

## Underground Railroad Free Press Prize Winners 2008-2025

### The 2025 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Victoria Jimpson-Flood***

For her work as founder and executive director of the African American Archive of Columbia County, New York and for her preservation of Jan Van Hoesen-Charles Marriott House



**Leadership Prize**  
***Audrey and Frank Peterman***

For their three decades of promoting the virtues of America's national parks including Underground Railroad sites, especially to African American markets



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Cathy LaPointe***

For her long research and stewardship of the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County, Michigan

↓ Scroll to see all ↓

## The 2024 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



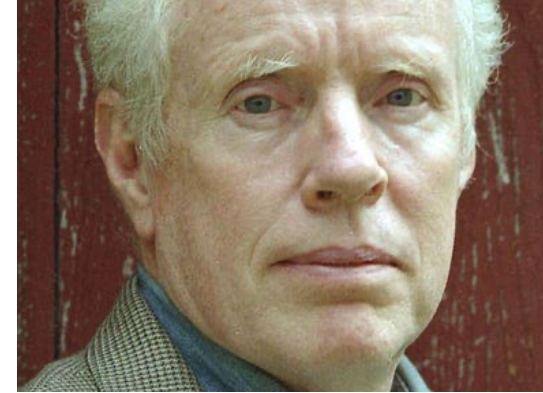
**Preservation Prize**  
***Mansion House 1757***

For its diligence in preserving the inn's Underground Railroad safe-room and keeping alive the history of the property's Underground Railroad involvement



**Leadership Prize**  
***The National Abolitionist Hall of Fame***

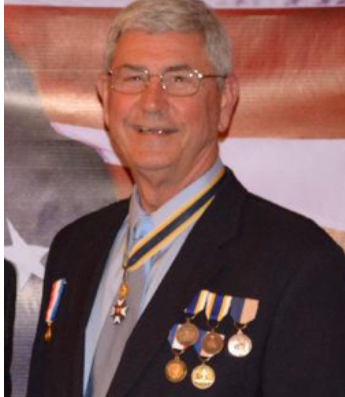
For its entrepreneurship in conceiving and launching its institution and actively involving itself in the modern abolition of slavery



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Fergus Bordewich***

For his book *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*, and for his lifelong attention to racial justice

## The 2023 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Dr. George Lewis***

For leading the restoration of the Catoctin Aqueduct near Lander, Maryland, in the National Park Service's Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, a major Underground Railroad escape route



**Leadership Prize**  
***Paul & MaryLiz Stewart***

For founding Albany, New York's Underground Railroad Education Center and developing it into a national model of institutional effectiveness. This is the couple's second Free Press prize.



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Professor Larry A. McClellan***

For his book *Onward to Chicago: Freedom Seekers and the Underground Railroad in Northeastern Illinois*

## The 2022 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Author Barbara Lockhart***

For her nine years of research bringing back to life the vivid 1850s African American history of her own farm and the remarkable life of Elizabeth Burton, its free Black owner 150 years before



**Leadership Prize**  
***Raul Rothblatt***

For his long and unwavering dedication in saving a historic New York City Underground Railroad safe-house from destruction



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***The James E. Bonine House  
Underground Railroad Research Library  
of the Underground Railroad Society of  
Cass County, Michigan***

For exemplifying what dedicated local organizations are capable of in uncovering and portraying regional Underground Railroad history

## The 2021 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Stuart McMillan***

Detroit's veteran local tour guide who for more than a half century has specialized in Underground Railroad tours.



**Leadership Prize**  
***Historic Sotterley***

For its exemplary Common Ground Initiative that has brought together Black and White descendants of people who lived at Sotterley Plantation in the era of slavery



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Jobie Hill***

For her exemplary work on the project "Saving Slave Houses" which Ms. Hill founded in 2011

## The 2020 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Kim and Reggie Harris***

For discovering and reintroducing songs of the Underground Railroad over their very long performing career



**Leadership Prize**  
***Rotary Action Group Against Slavery***

For its forceful initiative in persuading Rotary International, the world's most influential global service organization, to put its weight behind the fight to eradicate human slavery



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Kathleen Snowden and Ann Lebherz***

Two long-time community historians who did more than anyone to identify Underground Railroad sites and operators in one United States county

## The 2019 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Underground Railroad Society  
of Cass County, Michigan***

For its accomplishments in organizing, planning and execution of its outstanding performance in preserving multiple Underground Railroad sites in its area and showing the way on how it is done



**Leadership Prize**  
***The Maryland-National Capital  
Park and Planning Commission***

For purchasing, preserving and making publicly available the home where Underground Railroad icon Josiah Henson grew up and from which he escaped



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***California State University, Sacramento***

For founding its Underground Railroad Project, housing the west coast's only western Underground Railroad archive

## The 2018 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***James "Sparky" Rucker***  
***and Rhonda Rucker***

For reviving, performing and thus preserving the music of the Underground Railroad



**Leadership Prize**  
***John Pepper***

For his indispensable role in getting Cincinnati's much lauded National Underground Railroad Freedom Center funded, and up and running



**Hortense Simmons Memorial**  
**Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Lezlie Harper Wells***

For founding and operating Niagara Bound Tours of St. Catharine's, Ontario, Canada

## The 2017 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Senator Richard Gottfried and***  
***Assemblyman Corey Johnson***

For their long, tireless, articulate efforts that preserved Hopper-Gibbons House, Manhattan's sole surviving Underground Railroad safe-house



**Leadership Prize**  
***Professor Judith Wellmann***

For originating the Wellman Scale, which became the gold-standard for evaluating Underground Railroad site and story claims



**Hortense Simmons Memorial**  
**Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Colson Whitehead***

For illuminating the Underground Railroad to millions through his novel, *The Underground Railroad*, which won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

## The 2016 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
**Allen Nelson**

For decades of work researching and preserving the history of the oral tradition handed down in his family of his ancestor Frank Wanzer's two famed Underground Railroad escapes



**Leadership Prize**  
**Oprah Winfrey**

For setting the example in private fundraising for the National Museum of African American History and Culture and encouraging other major donors



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
**Grey Roots Museum and Archives**

For its long diligent work in bringing to public light Underground Railroad and African Canadian history of Grey County, Ontario, Canada

## The 2015 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



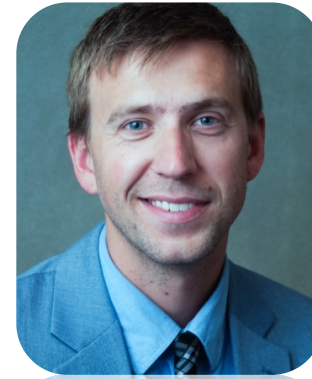
**Preservation Prize**  
**1776 Dobbin House Inn & Tavern**  
**Gettysburg, Pennsylvania**

For its diligence in preserving the inn's Underground Railroad safe-room and keeping alive the history of the property's Underground Railroad involvement



**Leadership Prize**  
**Louis Fields**

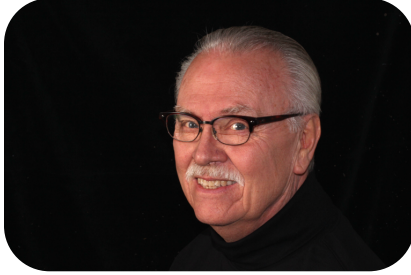
For compiling a record as one of the foremost state or provincial Underground Railroad leaders in the United States or Canada



**Hortense Simmons Memorial**  
**Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
**Nicholas Gunner**

For his pro bono development of the nation's leading online Underground Railroad map of safe-houses, routes and people in western New York State

## The 2014 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Professor Owen Muelder***

For preserving the history of the Illinois Underground Railroad, and founding Knox College's Galesburg Colony Underground Railroad Freedom Station



**Leadership Prize**  
***Cincinnati's National Underground Railroad Freedom Center***

For establishing its facility, programs, support and national leadership as one of the world's premiere Underground Railroad institutions



**Hortense Simmons Memorial Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Boston's WGBH***

For its innovative creation of its interactive Abolitionist Map of America emphasizing Underground Railroad sites

## The 2013 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
**Board of Directors of the**  
**Princeton, Illinois Lovejoy Homestead**

For supporting the City of Princeton, owner of the Homestead, in restoring the former Underground Railroad safehouse



**Leadership Prize**  
**Wendy Straight**

For her gold-standard research and diligence in her work uncovering the Underground Railroad in Chautauqua County, New York, and excellence in publicizing the discoveries



**Hortense Simmons Memorial**  
**Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
**David G. Smith**

For his exemplary 2013 history, *On the Edge of Freedom: The Fugitive Slave Issue in South Central Pennsylvania, 1820-1870*

## The 2012 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



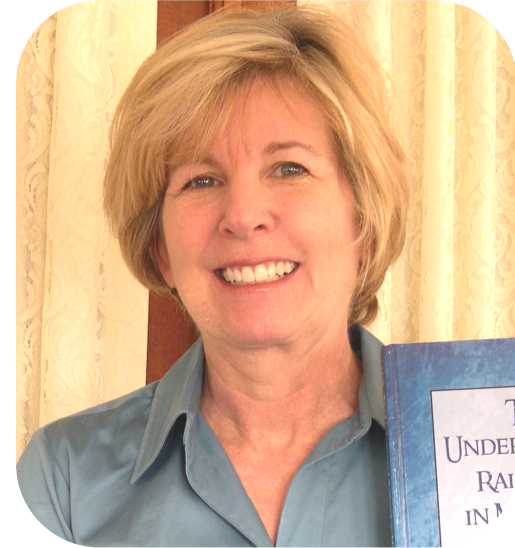
**Preservation Prize**

For arranging for acquisition of the National Underground Railroad to Freedom's signature slavey-era artifact, a cabin rescued from a Kentucky farm



**Leadership Prize**  
**Vivian & Donald Papson**

For founding and operating several major Underground Railroad institutions including a museum in the northern panhandle of New York state



**Hortense Simmons Memorial**  
**Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
**Carol Mull**

For founding the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission, authoring *The Underground Railroad in Michigan*, and advising the Adventure Cycling Association on its Detroit Underground Railroad Bicycle Route

## The 2011 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Randolph J. Harris***

For his steadfast work in successfully gaining protection of threatened Underground Railroad and abolitionist sites in Pennsylvania, often against entrenched opposition and long odds



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Bryan and Shannon Prince***

For their career-long work revealing and promoting Canada's rich Underground Railroad history. The spouses are both Underground Railroad descendants.



**Leadership Prize**  
***Indiana's Jeannie Regan-Dinius***

For spearheading the development over an eleven-year period of what is thought by many to be the most effective state-sponsored Underground Railroad program in the United States

## The 2010 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Wilma Morrison***

For her long devotion to promoting Underground Railroad and African-Canadian history of Canada, and for her five decades of work preserving the Nathaniel Dett British Methodist Episcopal Chapel in Niagara Falls, Canada



**Leadership Prize**  
***Carl Westmoreland***

For his roles in helping to create the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and for his central and effective work there in reilluminating the Underground Railroad



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Graham Hodges***

For his landmark biography,  
*David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist  
and the Underground Railroad  
in New York City*

## The 2009 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Julie Finch and Fern Luskin***

For their unflagging work heading the effort to save Hopper-Gibbons House, a nationally important Underground Railroad safe-house and center of abolitionism in New York City



**Leadership Prize**  
***Smithfield Community Association***

For the example it has set over many years in entrepreneurship, organizing, managing, and promoting the significant Underground Railroad and abolitionist sites and history around Peterboro, New York



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Karolyn Smardz Frost***

For her award-winning book, *I've Got a Home In Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*, archaeological work on Canadian Underground Railroad sites, and compelling public lecturing

## The 2008 Winners of the Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes



**Preservation Prize**  
***Maryliz and Paul Stewart***

For their inspiring detective work in uncovering the location of the Stephen Myers home and Underground Railroad safe-house in Albany, New York and restoration of the building



**Leadership Prize**  
***Dr. David A. Anderson, Scholar  
In Residence, Nazareth College***

For his tireless founding of a number of key Underground Railroad institutions and programs locally and nationally over the last half century



**Hortense Simmons Memorial  
Advancement of Knowledge Prize**  
***Thomas P. Calarco***

For his ground-breaking research and publications revealing the Underground Railroad in eastern New York state, especially in the state's hard-to-research Adirondack region