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Lancaster County's Historical Society & President James Buchanan's Wheatland

## For Immediate Release

*All events are camera friendly, and principals will be available for interviews.*

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## Four Underground Railroad Heritage sites in City of Lancaster recognized by National Park Service with grant for markers

*Lancaster, PA (February 7, 2018)* – Beginning in May, 2018 the African American walking tours highlighting sites associated with African American heritage in the City of Lancaster will feature four new historical markers installed in public areas describing the sites' association with the Underground Railroad.

LancasterHistory.org and the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania, in partnership with five other local groups and individuals, will receive a \$4,675 grant from the U.S Department of the Interior to be matched by the local partners.

The total funding of \$9500 will cover the costs of the research, design, fabrication and installation of two outdoor markers and two interior graphic display panels that will tell the story of the association with the Underground Railroad at those four sites.

“We found your project to be very exciting and feel that it will advance the goals of preserving the history of the Underground Railroad and informing the public. We commend your creativity in

developing the proposal and your dedication to this important part of our heritage,” said Diane Miller, National Program Manager of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, a program of the U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service. She added in her award letter: “This round of grants was extremely competitive, with 41 applications representing \$550,586 in requests, of which we were only able to fund 16 projects.”

The sites in the City of Lancaster are:

- The Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith Historic Site, part of the Lancaster County Convention Center facility. LancasterHistory.org is responsible for this historical marker, which will be installed inside the storefront windows of the Kleiss Tavern, corner of South Queen and East Vine Streets, a part of the Stevens & Smith Historic Site. These panels will explain the events that occurred in 1848 that documented the property as a safe house for the Underground Railroad during the time Stevens and Smith lived there.
- Former site of the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad Station, located within the entrance to the parking garage at the corner of North Queen and East Chestnut Streets. Some privately owned freight cars that ran on this train line and stopped at this station were outfitted with false walls and used to secretly transport formerly enslaved people to Philadelphia as part of the Underground Railroad movement. The South Central Transit Authority owns and manages this garage and is one of the local partners and funders of this project. The other funder is Frederick Waller of Waller Tax & Financial Services of Lancaster, through the African American Historical Society.
- Thaddeus Stevens Grave at Shreiner-Concord Cemetery, North Mulberry and West Chestnut Streets. A marker here is being supported by the Shreiner-Concord Cemetery, State Representative Mike Sturla, the African American Historical Society and LancasterHistory.org. This marker will explain why abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens chose to be buried at this public cemetery since it did not restrict burials based on race or religion. It will also share information about Stevens’s role in the work of the Underground Railroad.

- Fulton Opera House, which is the site of Old Lancaster County Jail. A sidewalk-mounted marker is under consideration opposite the Fulton Theatre at the corner of Prince and West King Streets. This marker is being funded by the Junior League of Lancaster and will tell the story of Sheriff David “Dare Devil Dave” Miller, who, in 1835 secretly released two African American women from the jail whom he knew personally, and who were being temporarily imprisoned as bounty hunters made plans to return them to slavery in the South. Miller’s courageous actions were kept secret for more than 50 years. The jail was demolished in 1852 and Fulton Hall was built on its foundations, with a portion of the original wall still visible along Water Street.

These outdoor markers and interior display panels will be the first of a larger effort to install up to as many as 25 similar displays throughout the City of Lancaster. Sites, and the historical people and events associated with them, have been tentatively identified. Future installations will depend on forming partnerships with property owners and securing funding from donations, community sponsors, and other sources, such as the current federal grant program.

“We are proud to be part of this initiative to help to launch this important program first envisioned by the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania. This effort, supported by several community organizations, individuals, and business partners, is a model for our community and will lead the way to the installation of additional markers and displays throughout the historic City of Lancaster over the next few years. Additional community collaboration and future partnerships will be key,” said Dr. Thomas R. Ryan, President and CEO of LancasterHistory.org.

Dr. Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr., President of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania, stated: “From the outset it has been the goal of the African American Historical Society of South Central Pennsylvania to identify and interpret locations and individuals associated with the local African American experience. That history has been too long forgotten or ignored. We welcome the partnership with LancasterHistory.org and other civic minded organizations and individuals who support this effort, an effort which is vitally important for all, but especially to the youth of Lancaster County.”

Dave Kilmer of SCTA/RRTA added: “SCTA/RRTA are honored to participate in recognizing the historic role the former railroad site played in the Underground Railroad and are proud to have a

display in our garage informing the public of these efforts.”

Deborah Aichele Keys, President, of the Sustainer Board of the Junior League of Lancaster, Inc. said: “The Junior League of Lancaster, PA, Inc. is pleased to support interpretive markers which tell the story of important people and events at African American Heritage sites in the city of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This project will give a more complete picture of our history; its educational value is priceless.”

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