

## **THE REVERSE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD**

By the late 1700s the institution of slavery was declining in Delaware. A changing economy and the active efforts of Quakers and Methodists had led to the manumission of many slaves and dramatic growth of the state's free black population. Though Congress outlawed importation of slaves in 1808, demand for slave labor in the expanding states of the Deep South continued to grow. A nefarious criminal element sought to fill this need by kidnapping free blacks for sale into slavery. Such was the case in Delaware, where countless numbers of innocent persons were abducted and sent to the South via secret networks operated by criminal gangs. The Abolition Society of Delaware worked tirelessly against the practice, and many brave men and women, both black and white, actively opposed the gangs. Among these was Wilmington resident Thomas Garrett, the legendary Underground Railroad conductor who dedicated his life to the abolition of slavery after the abduction of a woman employed by his family. Despite the efforts of Garrett and others, and the enactment of harsh punishments for kidnappers, Delaware's black residents continued to live in fear for their safety until the Civil War.

This memorial is dedicated to the victims of this evil enterprise, and those who struggled against it.

**NC-128**

**LOCATION:**

Date: 8-23-11

### Historic Marker Inspection Report

Marker Name and Number: Freedom Lost NC-128

Location: Riverside Park Rt. 13 and Water St.

Wilmington 19801

GPS Coordinates: 39.73722500 -75.55361111

General Overall Conditions: Good

Wear/Damage on Marker: None

Wear/Damage on Pole: None

Any Active Verdigris Visible on Marker: No

Additional Notes:

## Donovan T Karen (DOS)

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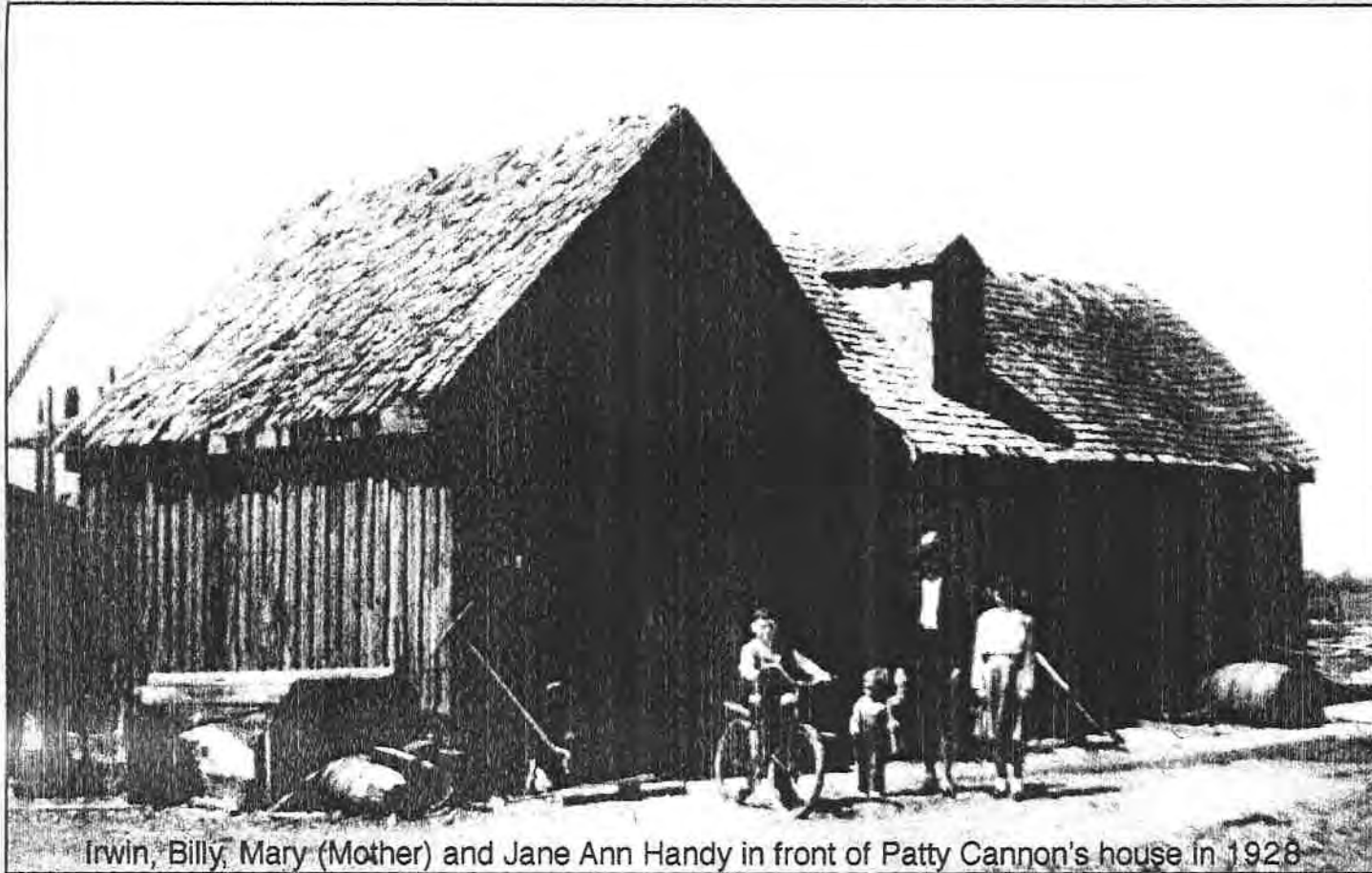
**From:** McCabe Russ (DOS)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 21, 2007 2:07 PM  
**To:** Donovan T Karen (DOS)  
**Subject:** RE: Freedom Lost

The FL marker is located on the west side of Market Street where it intersects with the Riverwalk - just north of the Market Street Bridge in Wilmington.

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**From:** Donovan T Karen (DOS)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 21, 2007 1:48 PM  
**To:** McCabe Russ (DOS)  
**Subject:** Freedom Lost

Also where is Freedom Lost marker? I have nothing on it – I have no text and the only thing in the project file is a news article that says its location is near the city's Tubman-Garrett Park. I know that's Wilmington but my knowledge ends there – most importantly I need the text.



Irwin, Billy, Mary (Mother) and Jane Ann Handy in front of Patty Cannon's house in 1928

# Patty Cannon's House

The tavern had a porch. The house did not. It was originally two large rooms with three bedrooms above. Each bedroom was reached by a **SEPARATE** staircase. The house was across the road from the tavern. It was raised around 1930.

*Patty is described again and again as wearing a thick belt and having a big ring of keys, dozens of keys.*

*Locks were expensive and only used where needed.*

*Why would someone with a five room house need so many keys?*

*Why have separate staircases to each room upstairs in the house?*

*Was it important that people come and go without others knowing?*

*Just what (or who) did all those keys fit?*

*Did Patty have secrets?*

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Instead, the will consider cited a 2003 cas Ward T. Evans y in 45 years or le

In its Nov Supreme Court old rapist sente with the possibi released in 45 ye igitible for time

Evans comm Delaware's Tru 1989, which cha a life sentence t the law's June

life sentence wa According to people sentence bility of parole have their sente time credits.

"We're grat willing to take matter," Attor Brady said.

The Suprem: torney General: for reargument:



The News Journal/BOB HERBERT

Celebrating the unveiling Friday of the new Freedom Lost historical marker on the Wilmington Riverfront are (from left) state Sen. Margaret Rose Henry, Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker and Herman M. Holloway Jr.

# REMEMBERING DARK SIDE OF FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Expert says Delaware leads the nation in expounding on such history

By ROBIN BROWN  
The News Journal

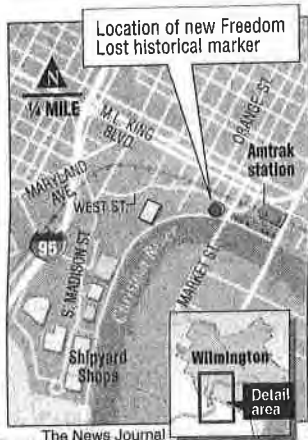
WILMINGTON - A murderous gang jumped a woman on the street, took her to Virginia and sold her as a slave.

The crime was not random.

Nor was it uncommon. In the 1800s, thousands of free black men and women in Delaware were kidnapped and sold into slavery.

The suffering of those victims was honored Friday - for what experts said was the first time in the nation - along with those who fought the kidnap gangs' enterprise and those who smuggled slaves to freedom through secret channels known as the Underground Railroad.

The unveiling of a historic marker was a perfect start for Black History



Month, said former state Rep. Herman M. Holloway Jr.

National expert James W. Loewen, a University of Vermont professor and best-selling author who studied bigotry and omissions in American history education, praised Delaware and those who helped get the marker ti-

tled "Freedom Lost."

By acknowledging the kidnap rings, sometimes called "the reverse Underground Railroad," Loewen said, Delaware leads the nation in being more intelligent about this rarely discussed dark part of history.

Loewen, keynote speaker at the marker dedication, praised Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker's selection of its site in front of the Riverfront Market.

Near the city's Tubman-Garrett Park - which honors Underground Railroad "conductor" Harriet Tubman and Thomas Garrett, a Wilmington "stationmaster" who smuggled slaves to freedom in the North - the sign will help generations understand the slave era more fully, he said.

People are comfortable praising the Underground

Railroad, he said, "because that was white folks and black folks working together for right."

Before the Wilmington sign, he said, only three historic markers in the nation alluded to the ugly trade in flesh by kidnap gangs such as those of Patty Cannon and the Johnson family, both of Sussex County.

One New York sign honors a man, kidnapped into slavery, who became an author. One at a Louisiana plantation says the same man, enslaved there, wrote a famous book but doesn't say he was kidnapped. A third, near Reliance, Md., marks the Cannon-Johnson gang's home, but omits that they sold free black people as slaves, he said.

A second Delaware marker is to be put by Cannon's Sussex County home later this

See FREEDOM - B5

N-J - 2/5/05

# Freedom: Newark man led campaign

FROM PAGE B1

year with the full story, officials said.

Loewen said both Delaware markers will be featured in his next book, "Surprises on the Landscape: Unexpected Places that Get History Right."

But it was one of his earlier books, "Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your High School History Textbook Got Wrong," that inspired native Delawarean Kevin A. Brown, 43, of Newark to lead a five-year push for the first marker.

Brown, a Delaware Technical & Community College teacher and consultant, said he felt compelled after reading the book to press for recognition of the state's "central role in this epic struggle between good and evil."

Russ McCabe, who handles the marker program through the state archives, said history here now is more accurate and humane because of Brown.

Kidnappers got "the modern-day equivalent of the price of a Mercedes, \$40,000 to \$50,000," for each person they sold, he said.

While their crime is offensive, he made sure the sign isn't. It is the first state marker to be remade to alter its wording.

The sign had referred to "the reverse Underground Railroad," but that phrase was taken out because it can be confusing or seen as insulting to the real Underground Railroad,

## FREEDOM LOST

Text of "Freedom Lost," a new Delaware Public Archives historical marker unveiled Friday at the foot of the Sen. John E. Reilly (South Market Street) Bridge in front of the Riverfront Market, across from Wilmington's Tubman-Garrett Park;

"By the late 1700s, the institution of slavery was declining in Delaware. A changing economy and the active efforts of Quakers and Methodists had led to the manumission of many slaves and dramatic growth of the state's free black population. Though Congress outlawed importation of slaves in 1808, demand for slave labor in the expanding states of the Deep South continued to grow. A nefarious criminal element sought to fill this need by kidnapping free blacks for sale into slavery. Such was the case in Delaware, where countless numbers of innocent persons were abducted and sent to the South via secret networks operated by criminal gangs. The Abolition Society of Delaware worked tirelessly against the gangs. Among these was Wilmington resident Thomas Garrett, the legendary Underground Railroad stationmaster who dedicated his life to the abolition of slavery after the abduction of a woman employed by his family. Despite the efforts of Garrett and others, and the enactment of harsh punishment for kidnappers, Delaware's black residents continued to live in fear for their safety until the Civil War. This memorial is dedicated to the victims of this evil enterprise, and those who struggled against it."

he said.

State Sen. Margaret Rose Henry of Wilmington, the marker's legislative sponsor, said removing the phrase was right.

Henry said it felt like witnessing history to see the sign unveiled. "It makes me feel so proud... as a Delawarean and as an African-American," she said.

Holloway, whose Martin Luther King Jr. Information and Referral Center in Southbridge sponsored the marker, said he was pleased it was unveiled on what would

have been the 84th birthday of his late father, the state's first African-American senator. He also praised Henry's role, noting her place in history as the first African-American woman in the state Senate.

But Brown said he's puzzled that people ask him why he, a white man, wanted the marker.

"There's no black history or white history, just history," he said. "Our history, American history. ... The people fighting against these kidnapping rings were black and white."

Contact robin brown at 324-2856  
or rbrown@delawareonline.com.

# Infants: Final report to provide recommendations to lower rate

FROM PAGE B1

education for women about their pre-conception health status and a lack of access to preventive and acute health care for low-income women, have also played a role in driving up the infant mortality rate. In many minority communities these problems are more serious.

Sardy Elliott, a nurse midwife who runs a women's health clinic in Milford and former president of the Delaware Perinatal Association, said the report should not shock anyone.

"There's nothing new here," she said. "These are all issues that we identified 10 years ago."

The interim report is based on the task force's research and information from nearly 3,000 Delawareans, Truschel-Light said.

The panel will develop spe-

be the foundation for the group's final report.

Dr. Jaime Rivera, director of the Division of Public Health, and Alvin Snyder, executive director of Children & Families First, are co-chairing the task force. They said the final report will also include recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of clinical and administrative practices.

Additionally, it will suggest ways to improve the access to maternal and child health preventive health systems for low-income women, they said.

"It will address weaknesses in our systems of care, as well as provide recommendations for strengthening our data collection and monitoring functions," Rivera said.

The task force's final report will be issued in March

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# Philly VS. Boston

## Football superiority and soon, but how else do the metros measure up?

There's one area of  
similarity that's beyond  
dispute - Philadelphia and  
Boston take their sports  
teams seriously

which is best.

"Boston's a nice little city that people mistake for being great," says Todd Pitcock, a travel writer who lives on Philadelphia's Main Line and studied at Boston University in the 1980s. Philly's a big city that looks smaller than it is because it's so close to New York, and it has an undeserved reputation for being less than it is, he says.

That perception of inferiority even plays a role in vacation planning, says David Glickstein, who with his wife Linda publishes the Discerning Traveler newsletter and Web site ([www.discerningtraveler.com](http://www.discerningtraveler.com)). "We sell a heck of a lot more Boston back issues than Philadelphia back issues," he says.

The Glicksteins, who live in Philadelphia, say Boston benefits from being the hub of New Eng-

See CITIES — E4

## AND PHILLY

y has ...

## HISTORY

# Marker will set record straight on slave trade

By GARY SOULSMAN  
The News Journal

A rare event in the telling of American history will occur next to Wilmington's Market Street Bridge today when the Delaware Public Archives dedicates a historic marker to the scores of free blacks kidnapped into slavery and sent south.

The 1808 Congress made it illegal to import foreign slaves into the United States, but since plantations needed labor there arose an illicit trade in free blacks captured by criminals who sold them for profit.

Such trade flourished in border states, such as Delaware and Illinois, and the new marker is titled "Freedom Lost." It will be unveiled at 11:30 a.m. near the Riverfront Market and walk.

That's why the marker is needed, says Kevin Brown, a Wilmington lawyer and consultant. "This is a chapter of our history that is rarely taught."

Brown learned these stories in 2000 while reading the work of historian James W. Loewen of Washington, D.C. He is the author of "Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your High School History Textbook Got Wrong" and "Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong."

"Nowhere does a single marker or historic site recognize the stream of humanity that was forced to take a reverse passage from north to south, from liberty into bondage," Loewen has written.

Brown felt such an oversight was wrong and argued that the state should erect a Delaware marker to captured blacks, given there is evidence that the reverse underground railroad trade flourished in the state.

Historian Carol Wilson of Washington College in Chestertown, Md., documented the Delaware trade in her 1994 book "Freedom at Risk." And Loewen has found that the notorious Can-



Thomas Garrett became an abolitionist when a free black he employed was kidnapped by slave traders.

In reality, both are charming, historic cities with vibrant restaurant and theater scenes, markets and ethnic neighborhoods. Philadelphia is larger and more spread out, Boston is more centralized and walkable, Linda Glickstein says. "It's a very European-looking city."

Both cities are college towns, although the Boston area has more students (268,000) than

There's one area of similarity that's beyond dispute - Philadelphia and Boston take their sports teams seriously. "Both places have over-the-top fans," Pitcock says. "I was in a Boston suburb the night Larry Bird and Doctor J had their famous fistfight. Guys started picking up chairs to take out their anger, and the two college students I was with started pointing at me and saying, 'He's

Red Sox won, put championship caps on their parents' or grandparents' graves," says Suzanne Rocheleau, associate dean for civic engagement at Drexel University in Philadelphia, who grew up in Worcester, Mass. "I have a Red Sox pennant still affixed to my office window, but I'm rooting for the Eagles this weekend."

Contact Kent Steinriede at 324-2894 or ksteinriede@delawareonline.com.

# Marker: Slave traders active in state

**FROM PAGE E1**  
 their freedom. The marker to be dedicated today makes note of this story and mentions that the Abolition Society of Delaware worked against the kidnapping of blacks.

Among those expected to attend the dedication is Sen. Margaret Rose Henry (D-Wilmington) who sponsored the marker at the request of Brown. They have

requested a second marker on this topic. It's now in the works, to be erected near the home of the Cannon-Johnson gang.

"If you ask folks about kidnapping in the 19th century they think mainly of Patty Cannon and we should make note of that in Sussex County," says Russ McCabe of the Delaware Archives. "But this is not where the story begins and ends."

Bounty hunters often used the law to capture free blacks. They would destroy documents attesting to the actual status of a black and take them south as a runaway. Unless a white person knew the black man or woman, there was nothing to stop the abduction, given that an alleged slave had no standing in a court of law, says Loewen.

The kidnappings flourished in northern Delaware where there were a growing number of free blacks in the 19th century, McCabe said. The kidnappings increased after 1850 when Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act giving slave owners the right to form a posse to capture runaway slaves. In addition, the courts and police were obligated to help.

He is expected to attend today's dedication, proud that the state is making note of overlooked history. He says as Americans we applaud when Germans memorialize the wrongs of the Holocaust.

"Surely," he says, "Americans can face what we did in our past too."

Contact Gary Soulsman at 324-2893 or gsoulsman@delawareonline.com.

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may have been the largest kidnapping ring in the history of the United States."

Such gangs inspired abolitionists to act, too. One of the most revered stationmasters on the Underground Railroad, Thomas Garrett, was motivated to work against slavery in 1813 when he discovered that a free black employed by his family was captured by men intent on selling her into slavery. Garrett, who then lived in Upper Darby, Pa., set off to rescue her and did. He also experienced a light that touched his soul and spoke to him of the horrors of slavery.

Later, he became a Wilmington businessman and helped an estimated 2,700 escaping slaves win

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