

# The 9th Annual Underground Railroad Days 2018

No matter what your age, no matter what your interest, the Village of Vandalia Underground Railroad Days was sure to please. Over 1000 visitors came to the tiny Village of Vandalia Michigan recently to enjoy the 9th annual collaboration between the Village and the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County (URSCC). They took guided tours of UGRR sites that told the story of the Kentucky Slave Raid in 1847, and watched local students act it out. They toured UGRR stations at the Bonine Carriage House and the Bogue House. They toured the Bonine House and met Mary Charlotte Bonine, who was born in the house in 1934, and thoroughly enjoyed talking about growing up in the beautiful Victorian home.

There was a delicious soul food dinner and a rousing Sunday morning church service that drew more than 200 worshippers.

There was music and storytelling, UGRR displays and presentations. And for kids, pony and train rides, face painting and bouncy houses.

Sally Connor's Friday night documentary on the Kentucky Raid was viewed by a large, appreciative crowd.

"We're happy to see so many new visitors from all over the region, Chicago and Detroit and even further. There is great interest in the Underground Railroad throughout the country and Vandalia has an amazing story to tell" said Cathy LaPointe, treasurer of URSCC. "We have four Underground Railroad stations still standing, and nineteen UGRR sites around Vandalia on our self-guided driving tour. This festival tells the story of black and white abolitionists working together to help over fifteen hundred fugitive slaves, now called freedom seekers, on their journey to freedom. Many went on to Canada, but many stayed here and thrived. Their descendents still live here."

"We are growing and progressing on our restoration efforts, and many return every year to see what's new," said Mike Moroz, president of URSCC. "This year we opened the home of UGRR stationmasters Stephen and Hannah Bogue, and visitors could access the second story of the Carriage House. Next year there will be other sites to explore."

Family activities are a welcome addition to the festival, this year including a baseball game, basketball camp and oldies music on the Vandalia lawn after the festival closed on Saturday.

Underground Railroad Days is the second weekend in July. Admission and all activities are free. URSCC wants to acknowledge the generous support this year of the Michigan Humanities Council.