

Michigan Freedom Trail Commission
Report to the Governor and the Legislature
for
FY 2014 and FY 2015

The Michigan Freedom Trail Commission (Commission) was established by Public Act 409 of 1998 with its first appointees made in 2002. Since that time it has worked to preserve, protect and promote the legacy of the Underground Railroad in Michigan.

Over the last two years, the Commission has met irregularly as its members focused their energy on two major projects: hosting in Detroit the 2014 meeting of the National Network to Freedom in cooperation with the National Park Service, and completing work for a book on the black community that spanned the Detroit River in the years prior to the American Civil War.

The 2014 Detroit meeting of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom conference brought scholars and public history volunteers from across the nation to Michigan to share knowledge and programs focused on the Underground Railroad. It also exposed them to southeast Michigan's extraordinary history and resources on this topic. The Commission served as the local arrangements committee, organizing tours, finding sponsors, nominating Detroit individuals for awards, recruiting volunteers, and welcoming visitors.

A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland, edited by Canadian scholar Karolyn Smardz Frost and former Commission chair Veta Smith Tucker, will be released by Wayne State University Press in the spring of 2016. It grew out of the Commission's past work and contains chapters by four current and past members of the Commission.

With the completion of these major projects, the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission will return to its long-term strategy around identification and preservation of sites, education, and heritage tourism and public awareness in the coming year.