



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
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William Still's Handwritten Underground Railroad Journal Conserved and Digitally Preserved

Come see the journal at a free event November 9

Philadelphia, PA (October 21, 2009) — The handwritten journal of William Still—the “Father of the Underground Railroad”—has been recently conserved and will be on display at a free event at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania **November 9**.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is the caretaker for this 316-page journal, which chronicles the passage of fugitive slaves through Philadelphia. The journal was in need of conservation. Earlier this year, the Penn Towne Chapter of The Links, Inc., made a generous donation to fund the necessary repairs and digitize every page of the journal.

The conserved journal is now coming back to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and will be unveiled to the public at a free event, “Saving the Still Journal,” which is sponsored by the *Philadelphia Tribune*. That evening, guests will be treated to a living history performance, with actors taking the roles of two of the 19th-century’s most celebrated abolitionists, William Still and Harriet Tubman. The performance will be followed by a reception and a display of the Still journal and other items from the Historical Society’s collection that document the African American heritage of Philadelphia.

To RSVP for this event, visit www.hsp.org or call 215-732-6200 ext. 214.

William Still was chairman of the Vigilance Committee, part of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. In the mid-1800s, Still assisted fugitive slaves as they were secretly shuttled into Philadelphia. From 1852 to 1857, Still kept a journal, describing his encounters with the slaves in painstaking detail, recording their names, physical characteristics, personality, and other details. The meticulous entries offer unique insight into the secretive network known as the Underground Railroad. The journal, which is owned by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, was deposited at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in the 1920s.

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“Americans are fortunate to have this distinguished document, the William Still diary, still in existence, penned by a black man in such an important era of our history and society,” said Joanna O. Lewis, president of the Penn Towne Chapter of The Links, Inc. “William Still’s diary provides a unique view into the everyday dynamics of the secretive network of fugitive slaves. Restoration of this historic document ensures the accessibility, contents and detail of this magnificent piece of history.

“This valuable document holds particular interest, importance and pride for the African American race; it is an integral part of their ‘story,’ giving credence to this great moment in history and to this great American of African descent. Yet, the significance of this journal extends well beyond the African American community. It has been preserved for all Americans for generations to come. The Penn Towne Chapter of The Links, Incorporated is proud to have been a part of this important and far-reaching project.”

The conservation work was performed at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) in Philadelphia, one of the largest conservation laboratories in the nation. The Conservation Center cleaned and washed the journal’s heavily soiled pages and mended tears. The book was re sewn by hand using the original sewing structure and rebacked with new leather using the original coverboards and spine.

Before the book was rebound, each page was scanned and digitally preserved. The conservation process will increase the life and stability of the journal. “We are very honored to have the opportunity to assist in preserving the Still Diary, a highly unique and significant artifact in the history of the Abolitionist Movement,” said Ingrid E. Bogel, executive director of CCAHA.

Kim Sajet, president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, said: “This journal represents an act of courage by William Still and the members of the abolition community who blatantly defied the Fugitive Slave Act in order to assist the hundreds of fugitives that passed through Philadelphia to secure their freedom.

“We are grateful to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society for allowing us to care for this amazing artifact and to the Penn Towne Chapter of The Links for recognizing its importance and taking an active role to ensure its conservation. With their combined generous contributions, the journal will be preserved for future generations.”

Attached are an image of William Still and exterior and interior photos of William Still’s “Journal C of Station No. 2” prior to the conservation work. Attached images can be credited: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

For more information, contact the society’s Director of Programs and Communications, Lauri Cielo, at (215) 732-6200 ext. 233 or lcielo@hsp.org. **Media is invited to attend the November 9 event.**

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EVENT DETAILS:

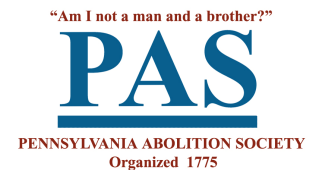
Title: Saving the Still Journal

When: 6 p.m. November 9

Where: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia

Cost: Free

RSVP: Online at www.hsp.org or by phone at 215-732-6200 ext. 214



About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824 in Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania collects and shares the stories of Pennsylvania. It is home to some 600,000 printed items and more than 21 million manuscript and graphic items. Its unparalleled collections encompass more than 300 years of America's history—from its 17th-century origins to the contributions of its most recent immigrants. The society's remarkable holdings together with its educational programming make it one of the nation's most important special collections libraries: a center of historical documentation and study, education, and engagement. (www.hsp.org)

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