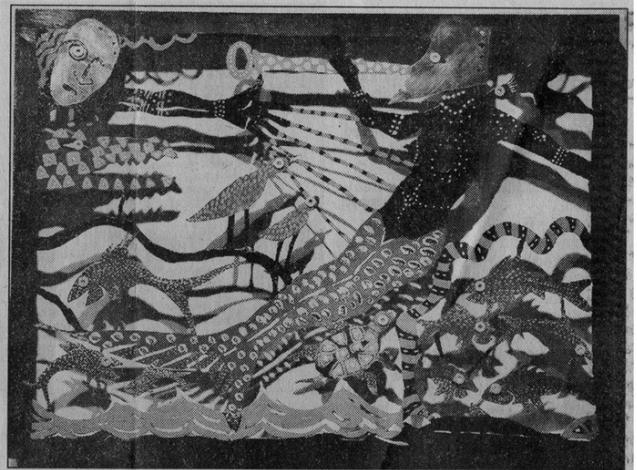
Organized around the metaphysical notion of the ojubo, the art-filled altars that traditionally bring vision and insight to the West African Yoruba people's culture, the exhibit "New Eyes for Ancient Gods" reflects the Yoruba devotional summoning-forth of art, mythology, and history.

The exhibit, continuing through Dec. 19 at the Washtenaw Community College Art Gallery, is sponsored by the Ann Arbor African-American Cultural and Historical Museum. Artists on display are Sonya Clark, Willis "Bing" Davis, Bamidele A. Demerson, L'Merchie Frazier, Carole Harris, Caryl Henry, Al Hinton, Earl Jackson, Ben Jones, Lester Lashley, Betty Leacraft,

Jon Onye Lockard, E.J. Montgomery, Aaron Ibn Pori Pitts, Bill Sanders and Shirley Woodson.

Among the show's most arresting contributions are those by WCC's Lockard and the University of Michigan's Hinton, who offer differing artistic interpretations of the Yoruba people's belief in Orisa, divine beings identified with forests, hills, windstorms, fire and other natural phenomena. Each god or goddess has a distinct personality with symbolic colors, garments, or insignia, and each Orisa has a unique position of power in Yoruba society.

Hinton's "Yemanja: Sea Goddess" sports a vibrant acrylic sheen that energetically reflects this U-M sculptor's current interest in fusing expression with metal. This 1994 wrought-iron, black-and-green mermaid goddess



See ART, E5

Al Hinton's 'Yemanja: Sea Goddess,' on display at WCC Art Gallery.

Continued from E1

## ART: WCC's 'New Eyes' pays respectful homage to past

blows a soulful horn surrounded by her retinue of birds, fish, and turtles. Hinton's exuberant interpretation of this Yoruba character suits her hearty exclamation.

By contrast, WCC's Lockard uses the considerable power of totem to illustrate his "Oxssi/Sans Detroit." His 1996 aquatint print depicts this Yoruba goddess as martial heroine. Provocative in her voluptuous pose

and regal bearing, Lockard's "Oxssi" holds a warrior's shield gracefully on the tip of her finger. Lockard's print, with its pointed Detroit reference, also makes clear his interest in promoting pride among African-Americans descending from these West African origins.

Other noteworthy works on display include Jackson's clever neo-Dada work "Obatala," with its sea-

shells draped against delicate lace; Pitts' jocular homage to jazz in "Speaking to Orgun"; and Shirley Woodson's sensuous expressionist portrait, "Secret Bather."

Whether through artisan media such as quilts or ceramics or through post-modern mixed-media inventions, "New Eyes for Ancient Gods" shines brightly with respect for the past as well as for its thor-

oughly contemporary aspirations.

"New Eyes for Ancient Gods: Yoruba Orisa in Contemporary Art" continues through Dec. 19 at the Washtenaw Community College Art Gallery, Morris Lawrence Building, 4800 E. Huron River Dr. Hours are noon to 2 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m., Monday-Thursday; and noon to 2 p.m., Friday. For details, call 973-3360.



## January 10

Granted non-profit (501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status

## May 19

**"Common Threads: Patches, Paints and Palettes"** These are the ties that bind our artistic, historic and cultural experiences. This site fundraiser featured 3 artists: painter Earl Jackson, doll maker Carolyn Walton and quilter Karen Simpson. Music was provided by Motif of Detroit and author Beverly Jenkins delivered the keynote address. *Home Builders Association of Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor*

## September

Leased office space at New Center Building. The museum established a physical office with access to conference rooms and meeting space. The board meetings are held in Conference Room C. 1100 N. Main St, Ann Arbor.

## December 17

### **"Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance"**

A film exploring the lives of visual artists who made the Harlem Renaissance one of the 20th century's richest artistic moments. Archival footage, newsreels, and photographs recall the influential force of exhibitions, Harlem's vibrancy in the Roaring Twenties, and significant personalities such as William E. Harmon, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke. Discussion followed. *Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor*

**"A Stronger Soul Within a Finer Frame"** Portraying African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. The museum served as docents for the exhibit of rare and original books, posters and art. *Ann Arbor Public Library, Ann Arbor*



## December 18-21

The University Musical Society (UMS) presents **The Harlem Nutcracker** at the Power Center for the Performing Arts. Choreographed by Detroit native Donald Byrd and featuring Duke Ellington's arrangement of the famous Tchaikovsky score. The museum mounted a collection of period photographs of Ann Arbor and Detroit during the Harlem Renaissance. Another Ann Arbor coordinated five youth choirs to sing traditional African American carols during intermission. *The Power Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

## December

Museum Bookclub was formed and meets monthly at *Bethel AME Church, Ann Arbor*.

**January 31 - February 27**

**"African American Life, History and Literature: Books for Young Readers"** Black History Month exhibit at the Ypsilanti District Library featuring a selection of volumes and artifacts from the private collections of Museum board members. Ypsilanti District Library, Ypsilanti

**June 22**

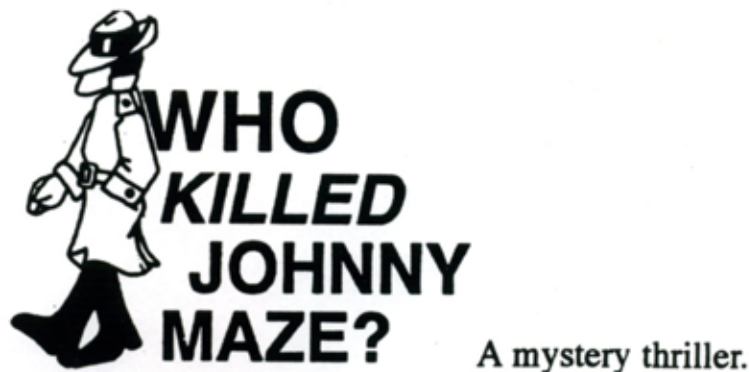
**"Who Killed Johnny Maze?"** Mosaic Youth Theater of Detroit presented a high voltage mystery thriller written and performed by students that asks tough questions about the choices facing young people today. Performance Network, Ann Arbor.

**August 19**

**"Craft Traditions from Africa to America"** Ypsilanti Heritage Festival display featuring weaving of baskets and Kente cloth. Depot Town, Ypsilanti

**November 19**

**"Million Man March Community Forum"** The mission, the message, the movement. Visual presentation by Earl Jackson, Panel Discussion with Joseph Dulin, Principal, Roberto Clemente High; Harry J. Williams, President, Ann Arbor Branch of the NAACP; Ray Mullins, President, Ypsilanti-Willow Run NAACP; Ronald Woods, Director, African American Studies, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Community College, Ypsilanti





**April 2**

Official site search launched for a home for the museum

**April 16**

**“Sweet Tradition”** An evening with the renowned African American basket weaver: Mary Jackson of South Carolina. Ms. Jackson is recognized as the most accomplished member of a dwindling group of artisans whose work is a symbol of South Carolina’s African American heritage. Held at Bethel AME Church, Ann Arbor.

**August 19**

Ypsilanti Heritage Festival display featuring Brown Chapel AME Church. Brown Chapel is the second oldest AME Church in the state of Michigan. One church member was George McCoy, father of Elijah McCoy. Elijah was famous for many inventions, including machinery lubrication devices and is the man behind the phrase “the Real McCoy” Depot Town, Ypsilanti

**October 23****“Spotlight on Youth: Continuing the Tradition”**

Teens in the performing arts featuring dance, drama and music with commentary by Elise Bryant. Washtenaw Community College, Ypsilanti



# Hopes are high for African-American history museum

By JUDSON BRANAM  
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

**D**id you know that the phrase "the real McCoy" was first uttered in deference to a black inventor from Ypsilanti? That railroad bridges between Ann Arbor and Dexter were designed by an African-American? Washtenaw County's rich history of African-American leadership and innovation - from Underground Railroad stops to an invention that kept the regular trains rolling down the line - is the focus of plans to create a new museum.

"There's a lot of history here that people aren't aware of - we just feel this history needs to be passed on," says Joyce Hunter, chairwoman of the Washtenaw County Committee for an African-American Cultural and Historical Museum. "It's something that will not only benefit blacks, but all ethnic groups in the area."

There is no set timeline for bringing the museum plan to reality, but the group has formed a site committee to find a location as a first priority. Along with searching out a site for the museum, the group hopes to assemble the historical record that exists on the black experience here, and to collect oral histories from longtime county residents.

"Our main focus is going to be on the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area," Hunter says. "We need to take a look at the contributions of blacks in both of the areas and then kind of go from there."

Organizers began the museum effort after accepting a challenge from Dr. Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, Hunter says. Work began in February, and the committee recently began a series of events aimed at focusing attention on local black history and the museum project.

"It's a dire need because of the richness of the history here," says committee member Coleman Jewitt, whose family history in Ann Arbor dates to 1856. His was one of the first

black families here, and his grandfather, George Jewitt II, was the first black football player at the University of Michigan in 1890.

Jewitt ticks off names of prominent blacks in local history: Elijah McCoy, the Ypsilanti inventor whose lubrication cups allowed the railroads to run longer between stops; Frederick Pelham, who designed the railway bridges over the Huron River between Ann Arbor and Dexter around 1910, and Simeon Carson, one of the first doctors to perform Caesarean sections in the late 1800s.

"Here's a guy who graduated from the Ann Arbor schools," Jewitt says, "and I bet 9 out of 10 people don't know who he is."

Jewitt says the committee has a good mix of community leaders and blacks from the area's Canadian and Southern heritages, so he's optimistic the project can move quickly.

"I think we've got a good basis there, we just need people to come together."

The committee is offering memberships for small children (\$1), teens (\$3), general (\$10), seniors (\$5), organizations \$100, corporate \$200 and up.

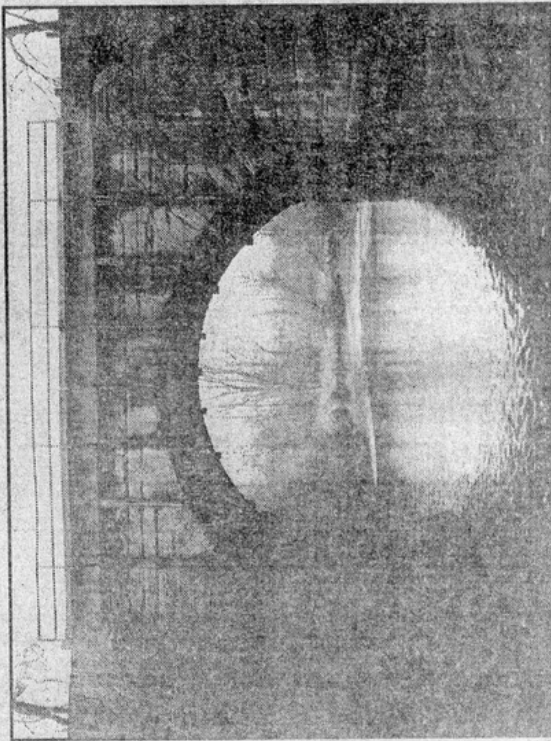
"We wanted the children in from birth to 12 so that parents take an interest with their children and they don't wait until they're adults and say, 'Where are my roots?'" says membership chairwoman Willie M. Edwards.

"Some of those beginnings are not always pleasant, but it is history and it is a fact, so they need to learn it, accept it and move on."

To join the Washtenaw County Committee for an African-American Cultural and Historical Museum, call membership chairwoman Willie Edwards at 994-6513. The group plans a program from 4-6 p.m. Nov. 21 at Brown AME Chapel in Ypsilanti, focusing on African-American churches here.



Around 1910, Frederick Pelham, left, designed the bridge over the Huron River in Dexter, below.



NEWS PHOTO • PAUL WARNER

Wednesday  
November 17, 1993



**February 6**

Dr. Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, spoke at the Delta Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority on Founders' Day in 1993 "Celebrating African Identity Through the Arts". She challenged the community of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti to start an African American Museum in Washtenaw County.

**March 13**

The first organizational meeting was held in Ann Arbor at Weatherstone Clubhouse in Ann Arbor and the challenge issued by Margaret Burroughs was shared with the greater community.

**July 19**

Board of Directors officers were selected.

**September 17**

Received papers of incorporation.

**October 10**

**"A Look at Local Black History & Culture"** with local historians A.P. Marshall & Coleman Jewett. Exhibits by artists: Earl Jackson, Jon Lockard; Photographer, John Matlock; Author, Marva Allen; and music by the Morris Lawrence Quartet. *Washtenaw Community College, Ypsilanti*

**November 21**

**"History of the African American Church in Washtenaw County"** with Rev. Levon Yuille, Bible Church, Ypsilanti and Professor Willis Patterson, University of Michigan School of Music. Featured Traditions of African American music and the Brown Chapel Youth Choir. Exhibit: Photographic display of early churches and ministers. Brown Chapel celebrates 150 years of service to the community in 1993. Brown Chapel Church, Ypsilanti



Jon Lockard and John Matlock, October 10, 1993



Johnnie Lawrence and Morris Lawrence, October 10, 1993



# Ypsilanti Press

## Museum promotes African American culture

Thursday

October 7, 1993  
25 cents

By Press Staff

The newly formed African American Cultural and Historical Museum is presenting two programs this fall.

"A Look at Local Black History" is scheduled from 4-6 p.m. Sunday at Washtenaw Community College, Job Skills and Campus Events Building.

It will feature local historians Coleman Jewett and A.P. Marshall. Other highlights include work by artists Earl Jackson and Jon Lockard, photographer John Matlock, author Marva Allen and musician Morris Lawrence.

"There's really a great feeling that African Americans have been in the community for many years," said Lola Jones, program chair. "We need to pay attention to preserving our history."

The second program, "Celebrating the African American Church in Washtenaw County" is planned from 4-6 p.m. Nov. 21, at the Brown Chapel A.M.E.

Jones said the programs are aimed at generating enthusiasm and promoting an awareness, understanding and appreciation of African Americans and their art.

"It's just an idea whose time has come," she said.



PRESS PHOTO MARK MUELLER

Lola Jones and Joyce Hunter display the work of artists Earl Jackson and Jon Lockard, which will be on display in the exhibit "A Look at Local Black History" Sunday at Washtenaw Community College.



# Who is Margaret Burroughs?

Margaret Burroughs is an artist, educator, museum founder and director, writer, political activist, and family woman. Born in St. Rose Parish, Louisiana in 1917, she moved to Chicago with her family before her fifth birthday and has lived here ever since. She graduated from Chicago Normal College (now Chicago State U.) and earned both a B.F.A. and M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Postgraduate work followed at Columbia University and both Lewis University and the School of the Art Institute awarded honorable Ph.D. degrees.

As an art and English educator, Burroughs taught for 23 years at DuSable High School and 10 years at Kennedy-King College as a Professor of Humanities. A cultural leader in the community since her early twenties, she was a founder of the South Side Community Art Center in 1939, the National Conference of Negro Artists in Atlanta in 1959, and the DuSable Museum of African-American History in 1961. As a museum director, she studied at the Field Museum and made numerous trips to Africa to enhance her knowledge and the museum's collection.

She is also known for her writing, which, in itself, is remarkably varied. Her works include children's books, poetry, and essays. Burroughs has received many awards from the black community for her work and her knowledge has gained her a position on national and local boards and panels. Her political activism is chronicled in the 450-page FBI file she obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter cited her as one of twelve Outstanding Black Artists and also appointed her to the National Committee on Black History and Culture.

Somehow she has managed to have a rich career as an artist, as well. A painter, printmaker, and sculptor, her work has been shown throughout the United States, but also internationally - Mexico, Poland, Germany, and the U.S.S.R. She has been included in several museum exhibitions over the last 20 years: the High Museum, Atlanta; the Studio Museum, Harlem, NYC; the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Los Angeles Afro-American Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum, and the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. Her work can be found in the permanent collections of several universities (including Atlanta, Howard, and Alabama A. and M.U., George Washington Carver Museum, and private collectors.

There is a lot more that can be said about the active life of Margaret Burroughs. When the Chicago Black United Communities ranked her among the top ten leaders the black community would support as a mayoral candidate in 1983, she respectfully declined by responding, "I'm deeply honored, but I'm happy doing what I'm doing. I'll serve this way." And so she has, a gifted and giving citizen of the city, the nation, and the world.

# Underground Railroad Research & Tour

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The University of Michigan, Arts of Citizenship program, in partnership with the African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County, conducted ground breaking research on the Underground Railroad and on antislavery activism and African American community life in nineteenth-century Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Facets of this project include:

1. Historical research by AACHM and by University of Michigan undergraduate and graduate students using primary documents in UM's Bentley Historical Library, local township archives, and other archival repositories around the American midwest and in Ontario, Canada.
2. Creation of a database of census and other materials, in consultation with researchers around the country, especially in conjunction with the White House National Freedom Trails Initiative (in preparation for a website).
3. Presentations at UM's Matthaei Botanical Gardens' Out of Africa Month programming on how fugitive slaves used their knowledge of nature to aid escape.
4. Research projects with local high school students.
5. Traveling public exhibit, *Midnight Journey*, on the Underground Railroad. This exhibit debuted in February 2001 in conjunction with the Ann Arbor Wild Swan Children's Theater production of "Along the Tracks," a dramatization of slave escape by Jeff Chastang.  
"Midnight Journey" has since been displayed at
  - Rentschler Farm Museum in Saline (fall 2001)
  - Ann Arbor District Library, with a series of related events (November 2001)
  - Matthaei Botanical Gardens (winter 2002)
  - Schools in Ann Arbor (spring 2002)
  - Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site in Ontario, Canada, (summer 2002)
  - Schools in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor (2003 and 2004)
  - Port Huron Museum of Arts and History, in Port Huron, Michigan (summer 2003)
  - Alfred P. Sloan Museum in Flint, Michigan (fall 2003)
  - Ypsilanti District Library (fall 2003)
  - The Franklin, Michigan, Historical Museum (spring 2004)
  - Jackson, Michigan (summer 2004)
6. Educational materials to accompany "Along the Tracks Part 2." For this Underground Railroad play about an African Canadian family (sequel to "Along the Tracks" from 2001), Arts of Citizenship will be producing study guides for the performances by Wild Swan Theater of Ann Arbor, for a February/March 2005 debut.

Funding for the Underground Railroad Project has come from the Ford Motor Company, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the UM Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program, and the UM Diversity and Democracy Fund.