

L.D. Mansfield House
67 Fulton Street
Auburn, New York
(Tentative Identification)

Significance: Home of well-documented Underground Railroad supporter.



Mansfield House
Fulton Street, Looking west
Photo by Tanya Warren
March 2005

Description: This square brick Greek Revival house, with limestone lintels, hipped roof, and a recessed doorway with sidelights makes a substantial high-style addition to this northside neighborhood. Although it appears to be missing an original porch, it nevertheless retains an air of quiet elegance.

Significance: L. Delos Mansfield appears not to have been in Auburn long and never to have owned property, which makes identification of his residence difficult. Based on his residence, as listed in the 1857 city directory, he apparently lived here in this house while he was involved in his Underground Railroad activities in the mid-1850s.

He left a dramatic and well-documented Underground Railroad legacy, emerging from his work as pastor of a biracial Christian church called the Tabernacle and from his strong connections with an African American Underground Railroad network that included Rev. Jermain Loguen (AME Zion minister and organizer of the main Underground Railroad station in Syracuse) and William Still (Secretary of the Vigilance Committee and keeper of the main Underground Railroad station in Philadelphia).

Rev. Mansfield first appeared in the abolitionist press in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in 1853, when he wrote a letter praising Douglass and explaining his own situation, then in New York City, ministering to a chapel supported by Gerrit Smith, Arthur Tappan, and other abolitionists:

By the blessing of God, New York is to have one more Church where a free gospel is to be preached to all, without distinction of color. The Advent Mission Church of which I have care have erected a neat and comfortable chapel at 39 Forsyth Street, where Negro pews have not place and we intend never shall. Where colored people are at home, by an acknowledged right not by an especial patronage, sometimes quite as humiliating as actual depreciation of place. I hope sometime to hear you earnest and eloquent appeals within the walls of our chapel in behalf of your injured race, with whom I deeply sympathize and for whose good I am ever ready to be used.¹

One of Rev. Mansfield's most memorable rescues involved a young man named James Harris. As William Still recorded it in his book, *The Underground Railroad*,

JAMES HARRIS escaped from Delaware. A white woman, Catharine Odine by name, living near Middletown, claimed James as her man; but James did not care to work for her on the unrequited labor system. He resolved to take the first train on the Underground Rail Road that might pass that way. It was not a great while ere he was accommodated, and was brought safely to Philadelphia. The regular examination was made and he passed creditably. He was described in the book as a man of yellow complexion, good-looking, and intelligent. After due assistance, he was regularly forwarded on to Canada. This was in the month of November, 1856. Afterwards nothing more was heard of him, until the receipt of the following letter from Prof. L. D. Mansfield, showing that he had been re-united to his wife, under amusing, as well as touching circumstances:

AUBURN, Dec. 15th, '56.

DEAR BRO. STILL:-A very pleasant circumstance has brought you to mind, and I am always happy to be reminded of you, and of the very agreeable, though brief acquaintance which we made at Philadelphia two years since. Last Thursday evening, while at my weekly prayer meeting, our exercises were interrupted by the appearance of Bro. Loguen, of Syracuse, who had come on with Mrs. Harris in search of her husband, whom he had sent to my care three weeks before. I told Bro. L. that no such man had been at my house, and I knew nothing of him. But I dismissed the meeting, and went with him immediately to the African Church, where the colored brethren were holding a meeting. Bro. L. looked through the door, and the first person whom he saw was Harris. He was called out, when Loguen said, in a rather reproving and excited tone, "What are you doing here; didn't I tell

¹ *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, August 19, 1853.

you to be off to Canada? Don't you know they are after you? Come get your hat, and come with us, we'll take care of you." The poor fellow was by this time thoroughly frightened, and really thought he had been pursued. We conducted him nearly a mile, to the hotel where his wife was waiting for him, leaving him still under the impression that he was pursued and that we were conducting him to a place of safety, or were going to box him up to send him to Canada. Bro. L. opened the door of the parlor, and introduced him; but he was so frightened that he did not know his wife at first, until she called him James, when they had a very joyful meeting. She is now a servant in my family, and he has work, and doing well, and boards with her. We shall do all we can for them, and teach them to read and write, and endeavor to place them in a condition to take care of themselves. Loguen had a fine meeting in my Tabernacle last night, and made a good collection for the cause of the fugitives.

I should be happy to hear from you and your kind family, to whom remember me very cordially. Believe me ever truly yours, L. D. MANSFIELD.

Mr. and Mrs. Harris wish to be gratefully remembered to you and yours.²

L.D. Mansfield was also involved in assisting Henry Lemmon and his sister, Catherine, who took the name of Jane Clark. When a friend of Henry Lemmon's died on the way North, Mansfield wrote to Still on his behalf:

AUBURN, NEW YORK, MAY 4TH, 1857.

DEAR BR. STILL:-Henry Lemmon wishes me to write to you in reply to your kind letter, conveying the intelligence of the death of your fugitive guest, Geo. Weems. He was deeply affected at the intelligence, for he was most devotedly attached to him and had been for many years. Mr. Lemmon now expects his sister to come on, and wishes you to aid her in any way in your power-as he knows you will.

He wishes you to send the coat and cap of Weems by his sister when she comes. And when you write out the history of Weems' escape, and it is published, that you would send him a copy of the papers. He has not been very successful in getting work yet.

Mr. and Mrs. Harris left for Canada last week. The friends made them a purse of \$15 or \$20, and we hope they will do well.

Mr. Lemmon sends his respects to you and Mrs. Still. Give my kind regards to her and accept also yourself, Yours very truly, L. D. MANSFIELD.

William Still included in his book an appreciative comment about Mansfield's work on the Underground Railroad. "Rev. Mansfield was," wrote Still, "one of the rare order of ministers, who believed it right 'to do unto others as one would be done by' in practice, not in theory

² William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872), 516-17, <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/other/ABL/etext/ugrr/ugrrmain.html>

merely, and who felt that they could no more be excused for 'falling down,' in obedience to the Fugitive Slave Law under President Fillmore, than could Daniel for worshiping the 'golden image' under Nebuchadnezzar."³

³ Still, *The Underground Railroad*, 54.

**North Street Cemetery
North Street
Auburn, New York**

Significance: Burial Place of Many People Associated with the Underground Railroad Abolitionism, and African American Life



People such as Morgan “Luke” Freeman (1803-1863), born in slavery, whose obituary noted that he kept an Underground Railroad station in Auburn for twenty-nine years; John Stewart, one of Harriet Tubman’s brothers; and Lydia P. Mott, Quaker abolitionist who kept a school in Skaneateles, are buried in North Street cemetery.

Northern Christian Advocate Office
16 Clark Street
Auburn, New York

Significance: Site of publication of *Northern Christian Advocate*



February 2005
 Looking NW

Abolitionism threatened to disrupt the Union, and many Americans, sympathetic as they might to the plight of people in slavery, were not willing to challenge slaveholders and risk dissolving the country.

This building represents the considerable opposition to abolitionism that existed throughout central New York. Built by the Methodist Publishing House, 16 Clark Street was the site of major publishing efforts of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Here they published their journal, the *Northern Christian Advocate*, for 28 years, beginning in 1841. In 1844, William Hosmer became editor of this newspaper, but his antislavery views made him too radical for Methodist authorities. In 1856, he left the editorship of the *Northern Christian Advocate* to assume control of a new publication, the *Northern Independent*. He published this staunchly abolitionist newspaper at 113 Genesee Street, the same location where Morgan “Luke” Freeman, born in slavery in Auburn in

1803, kept his barbershop, beginning in 1857. For 29 years until his death in 1863, Freeman also kept one of the most important Underground Railroad stations in Auburn, undoubtedly with the assistance of William Hosmer.

Note signs on side of buildings: "PrintingBinding," "Book Bindery."

Researched by Joni Lincoln, Cayuga County Historian's Office.

Site of Morgan Freeman Barbership (after 1857) and of Hornbeck, Waire, and Swarts Barbershops later in the century.

Site of William Hosmer's *Northern Independent* newspaper (after 1856).

111-117 Genesee Street

Auburn, New York

Significance: One of most important Underground Railroad sites in Auburn; important African American business site from 1857 through early twentieth century; important reform/abolitionist newspaper published here



June 2005

Looking northeast

Beginning in 1856, the building that stood on the site of the current First Niagara Bank building was occupied by William Hosmer and the offices of the *Northern Independent*. Beginning in 1857, a succession of African American barbers had their shops in this building and its successor, a Richardsonian Romanesque structure. In 1857, following the movement of Auburn's business district west along Genesee Street, Morgan "Luke" Freeman moved his barbershop from the corner of Cumpston Lane and South Street to this site. Morgan Freeman died in 1863, and his obituary noted that he had kept an Underground Railroad station for 29 years. Probably this barbershop was a key anchor for that station.

Morgan Freeman suffered a stroke in 1859, and Burget Freeman took over his shop. It was here, in B. C. Freeman's "shaving saloon," that African American men in Auburn organized the Auburn Suffrage Club in October 1860. As reported by the local newspaper:

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The colored people of Auburn held a meeting last evening to consider the propriety of forming a club to attend to the suffrage question at the polls. They desired to enjoy the elective franchise; and they know that they are dependent on white men to give it to them—They will attend at the several polls in the city on election day, and distribute tickets “for the amendment of the constitutions.”⁴ John Stuard (Stewart), Harriet Tubman’s brother, was elected treasurer of the new organization, and B.C. Freeman was secretary.

African American barbers continued to maintain their businesses at this site into the twentieth century, including John Hornbeck, John Waire, and George Swarts. For many years, Anthony Shimer, the jeweler with whom Harriet Tubman and her brother John Stewart were involved in a gold scheme in 1873, had his store in this building.

⁴ The *Auburn Daily Advertiser* noted that the “old and popular barber of Auburn” suffered a severe attack of paralysis yesterday.” His “entire right side was rendered useless.” July 26, 1859. Unknown newspaper, October 30, 1860. Thanks to Anthony Gero for finding this.

Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, African American Life

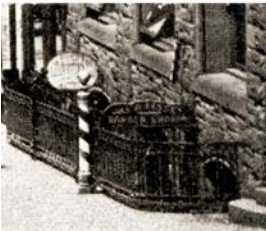
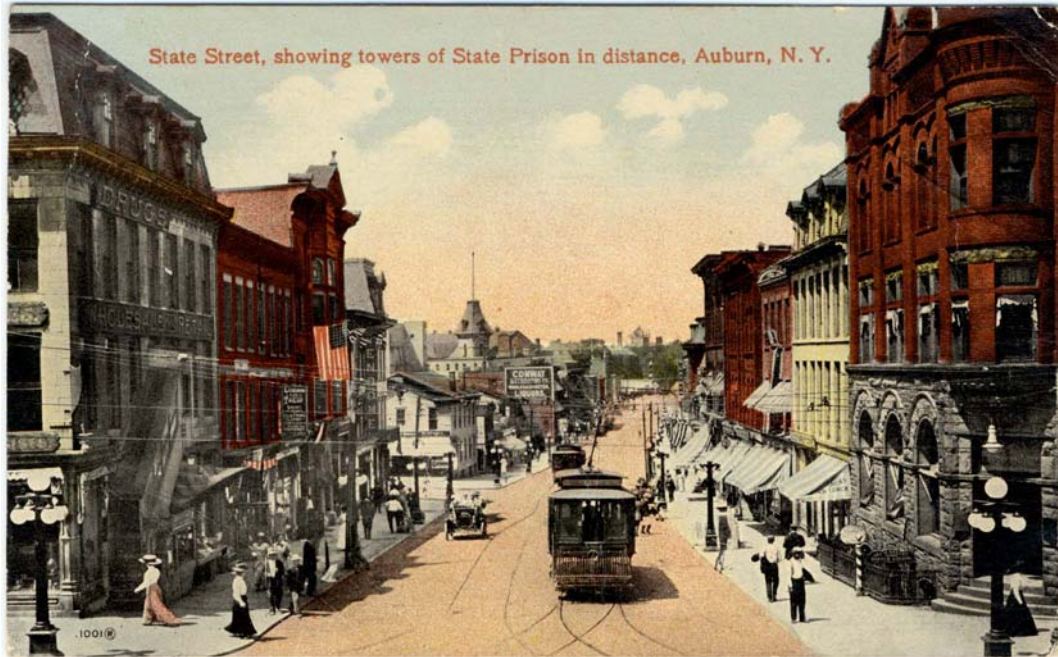
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State and Genesee Streets, Looking East
 Barber pole at corner of bank on SE corner.
 1890-1910

The building on the right replaced an earlier building on this site. Note the barber pole on State Street. Photo found by Bill Hecht.

**117 West Genesee Street
King Ferry Antique Shop (Walley Drugstore)
Auburn, New York**



Genesee and State Street, northwest corner, Looking NW
Limestone Building, King Ferry Antiques (Walley Drugstore)

Visible at the left in the historic photo above (with a Mansard roof), this building is still standing on the northwest corner of State and Genesee Streets. Dating from the mid-nineteenth century, it is currently the King Ferry Antique Shop. While it has no direct documented connection with the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, or African American life, it looks much as it once did when Morgan Freeman had his barbershop and William Hosmer had his publishing business in the building across State Street.



1875 Cayuga County Atlas

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**Auburn City Directories
Occupants of 111, 113, 115 and 117 Genesee St
Research by Tanya Warren**

1857: 111 W. Genesee Street Businesses:

- KEYES & SMITH, CLOTHING STORE
- MORRIS, M.E., DAGUERREAN AND AMBROTYPEPIST
- MYERS, MICHAEL S., LAWYER
- PEASE, ANN M., AMBROTYPEPIST
- UPHAM, LEWIS S., CLERK
- GREENFIELD, EDWIN, CUTTER

113 W. Genesee Street Businesses:

- HOSMER, JOHN G., CLERK
- HOSMER, REV. WILLIAM, EDITOR OF NORTHERN INDEPENDENT
- SHIMER, ANTHONY, WATCHES, JEWELRY AND MUSIC
- BETTYS, JOHN R., JEWELRY
- NORTHERN INDEPENDENT, OFFICE

115 W. Genesee Street Businesses:

- ONGLEY, EDWARD S., CLERK
- SCHENCK, SAMUEL L., BARBER (lives at Lumber Court)
- TELEGRAPH OFFICE
- WARRINER, ABNER E., TELEGRAPH OPERATOR
- COBB, E.B., BOOT AND SHOE STORE

117 W. Genesee Street Businesses (still standing):

- WALLEY, AMOS T., DRUGGIST/APOTHECARY, COR. W GENESEE/STATE
- WEEKLY AMERICAN, OFFICE 117 W GENESEE, COR. STATE

1863-1864:

- SWARTZ, GEORGE-BARBER, COR GENESEE & STATE
- FREEMAN, BERGET-BARBER, COR GENESEE & STATE
- BECKER, D. E.-PRINTERS, COR GENESEE & STATE
- MCCREERY, DAVID-TOBACCONIST, COR STATE & GENESEE
- MYERS & ADAMS, LAWYERS, 109 GENESEE
- BRIGGS, CHARLES-CROCKERY, CHINA & GLASSWARE, 111 GENESEE
- WORDEN & PINGREE-LAWYERS, 111 GENESEE
- SHIMER, A.-WATCHES & JEWELRY, 113 GENESEE
- NORTHERN INDEPENDENT-NEWSPAPER, 115 GENESEE
- WALLEY, A. T. & CO.-DRUGGIST, 117 GENESEE

1867-1868:

- Briggs, Charles-Crockery, etc., 111 Genesee**
- Walley, Amos-Druggist, cor Genesee & State**
- Hornbeck, John-Barber, 113 Genesee**

1900:

- Cayuga County Savings Bank-113-115 Genesee/-Walley, Martin-druggist, 117 Genesee**

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