

Back To Buxton – The Narrative

Throughout the 1700's and early 1800's southern American agriculture was lifting the new American economy to the heights of world supremacy, on the backs of African slaves. As the agricultural economy grew larger, the pain of the slave master's whip grew intolerable. Slaves resisted by many means and escaped by the thousands.

They traveled due north, following the North Star. Some arrived in Philadelphia; some in Pittsburgh, some in Cincinnati – all headed to Canada, where human slavery was illegal. They traveled by foot, at night, through swamps and woods, risking wild animals and risking being caught by murderous slave catchers. They designed elaborate disguises and clever means of travel, hidden in freight boxes, or under a wagon-load of fruit. At certain stops along the way they would find secret groups of people (Abolitionists) who would help them get through to the next safe haven. This elaborate scheme and network became known as the Underground Railroad.

“Railroad passengers” who arrived in Pittsburgh found a network of free blacks and sympathetic whites who would help hide them, and provide food, medicine, clothing, money and assistance to the next “Railroad station,” on their way to Erie and across Lake Erie to Canada.

One group of ex-slaves settled in a town called Buxton. Many American whites thought that ex-slaves could never settle a town without white oversight. The town of Buxton proved them all wrong. They built a town, had a town government, built schools, roads, stores, and factories. Their school was so superior that near-by whites sent their children to the school at Buxton.

Their friends in Pittsburgh stayed in touch and were so proud of the success of Buxton that they raised the funds to have the local A. Fulton Foundry cast a 500 lb. brass replica of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, to send to the people of Buxton, to symbolize their liberty and our friendship. That bell was hung in the Buxton church and rung every Sunday to call people to worship and to important community meetings. They have never forgotten the friendship of the people of Pittsburgh.

Recently, the Buxton community built a museum to honor their history and wanted to bring the original bell from the church to the museum. But out of respect for the age of the bell and respect for history, they decided to leave the original bell in its original place and to have a replica of the Pittsburgh bell made for the museum. That replica will be dedicated at the 2007 Annual Buxton Labor Day Family Reunion. They have invited the Pittsburgh community to join them in the celebration of this historic dedication.

A bus tour has been planned to take a group from Pittsburgh to Buxton, leaving 8 AM, Saturday, Sept. 1 and returning Monday, Sept. 3, 11 PM. We will stay at a hotel in nearby Windsor, which is home to Windsor Harrah's Casino. This will allow us to mix some fun with some history, for a memorable Labor Day Weekend, “Back to Buxton.” Tickets are only \$295.00 per person, double occupancy. For information and reservations, contact: Corporate Planners, www.corporateplanners.com or call Denise Norris, 412-494-5858.