

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Michigan Freedom Trail Commission
2021 Report to the Governor and the Legislature
1998 Public Act 409, Section 5**

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

The FTC met quarterly in 2021. These meetings were held virtually based on State of Michigan restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional collaboration continued with commissioners recruiting interested individuals to join four sub-committees. These sub-committees include:

- Site Identification, Facilities and Programs
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism
- Preservation and Support
- Education

Volunteers participated in the work of the sub-committees under the leadership of the commissioners.

In September, the Commission hosted its fifth annual Heritage Gathering conference. To reach the maximum number of people, the Commission hosted a month-long conference that consisted of one virtual session a week for four weeks and one day-long, in-person forum. The weekly virtual sessions focused on the local and national impacts of Michigan events involving fugitives from slavery in 1847. The day-long, in-person conference was held on the University of Michigan Ann Arbor campus. Sessions included:

- Resources at the Clements Library and a tour of the library
- Panel about a pilot international curriculum on resistance to slavery
- An Odawa Tale about Michigan's Underground Railroad
- Freedom is the Foundation: Five Black Detroit Institutions That Come From the Underground Railroad
- Living in Plain Sight: African Americans in Lenawee County

The Commission received a grant from The Association for the Study of African American Life and History to create signs marking Michigan Network to Freedom sites. The signs will use a QR code to link to online information about the sites and people who were part of Michigan's involvement in opposing slavery. The signs will start to be distributed in 2022.

Commissioner activities included writing and reviewing articles for publication, lectures to community organizations, participation in panel discussions and other activities promoting the work of the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission.