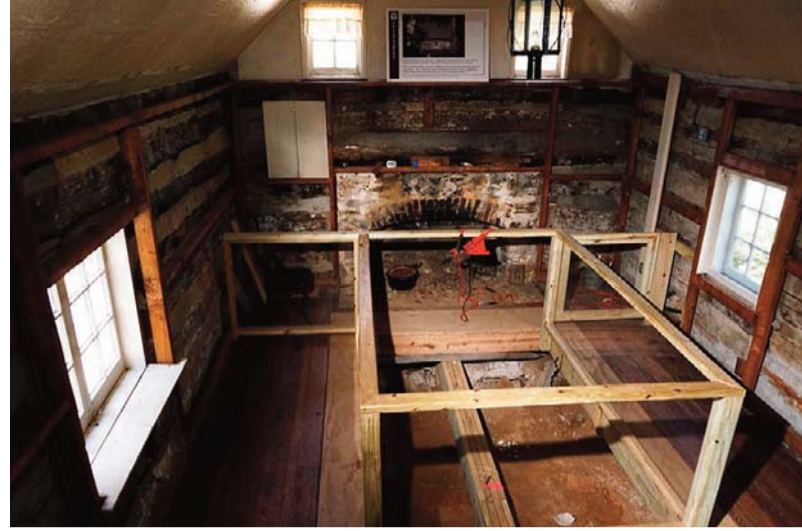


FEATURES



Photo shows the log cabin structure which was originally used as a kitchen, next to the plantation house at Josiah Henson Park in Bethesda, Maryland.



The interior of a log cabin structure which was originally used as a kitchen, next to the plantation house at Josiah Henson Park in Bethesda, Maryland.



The interior of the plantation house at Josiah Henson Park with a portrait of Henson above the mantel in Bethesda.— AFP photos

Late homage for US slave from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'

His life may have inspired the landmark novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin" but 150 years after the abolition of slavery in the US, Josiah Henson remains a controversial figure, and efforts to turn his onetime home outside Washington into a museum are slow at best. In Rockville, now a swank suburb of the US capital, all that remains of the tobacco and wheat plantation where Henson once worked is a wooden house painted white with a small, single-room attachment. The cabin is not specifically where Henson lived-its construction came long after he left-but it resembles the hut he described in his 1849 autobiography, "The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave."

Archeologists working with authorities in Maryland's Montgomery County—who bought the plantation house in 2006 and plan to develop the site in the next years to allow regular guest visits-discovered traces of a kitchen below. Henson may have slept there for time during his 30 years on Isaac Riley's plantation, where he joined his mother at age five in 1795, and experts hope they can use the traces to reconstruct his actual dwelling. Author Harriet Beecher Stowe used Henson's autobiography as the basis for "Uncle Tom's Cabin," her 1852 novel

that was one of the best-selling books of the 19th century which fueled tensions between the industrial northern states and the slave-owning south.

Tensions erupted in the 1861-1865 Civil War, which ended with the formal abolition of slavery across the country. Shirl Spicer, museum manager for Montgomery County parks, plans to showcase editions of both Henson's book and "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the site. But she says the museum will not be ready for at least five years, due to a lack of funding.

'Shame'

Honoring Henson is still a sensitive topic, especially among African Americans, some of whom think that he "betrayed his race to obey his white master," Spicer explains. For many, the term "Uncle Tom" is synonymous with terms like "obsequious," "sell-out" and "collaborator." Spicer said that even Henson's descendants, who came to the park a few years ago, said they had "always been ashamed of him." In 1825, Riley had Henson take some of his slaves to his brother's farm in Kentucky to keep them away from creditors. Henson obeyed, even though he could have escaped during the long journey on foot. Henson returned with his meager savings and tried-but failed-

to buy his own freedom from Riley. "He felt the only honest way to achieve freedom was to buy it," said historian Jamie Kuhns.

Hero?

Montgomery County officials hope to rehabilitate Henson. "We have to introduce the real man to everyone, the hero behind the fictional character," Spicer said. In 1830, Henson fled to Canada along with other slaves via a network of clandestine back roads known as the "underground railroad." Once in Canada, he established a fugitive slave community, and worked as a Methodist minister.

Henson's departure explains why he is being honored so late in his native country. "He left the US and escaped and stayed in Canada, where he is a national hero," said Kuhns. Archeologist Cassandra Michaud says she has found no trace of shackles, chains or collars in the former plantation-no doubt because Henson, a rare enslaved African-American who supervised some 20 other slaves-was "taking care of them in a way."

Kuhns said that the situation has to be viewed in the proper context. "If you live in a system based on subservience, it's a hard thing to break," she said.



Henson, for example, was allowed to go to services at the local Methodist church, where sermons "which preached obedience" were often delivered by white pastors.— AFP

A portrait of Josiah Henson in a book he authored, at Josiah Henson Park in Bethesda.— AFP



This undated family photo provided by Bernice McNeil shows a woman named Ethel Cooke with Robert Remington, right, of Hamden, Conn. Remington was killed in France in May of 1918 during World War I.— AP photos



Preparing artifacts of the 'Great War' for the digital age

Rick Maynard found the manila envelope containing letters from the battlefields of World War I while he and his sister were cleaning out the basement after their father's death. The more than three dozen letters were written, some in pencil, by Paul Maynard, Rick's great-uncle. "He was on the front lines," said Rick Maynard, the parks and recreation director for the town of Guilford. "In one of the letters to his mother, he said he had not slept in 10 days. I can't imagine it. I can't fathom that."

Soon, letters such as those from 21-year-old Paul Maynard, who died in 1918 during the last day of battle, will be available for anyone to read, thanks to a project spearheaded by the Connecticut State Library to help mark the 100th anniversary of the US involvement in the war. The library is hosting events across Connecticut, inviting people to bring in photos, letters and any artifacts associated with the "Great War" to be photographed or scanned for posterity. Students and veterans also conduct interviews with the owners to get a history of the items and the people to whom they are linked.

The library says it has the largest World War I archive of any US state. Since the project began in 2014, about 130 people have come to events, resulting in the digital preservation of more than 600 items and the creation of about 150 profiles of people who took part in the war effort.

Similar preservation efforts are being done at some universities, some branches of the military and local historical societies, but nothing on the scale of Connecticut's project, said Chris Isleib, spokesman for the US World War I Centennial Commission. The preservation is funded in part by an \$11,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The New Haven Museum will host a major scanning event May 24. There are 16 others scheduled this year across the state.

"We can do high-resolution captures of anything that comes in, 3D objects, flat objects," said Christine

Pittsley, the project managers for the state's Remembering World War I: Sharing History/Preserving Memories program. "All of that stuff is going to be online. It's being preserved in the Connecticut digital archive. So, even if that item disappears, there always will be a digital record of it." The library is building a website that will allow anyone to download the images. It also is working with schools across the state on ways to incorporate the stories and images into curriculum.

The project includes not only soldiers' stories, but also those of nurses, YMCA canteen workers, those who sold Liberty Loan war bonds or anyone else associated with the war. The project also allows those who own the objects to learn more about their relatives who served in the war. In 1919, the state library also became the state's Department of War Records. Librarian George Goddard took that role very seriously, and began gathering everything he could get his hands on.

The library sent out questionnaires to every Connecticut resident who served in the war, recording their experiences and thoughts on war. Those are all on file with the state and those attending the digitization events can get help looking up the information. The preservation efforts are important, Isleib said, because they put faces and personal stories to an abstract history lesson about a war that not many understand.

"This is our inheritance and our future generation's inheritance," he said. "These stories make up who we are as Americans." Bernice McNeil, of North Haven, said it was a way to make sure that when she is gone, others will remember the sacrifice of her uncle, Robert Remington, who was killed in 1918 at the age of 18 in Seicheprey, France. "These men and women should be recognized," she said. "He served our country and he died for this country, protecting our freedom." — AP

Cable car above Rio favela becomes ride to nowhere

A cable car built over one of Rio's most violent favelas as a symbol of hope stands idle today, a ride to nowhere in a city whose recent Olympic glory has never seemed more distant. The ski resort-style, multimillion-dollar gondolas were hailed worldwide when they first glided over Rio de Janeiro's gang-infested Complexo do Alemao favela in 2011. In the build-up to the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Rio Olympics, the network of cables and six hilltop terminals was meant to show that Alemao was about more than battles between drug gangs and police. But today the shiny facilities are closed-and the guns are getting louder.



The cable car over the Alemao favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, seen here on April 3, 2017, is no longer running.

climb the terminal for an even better look, warned Lieutenant Leonardo Violante, manning the bullet-scarred police station. "The bandits will see you and start shooting."

Brought down to earth

When the favela cable car opened, some criticized the 210 million reais (\$64 million today) price tag, saying the money should instead fund sewage systems, schools and other basic services for the impoverished people below. But the rides, spanning 2.2 miles (3.5 kilometers), became one of Rio's top tourist destinations. The system was also hugely popular with favela residents who could now get around without negotiating Alemao's tortuously steep, narrow streets. Some 9,000 people were reported to ride daily. "It changed a lot for us," said Bruna Teodoro, 26, who used to work in a market and now, like more than 13 percent of Brazilians, is unemployed.

Her commute changed from at least half an hour to five minutes. "We really miss it." What Brazilians call the "teleferico" was not only transport. Each terminal building became a buzzing community hub, housing medical, postal and social services, and in one case a library. "They had social services and community projects," said arts producer Nathalia Menezes, 29, who lives right next to the Alemao terminal. "Theater, fashion-there were a lot of great things."

Bullets flying

The cable car network was also closely integrated with a system of local policing called Pacification Police Units or UPP in Portuguese. The UPP idea was just as revolutionary as the cable cars. Instead of police fighting narco-gangs on sporadic, large-scale raids, officers would live and patrol inside the community, winning locals' trust and displacing the traffickers. Put that with the cable cars and the favela would change forever. So went the plan. "The goal of the project was to take over the traffickers' space," Violante, 28, said outside his UPP. "Up here is right where the drug traffickers used to execute people."

But now it's the heavily armed officers inside the UPPs, not the gangsters outside, who are marginalized. Officers don't go outside without their pistols or automatic rifles and they wouldn't dare go even a short distance alone. Even if they do go in force, the likelihood is they'll get into a firefight. Spraying high velocity bullets around the tightly packed neighborhood is hardly a way to win friends. "We've had to cut back on the patrols a lot because of the problem of stray bullets," the lieutenant said. "The idea was to work with the community but for us to talk with residents means getting into shootouts. It's a bit harder than we thought." — AFP



The cable car over the Alemao favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, seen here is no longer running.— AFP photos