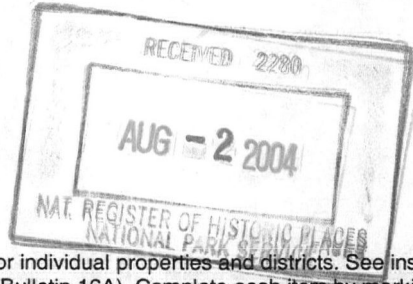


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence

other name/site number Vigilance Committee Office

2. Location

street & number 194 Livingston Avenue not for publication

city or town Albany vicinity _____

state New York code NY county Albany code 001 zip code 12210

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant, nationally, statewide, locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Theresa Carter, SAPO 5/9/04
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 11-30-04

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- public-local
- private
- public-State
- public-Federal

- district
- building(s)
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
_____		sites
_____		structures
_____		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A _____

0 _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC Single dwelling

DOMESTIC Multiple dwelling (vacant)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century Greek Revival

foundation	brick
walls	brick
roof	asphalt
other	_____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The building now addressed as 194 Livingston Avenue was constructed in 1847 and is situated on the south side of the street within the long block between Swan and Lark streets in Albany's Arbor Hill neighborhood. The house stands about where the long hill sloping up from the Hudson River to the east begins to flatten out and Livingston Avenue continues on its straight westerly path, ending more than one mile away. 194 Livingston is the only brick building in the immediate vicinity on the south side of the street. It is surrounded by frame houses of the same approximate age, most of which have been altered through the application of modern siding materials and non-historic windows.

Directly across the street from this building are several frame residential buildings dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and just east of those is a series of late-twentieth century single-family residential buildings built on land originally acquired for the federally-funded Arbor Hill Urban Renewal Program beginning in 1962. Behind the building on Third Street, parallel to Livingston, are scattered, mostly frame buildings that have survived the numerous demolitions that have taken place in this section of Arbor Hill over the last 40 years. Some appear to be even older than 194 Livingston but are in seriously dilapidated condition. About 200 yards east of 194 Livingston is the intersection of Swan Street, the western boundary of the Arbor Hill Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. At that time, the decision was made to exclude properties to the west because of substantial demolition, significant loss of architectural integrity for many that remained, and scattered new construction in the area. 194 Livingston Avenue is being nominated individually because of its overriding historical importance in the Underground Railroad in the city of Albany. Coincidentally, it also retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

The two-and-one-half-story brick townhouse in form and detail is typical of hundreds of such buildings constructed in Albany between the turn of the nineteenth century and the Civil War. It stands on a high brick basement and is three bays wide with the entrance in the western bay. The basement is separated from the first story by a sandstone water table, and rectangular sandstone lintels and sills are present on all openings of the basement, first and second stories. The doorway lintel is larger in size and has a triangular shape.

The first story is reached by a modern wooden stoop, and typical of Greek Revival buildings of the period, the front door is contained within a small recessed vestibule. The entrance is characterized by Doric pilasters on either side of the door, and multi-paned sidelights and transom. The original door does not survive. In the first story windows are six-light sash which are probably original. Above that, sash are missing, although they may be stored somewhere in the building. Above the second story is a half-story that contains eyebrow windows within a brick frieze cornice, and there is a side-gable roof.

Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2

To the east, the building abuts 192 Livingston and contains no openings. To the west, the wall also contains no openings, as if another house were expected to be built on the lot. At the time 194 Livingston was constructed in 1847, however, a house described in city assessment rolls as "old" was already located on the back part of the lot to the west, replaced by the current building in 1872. It seems that in this case, builders of 194 Livingston were more concerned with constructing a typical Albany "rowhouse" with windowless sides than with the fact that they could deviate from this plan since there was little likelihood that another house would be built adjacent to 194.

The rear of the building is covered with asphalt shingle siding, but the deep window reveals show the presence of a brick wall behind the siding. Present at 194 Livingston is a feature that is typical of Albany rowhouses of this period but not those in nearby Troy. In the interior hall, the staircase is placed at the rear of the hall and includes landings and 180-degree turns in the staircase, thereby resulting in the placement of stairhall windows on the landings at a lower level than those in the adjacent rear rooms.

The interior, although deteriorated, includes a significant amount of architectural fabric that dates from the original construction period of the building.

The basement entrance under the stoop provides access to a long side hall that runs the length of the building. The staircase to the first floor is contained within a characteristic plank enclosure. East of the hall is the front room which most likely functioned as the dining room. It includes a deteriorated wainscot around the perimeter and a wood mantelpiece that has pilasters supporting a panel and mantel shelf, most likely dating from 1847. This fireplace was apparently never functional as there is no hearth and the opening is bricked in, in what appears to be an original condition. There is, however, a chimney that served fireplaces on the upper floors.

The rear room of the basement, probably the original kitchen, is devoid of finishes and currently houses a deteriorated heating plant. Part of the brick wall separating the rear room from the stairhall has collapsed.

The first, or parlor, floor plan is essentially identical to that of the basement, with two large rooms and a side hall, but the architectural treatments are more grand. The ceiling is significantly higher than that of the basement. The hall and both parlors have plaster cornice at the ceilings, and in the stairhall, a simple circular medallion is present. It is likely that both parlors originally had medallions, but they are missing. Also present in the hall is the short run of stair rail and newel post adjacent to the basement staircase. The newel at the foot of the main staircase is present but the entire balustrade up to the attic is missing. (It may be stored somewhere in the house.)

In both parlors, chimney breasts are present. They have been stripped of plaster for the "exposed brick" look popular in the 1970s, and mantelpieces are missing. On both the front and rear walls of the parlors and in doorways to the stairhall, all original Greek Revival casings are intact. Beneath

Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

the front windows, original wood panels also remain. All historic baseboard has been removed, but original floor boards are in place.

The second floor plan again echoes those of the lower floors with a side stairhall and two large rooms in the eastern part of the building. The second floor also includes a small room above the front entrance reached through the large front room. There is also a closet present above the first floor entry hall, accessed through the large front room. In both front and rear rooms, original wood trim is present, but neither room includes a mantelpiece. On either side of the chimney breast in the rear room are shallow closets.

The attic is reached by the final flight of stairs in the stairhall. It has a slightly different plan from the lower floors and includes a transverse hall directly beneath the roof ridge, along with the stairhall parallel to those of the lower floors. The front portion of the building is divided into a small and a large room and the rear has a room above the rear bedroom. It includes historic wood trim but most of the walls have been covered with modern paneling.

At present the house has some structural problems due to masonry deterioration. These include some missing bricks in the eastern corner of the front wall, the collapse of the rear section of the interior bearing wall at the basement level, and some failure of the rear wall at the attic level. Despite the deterioration, however, the house retains a high degree of architectural integrity to its period of construction and remains as the most substantial residence on the block during its early development period.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
Name of Property

Albany County, New York
County and State

8. Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1847-1858

Significant Dates

1847, 1855-1858

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Myers, Stephen and Harriet

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The building now known as 194 Livingston Avenue in the Arbor Hill section of Albany, Albany County, New York, is significant under Criterion A as the one-time office of the Vigilance Committee of Albany. This group was active in the underground railroad from the early 1840s into the 1850s and assisted hundreds of fugitive slaves on their way to freedom in the northern United States and Canada. Albany was a critical link on the trail northward, and the Vigilance Committee was the primary group for ushering freedom seekers through Albany on their way to Canada.

In addition, 194 Livingston is significant under Criterion B as the home of Stephen and Harriet Myers. He was Chairman of the Vigilance Committee during the 1850s and perhaps the most significant figure in Albany's Underground Railroad history. Myers had actively assisted escaped slaves for nearly 30 years, beginning in 1831, and was a vocal proponent of education and self-sufficiency for African-Americans. And according to the obituary of Harriet Myers following her death in 1865, "during the many years her husband was devoted to the superintending of the underground railroad, she was kind and unremitting in her attendance on the unfortunate passengers..." In addition, "...she did perform much of the editorial labors upon the 'Northern Light.' published some years since by Mr. Myers, and was entrusted with the reading of the proof sheets for its columns."¹

Stephen and Harriet Myers lived in the house during part of the time when he was chairman of the Vigilance Committee and maintained the group's office in the building at the same time. Myers' importance in the national movement was highlighted many years after emancipation, when author Wilbur Siebert, in his 1898 book called The Underground Railroad, said the following:

Frederick Douglass, who was familiar with this Albany route during the period of his residence in Rochester, described it as running through Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Rochester, and thence to Canada; and he gives the name of the person at each station that was most closely associated in his mind with the work of the station. Thus, he says that the "fugitives were received at Philadelphia by William Still, by him sent to New York, where they were cared for by Mr. David Ruggles, and afterwards by Mr. Gibbs, ... thence to Stephen Myers at Albany; thence to J. W. Logan, Syracuse; thence to Frederick Douglass, Rochester; and thence to Hiram Wilson, St. Catherines, Canada West."²

In addition, Myers is cited frequently in newspapers of the 1840s and 1850s as a speaker and representative at multi-state conferences well beyond the Albany area, and often shared the podium with Frederick Douglass, both when Douglass spoke in Albany and in other locations. Therefore, because of Stephen Myers' close connection with Frederick Douglass and the importance of Albany

¹ The Christian Recorder, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 2, 1865.

² Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom (1898, Macmillan Company), reprinted by Peter Smith Company, Gloucester, MA, 1968, pp. 125-6.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

as a link in the chain of stations in this eastern route through New York State, this property is being nominated for national significance.

Finally, the property is significant under Criterion C as a highly intact example of a mid-nineteenth century brick Greek Revival style townhouse built in many other areas of Albany during the period but relatively rare in this part of Arbor Hill.

The City of Albany and the growth of Arbor Hill

The City of Albany traces its European roots to 1624 with the establishment of Fort Orange by the Dutch West India Company following Henry Hudson's voyage of 1609. Hudson claimed the river valley that bears his name, and lands east to the Connecticut River and southwesterly to the Delaware River for Holland, and the colony was known as New Netherland. Fort Orange was intended only as a fur-trading post, not a permanent settlement; rather, a medieval land-holding system known as the Colonie (original spelling) of Rensselaerswyck was organized surrounding the fort in 1630 to provide for permanent settlers who were expected to engage in farming, milling and other more stable occupations. That colony originally comprised over 240,000 acres east and west of the Hudson, in what are now Albany and Rensselaer counties, and its residents paid land rents in agricultural products to the "patroons" of the Van Rensselaer family each year.

By 1652, a small village named Beverwyck, Dutch for "beaver place," had grown up north of Fort Orange. This village was the home of those who desired a more settled existence in close proximity to the fort. In 1664, the British took over all Dutch claims in North America and New Netherland was thenceforth known as the colony of New York and Beverwyck as Albany, named for James, Duke of York and Albany.

Despite the fact that the stockaded settlement comprised less than a square mile, a rectangular tract of land measuring approximately two miles along the Hudson and sixteen miles inland surrounding the stockade was chartered in 1686 by the English crown as the City of Albany. For the next hundred years, additional population growth was slow, and continued to be heavily influenced by Albany's Dutch origins, as descendants of the original Dutch outnumbered settlers of other nationalities.

After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, the stockade was removed, but only after the American Revolution, as New Englanders began moving westward, did Albany begin to grow. The city became a major stopping point for travelers, as a series of turnpikes that provided new routes into the interior of New York State and beyond started in Albany. In the early years of the nineteenth century, the city's population increased rapidly as many ended their journeys in Albany and settled permanently in the growing city.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3

Shortly after 1800, new sections were opened for development, including the area immediately adjacent to the northern city line separating Albany from the Van Rensselaer land holdings. This area, designated as early as 1794 as Arbor Hill and outside city limits, included the main road north to Lake Champlain nearly 100 miles north of the city, and was urbanized enough by the early 1810s that residents petitioned for annexation to the city. At the time annexation came in 1815, this new ward was a neighborhood of coopers, boatmen, and other types of laborers, mainly employed in Albany's important Hudson River trade.

In 1825, the Erie Canal, connecting the Hudson River with Lake Erie 350 miles to the west at Buffalo, opened, and entered the Hudson River at the foot of Arbor Hill in Albany. The effect of the canal on Albany and the entire state of New York was nothing short of remarkable. Both the city and state populations grew rapidly, and soon New York City became the most important port along the Atlantic Seaboard. Albany's population grew tremendously in the early nineteenth century, and immediately after the canal opened, workers engaged in the operation of the canal and industries that grew as a result of it joined other working class residents of Arbor Hill.

At the same time, some members of Albany's small African-American population, most of whom were also members of the city's working class, settled in Arbor Hill alongside white working class families. This can be determined because African-Americans are listed in italics in the city directories of the period between 1813, when the first directory was published, until 1853 when the practice was discontinued. At this time, contrary to popular belief, Albany's black population was not racially segregated, but rather lived side-by-side with white families of the same economic status.

In this setting in 1847, John Johnson, an African-American ship owner, constructed the brick townhouse now known as 194 Livingston Avenue in the middle of a neighborhood of more modest workers' frame dwellings. Although Johnson's personal story and the construction of a brick townhouse with architectural pretensions outside the more middle- or upper-class neighborhoods of Albany are interesting, little is known of him at this time. Further development of that research topic may take place in the future, but at present it is the importance of Stephen Myers and his connection with this building that is the subject of this nomination.

When 194 Livingston Avenue was constructed, the street was known as Lumber Street, so named because it originated about one-half mile down the hill to the east of this building at the location of

Albany's thriving Lumber District. This district, located just north of where the Erie Canal entered the Hudson River, was characterized by a series of more than 50 narrow slips cut perpendicularly into the canal wall and used for storing lumber. Several mills and lumber processing buildings also populated the area.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 4

Many of the merchants who made large fortunes harvesting lumber from New York State's Adirondack Mountains and processing and shipping it from Albany to markets all over the United States and beyond made their home just east of 194 Livingston Avenue. The neighborhood of many of these so-called "lumber barons" was developed in the period after 1850 along Ten Broeck Street and surrounding streets and was originally listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 as the Ten Broeck Triangle Historic District. In 1984, the Arbor Hill Historic District was listed, encompassing the original listing and extending beyond the Ten Broeck Triangle one long block west to North Swan Street. Because of substantial alterations to buildings to the west of Swan Street and their more modest scale, however, the district boundary was established there, about 200 yards east of 194 Livingston.

Stephen Myers and Anti-Slavery Activities in Albany

Stephen Myers Photograph, from Autobiography of William Henry Johnson. 1900.



According to Irvine Garland Penn's 1891 book, The Afro-American Press and Its Editors, Stephen Myers was born into slavery at Hoosick Four Corners in Rensselaer County in 1800.³ Although little is known about his parents, it is certain that his name comes from his owner's wife's family. According to the New York State Museum's Colonial Albany Project website,⁴ her name was Alidia Wynkoop, and she and her family came to Albany from Manhattan when she was a girl of five. It is very likely that the family brought their slaves with them to their new home in Albany. Her father was a merchant named Johannes Wynkoop and her mother was Anna Koens Myers. It was a common practice, although not universal, for slaves to take the surname of their owner's family, and thus the Myers name. Stephen Myers was born into the home of Jonathan Eights, a well-known

³ Penn, Irvine Garland. The Afro-American Press and Its Editors. Wiley & Com., Springfield, Mass. 1891, pp 48-51.

⁴ Belinski, Stephan. "Johnathan Eights". (www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/joeights7933.html). Colonial Albany Project, New York State Museum.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 5

Albany physician who was married to Alidia Wynkoop. So it could be guessed that a slave taking the name Myers was passed along from Anna Myers Wynkoop to her daughter Alidia, who then married Eights, and at that time the female slave named Myers bore a child, Stephen.

Penn's 1891 book also suggests that at the age of 12, Myers was a servant to Major Warren in the War of 1812. It is not clear what he did in this capacity, but he likely secured Major Warren's food, tended to his horse, and kept the officer's refinement in order.⁵

At the age of 18 (c.1818), Myers was manumitted from slavery in Albany by Major Warren. Although secondary sources state this, the Albany County manumission records do not include Myers' name.⁶ Myers is known to have worked as a steamboat steward and a grocer over the next decade or more.⁷

In 1827, Stephen Myers was married to Harriet Johnson in Troy by the Rev. J. Steel,⁸ and the couple had four children. Stephen Junior was later identified in city directories as a waiter, and another child, Abram, appears to have been named after Harriet's father, Abram Johnson.⁹ In 1856, a person named Abram Johnson lived on Lumber Street in Arbor Hill just a few doors from the home of Stephen Myers, and operated a sloop on the Hudson River known as *Miriam*. An Abram Johnson also appears on the list of 1857 Vigilance Committee members. At present it is not clear whether all persons named Abram Johnson are the same or what their relationship to Harriet Johnson Myers is. The John Johnson who owned (now) 194 Livingston Avenue where the Myers family lived, and the neighbor named Abram Johnson may actually be Harriet's brothers, but federal and state census data are not clear on these points. Conclusive information may come to light as further research is conducted.

Stephen Myers was a fervent activist who helped build up the community of free blacks in Albany by assisting fugitives from slavery, as well as through his advocacy for work, education, and general betterment of the local population. According to Marion Hughes, Myers was one of the leading players in developing one of the first black schools in Albany and later became its superintendent.¹⁰ The school was associated with Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Hamilton Street, about one mile from Arbor Hill and itself a major Underground Railroad center in Albany. (This church is listed in the National Register as part of the Center Square-Hudson/Park Historic District, 1980).

⁵ Penn, Op. Cit.

⁶ Slave Manumissions Register 1800-1828, Albany County Hall of Records, Albany, New York.

⁷ Ripley, C. Peter. The Black Abolitionist Papers. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991, V. 3, note page. 378-9.

⁸ Freedom's Journal, New York, New York, June 22, 1827.

⁹ Ripley, Op. Cit.

¹⁰ Hughes, Marian I. Refusing Ignorance: The Struggle to Educate Black Children in Albany, New York, 1816-1873. Albany, N. Y., Mt. Ida Press, 1998.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 6

According to Myers' own testimony in the *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate* during the 1840s, he was involved in assisting fugitive slaves on their journey north as early as 1831.¹¹ In addition, during that same time, he established a number of newspapers, including what may have been his first venture, *The Elevator*, which was, according to Penn, published only for a short time.¹²

During the 1830s and 1840s, groups of citizens formed committees in many cities in the United States with the goals of protecting fugitive slaves from re-enslavement and assisting them in their flight to northern states or Canada. As slave catchers sought to recapture fugitives, these committees provided medical and legal assistance, food, clothing, money, temporary shelter, and sometimes employment, and assisted escaped slaves in making their way to freedom. One such committee had been formed in Albany in the early 1840s and a later committee continued to exist up to the time of the Civil War.

These vigilance committees were not an exclusive group that made up the opposition that was known collectively as the Underground Railroad, but they were a key element. Among other organized groups were Wesleyan churches, Quakers, Free Will Baptists, African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches. The Liberty Party, the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society, Unitarians, and many members of Congregational and Presbyterian churches were also organized in opposition to slavery. At the same time, however, the movement included individuals with no organizational or denominational affiliation.

Significant Albany groups who assisted fugitive slaves were also linked to two newspapers published in the early 1840s, the *Tocsin of Liberty* and the *Albany Patriot*. At the same time Myers was associated with another group called the Northern Star Association which published *The Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*, a newspaper that focused on self-help for the African-American community as well as abolition and temperance. In its pages Myers argued against slavery and for education for African-Americans as well as for employment and any other endeavors that would improve their economic condition, moral stature, or education.¹³

Around the same time, another anti-slavery group, known as the Vigilance Committee, was identified in Albany's *Tocsin of Liberty* newspaper. In an 1842 issue, ten members of its executive committee were named, and comprised an integrated group of blacks and whites. Some of the names of the executive committee were prominent members of Albany's African-American population, such as Thomas Paul, and Benjamin Lattimore, whose families dated back several generations in Albany. The actual membership of the Vigilance Committee, however, included all those who made financial contributions to its work. The Constitution of the Vigilance Committee

¹¹ *The Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*. January 2, 1843.

¹² Penn, Op. Cit.

¹³ *The Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*, December 2, 1843 – and many other numbers of this paper illustrate this point.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 7

published in the December 22, 1842 edition of the *Tocsin*, stated that it was the right and duty of citizens to help those escaping slavery and to do so promptly.¹⁴

While the paper was still young, there was a controversy between the *Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate* and *The Tocsin of Liberty*, as to which group was doing a better job in assisting fugitive slaves and free blacks in Albany. The *Tocsin's* editors, along with the Reverend Charles Torrey, an Albany Underground Railroad figure, accused Stephen Myers of taking money that was meant for the Vigilance Committee, when in fact Myers had only accepted the money for the Northern Star Association to assist fugitives through it, rather than the Vigilance Committee.¹⁵

This apparent rivalry between the two groups continued for a few years, but by the middle of the 1840s, two key players in the Vigilance Committee, Abel Brown and Charles Torrey, met untimely ends. Brown, who was a Baptist minister who campaigned tirelessly against slavery, died of pneumonia in Western New York in 1844 while on a preaching campaign. Torrey was imprisoned in 1844 for assisting fugitive slaves in Maryland and died in prison in 1846.¹⁶ After their demise, hostility between the groups subsided, and leadership of the Vigilance Committee was turned over to Stephen Myers. He served as the committee's chairman for at least three years and as a member for more than twelve.

Myers' *Northern Star* newspaper lasted until 1849 when it merged with another publication, *The True American*, published in Cortland by Sam Ringgold Ward, another key black abolitionist. The new publication was based in Syracuse and was called *The Impartial Citizen*. It lasted only until 1851 when it declared bankruptcy.¹⁷ In 1855, Myers asked readers of yet another of his papers, the *Telegraph and Journal*, to subscribe to Frederick Douglass' Paper because he (Myers) was ceasing publication and felt that it would advance the anti-slavery cause to receive Douglass' paper.¹⁸

The 1850s were particularly challenging following the passage of the Fugitive Slave law that increased the penalties for people caught assisting freedom seekers. During the period, however, Myers continued his work and in 1856 was recognized by the Vigilance Committee through a resolution that survives on a broadside published that year. The resolution honors Myers' role in assisting 287 freedom seekers in a ten-month period ending in 1856. At the time he was chairman of the committee, and additional members were identified in the flier.

¹⁴ *The Tocsin of Liberty*, December 22, 1842.

¹⁵ *The Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*, December 8, 1842.

¹⁶ Brown, C. S., *Memoir of Abel Brown*, Worcester, Mass.: Brown, 1849, pp 216-223; Lovejoy, J. C., *Memoir of Rev. Charles T. Torrey*, Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1847, pp 282-294.

¹⁷ Ripley, Op. Cit.

¹⁸ Frederick Douglass Paper, Rochester, New York, May 4, 1855.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 8

(Note that the address given on the broadside is 198 Lumber. By using Albany City Assessment Rolls, Albany City Directories, United States and New York State Census records, Albany County deeds, the broadside from 1856, and various maps and atlases of Albany published in the nineteenth century, it was conclusively determined that this is the property currently addressed as 194 Livingston Avenue.)

**Vigilance Committee Office,
198 Lumber Street, Albany, N. Y.**

At a meeting of the Vigilance Committee of Albany held on the evening of the 27th of April, 1856, it was

Resolved, That we, the Vigilance Committee, appreciate the untiring efforts of our Chairman, **STEPHEN MYERS**, in behalf of the Fugitive for the last three years.

The following resolution was offered by the Rev. John Sands of Albany:

Resolved, That we tender to Mr. **STEPHEN MYERS** our sincere thanks for his faithfulness in the proper expenditure of all funds placed at his control for the benefit of the Fugitive, and in accordance with the instructions of the Committee.

From the 12th day of September, 1855, to July 5th, 1856, two hundred and eighty-seven Fugitives passed through Albany. Paid for passage, \$542.36; board, \$76.60.

T. ELKINS,
Secretary.

C. BROOKS,
Chairman.

We call on our fellow citizens, here and elsewhere, to aid us in funds to help the poor, unfortunate Fugitives who come to us daily---in many cases destitute of clothing, weary of traveling, and hungry. No one is so poor as to be unable to give a little to this down-trodden class.

We appeal to the sympathy of ladies and gentlemen everywhere. We are in want of material aid and cast-off clothing.

All funds forwarded to Stephen Myers, William H. Topp, or any gentleman of the Committee, will be faithfully applied. All letters directed to this Office will be duly answered.

Rev. J. J. KELLEY,
Agent.

STEPHEN MYERS,
Gen'l Agent and Sup't.

COMMITTEE.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 9

During the 1850s, Stephen Myers was cited in notices in many contemporary newspapers as having spoken around the region on behalf of anti-slavery activities, and having collected money on behalf of the Northern Star Association to assist fugitives. Often, he shared the podium with Frederick Douglass.¹⁹

In 1850, Myers was elected to the executive committee of the American League of Colored Laborers at their meeting in New York City. This organization was dedicated to "improvement and elevation" of African American workers of the period and its officers included S.R. Ward of New York, president, L. Woodson and Frederick Douglass, Vice Presidents, and an executive committee comprised of men from New York State, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Michigan.²⁰

In The Black Abolitionist Papers, editor C. Peter Ripley states that, "despite his detractors, Myers was widely recognized for his achievements in antislavery and civil rights reform. His Albany station had the reputation of being the best-run part of the underground railroad in the state. He sheltered many fugitives in his own home and personally raised funds to sustain the Albany Vigilance Committee. He helped lead the struggle to expand black voting rights in New York. Beginning in the 1830s, he coordinated petition drives, organized the Albany Suffrage Club, participated in several black state conventions, and served as president of the New York State Suffrage Association. His skillful and persistent lobbying of the state legislature in Albany strengthened the voting rights campaign. Myers also spoke out against proposals to subsidize African colonization with state funds. He sat on the executive committee of the American League of Colored Laborers in the 1850s, and was a delegate to black national conventions in 1847, 1855, and 1864. During the Civil War, Myers recruited soldiers for the black Massachusetts regiments."²¹

Financial support for the work Myers did came from many sources at different times. In 1856 the Vigilance Committee circulated a flyer appealing to the public for money and supplies to help the large volume of people coming through Albany.²² Some evidence suggests that Myers received financial support from a number of prominent New Yorkers who opposed slavery or had a concern for the poor. In one letter from Myers to John Jay, grandson of Justice John Jay, and reproduced in The Black Abolitionist Papers, Myers outlines how half a dozen fugitives had recently come to him for help. Myers also indicates how he spent the contribution provided from Jay. He even provides details on his bank arrangements.²³ At the same time, Mr. Myers worked with the New York State Temperance Union, and while involved with this group, he was known to have published the *Telegraph and Temperance Journal*.²⁴

¹⁹ Frederick Douglass: The North Star, Rochester, New York, February 16, 1849.

²⁰ The North Star, Rochester, New York, June 13, 1850.

²¹ Op. Cit., Ripley

²² Handbill "Vigilance Committee Flyer", original held by American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

²³ Op. Cit. Ripley, pp. 407-411.

²⁴ Op. Cit., Ripley, pp. 378-9.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany Co. New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 10

In 1863, Stephen Myers served on the organizing committee of a group that arranged for a celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation. According to a historic poster in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art, the program was held at Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church and featured Frederick Douglass as the principal speaker.²⁵ It is likely that Myers took the podium along with others, as it was a common practice for the two men to appear together at such meetings. In fact, Frederick Douglass identified Myers as a key individual related to the Underground Railroad in his reflections on it many years later. According to Wilbur Siebert, Douglass notes "fugitives were received in Philadelphia by William Still, by him sent to New York, where they were cared for by Mr. David Rugges, and afterward by Mr. Gibbs, ... thence to Stephen Myers at Albany ...".²⁶

After the close of the Civil War, not much is known about Myers' life. William Henry Johnson, a long time African-American activist and Albany resident, provides the only known photograph of Stephen Myers. Johnson published it in his autobiography along with scores of pictures of others from the period.²⁷ As mentioned above, it is known that his wife died in 1865. In the early 1870s Myers' name disappears from the City Directories. There is no record of his burial at Albany Rural Cemetery nor at Hoosick Four Corners. Even Ripley merely places a question mark where the date of Myers' death should be. No one seems to know what Myers' final resting place or date of death.

Regardless of his obscurity by the time of his death, there is no question as to the importance of Stephen Myers during his lifetime. His dedication to the cause of freedom for fellow African-Americans was well known to citizens of Albany and beyond, and the building at 194 Livingston Avenue stands as the only known site where Myers lived and worked during the period.

Conclusion

Presently, the building is privately owned. The nomination sponsor, Albany's Underground Railroad History Project, hopes to acquire the building and interpret it as the home and office of Stephen Myers. Listing the property in the National Register will recognize the importance of Myers and the whole Underground Railroad in Albany. At the same time, 194 Livingston Avenue will become eligible for rehabilitation grants provided by the State of New York and other entities, to restore this property and showcase its architectural and historical significance for residents of Albany and beyond.

²⁵ Emancipation Proclamation poster of celebration at Israel Church of Albany, N.Y. for January 1, 1863. Held at Albany Institute of History and Art, Ruth Roberts Collection.

²⁶ Siebert, Wilbur. The Underground Railroad From Slavery To Freedom. The Macmillan Company, 1898 pp.125-6 (Reprinted, Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass. 1968).

²⁷ Johnson, William Henry. Autobiography of William Henry Johnson. Albany, N. Y.: Argus Press, 1900.

Stephen & Harriet Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

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OTHER SUPPORTING WORKS

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Williams-Myers, A. J. Long Hammering: Essays On The Forging Of An African American Presence In The Hudson Valley To The Early Twentieth Century. Tenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1994.

Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence
Name of Property

Albany County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 602030 4723714
Zone Easting Northing

2 18
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

4 18
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark L. Peckham, Historic Preservation Program Coordinator (See continuation sheet)

organization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation date July 2004

street & number PO Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643

city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188-0189

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Stephen and Harriet Myers House
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property boundary is outlined on the attached tax map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the boundary that has been associated with the 194 Livingston Avenue since it was constructed in 1847.

Stephen Myers Residence, 194 Livingston Avenue
Albany County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 11 Page 1

Draft prepared by:

Paul and Mary Elizabeth Stewart
Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.
PO Box 10851
Albany, NY 12201

Stephen and Harriet Myers House
194 Livingston Ave., Albany, Albany County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photographs

Photograph key

Pictures taken May 2004

Photographer: Paul Stewart

Negatives: Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital District, Inc., Albany, NY

1. View of front façade and west wall
2. View of the rear of the building
3. Interior 1st floor looking toward front (north) wall in stairhall
4. Interior 1st floor front hall medallion detail
5. Interior 1st floor looking toward front (north) wall in front parlor
6. Interior, basement staircase
7. Interior 2nd floor rear room

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Myers, Stephen and Harriet, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Albany

DATE RECEIVED: 8/02/04 DATE OF PEN:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/10/04 DATE OF 45TH:
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 04000999

REASONS FOR I
APPEAL: N I Return - DSCAPE: N LES
OTHER: Y I 999 IOD: N PRO
REQUEST: N : Mark Peckham - DRAFT: N NAT
COMMENT WAIV: Crystal Archive paper

resub. 10/28
List. 11/30
recommend to NHL

In Siebert...
Noted by ⁹¹ Fred. D.
as person most
associated w/
UKR activity in
Albany, a key
link in the
northern route
from Philadelphia
to Canada.

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:
Please provide photographs (B&W)
processed with B&W processing and
printed on B&W photo paper.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return
REVIEWER Savage DISCIPLINE Architectural History
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 9-15-04

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N
If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Myers, Stephen and Harriet, House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Albany

DATE RECEIVED: 8/02/04 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/26/04
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/10/04 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/15/04
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 04000999

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Please provide photographs (B+W) processed with B+W processing and printed on B+W photo paper.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER Savage

DISCIPLINE Architectural History

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 9-15-04

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STEPHEN & HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N. Y.

PHOTO #1



STEPHEN + HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

PHOTO # 2



STEPHEN & HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #3



STEPHEN + HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #4



STEPHEN + HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE
ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

PICTD #5



STEPHEN + HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

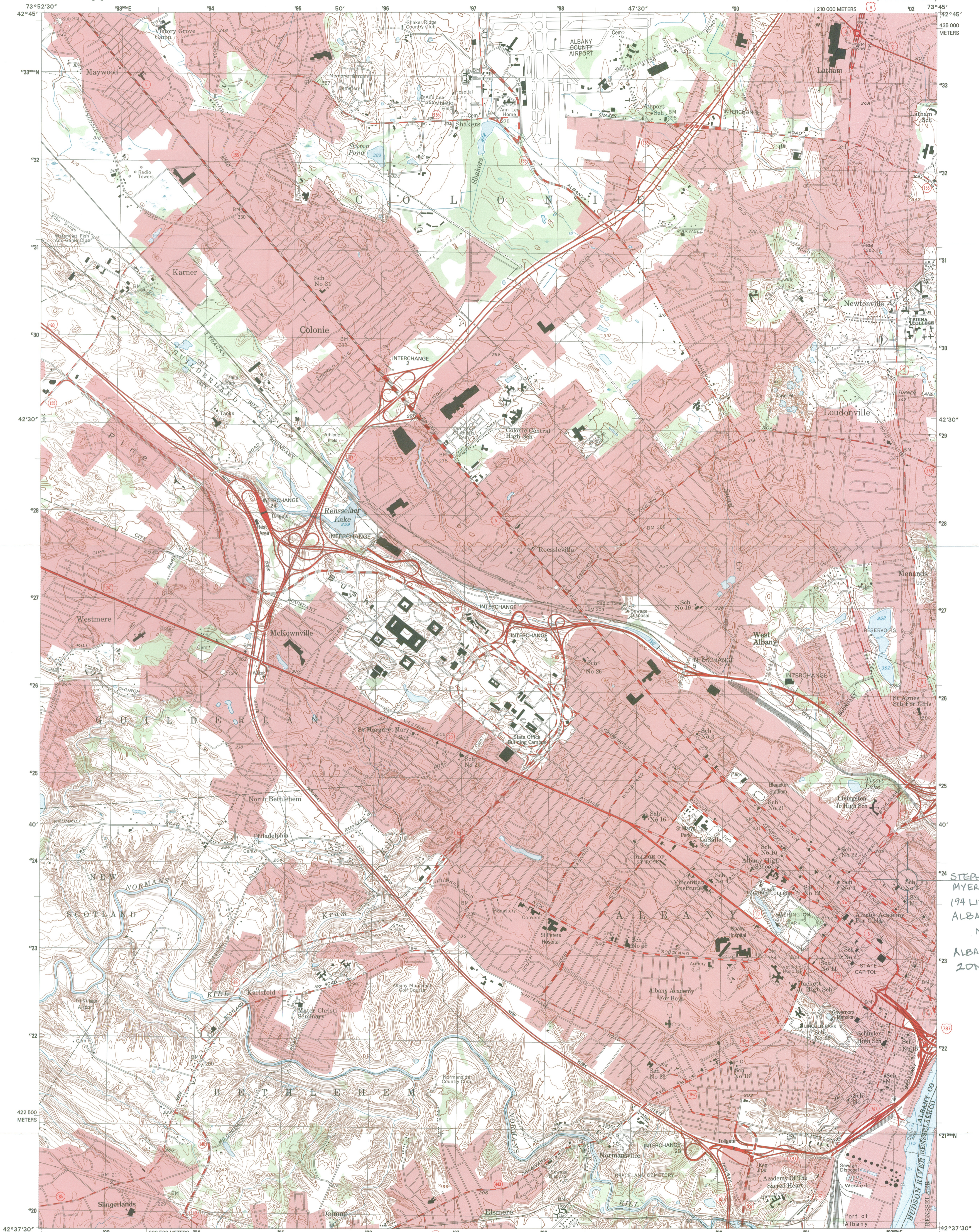
PHOTO #6



STEPHEN + HARRIET MYERS
RESIDENCE

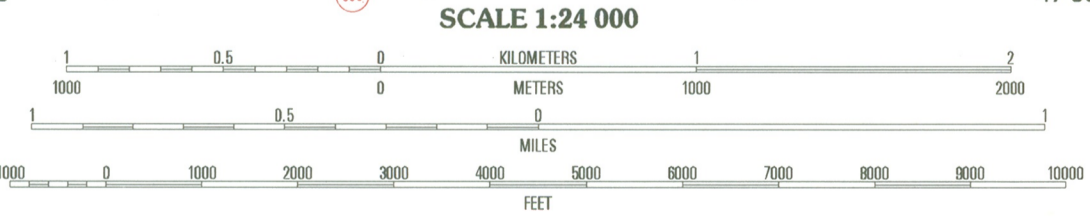
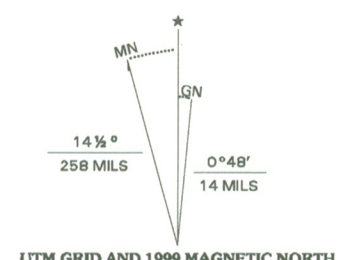
ALBANY, ALBANY CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #7



STEPHEN + HARRIET
MYERS RESIDENCE
194 LIVINGSTON AVE.
ALBANY, ALBANY CO.
NEW YORK
ALBANY QUAD
ZONE 18

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1994 and other sources. Survey control current as of 1953 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 18 2 500-meter ticks: New York Coordinate System of 1983 (east zone) North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software
Landmark buildings verified 1953



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

1	2	3	1 Schenectady
			2 Niskayuna
			3 Troy North
4	5	4 Voorheesville	
			5 Troy South
			6 Clarksville
6	7	8	7 Delmar
			8 East Greenbush

ALBANY, NY
1994

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

NIMA 6269 III NE-SERIES V821





CITY OF ALBANY
COMMON COUNCIL

Alderwoman 4th Ward
SARAH CURRY-COBB
79A Lawn Avenue
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12204
Phone: (518) 463-8864

CHAIRWOMAN
GENERAL SERVICES

VICE-CHAIRWOMAN
ZONING

MEMBER
COUNCIL OPERATIONS
FINANCE & BUDGET
LAW
PUBLIC AUTHORITIES & UTILITIES

March 17, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro, Commissioner
OPRHP
Building 1 - 20th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

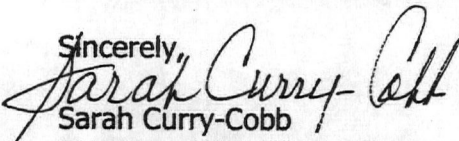
Dear Commissioner Castro:

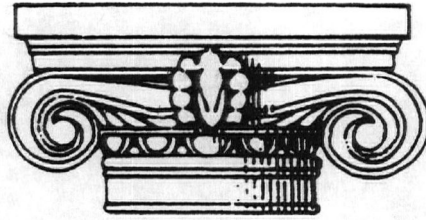
I am writing to support the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the State and National Historic Registry. This building has a significant history relating the Underground Railroad Movement and should be preserved, maintained as a historical site. I believe this building to be one of the little known or endangered sites in the North East. It can serve as a resource center for individuals and groups needing assistance in the preservation of African American Historical sites and history. Among the other factors that are important to this site are:

- It has a clear connection to the Underground Railroad through its traceable history as being the address of the office for the Vigilance Committee that operated in the mid 1850s.
- It is connected with Stephen Myers, the most conspicuous and leading figure in Albany's Underground Railroad connected history.
- It is outstandingly preserved, though in disrepair.
- It is an outstanding example of early middle 19th century Albany architecture and is unique in its location in Arbor Hill.
- It is important to local African American history and culture because of its connection to African Americans Stephen Myers and boat Captain John Johnson.

This property would be an important addition to the known historic treasures of the City of Albany and a support to the progress of revitalizing the Arbor Hill Community.

Again, the people of Albany ask for your support and trust for a favorable decision.

Sincerely,

Sarah Curry-Cobb
Member of the Albany Common Council



HISTORIC ALBANY FOUNDATION

March 17, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner
NYS Office of Parks Recreation & Historic
Building 1, 20th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Ms. Castro,

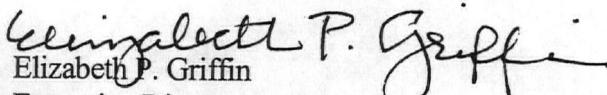
I am writing in strong support of the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the State and National Register of Historic Places.

The building's clear connection to the Underground Railroad as an office for the Vigilance Committee, a group that assisted hundreds of fugitive slaves escape slavery through Albany, makes it an incredibly unique and important site to be added to the register. The building is also connected with Stephen Myers, an active and leading figure in Albany's Underground Railroad connected history.

Although in disrepair, most the building's architectural features remain. Few early to mid nineteenth century buildings of its size and scale have been studied and restored in the Arbor Hill neighborhood. This building lies just outside of the Arbor Hill historic district and greatly deserves the status, prestige and notoriety of listing. While important to local African American history and culture, the building's link to the Underground Railroad activities and movement, makes a strong argument for its significance to our state and national history and heritage as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at 465-0876.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth P. Griffin
Executive Director

Virginia B. Bowers
Historian - City of Albany
352 Second Avenue
Albany, New York 12209

March 18, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro, Commissioner
OPRHP
Building #1, 20th floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, N.Y. 12238

Dear Ms. Castro:

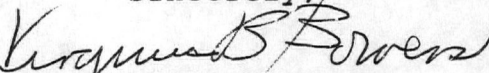
During almost a decade Paul and Mary Stewart have been developing programs regarding Albany's role in the Underground Railroad. With each passing month and year they have been able to identify locations within the city relative to their project.

Most recently after meticulous research they have arrived at the conclusion that 194 Livingston Avenue is a property that was deeply involved with the operation of "The Railroad". Located in what is now identified as Arbor Hill (in the 19th century known as the Lumber District) was an office for the Vigilance Committee which had major involvement with the operation of The Railroad.

It can be identified with Stephen Myers who was the "conductor" in Albany in the movement of slaves from the south to other safe havens to the north, west and east. As it is important to local African American history and culture I wish to nominate 194 Livingston Avenue to the state and national historic register.

This is indeed important that within the City of Albany, this another treasure of African American heritage be preserved. It will, also, contribute towards betterment of the Arbor Hill community.

Sincerely,


Virginia B. Bowers
Historian, City of Albany

39 Ten Broeck Place
Albany, NY 12210

March 19, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro,
Commissioner, OPRHP
Building 1, 20th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Ms. Castro:


This letter enthusiastically supports the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the state and national historic registers. Not only is it historically an outstanding example of early middle 19th century Albany architecture, but rare in its location west of the Ten Broeck Triangle Historic District of Arbor Hill. But there is more to the story: the fact that Stephen Myers, a former slave who became a leader in Albany's Underground Railroad movement, was so important then and is now for us to celebrate.

Since I purchased and renovated my historic home five years ago, I have personally seen the difference that saving one more building can make in a neighborhood. But again, there are other positive significant impacts that can happen in poor, predominately black neighborhoods like Arbor Hill when there is diversity of race, culture, economics and human relations. Neighbors get to know each other and work together to make it a better place for everyone – young people see that there really is reason to hope for a better future.

So, having this wonderful building honored with this historic designation will help return it to its' original beauty. People who are specifically interested in historic architecture will come as so many do to the home of General Ten Broeck just down the street. Others will come because of their quest to know more of the previously unknown facts about the Underground Railroad. Then those who live nearby and still have struggles to overcome will learn more about Stephen Myers and be encouraged by his courage and leadership.

It will be a great day when I look out my window and see evidence that Arbor Hill is being restored to its rightful place, known for its beauty and a community working together. Thank you for your consideration and assistance in this giant step forward to achieve this vision.

Sincerely,



Helen Black

March 20, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner
OPRHP
Building 1, 20th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

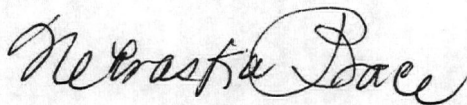
Dear Ms. Castro:

I support the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the state and national historic register. This property:

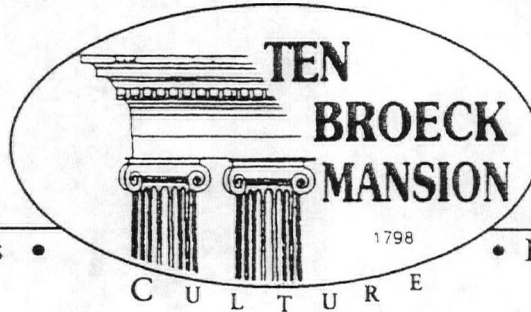
- Has a clear connection to the Underground Railroad through its traceable to being the address known to be an office for the Vigilance Committee that operated in the City of Albany in the mid 1850s
- Is connected with Stephen Myers, the most conspicuous and leading figure in Albany's Underground Railroad connected history
- Is outstandingly preserved, though in disrepair
- Is an outstanding example of early middle 19th century Albany architecture and is unique in its location in Arbor Hill
- Is important to local African American history and culture because of its connection to African Americans Stephen Myers, and boat captain John Johnson.

This property would be an important addition to the known historic treasures of the City of Albany and a support to progress in bringing to betterment the Arbor Hill community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nebraska Brace". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Nebraska Brace
105 Third Street
Albany, New York 12210



A R T S •

March 22, 2004

• H I S T O R Y

C U L T U R E

Bernadette Castro, Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks
Recreation and Historic Preservation
20th Floor, Agency Bldg 1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

Dear Commissioner Castro:

The Board of Trustees of the Albany County Historical Association (ACHA) strongly supports the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc. in their efforts to list 194 Livingston Avenue, Albany, New York, on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. As you are likely aware, the ACHA is headquartered in the historic Ten Broeck Mansion which was listed on the National Register in 1971. The Ten Broeck neighborhood in Arbor Hill boasts many historic properties, including those listed as part of the Arbor Hill Historic District-Ten Broeck Triangle, the Clinton Avenue Historic District, and the individually listed Palace Theater. The buildings stand as testament to the rich history of North Albany and the efforts of its current residents to preserve and promote its built environment. The addition of 194 Livingston Avenue to the register will serve greatly to increase the awareness and recognition of this historic neighborhood of which the ACHA and the Ten Broeck Mansion are proud to be a part.

As the onetime home of the local Underground Railroad activist, Stephen Myers, 194 Livingston Avenue reminds us that important historical structures are not always impressive public edifices but more often modest buildings. The story of Stephen Myers and his role within the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movements exemplifies the spirit and courage of many Albanians who lived in this neighborhood throughout the past two centuries. The property at 194 Livingston Avenue deserves to be acknowledged for its association with this important historical figure. The ACHA asks the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to carefully consider the merits of the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue and recommends its listing on the Register.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul S. Cohen".

Paul S. Cohen
President

CELEBRATING ALBANY'S HERITAGE

7 Ichabod Lane
Albany, New York 12211
March 24, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner
OPRHP
Building 1, 20th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

Dear Ms. Castro:

I would like to support the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the state and national historic register. As the Albany County Legislator for the 4th District, I realize the importance of retaining the integrity of the historic sites in Arbor Hill by ensuring that the state of New York recognize the treasures of this neighborhood.

194 Livingston Avenue is important to local African American history and indeed to the history of all citizens of Albany because of its clear connection to the Underground Railroad as having been an office for the Vigilance Committee that operated in the city of Albany in the mid 1850s. Beyond that, it is a superb example of early 19th century Albany architecture.

I, again, ask you to support this nomination which can only bring pride to the Arbor Hill community and the city of Albany.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Very truly yours,

Virginia Maffia-Tobler

Virginia Maffia-Tobler
Albany County Legislator
4th District

Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.

"BREAKING OLD GROUND EVERY DAY"

CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALISTS

524 BROADWAY, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12007

PHONE (518) 427-0382 – FAX (518) 427-0384

email: albany@hartgen.com

March 25, 2004

Bernadette Castro, Commissioner
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
20th Floor, Agency Bldg 1, ESP
Albany, New York 12238

RE: State and National Register Nomination
194 Livingston Avenue, Albany,

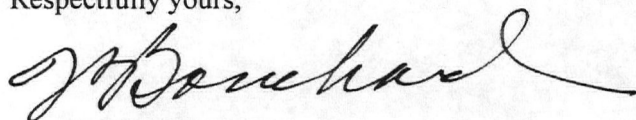
Dear Commissioner Castro,

As the longest-serving employee of Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. and a 40-year resident of the city of Albany, I am writing to you in support of the nomination of 194 Livingston Avenue to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. This nomination is supported by the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.

As you may know, Arbor Hill has been associated with Albany's African American community for more than a century. Prior to the Civil War, African Americans living in the neighborhood and elsewhere in the city were involved with the Underground Railroad and its effort to shepherd enslaved African Americans northward to freedom. As is often the case with minority and economically disadvantaged communities, and partly as a consequence of the desire of Underground Railroad supporters to maintain a low profile, little is recorded about when and where these activities took place. Therefore, we are extremely fortunate to be able to "locate on the ground" a surviving structure once occupied by Stephen Myers, one of the most active and committed members of the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movements in Albany.

Determining 194 Livingston Avenue to be eligible for register listing is an important step in recognizing and memorializing the contribution the Underground Railroad made to the history of the city, the state, and nation. In addition, Stephen Myers is an important historical figure in his own right. With this in mind, I respectfully request that you as commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation recommend 194 Livingston Avenue for listing on the state and national registers.

Respectfully yours,



J. Wm. Bouchard
Project Manager

CERTIFIED DBE/WBE IN NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, VERMONT,
MASSACHUSETTS, CONNECTICUT, PENNSYLVANIA,
AND NEW YORK CITY AGENCIES



The Assembly
State of New York

JOHN J. Mc ENENY
Member of Assembly

April 14, 2004

Ms. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner, OPRHP
1 Empire State Plaza 20th Fl
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Commissioner *Bernadette* Castro:

The building at 194 Livingston Avenue in Albany clearly belongs on the state and national registers of historic places.

This building was obviously used as part of the Underground Railroad. The address was mentioned as an office of the Vigilance Committee in the City of Albany in the mid 1850s. 194 Livingston was used by Stephen Myers, an African-American and the most conspicuous and leading figure in Albany's Underground Railroad. He and another African-American, boat captain John Johnson, is also associated with this address.

Today the building is both very well preserved and in a state of some disrepair. It is wonderful example of early middle 19th Century Albany architecture and has an excellent location on the hilly part of Livingston Avenue that helped give Arbor Hill its name.

Sincerely,

John J. McEneny
Member of Assembly

*Bernadette -
This is a wonderful
opportunity to recognize
a very important
physical remnant of the
abolitionist press and
Underground Railroad!
Jack*

APR 20 2004

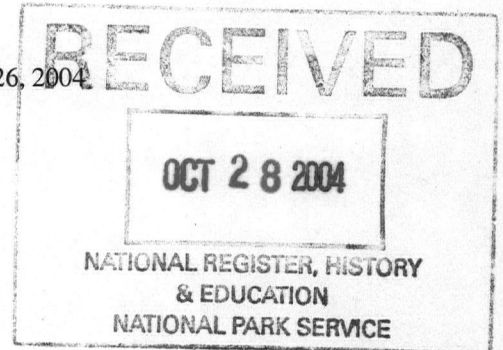


New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

October 26, 2004

Ms. Beth Savage
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005



Re: Transmittal of National Register
Photographs
Stephen and Harriet Myers House
Albany Co., NY

Dear Beth:

I am enclosing seven black and white prints of the Stephen and Harriet Myers House together with a replacement photo key. I believe this completes the file and hope the house can be listed promptly.

Thanks for your assistance. Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosures

NOV 16 2009

H34(2280)

Mr. Paul and Ms. Mary Elizabeth Stewart
PO Box 10851
Albany, New York 12201

Dear Mr. and Ms. Stewart:

Thank you for your inquiry requesting review of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence in Albany, New York, and its potential for National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation. We have reviewed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form to determine whether the residence merits further consideration for National Historic Landmark designation.

Properties that have been designated as National Historic Landmarks for their association as stations in the Underground Railroad have typically had very strong documentary evidence to substantiate their claim, and have been significant beyond their roles as stations by representing a particular facet of the Underground Railroad on a national scale. The complexity of evaluating Underground Railroad sites is such that we ask these sites to provide us with an understanding of how they fit into and illustrate a significant element of the Underground Railroad story. For example, the Levi Coffin Home (Fountain City, Indiana) is known as the "Union Depot of the Underground Railroad," and Rokeby (Ferrisburgh, Vermont), in addition to being a documented Underground Railroad station, is significant for rare surviving documentation which has provided greater insight and knowledge into the Underground Railroad. The John Rankin House (Ripley, Ohio) is one of the first stops in the Underground Railroad because of its location adjacent to the Ohio River. It is also significant for Rankin's 1826 publication, *Letters on American Slavery*, a text that became standard reading for abolitionists throughout the country.

Before we make a preliminary determination on whether the Stephen and Harriett Myers Residence meets the criteria for designation as a National Historic Landmark for its role as a link in the northern route to Canada for fugitive slaves, and/or for its association with Stephen Myer's Underground Railroad activities, we require additional information on Stephen Myers' lobbying efforts at the state capitol. Did his efforts at the state capitol produce any measurable results in civil rights legislation for African-Americans in New York State? Did these efforts eventually translate into any meaningful civil rights legislation for African Americans in the North or nationally?

Albany's location within the Hudson River Valley and its proximity to the Burned Over District may also provide an opportunity for contextualizing the local abolitionist movement in Albany within the larger nascent reform movements and utopian communities that germinated from this

general region. How did Albany's proximity to the Burned Over District influence the development of an abolitionist movement and Underground Railroad activities in Albany? How did Albany's geographic position on an arterial road leading west to Canada augment its role in the Underground Railroad? What role did other nearby communities such as Utica, Rochester, and Ithaca play in the Underground Railroad? How do Underground Railroad activities in these communities compare with those in Albany? These questions will help place the significance of the Myers Residence within a larger national contextual framework.

A successful argument for national significance for the Myers property should not place emphasis on his association with famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Mere association with a figure of national prominence does not make the site nationally significant – "documentation of the Underground Railroad activities of the person must be connected to the property itself." Therefore, his association with Douglass is not enough to make a case for national significance.

For further information on the National Historic Landmarks Program you can access the program bulletin online at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nhl/nhlstart.htm>. We recommend a close review of the *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study* which is available electronically at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/Themes/UNGRRR.FINAL.pdf>. Lastly, all the aforementioned nominations are available online through our NPS Focus website at <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov>. Please contact Caridad de la Vega at caridad_de_la_vega@contractor.nps.gov or via telephone at 202-354-2253, if you wish to further discuss the review of the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence.

Sincerely,

Alexandra M. Lord

Alexandra M. Lord, Ph.D.
Branch Chief
National Historic Landmarks Program

bcc: NERO, B. Halda

2201

2285

2280 Loether; **Abernathy**

2280 Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence (Pending)

FNP:Cdelavega:OP:11/10/09:S:\nr-nhl\Nominations Pending\Underground Railroad\Stephen and Harriet Myers\Myers House