



## *A Different Kind of Rebel: Greenburgh's Contributions to the Underground Railroad*

*By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber*

Not all rebels wave the Confederate Flag. Or do they? That depends on your answer to the question, “What is a rebel?” In answering this question Merriam Webster Dictionary and Encarta Dictionary provide two different answers. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a rebel as “One who opposes or takes up arms against a government or ruler.” In contrast Encarta Dictionary defines a rebel as “Somebody who rejects the codes and conventions of society.” Both of these

answers are relevant to The United States in the period 1861-1865. While Greenburgh didn't have any of the first type of rebel, it had a few of the second. As shown in our previous article (<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47461&TID=10&jump2=0>), racism and white supremacy were the dominant social and moral codes in Greenburgh during the Civil War years, but there were a proud and enlightened few who were brave enough to rebel against them and help runaway slaves reach their freedom. These were the people who made their homes, churches, and businesses into a ring of safe-houses for runaway slaves. These men and women became “conductors” and these buildings became “stations” in what became known as The Underground Railroad. This article is the story of those rebels who did what was considered wrong to do what they knew was right and the buildings in which they hid their precious cargo. There were two different Underground Railroad routes in Westchester County:

**Route 1:** Hastings to Tarrytown (passing through Dobbs Ferry and Irvington), Tarrytown, to Syracuse, Syracuse to Buffalo, Buffalo to Montreal, Canada (Miyares, 1981 p. 6).

**Route 2:** Pleasantville to Montreal, Canada (Miyares, 1981 p. 5). As Pleasantville is not in Greenburgh, this article will only discuss the first route.



### **Hastings:**

The first stop was Mr. William H. Schenck's house in Greenburgh's village of Hastings. Mr. Schenck, a carpenter, hid runaway slaves in his cellar and was so secretive about it, that he did not even tell his wife

Mary([https://www.newyorkroots.org/oswego/biographies/Fuller\\_Hapgood\\_House\\_Schenck.html](https://www.newyorkroots.org/oswego/biographies/Fuller_Hapgood_House_Schenck.html)). After hiding the slaves in his cellar for several days, he would then lead them on foot to the next station, the restaurant called Downing's Oyster House on 23 Wall Street at the south east corner of Nassau and Wall. The owner, Thomas Downing, was the “conductor” at this “station.” Mr. Downing would then take them by train to 158 Church Street, the location of the next station. This station was Mother AME Zion Church. This church was founded in 1796. Bishop James Varick, was the conductor at this station (<http://www.kidsnyc.com/testimonials.html>). From this station passengers would proceed to pass through the land which the villages of Dobbs Ferry and Irvington now occupy on the way to the last stop in Greenburgh at 90 Wildey St, Tarrytown.

### **Tarrytown:**

At this address stood Foster Memorial AME Zion Church, this church was founded in 1860, by Amanda and Henry Foster. It provided food and shelter to runaway slaves during the Civil War. The person responsible for collecting the food given to the slaves was Reverend Jacob Thomas. He served as the conductor for this station.



**Previous Slices of History include:**

**Greenburgh at The Great American Crossroads: Greenburgh's Civil War Story (10/19/18)** <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47461&TID=10&jump2=0>

**Greenburgh's Hall of Heroes: Ferncliff Cemetery Where Memories Live Forever (10/12/18)** <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47403&TID=10&jump2=0>

**A Final Resting Place for "Man's Best Friend": The Peaceable Kingdom (9/29/18)** <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47331&TID=10&jump2=0>

**Greenburgh and The Arts (9/22/18)** <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>

**Greenburgh's BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF AND TRUTH: A History of The Freemasons in Greenburgh (9/12/18)** <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/archnews.cfm?NID=47212&TID=10&jump2=0>

About the Authors:

We are both interns at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

**Riley Wentzler:**

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. If you want to help me find employment, you can contact me at:

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**Felicia Barber:**

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government. If you want learn more about my artwork, or help me find employment, you can contact me at:

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Interview with the Authors:

<https://wcbs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-many-talents-town-greenburgh>

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