

New Bedford and the Civil War Author Series 2012

New Bedford residents played an integral part in the Civil War from the Underground Railroad and the Stone Fleet to Frederick Douglass and the MA 54th Regiment. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, please join us to meet and hear many well-known authors as they assess the role of the war in American memory and New Bedford's unique role in this historic conflict.

Friday, February 3, 2012, 7:00 PM

"Black Confederates in History and Myth"

John Stauffer, Professor of English and American Literature and Language of African and African American Studies Harvard University

"Black Confederates" is one of the most controversial ideas of the Civil War era and the American memory more generally. According to African Americans themselves, writing during the war, thousands of blacks did fight as soldiers for the South. Stauffer will assess and contextualize the sources and examine the case studies of blacks who fought for the Confederacy, and explain how and why it happened. Additionally, he will reveal the richly diverse ways in which blacks acted on their own understandings of freedom. Author of *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* presentation will also include book signing.

The Friends Meeting House, 83 Spring Street, New Bedford, MA

For more information call (508) 979-8828 or e-mail nbhistory@verizon.net

Sunday, February 5, 2012, from 2-6 PM

"The 12th Annual Frederick Douglass Read-a-Thon"

Join in the Twelfth Annual Frederick Douglass Read-a-thon as community members read and listen to *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, published in 1845. We continue our tradition of celebrating the life and times of one of New Bedford's most famous residents who came to the City of Light and found his voice as an advocate for social justice and equality for all. We invite everyone to participate in this celebration of African American History.

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For more information or to register as a readers call (508) 979-8828 or e-mail nbhistory@verizon.net

Thursday, February 23, 2012, 7:00 PM

"American to the Backbone: The Life of James W.C. Pennington"

Christopher L. Webber, is a minister and the author of a number of books ranging from a guidebook for Vestries to a study of Christian marriage.

Webber has written a richly detailed, wide-ranging biography of James W.C. Pennington, a black educator, clergyman, orator, author and abolitionist who was born a slave in 1807. Pennington fled north at the age of 19. Illiterate and so ignorant he had never heard of the Underground Railroad, he encountered it after reaching the North. Within five years, he was teaching, preaching and participating in the earliest national black-activist organizations. He emerged as a leader in black churches in New England and became a major player in the beginnings of the international movement to end slavery.

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Friday, March 2, 2012, 6:30 P.M. and Saturday, March 3, 2012, 10 A.M. for Young Adults

"Harriet Tubman: Secret Agent"

Thomas B. Allen. Allen's writings range from articles for National Geographic Magazine to books on American history. Allen is the author of the Geographic's Civil War book, *The Blue and Gray*.

It's 1863. Harriet Tubman is facing her greatest challenge. She has survived her master's lash, escaped from slavery, and risked her life countless times to lead runaway slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad. Now she has a new role: Union Spy! She is about to lead Union warships on a raid up a river deep in Confederate territory. Success depends upon the intelligence she and her black spies have gathered. Failure means death by hanging. This is the hidden war inside the Civil War—the daring work of African Americans who spied for the Union. It is a world of danger, of "Black Dispatches," of secret codes, and "The Secret Six." Young Adult talk is on Saturday, 10 a.m.

New Bedford Free Public Library, 613 Pleasant Street, 3rd Floor Meeting Room

For more information call 508-990-2130 or e-mail friends@nbplib@nbfol.org

April (to be announced)

"New Bedford's Civil War"

Earl F. Mulderink, III, Professor of History at Southern Utah University.

New Bedford's Civil War examines the social, political, economic and military history of New Bedford, MA, in the nineteenth century, with a focus on the Civil War homefront from 1861-1865 and on the city's black community, soldiers, and veterans. Known before the war for both its wealth and antislavery fervor, New Bedford offered a congenial home for a sizeable black community that experienced a "different Civil War". This book focuses attention on soldiers and families connected with the 54th Regiment made famous by the 1989 Academy Award winning film "Glory" and contextualizes the rise and fall of New Bedford's whaling enterprise. A major goal of this book is to explore the war's social history by examining how the conflict touched the city's residents - both black and white.

Photo: Martha Bush Gray, nurse to 54th Regiment and her husband, William H.W. Gray.

Courtesy of the Carl Cruz Collection, New Bedford Historical Society