



Delaware's Underground Railroad

Delaware Underground Railroad Public Exhibits and Interpretive Areas

As both a slave state and a state with a proportionately large Free Black population, Delaware was a complicated place in the 18th and 19th centuries. The attitudes about slavery, like the Delaware landscape, varied widely from the north to the south and even within communities. Consequently, freedom seekers saw Delaware in many different ways - from a place of hope and safe transition, to a place full of danger for those traveling without a guide or explicit instructions. The Underground Railroad, a clandestine network of routes, guides and safehouses, was in full operation in Delaware prior to the Civil War. The courageous and diverse individuals who made it work moved thousands of people through the state and into Free states as quickly as possible. They operated at their peril as they defied slavery laws in order to act on their conviction that slavery was fundamentally wrong.

This brochure is a guide to Delaware Underground Railroad exhibits and sites that have either open-access (i.e., parks) or are open to the public during regular, established hours and are staffed. There are many other locations (some public, but mostly private) within the state that have associations with the Underground Railroad, and more information will be published on them as research and funding are developed.

The sites listed below are all designated National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom sites. Visit www.nps.gov/history/ugrr for more information on this National Park Service program.

Wilmington

Tubman-Garrett Park
Front and Market Streets
City of Wilmington and Riverfront Development Corporation

The park commemorates Harriet Tubman and Delaware Underground Railroad stationmaster, Thomas Garrett, whose home once stood nearby at 227 Shipley Street. Market Street Bridge was a gateway into the City, and an earlier bridge was used by Harriet Tubman and freedom seekers to reach UR operatives in Wilmington.

Open access, with paved riverwalk; paid parking available; free;
Time: Approx. 1/2 hour

Nearby: Wilmington Train Station, Christina Riverwalk and interpretive panels on waterfront history, Riverfront Market, Shipyard Shops, Peterson Wildlife Refuge,

Contact: 302-576-3107
www.riverfrontwilm.com
www.wilmingtonde.gov



Trip Itinerary

Delaware History Museum
505 N. Market Street
Delaware Historical Society

The story of the Underground Railroad in Delaware is part of the “Distinctively Delaware” permanent exhibit. The Museum also offers a school program on “Delaware and the Underground Railroad” that meets standards for grades 3-6. The Old Courthouse was the setting for speeches by abolitionists, and its basement cells were authorized to hold captured freedom seekers. An informative panel display on the UR is available for loan. The research library holds extensive collections useful for researching UR topics.

School groups by appointment; Wednesday-Friday 11-4, Saturday 10-4; metered or paid lot parking; small museum fee; Time: Approx. 1-2 hours

Nearby: Tubman-Garrett Park, Christina Riverwalk, Wilmington Train Station, shops and restaurants.

Contact: 302-655-7161
www.dehistory.org

Old New Castle

New Castle Court House Museum
211 Delaware Street
Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

“Emeline’s Story” tells of the freedom-seeking Hawkins family, captured in Middletown and held in New Castle, and the subsequent trials of Thomas Garrett and John Hunn, Quaker abolitionists convicted of assisting the Hawkins’ to leave Delaware.

Wednesday-Saturday, 10- 3:30; street parking; free; Time: Approx.1 hour

Nearby: George Read II House and Gardens; New Castle Historical Society; self-guided walking tours of New Castle National Historic Landmark District; Battery Park and playground; shops and restaurants.

Contact: 302-323-4453
www.history.delaware.gov/museums
www.newcastlehistory.org

Odessa

Corbit-Sharp House
Corner Main and Second Streets
Historic Odessa Foundation

Exhibit, school and family program on the UR featuring a first-hand account of an encounter with an escaping slave at the Corbit-Sharp House, a National Historic Landmark.

Monday – Wednesday by reservation, Thursday-Saturday, 10-4:30, Sunday 1pm-4:30pm. On-street parking; small museum fee. Time: Approx. 1 hour.

Nearby: Other museum buildings open for tours, exhibits and programs of the Historic Odessa Foundation; Appoquinimink Friends Meeting, UR Stationmasters John Hunn and his cousin John Alston were members. (Step-on guides available through Historic Odessa Foundation).

Contact: 302-378-4119
www.historicodessa.org
wilmmtg@juno.com

Dover

Old State House Museum
25 The Green
Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

“Samuel Burris” exhibit tells the story of an UR conductor captured and convicted of enticing an enslaved woman to escape. On the auction block on the front steps of the Courthouse, Burris was “purchased” by abolitionist friends and helped out of the state.

Wednesday-Saturday, 9-4:30; street and lot parking; free Time: Approx. 45 minutes

Nearby: Other State House exhibits; First State Heritage Park Welcome Center; shops and restaurants

Contact: 302-744-5055
www.history.delaware.gov/museums

John Dickinson Plantation
340 Kitts Hummock Road
Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Trip Itinerary

Slavery, practiced at the John Dickinson Plantation, impacted the lives of more than 60 men, women, and children. During the time of John Dickinson's ownership, at least 3 slaves attempted to flee. These acts of resistance to slavery underlined the discontent with human bondage.

Wednesday-Saturday, 10-3:30; lot parking; free
Time: Approx. 1 hour

Nearby: Plantation buildings and other interpretive themes

Contact: 302-739-3277
www.history.delaware.gov/museums

Facebook

Underground Railroad Coalition of Delaware
Old State House
New Castle Court House Museum
John Dickinson Plantation
Historic Odessa Foundation

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway
(Kent and New Castle Counties), provisional route:

http://del.dot.gov/information/community_programs_and_services/scenic_historic_hwy/underground_railroad.shtml

Underground Railroad Coalition of Delaware, Inc.

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