

KENNETT UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER

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October 2003 Newsletter

Many thanks for your enthusiastic support this past year. KURC has been encouraged by the willingness of our friends to help out: serving as docents, responding generously to our appeal for funds, contributing items for our exhibit rooms at the History Station, and helping in many other ways.

Thanks to our donors and lenders

- **Laura Gipe** for the ancient cotton dress, like those worn by women in slavery, and for a manumission document, in which a Philadelphia man buys the freedom of a Delaware slave,
- **Naomi Moore** for a framed, full-size photograph of the Western Quarter Quaker tapestry,
- **John Thomas** for the loan of an antique display case,
- **Carol Berzon** for her bowl and pitcher set,
- **Leslie Streitwieser** for a featherbed,
- **Lee Carter** for a print of one of his paintings,
- **Lucille Koenig** for her homespun blanket,
- **Lou Mandich** for his giant 19th-century cupboard, and
- **Sue Darrel** for many period items to put in the cupboard.

Lou Mandich and **Kevin Arnold** put the cupboard in and anchored it so it can't fall on our visitors.

Kevin also made and installed our new picture-hanging system, according to **Marjorie Kaskey's** design.

We extend a warm invitation to all to visit us,

***** **Sunday afternoons 1-3 p.m. until late fall or other times by appointment,** *****

and see how our exhibit rooms in the History Station are shaping up.

Publicity

Word of KURC is getting out there, thanks to our website and especially to **Chris Jones, Rusty and Linda's son**, a talented graphic designer who designed our new brochure. **Caryl Huffaker** continues to write lively announcements of our activities in The Kennett Paper, and a recent **Boston Globe** article recommended KURC as one of a very few must-see spots in the Kennett area. **Chester County Town & Country Living's** Summer 2003 issue carried an excellent article about us, and we'll be included in a guidebook, **Brandywine Valley: The Informed Traveler's Guide** by Sharon Silverman, to be published next spring.

Events and Activities

_____ We've had many visitors, some from distant points who've learned of KURC from our website. Also, we've hosted over a dozen groups--home schoolers, Mennonites from Lancaster County, kids from summer day camps, York PA Historical Commission, Greenwood's third-graders, and bus tour groups.

In March we had an exciting day with **Frederick Douglass IV and his wife BJ**, who gave galvanizing performances at Kennett High and Middle Schools, joined KURC and community members for lunch at the Kennett Inn, and wound up with a performance for the public that evening. It was truly a day to remember. In May we presented the **Chester Children's Chorus**, in an inspiring concert at Kennett High School.

Our table at the **Mushroom Festival** drew much interest, and we met some new local history buffs. Thanks to **Kathi Lafferty** for her Festival leadership and to **Albert McCarthy** for help with minibus parking.

Sarah Wesley has been an enthusiastic, well informed guide on our Underground Railroad Heritage minibus tours, which sold out at the Mushroom Festival. The tours will start up again next May, one Sunday afternoon a month. Sarah has been researching nurse Esther Hayes and will have some new anecdotes to add to her talk.

Outreach during the past year included a delightful afternoon with **The Links** women's group and talks at **Caln Historical Society** and **White Clay Creek Preserve**. To expand our knowledge of local Underground Railroad history, several of us are investigating the history of area houses with possible hiding places or legends of URR activity.

Looking ahead, watch for an announcement of the **150th anniversary of Longwood Progressive Meeting of Friends**. If you are a descendant of any of the founders or know someone who is, please call Mary Dugan at 610-347-2237. We're hoping to have a reunion of descendants as part of the festivities.

Also in the works is a play about the Underground Railroad, commissioned by People's Light and Theatre Company. Playwright **Tazewell Thompson** has visited The History Station, Marlborough Meeting, and other local sites, and we look forward to working with him and especially to seeing his play in a year or two.

Cox House

Last May many of us attended a presentation at Longwood Gardens by **John Milner's** graduate students in historic restoration. This University of Pennsylvania group had done a thorough study of the Cox house's history and structure, and one of them is continuing to research it as a thesis project. Some of you may be surprised to learn the class found no evidence of a tunnel or hiding place. However, as a recent newspaper article mentioned the possibility of moving the Cox house to make room for widening Route 1, maybe we should be glad there is no tunnel to be destroyed.

Once again, we appeal for any clues about **Hannah Cox's diaries**: they were mentioned in her obituary, but no one seems to know where they are or even if they still exist. Please do get in touch with us if you know anything about them.

We hope this summary of our activities will inspire your generous support

*of our efforts to educate, to learn, and to attract visitors to Kennett,
that “hotbed of abolitionism.”*

Mary Larkin Dugan, president

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