

KENNETT UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER

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NOVEMBER 2004 NEWSLETTER AND APPEAL

KURC has much to tell from the past year, but first let's look ahead to next year:

- February 2005: At KURC's suggestion, Stackpole Books will reissue R. C. Smedley's **History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania**, a treasure trove of information about our area's history. Christopher Densmore, curator of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, has written a new and enlightening introduction. Copies will be available through KURC and in local bookstores.
- Mark Sunday afternoon, May 22, 2005, on your calendars, to celebrate the **150th anniversary of the building of Longwood Meeting of Progressive Friends**. KURC, Friends Historical Association, Western Quarterly Meeting, Longwood Gardens, and Chester County Convention & Visitors Bureau will sponsor a Friendly get-together in a marquee just inside Longwood Gardens' gates. A list of the **founders** is included, as we hope many of their descendants will be with us. Watch for more information in a few months, and check our website, undergroundrr.kennett.net.
- Kennett Square filmmaker **Felicé Verrecchia** has begun work on a video documentary about Kennett's **African-American baseball team, the Grey Sox**, and he's extremely eager to get in touch with anyone who played on the team or has information or artifacts--uniforms, caps, etc.--to share. Call KURC board member Earl Jones, 610-444-6392, to get in on this exciting project.
- Last July an **Australian TV crew** spent a morning filming URR sites in the area and interviewing **Hersey Gray, Earl Jones, and Christopher Densmore** for a segment of their series *The Once and Future City*. Our latest information is that the series will air on the Travel Channel on June 30, July 3 and 4, 2005. Keep an eye out for some familiar faces and local sites.
- KURC has purchased a **charming little needlework**: a big letter S surrounded by a black girl, a boat, a butterfly, a star, and a date, maybe 1832, maybe 1882. The story is that a local family sheltered a runaway girl, who later made and sent them this thank-you. When we find the proper way to display the piece, we'll show it off at The History Station.
- Kennett's **East Linden Street** is a focus of local interest and revitalization, and KURC is helping study its history. Preliminary research indicates it was a sort of retirement area, as quite a few abolitionists settled there in their later years. Before the Civil War some residents may have sheltered freedom seekers, but much more work is needed before we know for sure--if we ever do.

GIFTS, LOANS, AND NEW EXHIBITS

As always, we are blessed with generous friends. **Anne Hayes Berry** has loaned us **Mordecai and Esther Hayes's bed**, complete with trundle, and has given us an apple butter stirrer and rug beater. These enhance our period room, as does one of **Lucille Koenig's Quaker quilts**, which covers the bed. Another loan was from **Carol Little**: a framed Leonard Baskin print, **John Woolman's Dream**.

Enthusiastic docents **Joan and Don Silknitter** gave us a **Sojourner Truth figure**, and **Carol Landefeld** presented an **antique display case** in honor of her parents **Sis and Bill**. Before **Anne Hicks** moved to Vermont, she gave us several **beautiful family garments**, including a dazzling silk brocade dress c. 1850, and high button shoes with a silver buttonhook. Does anyone have a mannequin, with the tiniest of waists, on which we could display the dress?

Most helpful was a grant from the **Aaron and Jean Martin Fund** of the Chester County Community Foundation.

*During the late spring, summer, and fall until November 1,
we have been open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-3 p.m.
Now we're closed for the winter, but we're always glad to welcome visitors who call for an appointment.
There's no charge, but donations are appreciated.*

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Through the year we've had a steady stream of group visits, two or three a month. School groups come, including home schoolers, charter schools--even one all the way from Atlanta--and others such as scouts and day campers. Our summer Sunday afternoon minibus tours have been popular, especially the Mushroom Festival tour, and our booth at the Festival was extremely successful, located as it was opposite one of the dropoff points for visitors. We appreciate **Kathi Lafferty's** and Chief **Albert McCarthy's** help.

Our website, **Chester County Visitors Bureau**, and **The Kennett Paper** have been helpful, bringing us visitors from up and down the east coast plus some from California, Israel, and Australia. Nearly every visitor, we find, leaves something with us in the form of an insight or suggestion. One visitor gave us the idea for the Grey Sox documentary, and an Australian woman spoke movingly of her concerns for the native people there.

Sharon Hernes Silverman featured KURC in her book, *Brandywine Valley: The Informed Traveler's Guide*, an extremely well researched and appealing travel book. **Nia Bond** will feature Kennett URR history and our exhibit in an article in *Pursuits*, the Pennsylvania travel magazine.

Our board member **John O'Neal** will send a Chester County serpentine rock from a local quarry to Canada, to form part of a memorial cairn. People in Owen Sound, Ontario, are commemorating the freedom seekers who found refuge there and they've requested rocks from the eastern states, Barbados, and Africa. We're proud that KURC's serpentine rock will represent Pennsylvania in the cairn.

In February, Black History Month, we'll sponsor reenactors in Kennett, Avon Grove, and Unionville Schools. Last spring's appearance by **Willis Phelps**, who impersonates a black Civil War soldier, was a resounding success at Unionville's Patton Middle School.

Happy holidays to you all. We look forward to seeing you at the History Station next year.

Mary Larkin Dugan, president

Board of Directors: Mary Anderson, Carol Berzon, Susan Darrel, Martin Greene,
Linda and Earl Jones, Marjorie Kaskey, Louis Mandich, John O'Neal, Treasurer