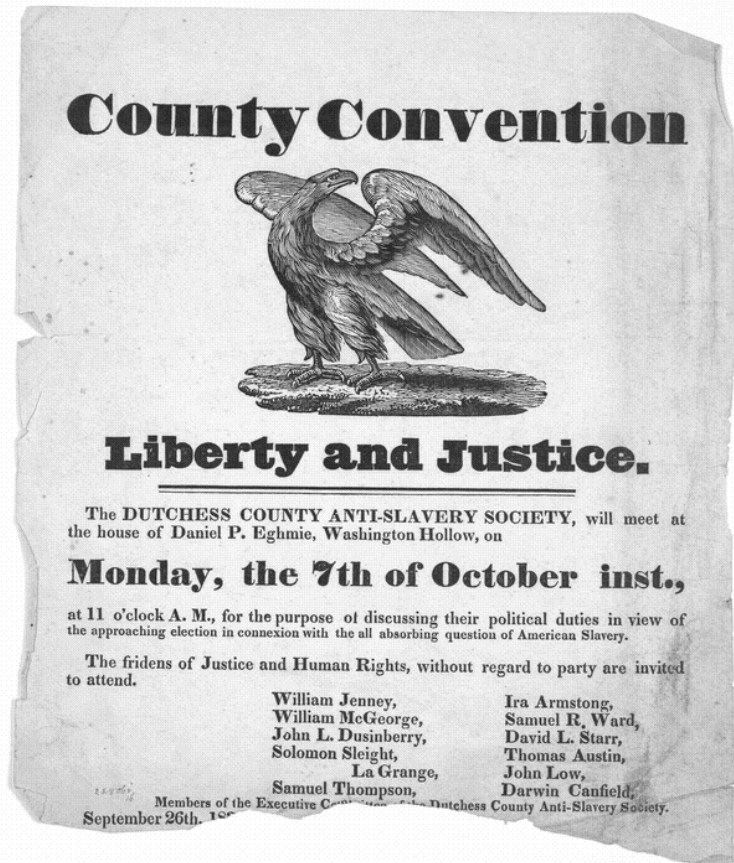


The Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project



P.O. Box 3647
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Founding Directors (pending first annual meeting and selection of full Board): Rebecca Edwards, Jim Mandracchia, and Lorraine Roberts

Image above, broadside for Dutchess County Antislavery Society, circa 1839, courtesy Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection

The people of Dutchess and Ulster Counties played a unique role in the struggle to end slavery. The Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project works to call attention to this neglected aspect of our past. Created in 2006, MHAHP brings together researchers, educators, civic leaders, and interested community members. Our goals are:

- ★ to conduct and synthesize research on the history of antislavery in the Mid-Hudson Valley, with special emphasis on the Underground Railroad;
- ★ to interpret this history and to share these interpretations with a wide array of residents and visitors in our area, with particular attention to students and youth;
- ★ to place local histories of slavery and antislavery in the Mid-Hudson Valley in the broader contexts of racial slavery in the New World; the African-American experience after Emancipation; and antislavery legacies today, including the impact of this historic grassroots movement on subsequent struggles for racial and social justice.

The Significance of Antislavery

The antislavery movement was the first great social justice movement in the United States. It provided an early model of interracial cooperation and gave birth to the modern movements for women's rights, civil rights, and the dignity of labor. It has rightly been called "one of the great reservoirs of civil morality in American political culture."

The history of this movement in the Mid-Hudson Valley includes stories of resistance, faith, courage, compassion, and solidarity. It encompasses the lives of such famous leaders as Sojourner Truth, Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward, the Tappan family, and Angelina Grimké, and many lesser-known individuals who risked their lives and raised their voices for the cause of human freedom.

The Significance of the Mid-Hudson Valley

In a unique way, our area combines central themes in the history of slavery and antislavery in ways unlike any other in the United States:

- ★ As part of New York's agricultural heartland, the Mid-Hudson Valley

was one of the most significant sites of slavery outside the South. In 1790, at the slave system's peak, New York counted over 21,000 enslaved people in its population. Almost 10 percent of these lived in Dutchess County alone.

- ★ The presence of many free Blacks created vibrant communities that became early sites of resistance and protest.
- ★ Eastern Dutchess, containing America's largest Quaker settlement outside Philadelphia, played a lead role in ending slavery among Friends and operated an Underground Railroad to help freedom-seekers reach safe havens further north.
- ★ In the 1830s, the creation of the Poughkeepsie Anti-Slavery Society and Dutchess County Anti-Slavery Society brought together new coalitions. Communities of faith, especially the new Catharine Street AME Zion and the First Congregational Church in Poughkeepsie, took a strong antislavery stance; famous lecturers like Frederick Douglass and Abby Kelley Foster visited Dutchess repeatedly to speak and organize, and Dutchess County representatives attended many state and national abolitionist conventions.
- ★ Though still controversial, the antislavery cause endured and grew. By 1860, some of the area's outspoken abolitionists won local offices in the year Abraham Lincoln captured the presidency.

The antislavery movement left rich legacies in the post-Civil War era and beyond. Its influence and inspiration can still guide us now in the quest for social and racial justice.

MHAHP seeks to bring alive this complex and vital aspect of our past through lectures, exhibits, interpretation at key historic sites, walking and driving tours, art, music, and living-history recreations.

MHAHP welcomes volunteers and supporters of all backgrounds and interests. Please join us in celebrating the history of freedom in our communities, and its meaning for us today.

Freedom Schooner *Amistad*

MHAHP's first public initiative is to bring the *Amistad* to Poughkeepsie. The *Amistad* is a reconstruction of the vessel that became the centerpiece of a dramatic episode in antislavery history. In 1839 a group of West Africans was abducted from their homeland and brought to Cuba, in violation of Spain's ban on international slave trading. They were sold in the Havana slave market and placed on *Amistad* for transfer to sugar plantations. The captives revolted, seized the ship, and sailed northward on a zigzag course, seeking to steer toward Africa, until they were taken into U.S. custody off the coast of Long Island. Fifty-three *Amistad* captives eventually won their freedom, in a court case that riveted the nation and built support for the fledgling antislavery cause.

The present-day *Amistad* was launched in 2000. With a home port in New Haven, Connecticut, it is operated by Amistad America, Inc., a non-profit organization that promotes improved relationships between races and cultures by educating the public, based on the lessons of freedom, justice, perseverance, cooperation, and leadership arising from the *Amistad* Incident. More information on *Amistad's* history and programs can be found online at www.amistadamerica.org.

Amistad will visit Poughkeepsie **Oct. 12-14** (alongside Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater*) and again **Oct. 19 -20**. The *Amistad* will also dock in Haverstraw in early October and in Kingston Oct. 14-19. Public tour times and a schedule of events and programs will be posted in September at the website of the Hudson River Valley Institute (www.hudsonrivervalley.net).

Please help us launch the Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project and bring the Amistad to Poughkeepsie.

See below for information on how you can help!

To support MHAHP and help bring the Amistad to Poughkeepsie

MHAHP is a donor-advised fund of the Community Foundation of Dutchess County. We need your support! You can make an online tax-deductible donation at:

www.communityfoundationdc.org/page30001.cfm

. . . or send a check made out to the Community Foundation of Dutchess County, clearly marked for "MHAHP Fund," to: **80 Washington Street, Suite 201, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.**

Unless anonymity is requested all donors will be acknowledged with gratitude in dockside displays. All donors and volunteers will be invited to a farewell *Amistad* reception on Friday, Oct. 20. Sponsors (those able to give \$500) will receive information about a thank-you "sunset sail" during the *Amistad's* visit.

If you cannot donate at this time but would like to receive information about MHAHP's programs, please mail this form to **MHAHP, PO Box 3647, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603:**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Check here to receive MHAHP news via e-mail, not paper

To volunteer or learn more about the *Amistad's* visit, you can also email amistadpok@gmail.com.

Amistad in Poughkeepsie

The *Amistad* will arrive in Poughkeepsie early on the morning of Thursday, Oct. 12, sailing up from Haverstraw. We will greet the schooner with a welcome ceremony, after which it will be docked in Poughkeepsie until midday on Saturday, Oct. 14. The *Amistad* will visit Kingston Oct. 14-19 and return to Poughkeepsie on Oct. 19-20 before sailing for home. Music and historical exhibits will be presented dockside in Waryas Park during *Amistad's* visit, and public tours of the vessel will be available during much of its stay. Mid-afternoon tour times will be largely reserved for after-school students from the City of Poughkeepsie, who will be studying *Amistad* history in preparation for the visit. Additional group tours will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis starting in September.

A number of special events are planned in conjunction with *Amistad's* visit. On the evening of Oct. 12, Dutchess Interfaith Council will sponsor an Interfaith Story Circle, to be held at First Congregational Church/United Church of Christ, 269 Mill Street, Poughkeepsie. On Saturday morning, Oct. 14, *Amistad* and the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater* will sponsor a joint celebration. On Friday, Oct. 20, the First Congregational Church/United Church of Christ will host a Farewell Celebration Concert, marking the role of the UCC in reconstructing the *Amistad* and funding its mission. Sacred music will be presented by the Zion Chorale of Albany and participants from Poughkeepsie congregations.

How You Can Help

Lectures and other events to celebrate the Hudson Valley Tour are now in the planning stages. In addition to financial support (at left), there are many other ways to help! **Local organizations** wishing to sponsor a related event, or **volunteers** interested in helping with any aspect of the *Amistad's* visit, ranging from dockside events to public outreach, should email amistadpok@gmail.com.