

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE, THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHUCH

Other Name/Site Number: Harriet Tubman District Properties Relating to Harriet Tubman in Auburn, NY

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 180 South Street 182 South Street 33 Parker Street City/Town: Auburn

Not for publication: Vicinity:

State: NY County: Cayuga Code: 011 Zip Code: 13201

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property Private: X Public-Local: Public-State: Public-Federal: Category of Property Building(s): X District: Site: Structure: Object:

Number of Resources within Property Contributing 3 Noncontributing 4 buildings sites structures objects 4 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 4

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: (National Register)Historic Properties Relating to Harriet Tubman in Auburn, New York

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.****ZION CHURCH****Page 3**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic:	Domestic	Sub:	Single dwelling (Tubman residence)
	Domestic		Institutional housing (Home for the Aged)
	Religion		Religious facility (Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church)
Current:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Museum (all)

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: Late Victorian (Tubman Residence)  
 Mid-19th Century (Home for the Aged)  
 Late Victorian: Stick/Eastlake (Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church)

## Materials:

Foundation: Stone (Tubman residence)  
 Stone, concrete block (Home for the Aged)  
 Stone (Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church)

Walls: Brick (Tubman residence)  
 Wood/weatherboard (Home for the Aged)  
 Wood/shingle (Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church)

Roof: Asbestos shingle (all)

Other:

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.****ZION CHURCH****Page 4**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Tubman Home for the Aged is located on a parcel on the east side of South Street, adjacent to the south boundary of the City of Auburn. Harriet Tubman's residence, a contributing building, is located on an adjacent parcel immediately to the south. The Home for the Aged itself, a nineteenth century frame house, represents one contributing building and was previously designated a National Historic Landmark

In addition to the historic Tubman Home for the Aged and the Harriet Tubman residence, there are four non-contributing buildings, and the unevaluated cellar hole of a now-destroyed house on the 24-acre total parcel of land, which belongs to the A.M.E. Zion Church. The site is bisected by a gravel east/west driveway leading to a parking lot in front of the one-story frame Multipurpose Building (non-contributing) at the rear of the property. The frame Tubman Home for the Aged, which is set back from South Street, is situated on the north side of the drive and is oriented to it, rather than to South Street. A one-story, concrete block garage (non-contributing) is located at the east side of the Home. On the south side of the drive, set back from South Street is the modern, one-story frame Tubman Memorial Library (non-contributing). The property is level, with lawn, several trees and shrubs around the various buildings. A gravel path extends from the entrance of the Harriet Tubman Memorial Library, south and west to the brick Harriet Tubman residence at 182 South Street. Flower gardens have been planted in front of the Library (west) and on the west side of the frame Home for the Aged.

**The Tubman Home for the Aged (180 South Street)**

The Tubman Home for the Aged is a rectangular two-story, five bay frame house with lateral gable roof. It is of balloon construction finished with clapboards and is devoid of embellishing architectural detail. A one-story porch runs the length of the main (south) façade and wraps around the west side of the building. A brick chimney is seen at either end of the gabled, asphalt shingled roof. On either side of the central entrance are pairs of 6/6 sash windows, each with a corresponding window above on the second story. Two low, wood steps lead up to the porch, and the standing seam porch roof is supported by four simple, wood posts. Wood lattice wraps the porch beneath its deck.

The porch extends across the three-bay western façade facing South Street as well. A central door on the first story is flanked by a pair of windows. The second story repeats this fenestration pattern, while the low attic is lit by two smaller windows beneath the gable. The rear (north) façade repeats the five bay pattern of the main façade. Two windows on each story flank a first story entrance, although here the door is somewhat off-center to the right (west). On the east façade two entrances are seen, one central, and another at the left. A small window is located at the right side of the center door. There are no windows on the second story, but two small windows light the attic, as in the corresponding western façade.

The house was allowed to fall into serious disrepair in the 1930s and 40s and underwent extensive restoration in 1953. Virtually nothing of the original interior remains. In 1974 it was designated a National Historic Landmark, based on its association with the life of Harriet Tubman.

**Harriet Tubman Residence (182 South Street)**

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Harriet Tubman's residence is a rectangular, two-story brick house, with principal façade in the gable end facing South Street. It sits close to the street with the contributing garage/barn behind it to the east. A brick chimney pierces the gable of the asbestos shingle roof toward the rear. The building is very simple, having no architectural embellishments beyond the shallow relieving arches of the windows in the brick body of the house.

The three bay main façade has a central entrance flanked by single, 1/1 windows on first and second stories. These windows are topped by shallow relieving arches. A small round opening (now sealed) is seen under the gable at the attic level. On either side of the entrance porch, the stone foundation is pierced by two windows, also with shallow relieving arches. The small porch consists of a gabled roof with eave returns and shallow arch in the gable end, supported by simple wood posts of square profile. The base of the porch and two steps leading up to it are of concrete.

The north side of the house displays a frame, one-story, enclosed porch with a hip roof. The east and west sides of the porch each have a pair of 1/1 windows, while the north side has two pairs of windows. The foundation of this addition is of concrete block. At the second story level, above the porch are two 1/1 sash windows. The enclosed porch was probably built in the 1920s to replace the open porch which was there during Harriet Tubman's time.

A hip-roofed frame addition extends across the back (east side) of the house. On the east side of the addition is a door on the right (north), and a window on the left (south), with a basement window beneath. Two 1/1 windows are seen at the second story level of the house. On the south side of the addition there is a single window. This addition is approximately one and a half stories high because the house sits higher on its foundation as the land falls away at the rear of the house.

The south side of the brick house has 1/1 windows on the first and second stories to the west, and a second story 1/1 sash window above a small pair of windows on the east end of the façade. A basement window is situated roughly beneath this pair of small windows.

The interior of the house has seen extensive change over the years. Some interior partitions have been moved and new stairs added. What remains of the interior trim and finishing materials are of no particular architectural distinction.

**Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church (33 Parker Street)**

The Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church at 33 Parker Street, constructed in 1891, is a modest, rectangular, two-story frame building on a residential street. The surrounding homes are of scale similar to that of the church. The church's gable end, which is surmounted by a steeple, is oriented to the street. The apex of the gable is truncated and above this rises the four-sided base of the small spire. The spire itself is square in plan, with the upper portion tapering slightly and slanting inward, suggesting a mansard roof. From each face of this upper portion projects a steep gable supported by simple, unfluted pilasters flanking wooden louvered vents. A cross is mounted at the top of the steeple. Bargeboards with a simple, raised bullseye pattern trace the profile of the truncated gable of the church front.

Shallow concrete steps flanked by handicap ramps, lead up to the main entrance. This central double-doored entrance is sheltered by a gabled canopy supported by wood brackets with a compound curved

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.****ZION CHURCH****Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

profile. Decorative shingles in a fishscale pattern fill the triangular surface of the canopy's gable. Flanking the entrance are two 4/4 windows with rectangular lights of colored glass. Their simple architraves display slightly projecting cornices. Above the entrance canopy are two windows set side by side, separated only by a wooden post. The upper outside corners of each window is angled to echo the line of the eaves above. Directly above these windows a horizontal molding separates the wall below, with its plain shingles, from the upper portion of the façade, which displays decorative fishscale shingles.

The side elevations each display four sash windows; a central pair, which is flanked by single windows. Originally these were 4/4, with the larger, central lights surrounded by a border of small square, lights. A number of these have been broken and in some cases, plain clear glass replaces the predominately gold and amber toned glass of the original windows.

The church is shingled, predominately in a plain pattern, except for the decorative fishscale pattern, as noted. The roof is of asphalt shingle, and the foundation of stone.

The double doors of the church open into a small vestibule with stairs to the basement and to the balcony situated at the right, and a small office for the pastor at the left. Two doors open into the double-aisled sanctuary. At the liturgical east end of the church opposite the entrances are the pulpit and seats for the choir, raised on a low platform. In front of the platform a low wooden railing with a carved trefoil pattern projects into the sanctuary space slightly. Behind the pulpit is a shallow rectangular recess, with slightly curved ceiling, recalling an apse form. Above the entrance vestibule is the balcony, its railing ornamented with a dentil motif. Two simple turned posts rise from the balcony railing to the ceiling.

Narrow beaded boards make up the wainscoting which covers the walls to the level of the window sills (about 4 feet). Above this the boards are wider, though still beaded. The windows, with their simple architraves display a bullseye motif in the head blocks, a detail echoed in the door surrounds. The ceiling of modern square, acoustic tiles curves upward gently, flattening slightly at the top.

The church is largely intact, with few alterations. The exterior walls have more recent shingle siding and the roof is of modern composition shingles. As noted above the ceiling of the sanctuary has been replaced with modern materials. The present pews are not fixed or original to the building. The three hanging light fixtures are modern.

**Non-contributing buildings****Garage, Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged (180 South Street)**

A one-story, two bay, concrete block garage with gable roof (ca. 1953) is situated next to the house on the east. The ends of the gables above the concrete block walls are clapboard.

**Garage, Tubman Residence. (182 South Street)**

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH****Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Behind the residence where Harriet Tubman lived is a four bay frame and concrete block garage. The structure comprising the central two bays is frame with a gable roof, and probably was originally one of the barns or outbuilding of her small farm. Two modern overhead garage doors have been installed. On either side of this central section are single, one- story garage bays with shed roofs. The sides containing the overhead garage doors are frame, while the sides and backs are of concrete block. While this building possesses some historic fabric, it has been altered to the point where it should be considered non-contributing.

**Harriet Tubman Memorial Library**

Between the Home for the Aged and the Tubman residence is the modern Harriet Tubman Memorial Library serving the site. It is a long, low, one-story frame building with its side gable roof intersected by the shallow gable of the porch roof. The porch roof is supported by paired posts on either side of the double wood and glass doors. On either side of the entrance are rectangular windows with three vertical sliding panels. The building is sheathed with vertical board and batten siding, while the roof is of composition shingle.

**Harriet Tubman Multipurpose Building**

At the rear of the property is a long, low, frame building with a shallow gable roof. The building has a long, rectangular footprint, with one section on the right (south) skewed toward the back at an angle. The eaves have a wide overhand, creating shallow porches along the long sides of the building. The eaves are supported at intervals by simple posts. A single door is seen at the right of the main façade, which has six vertical, fixed windows. Double wood and glass doors are located in the short side of the building on the left (north). The building is of recent construction and displays board and batten siding and composition shingle roof.

**Archeological remains - Cellar hole**

It should be noted that on the South Street site are the remains of what was once one of the main buildings of the Home for the Aged. This was a brick house located towards the rear of the property to the southeast of the present Assembly Hall. Old photographs reveal that it was a fairly substantial one-story house, raised on a high stone foundation. It was allowed to fall into serious disrepair and what remains now is only the cellar hole, into which the brick walls and foundation stones have been pushed. An archaeological dig by a team from Syracuse University took place on the site in the Spring of 1998 and the results of this work are being analyzed at this time. There is reason to believe that further archaeological investigations on this building and on the remains of the outbuildings that once stood on the site, would be profitable.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH**

**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A    B X C    D   

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A X B    C    D    E    F    G   

NHL Criteria: 2

NHL Exception: 1

NHL Theme(s): II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements  
2. reform movements

Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage/Black  
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1859 - 1913

Significant Dates: 1859, ca. 1885, 1891, 1896, 1911, 1913

Significant Person(s): Harriet Tubman

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: Charles H. Sweeting (Contractor, Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church)

Historic Contexts: XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements  
D. Abolitionism

Black Americans in United States History (1974)

Underground Railroad Theme Study (1998)



**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

The properties comprising this National Historic Landmark nomination all relate to the life of Harriet Tubman between 1859 and 1913 in Auburn, New York. They include her own residence, the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, a charitable organization for aged and indigent African Americans which she founded, and the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street, where she worshipped.

Harriet Tubman is most famous for her role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a fugitive slave herself, who repeatedly made dangerous trips to the South to escort others to freedom, actions which earned her the title "Moses of her people." She dedicated her years in Auburn to selflessly and tirelessly looking after those who could not take care of themselves, and she did it with the same conviction that she was doing God's will that she brought to her rescue work before the Civil War. Despite international fame (she received a Diamond Jubilee medal from Queen Victoria, and was the subject of a biography) it was an on-going struggle for Harriet to carry on her charitable work due to lack of funds. And while the heroism of her Underground Railroad work has overshadowed other aspects of Harriet's remarkable life, character, and work, it is with these lesser known facts of her life that the sites in Auburn are interwoven.

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery as Araminta Ross in Bucktown, near Cambridge, Maryland, in 1820 or 1821. One of eleven children of Harriet Green and Benjamin Ross, Araminta (who later changed her name to Harriet) was as a young girl "hired out" to a succession of masters, in an effort by her owner to recoup some of the financial losses that he was experiencing. By all accounts her work was difficult physical labor and at the age of 12 she sustained a head injury at the hands of an overseer, an injury that for the rest of her life would cause her to fall into a deep trance-like sleep without warning. In 1844 she was married to a free African American, John Tubman, but no children came of this marriage. In 1849, hearing that she and two of her brothers were to be sold into the Deep South, Harriet determined to make her escape. Although the brothers started out with her, they turned back fearing the consequences of capture, and Harriet continued alone into Delaware, where she received assistance from Quaker sympathizers. She then moved on to Philadelphia, where she was safer among the larger free African American population. After working and saving for two years in Philadelphia, Harriet secretly returned to her home and began her work of escorting other slaves, family and strangers alike, to freedom. She eventually managed to guide a number of her siblings and their spouses and children to freedom, but her husband John Tubman remained behind, having remarried after her first disappearance.<sup>1</sup> The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 made this work even more dangerous, for it provided that anyone found assisting fugitive slaves would suffer severe penalties.

Harriet's work as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad has been extensively documented in biographies, histories of the Underground Railroad, children's literature, and newspaper, magazine and encyclopedia articles. Accounts of how many trips she made and how many slaves she led to freedom differ,<sup>2</sup> but the danger and hardships she and the other refugees experienced cannot be disputed. The stories of night flight, hiding in fields and ditches, being hunted by dogs, and riding under cargo in

---

<sup>1</sup> Alden Whitman, *American Reformers*, p. 817

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Bradford cites the number of trips that she made as 19, and credits her with rescuing about 300 individuals. Most sources follow Bradford's numbers, though some claim many more trips and rescues.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

wagons are too numerous to be recounted here, but such accounts fired the imaginations of abolitionists and others engaged in Underground Railroad work. As her fame spread, she received contributions of money to carry on her work from many quarters, and "by 1858, she was well known in progressive circles in England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Liberia and South America."<sup>3</sup> Her activities were known, of course, to those who would have stopped her and at one time a \$40,000 reward was offered for her capture, an immense sum at that time, and a reflection of the threat she represented to slave holders. Her success in bringing others to freedom was an inspiration to antislavery activists, and undoubtedly added to the building tensions between North and South in the 1850's, her chief period of Underground Railroad activity.

A less well known aspect of Harriet's life are the friendships that she formed with powerful and influential abolitionists and politicians during her Underground Railroad days. In 1857 she managed to bring her aged father and mother north, first to Canada and then later to Auburn, NY. That she should choose a permanent home for them in Central New York is not too surprising since this was an area deeply involved with abolitionist and other reform causes. The religious revivals of the 1820's and 30's had caused central New York to be dubbed the "burned-over district" for the zeal and passions exhibited by converts in their new-found faith. In the several decades before the Civil War, the reform spirit in the "burned-over district" extended to abolitionism, women's rights, dress reform, spiritualism, and various types of health cures.<sup>4</sup> Many of the best known and vocal advocates of abolitionism and women's rights lived, wrote and proselytized from their homes in Rochester, Syracuse, Auburn, Seneca Falls, Onieda, and Peterborough.

Harriet was a close friend of Frederick Douglass who published his paper the *North Star* in Rochester, and of the Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Syracuse, and a leading abolitionist. She frequently stayed with these famous figures as she escorted fugitives to Canada.<sup>5</sup> Harriet also counted Susan B. Anthony as a friend and she spoke out on women's rights and temperance issues, as well as abolition. John Brown admired her greatly, an admiration she returned, and she took great interest in his activities. She advised him on his campaigns, inspiring him to dub her "General Tubman." Harriet even planned to accompany Brown on his raid on Harpers Ferry to advise on geography and tactics, although ill health prevented her participation in the end.<sup>6</sup> Prominent abolitionists Gerrit Smith, Wendell Phillips and Douglass testified to her bravery, strength of character, and her contributions to the abolitionist movement, in letters published in a biography underwritten by prominent Auburn businessmen in 1869. She was befriended by the intellectual elite of New England as well, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Bronson Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mrs. Horace Mann.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most frequently mentioned of her connections with the powerful and influential was that of her friendship with William Henry Seward, Governor and Senator from New York, and Lincoln's

---

<sup>3</sup> Walls, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Yellin and Van House, p. 150

<sup>5</sup> Blockson, p. 248-249)

<sup>6</sup> Whitman, p.817, Bradford, p. 96, Wall, p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Telford, *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914. p. 7

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Secretary of State, who lived in Auburn. In 1859 Harriet contracted with Seward for seven acres of land and a house on South Street just over the town line in Fleming. It was to this property she brought her parents after their initial stay in Canada, and where they stayed while she was assisting the Union troops in the South during the war. According to all contemporary accounts, the \$1200 price for the property and the lenient terms of repayment were a generous gesture on Seward's part, and this arrangement certainly may be a significant reason for her choosing Auburn as home for herself and her family. It can also be said with some assurance that the general climate of reform and enthusiasm for abolition in central New York, and the presence and friendship of such figures as Douglass, Loguen and Anthony also influenced her decision.

During the Civil War, Harriet served as nurse, scout and spy for the Union forces. Recruited by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts, she served under Col. Robert Gould Shaw in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry, the first African American regiment in the US Army.<sup>8</sup> Her duties ranged from nurse and cook, to spy and scout. It seems that it was easy for her to pass unnoticed behind enemy lines, and report on positions and numbers.<sup>9</sup> According to a contemporary (1863) newspaper account, "Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 black soldiers, under the guidance of a black woman, dashed into the enemies' country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings, and striking terror to the heart of rebellion, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch. It was a glorious consummation."<sup>10</sup> When the war was over, Seward and a number of the high ranking officers whom Harriet had known and assisted, petitioned Congress to grant her the Army pension extended to other soldiers. (Bradford, 1st ed. p.64) Congress refused, however, and Harriet was only granted a widow's pension in 1890, after the death of her second husband, who was a veteran.<sup>11</sup>

After the war she returned to the home on South Street where her parents had remained. Several of her siblings and their families had settled nearby as well. Here, Harriet began what was to be her life-long work of caring for those African Americans who were too ill or old, or otherwise unable to provide for themselves. In 1869 she married Nelson Davis, a Union soldier whom she had met during her service in the army. Having no regular income of her own, she eked out a living on her seven acres and accepted gifts of clothing, food, and money to support her charitable work. Contemporaries recall that she always had several people living with her, accepting her assistance. As in her days as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, Harriet requested assistance, not for herself, but for her charges, and accepted these gifts as being the natural outcome of the work of God. It seems that more affluent citizens of Auburn and friends in Boston were there to help her when the need arose. Research into the accounts of the Seward family reveal that Harriet continued to borrow from William Henry Seward against her property throughout his lifetime. Since the debts over and above that owed for the property itself were forgiven after his death in 1872, it would seem that Seward was subsidizing Harriet's work through these loans.<sup>12</sup> For the better part of the next half century, Harriet would continue in her charitable work, immediately passing on all that was given to her to those who had greater need.

<sup>8</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, March 12, 1913, p.5

<sup>9</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, March 11, 1913

<sup>10</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser and Union*, 5? August 1863

<sup>11</sup> Walls, p. 440.

<sup>12</sup> Rebekah Green, Unpublished paper, "History of Harriet Tubman's Brick House."

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

In practically all accounts of Harriet Tubman, her remarkable character and personality are mentioned, and one of the defining aspects of that character seems to have been her deep faith and commitment to God. Harriet's own accounts of many of the events of her life (in Sarah Bradford's *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 1869, and *Harriet Tubman: Moses of Her People*, 1886) reveal that she saw herself merely as an instrument of God. She believed that her work, the miraculous escapes, and her remarkable physical endurance, were all due to His will and intervention. When she was in a difficult situation, her solution was prayer, and according to Harriet, an answer always came to resolve the difficulty. Indeed, as her friend Thomas Garrett wrote in a letter: "... in truth I never met with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul. She has frequently told me that she talked with God, and he talked with her every day of her life, and she has declared to me that she felt no more fear of being arrested by her former master . . . for she said she never ventured only where God sent her, and her faith in the Supreme Power truly was great."<sup>13</sup> Above all, Harriet regarded her work, whether repeatedly risking her life to free fellow African Americans, or devoting her energies to caring for others, as the working out of divine will, of which she was just a tool.

In that her every action was imbued with the conscious need to serve her Lord, there is no doubt that the A.M.E. Zion Church had a central importance in the life of Harriet Tubman. If she lived her religion through her day-to-day activities, she rejoiced in it at Sunday worship. There are accounts of her enthusiastic rejoicing, leading the congregation in singing and praising the Lord.<sup>14</sup> She also worked to strengthen the Church in central New York and took an active part in seeing that the new church was built on Parker St. in 1891.<sup>15</sup> Her family, too, were active members of the church and as early as 1863, her brother, J.T. Stewart, is listed as a trustee of the A.M.E. Zion Church., as was later her husband Nelson Davis. It is worth noting that a number of the descendants of Harriet's siblings still reside in Auburn and are active in the church today.

Her authority in the church and in the African American community was considerable, as it was in the larger white population. In orations at her funeral listeners were reminded that "Aunt Harriet's life should be an inspiration to the young men and to the young women of this congregation....In this workaday world filled with activities, what a contrast we find between the average person's life filled with petty vanities, as compared with the unselfish life of our good sister, filled with sympathy and devotion to her people."<sup>16</sup> In all likelihood, the members of the congregation did not need to be reminded of her moral or personal authority, for she had been a living monument in their midst, carrying on the spirit of her Underground Railroad work in her struggle to care for her charges.

---

<sup>13</sup> Bradford, 2nd. ed. pp. 83-84.

<sup>14</sup> "Pays Tribute to Harriet Tubman," *Advertiser-Journal*, Saturday, June 6, 1914 p.4. James E. Mason recalls his first meeting with her at the "old one-aisled frame church on Washington Street" where he noted a "a woman with shoulders somewhat stooped, and head bent forward....At the close of a thrilling selection she arose and commenced to speak ...in a shrill voice she commenced to give testimony to God's goodness and long suffering. Soon she was shouting, and so were others also. She possessed such endurance, vitality and magnetism, that I inquired and was informed it was Harriet Tubman - the Underground Railroad Moses."

<sup>15</sup> Walls, p. 158-59.

<sup>16</sup> "To Aunt Harriet: 100's Pay Tribute at Funeral Services." *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913.  
From address by President of the Common Council.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

That Harriet was a figure of prominence in Auburn is seen in the interest in which the local press took in her life and activities. In 1905 the *Auburn Daily Advertiser* reported that she attended and addressed a suffragist convention in Rochester, noting the detail that she had to spend the night at the railroad station due to the late arrival time of the train. On another occasion, the theft of a small amount of money from her home was reported on in considerable detail for several days. When she was briefly hospitalized in 1907 the *Daily Advertiser* reported on her condition. Clearly, in the eyes of her fellow citizens, Harriet was someone of consequence.

Harriet's greatest desire in these years in Auburn, however, was to establish a charitable institution, a Home that would carry on her work after her death. In 1896 she made a bold move to secure that dream when she purchased at auction the 25 acres adjoining her property to the north. Although she had no funds of her own, she bid upon the 25 acre plot and managed to secure the property through a mortgage. The property included two houses, barns and some outbuildings, though only one, the current landmark Tubman Home for the Aged remains.

For the next seven years Harriet struggled to care for her charges and to find the funds to permanently establish the John Brown Home, as she wished to call it. As her own age advanced, it became harder for her to sustain these efforts, however, and in 1903 she deeded the 25 acres and buildings to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church with the understanding that the church would run the Home. A Board of Trustees and a Board of Lady Managers assumed the debt on the property. For several more years the Church worked to raise enough money to renovate and equip the second house on the property for use as part of the home.<sup>17</sup> In 1908 the second facility was opened to receive inmates amid much fanfare.<sup>18</sup> Harriet continued to live in her home on the adjacent 7 acres until 1911, when her health deteriorated to the point where she herself needed to be cared for at the Home.

On March 10, 1913 Harriet Tubman died at the age of 92 or 93 in the Home for the Aged she had founded. Her death received considerable note in the press, which recounted in detail events of her life, praising her bravery and lifelong sacrifice and selflessness. After a service at the Home, Harriet lay in state at the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street wearing, by one account, the Diamond Jubilee medal sent to her by Queen Victoria.<sup>19</sup> Hundreds of people came to pay their respects, including local dignitaries and Bishops of the A.M.E. Zion Church from as far away as Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup> In the absence of Auburn's mayor, the President of the City Council gave an oration saying, "It is appropriate that the city give official recognition of the passing of this wonderful woman. No one of our fellow citizens of late years has conferred greater distinction upon us than has she. I may say that I have known "Aunt Harriet" during my whole lifetime. The boys of my time always regarded her as a sort of supernatural being; our youthful imaginations were fired by the tales we had heard of her adventures and we stood in great awe of her. We came to believe she was all-wise....Greatness in this life does not come

---

<sup>17</sup> The second house was brick and stood back on the property (east) from South Street. Abandoned, it eventually fell into disrepair and eventually disappeared except for the cellar hole. Recent excavations indicate that it may have been bulldozed when its condition reached the point of being a hazard.

<sup>18</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser* June 24, 1908 p.5

<sup>19</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913, p.6. "Aunt Harriet's Funeral." Oral tradition has it that this much-prized possession had disappeared before her death, however.

<sup>20</sup> *Auburn Citizen*, March 12, 1913 p.5

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

to people through accident or by the caprice of fate or fortune; it is the reward of great zeal accompanied by great faith in the object sought and the persistent fighting against great obstacles and difficulties for its accomplishment."<sup>21</sup> Her burial took place later that day at the adjacent Fort Hill Cemetery with military honors.

The degree of esteem in which Harriet Tubman was held by her fellow citizens was further marked a year later, when a large bronze tablet honoring her and her achievements was placed on the County Courthouse by the citizens of Auburn. A lavish ceremony and celebration was planned long in advance and covered in detail by the press. The Mayor of the city directed that flags be flown on every municipal building on the day of the ceremony and requested that Auburn residents display Old Glory at their homes, "in recognition of "her loyal and patriotic service to our country and flag."<sup>22</sup> Booker T. Washington traveled to Auburn to address the throng gathered at the City Auditorium for the unveiling of the tablet. Testimonials to Harriet's life and work were given by noted African American educators and clergy. Souvenir programs were sold, the Auburn Festival Chorus sang and Olmstead's Orchestra played hymns and anthems<sup>23</sup> According to one newspaper account, "The fame of Aunt Harriet combined with that of Dr. Washington will undoubtedly fill the huge theater to capacity. The demand for tickets has been very heavy and Secretary Adams of the Business Men's Association declares the services will be a big event in the history of the City."<sup>24</sup>

The three sites included in this nomination, and discussed in detail below, are all closely associated with Harriet Tubman's life and activities in Auburn. Other than these properties there are hardly any artifacts relating to her that still exist; only a few personal possessions, and, since she couldn't read or write, no written materials from her hand. The three buildings, her residence, the Tubman Home for the Aged, and the church where she worshipped, (and one commemorative site, her grave,) are all that remain to mark her presence in the city which spanned more than fifty years.

**Tubman Home for the Aged** (180 South Street)

The Tubman Home for the Aged is an institutional property that has already been designated a National Historic Landmark, as it represents an important aspect of Harriet Tubman's charitable work and activities in Auburn. It maintains integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, design, and association.

To establish a home for aged and indigent African Americans was a goal for Harriet Tubman throughout her years in Auburn (ca 1859 - 1913). It was a partially realized goal for most of that period, in that there were always sheltered in her own home some poor "wrecks of humanity, entirely dependent upon Harriet for their support."<sup>25</sup> She depended upon the generosity of her many friends to help her provide for those in her care doing, as she herself said, "...what the Lord meant me to do."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913.

<sup>22</sup> "National Flag to be Displayed," *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914 p. 4

<sup>23</sup> *Advertiser-Journal* June 9, 1914 p.4

<sup>24</sup> *Advertiser-Journal*, June 8, 1914, p.5

<sup>25</sup> *Advertiser-Journal*, Thursday, June 11, 1911, p.7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

It seems that there were always more people to be cared for than she could accommodate, however. In 1896 she seized an opportunity to expand this work beyond her own home when she purchased the parcel of land with two houses, barns and outbuildings, immediately to the north of her own 7 acre tract on South Street. Of the two houses on the property, it is the frame building that was initially used for Harriet's home for the aged.<sup>27</sup> Although she had expanded the space in which she could care for people, she did not have an increased income to provide for necessities. She continued to rely on donations from her friends in the community and elsewhere, and to what could be raised on her lands.

The struggle to keep food on the table and clothes on the backs of the inmates continued until Harriet was in her 80s. Finally, in 1903, Harriet deeded the 25 acre parcel and the two houses to the A.M.E. Zion Church, and responsibility for the continuation of the Home was turned over to them, although she remained active in her work with the inmates. In May 1911, her own health failing, Harriet was admitted to the Home that she had founded, and remained there until her death on March 10, 1913.<sup>28</sup>

The Tubman Home for the Aged was run by the church for a number of years after Harriet's death, remaining open until the last remaining inmate died. After this, the properties fell into disuse and by the late 1930's both the frame and brick houses were derelict.<sup>29</sup> By the late 1940s only the frame house remained, and in 1944, Bishop William J. Walls spearheaded an effort to have the A.M.E. Zion Church restore the frame house.<sup>30</sup> This was eventually done and on April 30, 1953 the Tubman Home was dedicated as an historic site and memorial to Harriet Tubman's life and work, a recognition that came some 40 years after it was initially suggested. In 1914, on the occasion of the dedication of the plaque honoring Harriet at the Cayuga County Court House, James Edward Mason had said, "The Tubman Home should be a mecca for Afro-Americans in particular and patriots generally, that the rising youth may be impressed with the important lesson how noble it is to live for others and the elevation of their native land."<sup>31</sup>

These sentiments received official sanction in 1974 when the Home for the Aged received National Historic Landmark designation, and it has attracted tourists, scholars, and those who wish to pay tribute to Harriet Tubman, ever since. It is also the site of an annual Pilgrimage for members of the A.M.E. Zion Church, when members gather at the Tubman Home to celebrate her life and work. Harriet's own residence had always been used to care for others, first in the frame house that she purchased from Seward, then in the larger brick house that she built with the aid of her friends, to enable her to care for more inmates. The existing Home for the Aged represents the culmination of her charitable work in this area, and is the remaining physical evidence of her efforts to see that it would continue after she was gone.

---

<sup>27</sup> The Tubman Home is listed in city directories from 1897 to 1903 as being next to her own residence on South Street. Since the brick house (not extant) at the rear of the property was not fixed up for use by the inmates until 1908, it seems clear that the initial expansion of the Home was to the frame house.

<sup>28</sup> *Souvenir - Harriet Tubman Memorial*. Undated pamphlet, possibly on occasion of dedication of plaque in her honor, 1914.

<sup>29</sup> *Syracuse Post-Standard*, March 16, 1939.

<sup>30</sup> Walls, P. 444.

<sup>31</sup> *Advertiser-Journal*, June 6, 1914 p.4.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH****Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**Harriet Tubman Residence** (182 South Street)

The Harriet Tubman Residence served as the primary residence for Harriet Tubman and certain members of her family from 1859 - 1913. It retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, design, and association.

When Harriet Tubman acted as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, her journeys with fugitive slaves often brought her to central New York, where the thriving abolitionist culture made finding stopping places easier than elsewhere. Auburn was one of the cities whose citizens provided shelter and hiding for the "passengers" and their "conductor." Harriet Tubman was well known to abolitionists, of both races, and undoubtedly it was in these circles that Harriet encountered Auburn's first citizen, Senator William Henry Seward.

In 1857, Harriet made the dangerous journey to Maryland to bring her aged parents to freedom, taking them to St. Catherines, Ontario for the winter of 1857-58.<sup>32</sup> According to later accounts, her mother was unhappy there, and so Harriet went to Auburn to secure a better place for them. There she negotiated with Seward to purchase a house and seven acres of land in Fleming, just outside the city limits of Auburn.<sup>33</sup> In order to raise money to pay Seward, Harriet went to Boston, probably in the Spring of 1859, with letters of introduction to those who might help her.

According to Sarah Bradford, in her biography *Harriet Tubman: Moses of Her People*, in Boston "Pains were taken to secure her the attention to which her great services of humanity entitled her, and she left New England with a handsome sum of money toward the payment of her debt to Mr. Seward."<sup>34</sup> If Harriet had indeed raised money in New England for the purchase of the house and land, little of it made it into Seward's coffers at that point. Seward's financial reports show that several friends in Boston made payments, but at a later time. At any rate, the initial contract between Seward and Harriet Tubman was recorded on May 25, 1859 for the house and seven acres, and the property would remain in Harriet's hands until her death in 1913.<sup>35</sup>

After serving with the Union Army in the Civil War, Harriet returned to the property in Fleming and there began her work of caring for aged and indigent African Americans. Harriet's mother, Harriet Green died in 1870. One year earlier, Harriet had married Nelson Davis, a man a number of years her junior whom she had known in the army. He was also in poor health, apparently suffering from tuberculosis.<sup>36</sup> Harriet cared for him along with the others who drifted to her home on South Street, knowing that she wouldn't turn them away.

---

<sup>32</sup> Bradford, 2nd ed., p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 116

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 117

<sup>35</sup> Green, Unpublished paper, p.1

<sup>36</sup> Whitman, *American Reformers*, 1985. p.817.



**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH****Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Harriet also continued to borrow from Seward against her land, only repaying him irregularly, undoubtedly because her charitable work took most of what she had.<sup>37</sup> Sarah Bradford states that by the late 1860's the property was being threatened with foreclosure, and that she undertook the writing of her first biography of Harriet, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, in 1869 in order to raise money to forestall that event.<sup>38</sup> Although several sources maintain that about \$1200 was raised from the sale of the book and given to Harriet, it was not until 1873, after Seward's death, that payment was made on the property and the title transferred to her from Seward's estate. Also, no evidence in the historical record has been found to date to support the idea that William Henry Seward or his heirs were about to foreclose on Harriet and her family. Indeed the additional debts that she had built up with Seward over the years were forgiven by the estate, a further indication that those who could afford to supported her work indirectly.<sup>39</sup>

Evidence seems to point to the fact that the house which Harriet initially purchased along with the seven acres was not the brick house that now stands there.<sup>40</sup> The extant brick house, was most likely built in the mid to late 1880's to satisfy her desire to accommodate more aged and infirm individuals. In 1886 Sarah Bradford came to her assistance and helped Harriet establish a home for the indigent. As she explains in her second book, *Harriet Tubman Moses of Her People*, a slightly revised version of the first; "I have been urged by many friends as well as by Harriet herself, to prepare another edition. For another necessity has arisen and she needs help again not for herself, but for certain helpless ones of her people."<sup>41</sup> "... our sable friend, who never has been known to beg for herself, asks once more for help in accomplishing a favorite project for the good of her people. This, as she says, is 'her last work, and she only prays de Lord to let her live till it is well started, and den she is ready to go.' This work is the building of a hospital for old and disabled colored people."<sup>42</sup> It seems likely that the proceeds from the sale of this second book would have been used to build the more substantial brick house, the "hospital" that Bradford refers to. Since the possibility of raising enough money to do this herself is remote, the evidence suggests that construction of the brick house was the next step in establishing a more permanent Home for Aged and Indigent Negroes that Harriet dreamed of.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the brick house is where Harriet herself lived, where she cared for family and strangers, and carried on her life work. As such it is the site most intimately connected with her. This house and the seven acres purchased from Seward were left to family members upon her death, being the only property of any

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.2

<sup>38</sup> Bradford, 2nd. ed. p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Green, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> Censuses of 1865 and 1870 report a frame house worth \$500 - \$600, housing various members of her family. Later censuses do not include information on the construction of buildings or their value.

<sup>41</sup> Bradford, 2nd ed. p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Bradford, 2nd ed. p. 78.

<sup>43</sup> The home is referred to in several ways. Harriet herself wanted to name it the John Brown Home to commemorate the man she most fervently admired. There are several variations on the name; some accounts have it as the Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Colored People, The Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Negroes, and more simply the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Indigent.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

value that she owned outright at the time. Given her habit of giving away whatever she had to help those in need, it is likely that she regarded the property less as a personal possession than as an instrument through which she could accomplish her goals.

She lived in the brick house until the Spring of 1911, when her own infirmities made it necessary for her to move into the Home for the Aged, by that time run by the A.M.E. Zion Church on the adjoining property on South Street. In 1914, after her death, Harriet's heirs sold the house to cover other debts on the estate and over the next 50 years, its status as her actual residence was lost. For many years the frame house next door, which was actually part of a later acquisition, was considered to be her home. It was not until 1990 that the identity of the brick house as her own home was re-established, serving as an impetus for the A.M.E. Zion Church to purchase it and unite it with the other properties relating to Harriet Tubman in their care.

**Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church** (33 Parker Street)

The Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street reflects significant and symbolic aspects of Harriet Tubman's spiritual, social and cultural life as her regular place of worship. The chapel retains integrity of design, location, setting, feeling and association.

The A.M.E. Zion Church, of which Harriet Tubman was a member during her years in Auburn, has been one of the unifying and sustaining institutions for the African American community in that city from its founding in 1838 to the present. As the home of the congregation of the A.M.E. Zion Church from 1891 to 1993, the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is historically significant in and of itself. It also serves, however, as a juncture between Harriet Tubman's life, activities and commemoration and the larger context of the African American community in Auburn, and therefore is included in this nomination of Harriet Tubman-related sites.

There had been African Americans in Auburn from its founding in 1793, as Captain John Hardenburgh brought with him two slaves, Harry and Kate Freeman, when he came to settle on his portion of the Military Tract assigned to veterans of the Revolution.<sup>44</sup> New York law provided for the gradual freeing of slaves in the state after 1800, with certain conditions of age applying, and by the 1830s almost all were free. That Auburn had an established African American population is borne out by the fact that maps of the time (1836) show an area along the banks of the Owasco river named New Guinea, which is labeled as a "Negro settlement." According to the oral tradition, this is land that Captain Hardenburgh gave to his slave Harry Freeman when he freed him, and this became the nucleus of the African American community in Auburn.<sup>45</sup>

During the 1830s and 40s opposition to slavery gradually grew in the North as prominent white abolitionists solidified their arguments against the "peculiar institution." In so doing, they joined the African American community which had, naturally, long advocated the abolition of slavery. In particular, the African American churches were a wellspring of opposition and the A.M.E. Zion Church in New York took a very active role in these efforts. It "became to the Afro-American race what Faneuil Hall was to the Anglo-American: their Cradle of Liberty. When the doors of all the other churches and

<sup>44</sup> Hall, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Pauline Johnson, June 17, 1998.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

the public halls and theaters were closed to Abolitionist orators and friends of emancipation, the doors of Zion Church were always opened to them. It naturally become the forum of the proudest triumphs of Afro-American orators."<sup>46</sup>

In central New York the A.M.E. Zion Church actively assisted in the anti-slavery activities. Frederick Douglass, who came to Rochester in 1847 to publish *The North Star*, frequently spoke from the pulpit of the city's Zion Church. It was also in the context of the church that he and other members and abolitionists, such as Jermain W. Loguen, Sojourner Truth, William Howard Day and Harriet Tubman, came together.<sup>47</sup> The Reverend Jermain W. Loguen made the Syracuse A.M.E. Zion Church a haven for fugitives on the Underground Railroad, openly publishing the fact that he would receive any who called upon him in this capacity.<sup>48</sup> The central position of the church in abolitionist activities in central New York is well established, and undoubtedly had considerable influence upon where Harriet Tubman eventually decided to settle and bring her family members.

By the time Harriet acquired land in Auburn from Seward in 1859 and moved her family there, the A.M.E. Zion Church was well established in the community. On July 17, 1838 members of the African American community had incorporated their church as the Auburn African Methodist-Episcopal Church.<sup>49</sup> Their first home was in an old school house on Washington Street which had originally been erected in 1846 as a separate school for African American children. When they were admitted to the regular school system in 1851, the Washington Street school was abandoned, and eventually taken over by the Zion church for a house of worship.<sup>50</sup> There is evidence that the church was struggling financially because in 1853 an announcement in the *Auburn Daily Advertiser* calls on the citizens of Auburn to subscribe to a fund to pay a debt incurred to fix up the church building. This effort resulted in the city's purchase of the building and then turning it over to the A.M.E. Zion Church for its use.<sup>51</sup> The congregation continued to meet on Washington Street for the next four decades, and it is from here that they moved into the church on Parker Street when it was built in 1891.<sup>52</sup>

The church on Parker Street, named the Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church after Bishop Joseph P. Thompson (and later Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church), was built in 1891 with funds raised through subscription and donations. At the ceremony to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone on August 9, 1891, there was considerable interest in the undertaking exhibited by all the citizens of

---

<sup>46</sup> Fortune, *The New York Age*, October 1, 1896, as quoted in Walls, p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Walls, p. 151.

<sup>48</sup> Walls, p. 163.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Cayuga County Historical and Genealogical Referral Center, Auburn to Mrs. Reginald Carter, June 18, 1971.

<sup>50</sup> Hall, 256.

<sup>51</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, "To the Citizens of Auburn and Vicinity" January 8, 1853.

<sup>52</sup> There are conflicting accounts of where the church met during the latter part of the 19th century. Oral tradition has it that the congregation met in the homes of church members, but investigation of city directories gives its location as Washington St, between Orchard and Genesee from the 1860s until construction of the Parker St. church. A map of the city of Auburn of 1871 also shows the Zion M.E. Church on the West side of Washington, about midway between Genesee and Orchard.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH****Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Auburn.<sup>53</sup> The speakers attached considerable importance that the A.M.E. Zion Church now had its own facility that was built expressly for their use and purposes and owned outright.<sup>54</sup> Bishop Thompson spoke, recalling his arrival in Auburn in 1841 and the early struggles to establish the Church in the village, how they had lost earlier places of worship “through the ignorance and want of education of the people and their pastors. And now a few good men have volunteered to give you a place of worship free from debt.... I thank God that I am privileged to see the laying of the second cornerstone for a place of worship for my poor persecuted people of Auburn.”<sup>55</sup> The cornerstone was filled with various documents pertaining to the A.M.E. Zion Church as well as a memorial medal of John Brown.

Harriet Tubman’s funeral was held in the Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street on March 13, 1913. In the morning a private service was held at the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged on South Street and then her body was transported to the Parker Street church for viewing until the 3:00 o’clock public ceremony. According to contemporary accounts, hundreds passed the flag draped casket<sup>56</sup> and because of the small size of the church, many were excluded from the funeral service itself. After the service, the casket was taken to the grave site in nearby Fort Hill Cemetery and Harriet Tubman was laid to rest with military honors.

The Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church continued to be used by its congregation until 1993 when a larger facility with much needed meeting rooms was acquired. It serves as a reminder of the importance of the Church in the African American community in Auburn and of the central role that the church and religion played in the life of Harriet Tubman, its historically important member.

---

<sup>53</sup> *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, August 10, 1891.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> “Aunt Harriet’s Funeral” *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913. p. 6.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 21**  
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**Monographs

Blockson, Charles L. *The Underground Railroad*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987.

Bradford, Sarah. *Harriet: Moses of Her People*. New York: George R. Lockwood & Son, 1886.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Auburn, NY: W.J. Moses, 1869

Buckmaster, Henrietta. *Let My People Go: The Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941.

Conrad, Earl. *Harriet Tubman*. Washington: Associated Publishers, Inc. 1943.

Gara, Larry. *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996.

Hall, Henry. *History of Auburn*. Auburn, NY: Dennis Bros. & Co., 1869

History of Cayuga County. 1908 ?

Monroe, Joel H. *Historical Records of a Hundred and Twenty Years. Auburn, New York*. Geneva, NY: W.F. Humphrey, 1913

Seward, Frederick W. *Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State: A Memoir of His Life, with Selections from His Letters 1846 - 1861*. New York: Derby and Miller, 1891.

Siebert, Wilbur. *The Underground Railroad*. (The American Negro: His History and Literature) New York: Arno Press, 1968.

Sorin, Gerald. *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism*. Series: Contributions in American History, No. 2. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corp., 1971.

“Souvenir - Harriet Tubman Memorial.” Undated pamphlet. (Probably from occasion of dedication of plaque in her honor, 1914.)

Still, William. *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c*. Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872. Reprint. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968.

Sterling, Philip and Rayford, Logan. *Four Took Freedom: The Lives of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Robert Smalls, and Blanche K Bruce*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1967.

Storke, Elliott. *History of Cayuga County 1789- 1879*. Syracuse, NY: D. Mason, 1879.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH****Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Walls, William J. *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church*. Charlotte, NC: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House. 1974.

Whitman, Alden. *American Reformers*. New York, H.W. Wilson Co., 1985.

Yellin, Jean Fagan and John C. Van House, eds. *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Ante-bellum America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.

### Articles, Papers, and Interviews

Cocola, Tom. "AME Zion True City Landmark." *Auburn Citizen*, January 28, 1982.

"At Church of Zion: Body of Harriet Tubman Will Lie in State." *Auburn Citizen*, March 12, 1913.

"Aunt Harriet's Funeral." *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1913, p.6.

"Aunt Harriet Was Very Old." *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, March 12, 1913.

Committee Plans Tubman Program." *Advertiser-Journal*, June 8, 1914, p.4.

Clyne, Patricia Edwards. "Triumph in Troy: A Mysterious Woman Leads the Daring Rescue of a Recaptured Fugitive Slave." *Hudson Valley*, February 1998, p. 17.

"Describes Tablet to be Unveiled in Memory of Harriet Tubman." *Advertiser-Journal*, May 25, 1914, p.5.

d'Ornizo, Judith. Interview with author. June 18, 1998, Auburn, NY.

"For Tubman Memorial" Complete Programme of Friday Night's Exercises at Auditorium." *Auburn Citizen*, June 9, 1914.

"Gives History of Tubman Home." *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914, p.4.

Green, Rebekah. "History of Harriet Tubman's Brick House." Ithaca, NY: Unpublished paper, 1998.

"Harriet Tubman." *Auburn Daily Advertiser & Union*, ?5 August, 1863.

"Harriet Tubman is Dead." *Auburn Citizen*, March 11, 1913.

"Home of Civil War Heroine in Auburn Decaying Fast." *Syracuse Post-Standard*, March 16, 1939.

"Home of Harriet Tubman to be Cayuga County Shrine." *The Citizen Advertiser*, December 17, 1952.

Johnson, Pauline. Interview with author, June 17, 1998, Auburn, NY.

"Most Remarkable Woman of This Age." *Boston Commonwealth*, July 17, 1863; *Freeman's Record*, March 1865. Also quoted in Blockson, *The Underground Railroad*.

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH**

**Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Mallory, Maria. "Bound for the Promised Land." *U.S. News & World Report*, September 30, 1997, p. 88.

"National Flag to Be Displayed." *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914. p.4.

"Pays Tribute to Harriet Tubman: James E. Mason Tells of Noble qualities of Woman in Whose Honor Tablet is to be Unveiled." *Advertiser-Journal*, June 6, 1914, p.4.

"Scouts to Attend Tubman Exercises." *Advertiser-Journal*, June 11, 1914, p.5.

"Thompson A.M.E. Church: Cornerstone Laid With Appropriate Ceremonies." *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, August 10, 1891.

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. (Home for the Aged only)

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository):

Office of Planning and Economic Development, City of Auburn, NY

Harriet Tubman Memorial Library, Auburn, NY

Cayuga County Historian

Cayuga County Clerk's Office

Local History Room of the Seymour Library, Auburn

Tubman Memorial Library of the Tubman Home, Auburn, NY

Cornell University Archives, Ithaca, NY

National Park Service (Tubman Home for the Aged National Landmark Nomination)

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E. ZION CHURCH**

Acreage of Property: 25.5 acres  
 ( Home for the Aged and Tubman Residence 24.8 acres, Church - less than one acre)

UTM References: Home for the Aged and Tubman Residence

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	372865	4751944	B	18	372770	4751898
C	18	372261	4751888	D	18	372260	4752042
E	18	372864	4752055				

Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	371362	4753279

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Tubman Home for the Aged : Parcel 123.38-1-2.0 City of Auburn, NY

Harriet Tubman Residence: Parcel 123.03-1-43 Town of Fleming

Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church: Parcel: 115.75-1-81 City of Auburn

**Boundary Justification:**

Home for the Aged: (180 South Street)

The Tubman Home for the Aged stands on a 19.6 acres parcel at 180 South Street. The Home, the modern Harriet Tubman Memorial Library (non-contributing), the Harriet Tubman Multipurpose Building (non-contributing), and a non-contributing modern garage are all situated on the parcel of land that Harriet Tubman bought at auction in 1896 and deeded to the current owners, the A.M.E. Zion Church, in 1903. In addition, the archaeological remains of the cellar of a brick house, originally part of the Home run by the church, are on the property. There is no indication that additional resources originally associated with the Home are excluded from the boundaries of the current property.

Harriet Tubman Residence (182 South Street)

The parcel of property at 182 South Street where Harriet Tubman’s residence stands is land which she contracted to purchase from Henry Seward in 1859, and where she lived for the rest of her life (with the exception of the time when she was serving the Union Army in the Civil War and when she moved to the Home for the Aged next door). The present 5.2 acre parcel comprises the bulk of the original property purchased from Seward, and includes the brick residence which she built ca. 1886, as well as the non-contributing outbuilding associated with it. There is no indication that there are additional



**TUBMAN HOME FOR THE AGED, HARRIET TUBMAN RESIDENCE AND THOMPSON A.M.E.  
ZION CHURCH****Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

resources originally associated with Harriet Tubman's residence which are excluded from the boundaries of the current property.

Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church (33 Parker Street)

The boundaries of the nominated site correspond to the parcel of land on Parker Street associated with the Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church since its construction in 1891.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Susanne R. Warren

Address: 101 Monument Avenue  
Bennington, VT 05201

Telephone: 802.447.0973

Date: February 18, 2000

Edited by: Patty Henry  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Survey  
1849 C St., N.W.  
Room NC-400  
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202)343-8163

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY