



LancasterHistory

For Immediate Release

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LancasterHistory To Host Esteemed Panel on the Hidden Stories of the Railroad's Role in the Underground Railroad

Scholars & Historians to Discuss Southern Pennsylvania's Unsung Heroes of Abolition

LANCASTER, Pa. – On Thursday, September 14, 2023, LancasterHistory invites the public to an enlightening panel discussion featuring prominent scholars and historians. The topic of discussion will be the abolitionists and activists from southern Pennsylvania who utilized actual railroads, notably the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad, as an integral part of the Underground Railroad. The event aims to highlight the unsung heroes and the hidden stories that contributed to the fight against slavery.

Begun in 1834, the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad quickly became a path to liberation for enslaved individuals. Activists like William Whipper, Stephen Smith, and Thaddeus Stevens made innovative use of the 80-mile route. For example, Whipper, Smith, and Quaker William Wright of Columbia in Lancaster County constructed secret compartments in lumber-hauling cars starting in 1838 and continuing until at least 1855. Their efforts have been officially recognized by the National Park Service's Network to Freedom.

The evening will feature an esteemed panel of presenters:

- **Randy Harris:** A historian with a rich background in community revitalization and historic preservation.
- **Dr. Leroy Hopkins Jr.:** A native of Lancaster and retired Millersville University professor, specialized in Germanic Languages & Literatures and local Black history.
- **John Sigmund:** A multidisciplinary artist and urban park enthusiast with a strong focus on historic public programs.
- **Dr. Barbara Zaborowski:** A highly experienced librarian currently serving as the Dean of Library Services and Special Projects at Pennsylvania Highlands Community College.

The discussion will be moderated by **Lenwood Sloan**, a leader in both the public and private sector with a rich history in arts and culture.

This event, titled "**The Pennsylvania Main Line of Public Works & The Underground Railroad**," is expected to take place in person at LancasterHistory on Thursday, September 14, 2023. Doors open and the reception begins at 5pm. The lecture will begin at 5:30pm.

This program is free and open to the public. In-person attendance requires advance registration in order to guarantee a seat. Due to capacity restrictions, tickets may not be available at the door. Register [online](#) or by calling (717) 392-4633. Registration will close online on Thursday, September 14 at 5:30pm. This event will not be streamed or recorded.

Come learn about the remarkable stories of courage and innovation that made the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad a true pathway to freedom.

About LancasterHistory

LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the life and legacy of Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, his house manager, Lydia Hamilton Smith, and America's 15th President, James Buchanan.

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