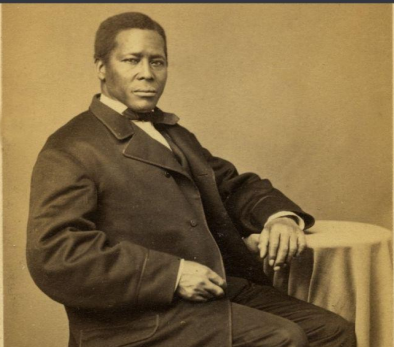GUIDED HIKE IN FAIRMOUNT PARK

WALKING IN WILLIAM STILL'S STEPS
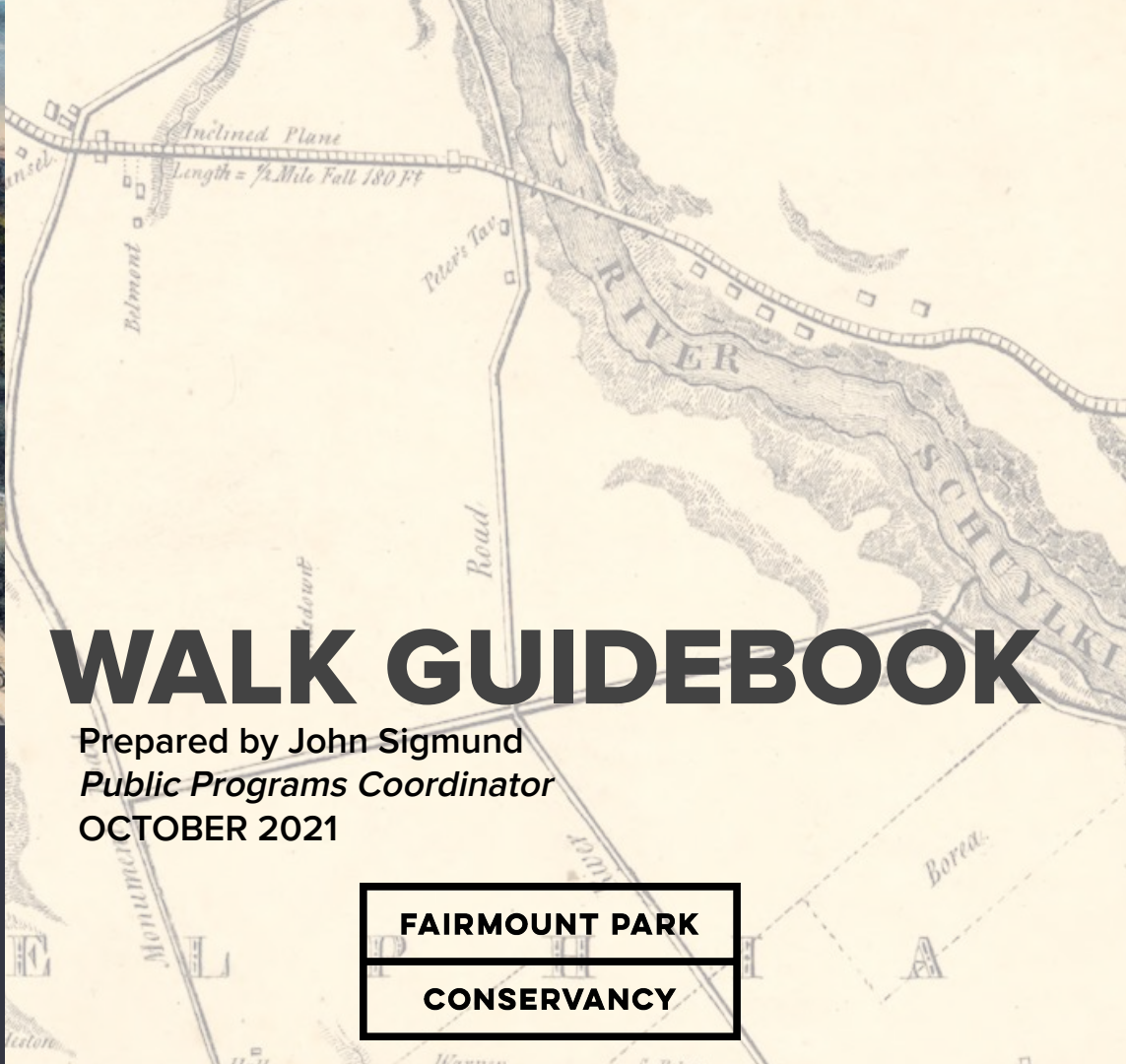
Honoring the Father of the Underground Railroad

SATURDAY, OCT. 9
HIKE 9AM-11:30AM
LUNCH TALK 12-1PM

Led by historic storyteller Dionne Patterson of UGR3DAY Underground Railroad Experiences, Inc.

UGR 3 DAY WALK

Ridgeland Mansion
4100 Chamounix Dr.
Phila. PA 19131

WALK GUIDEBOOK

Prepared by John Sigmund
Public Programs Coordinator
OCTOBER 2021

Inclined Plane
Length = ¼ Mile Fall 180 Ft

Belmont

Peter's Tav.

RIVER

SCHUYLK

Road

Monument

Borea.

Many thanks to:

Dionne Patterson of UGR3DAY Underground Railroad Experiences Inc.

Gwen Ebowen (as Cornelia Wells)

Vance Evans (as William Still)

Simpson House

Belmont Mansion

Joshua's Catering

Cancer Support Community of Greater Philadelphia

Gerald Francis and the Lower Merion Historical Society
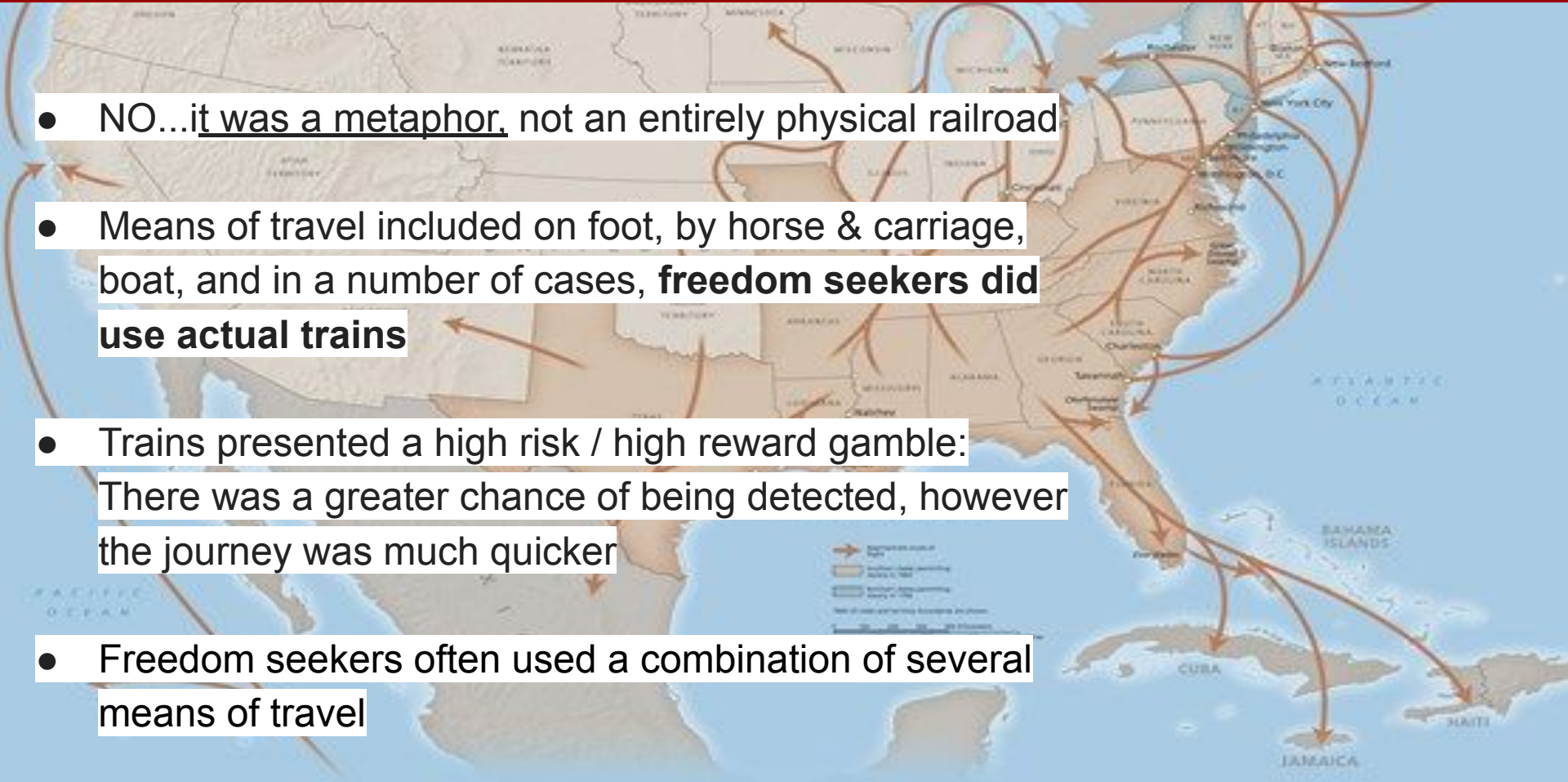
What was the Underground Railroad?

The "Underground Railroad" was a clandestine network of aid and assistance for freedom seeking enslaved people in the U.S.

Between 1815-1860, approximately 80,000 - 100,000 freedom seekers escaped to the North via the Underground Railroad, with an estimated 50,000 of them eventually reaching safe harbor in Canada

Was the Underground Railroad actually a railroad?

- NO...it was a metaphor, not an entirely physical railroad

- Means of travel included on foot, by horse & carriage, boat, and in a number of cases, **freedom seekers did use actual trains**

- Trains presented a high risk / high reward gamble: There was a greater chance of being detected, however the journey was much quicker

- Freedom seekers often used a combination of several means of travel

Underground RR: a theory of the name

The origin of the name is uncertain, but one of the prevalent theories is that it began in Columbia PA, a city with a large Free Black population, including prominent businessmen such as William Whipper who operated a lumber company. Freedom seekers were hidden among the cargo (mainly lumber) being shipped to Philadelphia on the Columbia Railroad.

In his book _Station Master on the Underground Railroad: The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett_, James McGowan describes Columbia name origin:

"Slaves were hunted and tracked as far as Columbia, PA. There the pursuers lost all trace of them.The most scrutinizing inquiries, the most vigorous search, failed to deduce any knowledge of them. Their pursuers seemed to have reached an abyss, beyond which they could not see, the depth of which they could not fathom, and in their bewilderment and discomfiture they declared there must be an "underground railroad" somewhere. This gave origin to the term by which this secret passage from bondage to freedom was designated ever after." (McGowan, p. 4)

Some terms to clarify

- "Enslaved" rather than "Slave"

- "Freedom Seeker" rather than "Fugitive"

- The "Underground Railroad" and the "Regular Railroad"
  - William still used this distinction between the metaphor and the real form of transportation in his writing, so we will also use it

CODE LANGUAGE of the UNDERGROUND RAILROAD:

Agent: coordinator who plotted courses of escape and made contacts.
Baggage / Bundles of wood / Freight / Parcels: freedom seekers in transit
Conductor: Person who directly transported freedom seekers
Station: Place of safety and temporary refuge, a safe house
Station Master: Keeper or owner of a safe house

- Chair of "Vigilance Committee" to assist freedom seekers.
- His wife Letitia Still sewed clothing & raised money
- Received Henry "Box" Brown
- *"The Underground Railroad"* was self-published in 1872 exhibited at 1876 Centennial Exposition in Fairmount Park

W Still

THE

UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD.

A RECORD

OF

FACTS, AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES, LETTERS, &c.,

Narrating the Hardships Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles

OF THE

Slaves in their efforts for Freedom,

AS RELATED

BY THEMSELVES AND OTHERS, OR WITNESSED BY THE AUTHOR;

TOGETHER WITH

SKETCHES OF SOME OF THE LARGEST STOCKHOLDERS, AND
MOST LIBERAL AIDERS AND ADVISERS,
OF THE ROAD.

BY

WILLIAM STILL,

For many years connected with the Anti-Slavery Office in Philadelphia, and Chairman
of the Acting Vigilant Committee of the Philadelphia Branch of
the Underground Rail Road.

Illustrated with 70 fine Engravings by Bensell, Schell and others, and
Portraits from Photographs from Life.

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that has escaped from his master unto thee.—*Deut.* xxiii. 15.

SOLD ONLY BY SUBSCRIPTION.

PHILADELPHIA:
PORTER & COATES,
822, CHESTNUT STREET.
1872.

STOP 1: P&C Marker + Sleeper stones

1832- construction complete of an 82 mile railway, from Columbia (on the Susquehanna River), Lancaster, Merion, and down an "inclined plane" at the Belmont Plateau, and terminating at Philadelphia (at Broad & Vine)

Philadelphia and Columbia Railway
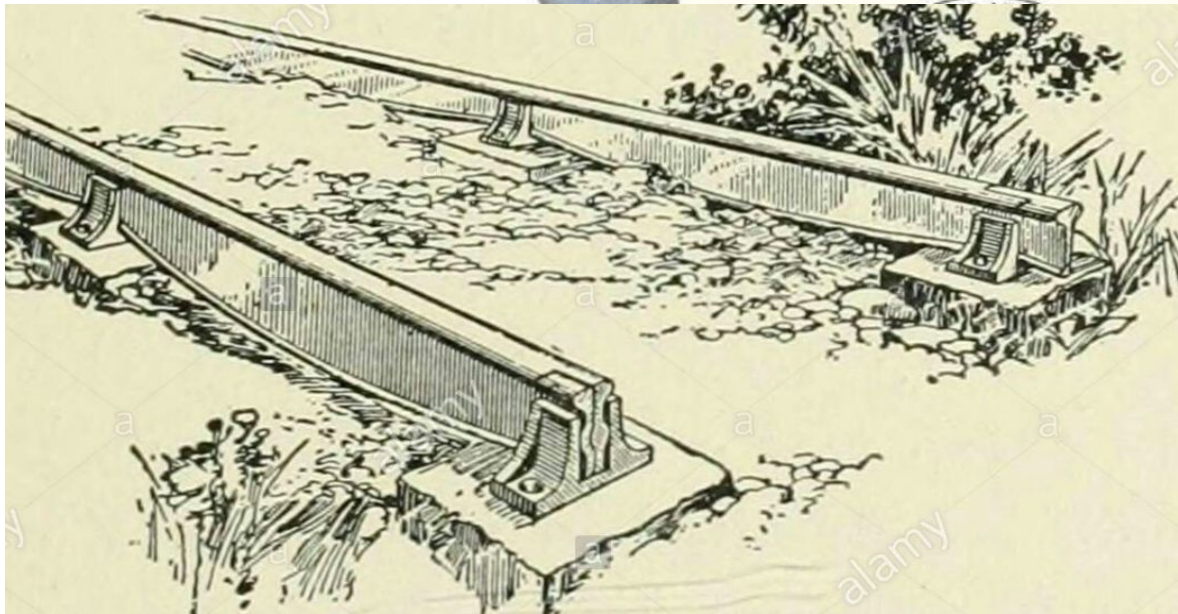### The Main Line of Public Works of the State of Pennsylvania
1834-1857

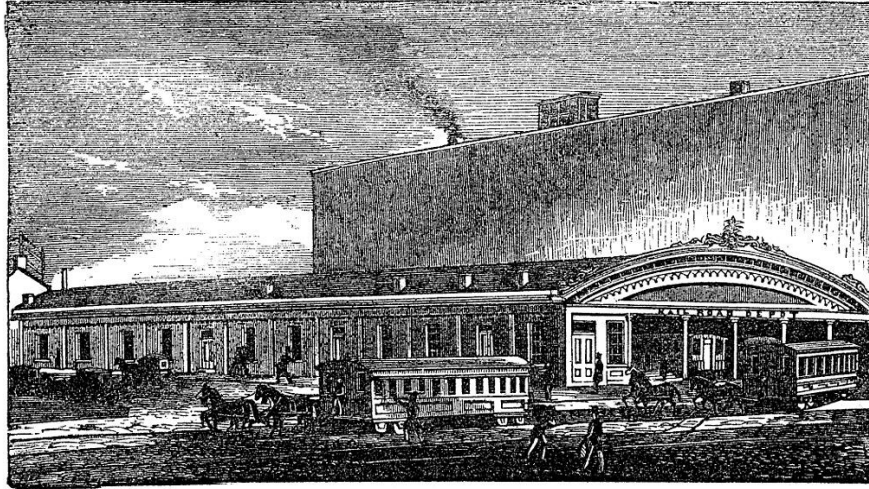**ONE OF AMERICA'S EARLIEST RAILROADS,**
it was first powered by horses, later by steam. The right-of-way was on the south-side of Montgomery Avenue across from Merion Friends Meetinghouse.

This railroad was a major route for escaping slaves crossing the Susquehanna River from Maryland. As the freight cars passed this Meetinghouse, several Quaker families, who operated Safe Houses, placed food and water in the cars for the escaping slaves.

These are the original "sleeper" stones which were used as track supports.

Phila & Columbia R.R.

PHILADELPHIA AND COLUMBIA RAILROAD DEPOT.

In 2010, the section of the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad between Lancaster and the City of Philadelphia was determined to be an authentic site associated with the activities of the Underground Railroad, as designated by the national Underground Railroad Network to Freedom – the nation's official listing of such sites, programs and facilities administered by the National Park Service.

A Train for the Accommodation of Way Passengers will leave

COLUMBIA for PHILADELPHIA

Every Morning at **11** o'clock, and a like Train will *Leave Philadelphia* each Morning at the same hour, stopping at the following named points :

EASTERN TRAIN.				WESTERN TRAIN.		
	M. M.		M. M.		M. M.		M. M.
Leave Basin at	1 P	Arrive at Coatesville	3	Leave Philadelphia at	11	Arrive at Parkesburg	3 15
Arrive at Mountville	11 50	" Gallagherville	3 20	Arrive at Whitehall at	12 30	" Pennington's	3 35
" Hempfield	12 15	" Downingtown	3 40	" Brookeville	12 40	" Gap	4 10
" Lancaster (dine)	12 30	" Oakland	4	" Eagle	1	" Kinsor's	4 25
" Bird-in-Hand	1 30	" Steamboat	4 15	" Paoli (to dine)	1 20	" Leaman's	4 35
" Leaman's	1 50	" Paoli	4 45	" Steamboat	1 50	" Bird-in-Hand	5 10
" Kinsor's	2	" Eagle	5	" Oakland	2 10	" Lancaster	5 40
" Gap	2 10	" Brookeville	5 20	" Downingtown	2 25	" Hempfield	6
" Pennington's	2 30	" Whitehall	5 30	" Gallagherville	2 35	" Mountville	6 30
" Parkesburg	2 45	" Philadelphia	6 30	" Coatesville	3	" Columbia	7

A. MEHAFFEY,
Sup't Col. & Phila. R. R.

Alex. Knox, Printer, 96½ Chesnut street, Philadelphia

Fig. 1. THE BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE "LANCASTER" AND TRAIN, 1834 ; PHILADELPHIA AND COLUMBIA RAILROAD.
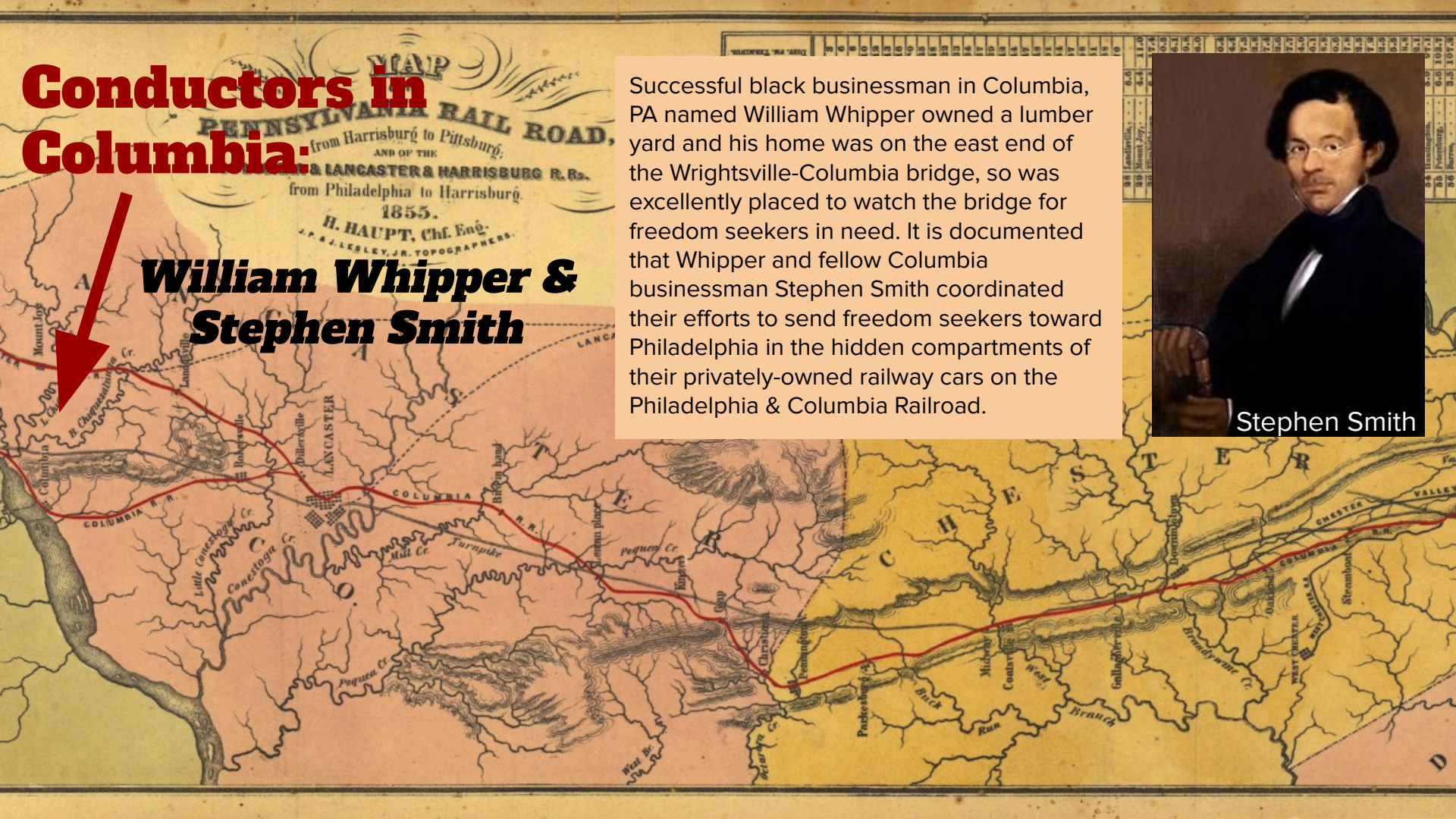
Conductors in Columbia:

William Whipper & Stephen Smith

Successful black businessman in Columbia, PA named William Whipper owned a lumber yard and his home was on the east end of the Wrightsville-Columbia bridge, so was excellently placed to watch the bridge for freedom seekers in need. It is documented that Whipper and fellow Columbia businessman Stephen Smith coordinated their efforts to send freedom seekers toward Philadelphia in the hidden compartments of their privately-owned railway cars on the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad.

Stephen Smith

WILLIAM to WILLIAM
Correspondence between Still & Whipper
from *The Underground Railroad*

MR. WILLIAM STILL, DEAR SIR:—I sincerely regret the absence of statistics that would enable me to furnish you with many events, that would assist you in describing the operations of the Underground Rail Road. I never kept any record of those persons passing through my hands, nor did I ever anticipate that the history of that perilous period would ever be written. I can only refer to the part I took in it from memory, and if I could delineate the actual facts as they occurred they would savor so much of egotism that I should feel ashamed to make them public. I willingly

736   THE UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD.

refer to a few incidents which you may select and use as you may think proper.

You are perfectly cognizant of the fact, that after the decision in York, Pa., of the celebrated Prigg case, Pennsylvania was regarded as free territory, which Canada afterwards proved to be, and that the Susquehanna river was the recognized northern boundary of the slave-holding empire. The borough of Columbia, situated on its eastern bank, in the county of Lancaster, was the great depot where the fugitives from Virginia and Maryland first landed. The long bridge connecting Wrightsville with Columbia, was the only safe outlet by which they could successfully escape their pursuers. When they had crossed this bridge they could look back over its broad silvery stream on its western shore, and say to the slave power: "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.[
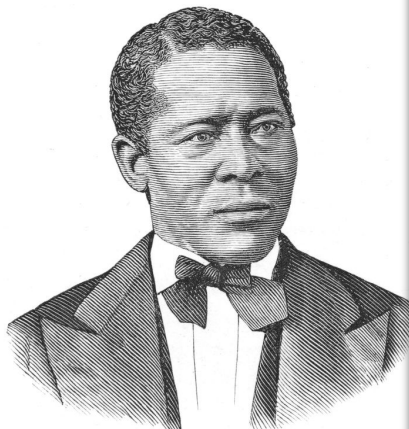
WILLIAM WHIPPER.

Now the slaves are emancipated, and we are all enfranchised, after struggling for existence, freedom and manhood—I feel thankful for having had the glorious privilege of laboring with others for the redemption of my race from oppression and thraldom; and I would prefer to-day to be penniless in the streets, rather than to have withheld a single hour's labor or a dollar from the sacred cause of liberty, justice, and humanity.

I remain yours in the sacred cause of liberty and equality,

WM. WHIPPER.

References to Railroad Travel in Still's Records

WILLIAM HOGG, ALIAS JOHN SMITH.

TRAVELER FROM MARYLAND.

WILLIAM fled from Lewis Roberts, who followed farming in Baltimore county, Md. In speaking of him, William gave him the character of being a "fierce and rough man," who owned nine head of slaves. Two of William's sisters were held by Roberts, when he left. His excuse for running away was, "ill-treatment." In traveling North, he walked to Columbia (in Pennsylvania), and there took the cars for Philadelphia. The Committee took charge of him, and having given him the usual aid, sent him hopefully on his way. After safely reaching Canada, the thought of his wife in a land

ARRIVAL No. 6. Henry Cromwell. This passenger fled from Baltimore county, Md. The man that he escaped from was a farmer by the name of William Roberts, who also owned seven other young slaves. Of his treatment of his slaves nothing was recorded.

Henry was about six feet high, quite black, visage thin, age twenty-five. He left neither wife, parents, brothers nor sisters to grieve after him. In making his way North he walked of nights from his home to Harrisburg, Pa., and there availed himself of a passage on a freight car coming to Philadelphia.

LETTER FROM E. F. PENNYPACKER (U. G. R. R. DEPOT).

SCHUYLKILL, 11th mo., 7th day, 1857.

WM. STILL:—*Respected Friend*—There are three colored friends at my house now, who will reach the city by the Phil. & Reading train this evening. Please meet them.
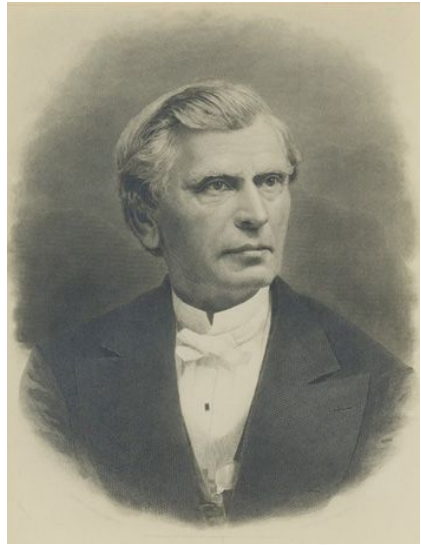
Thine, &c., E. F. PENNYPACKER.

We have within the past 2 mos. passed 43 through our hands, transported most of them to Norristown in our own conveyance. E. F. P.

STOP 2: Simpson House & Simpson Statue

Born on the Ohio frontier to parents who sold and traded weavers' reeds, Matthew Simpson became a doctor. 1852, Simpson was elected as an American Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Bishop Simpson was an influential leader and friend of President Abraham Lincoln. He contributed greatly to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and delivered the eulogy at Lincoln's funeral.

During the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, Simpson supported "radical" policies that favored the Freedmen (former slaves) and distrusted the Southern whites. His biographer calls him the "High Priest of the Radical Republicans."

Simpson House, established in 1865, is the oldest Retirement Community in the world. Mrs. Jane Henry, widow of a Philadelphia Methodist minister had the dream of a home for elderly persons with limited resources. She approached Bishop and Mrs. Matthew Simpson, who created the "Methodist Episcopal Home for the Aged." The name had several different forms over the years and was renamed Simpson House in 1972.

STOP 3: Chamounix Drive Tunnel Song

This engraving is from William Still's "The Underground Railroad"

Twenty eight slaves banded together and fled Cambridge, Md. plantations October 24, 1857 armed and ready for battle if necessary.
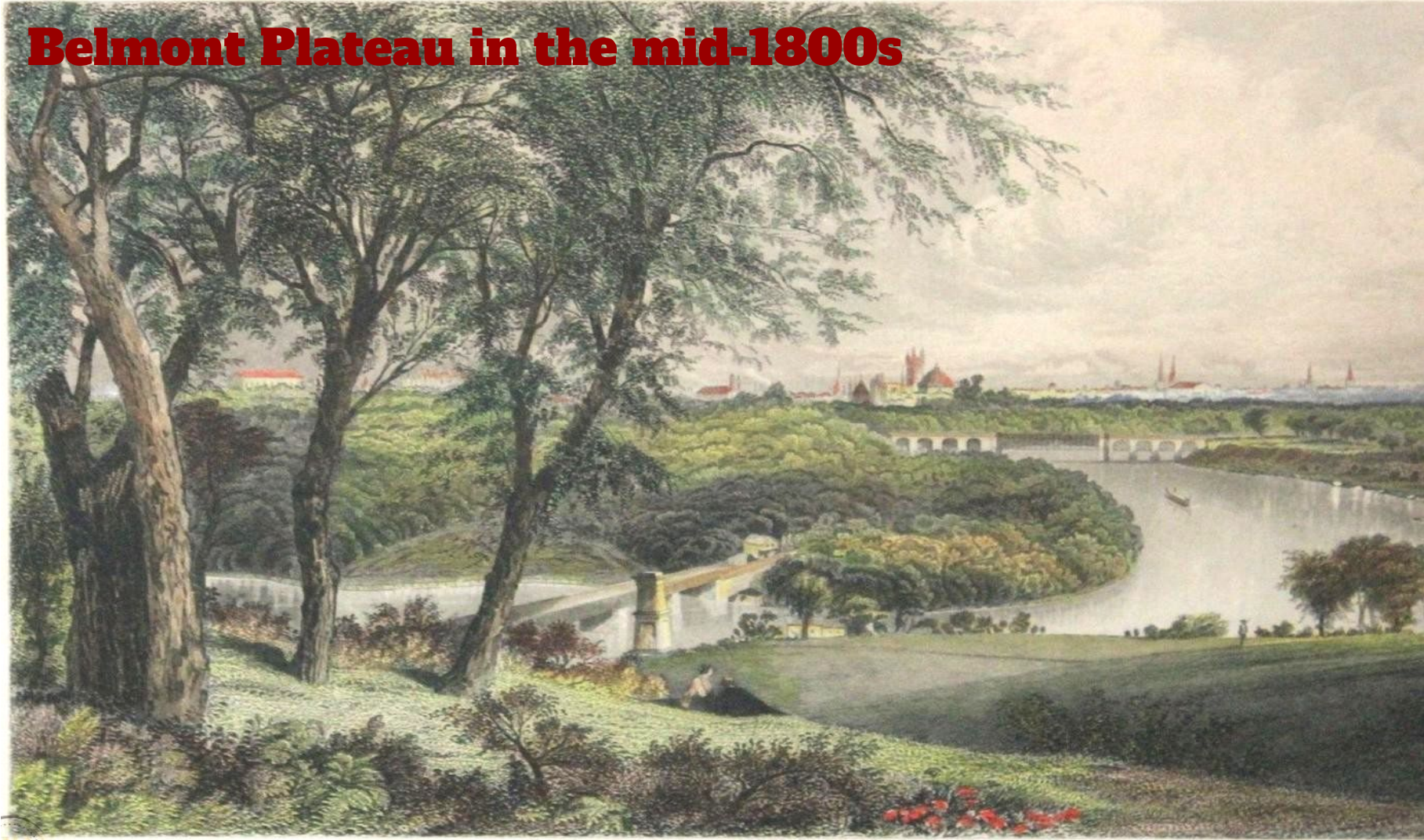
OH FREEDOM!

Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom,
Oh freedom over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

No more weepin,(don't you know), no more weepin,
no more weepin over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

Oh freedom,
Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom,
Oh freedom over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
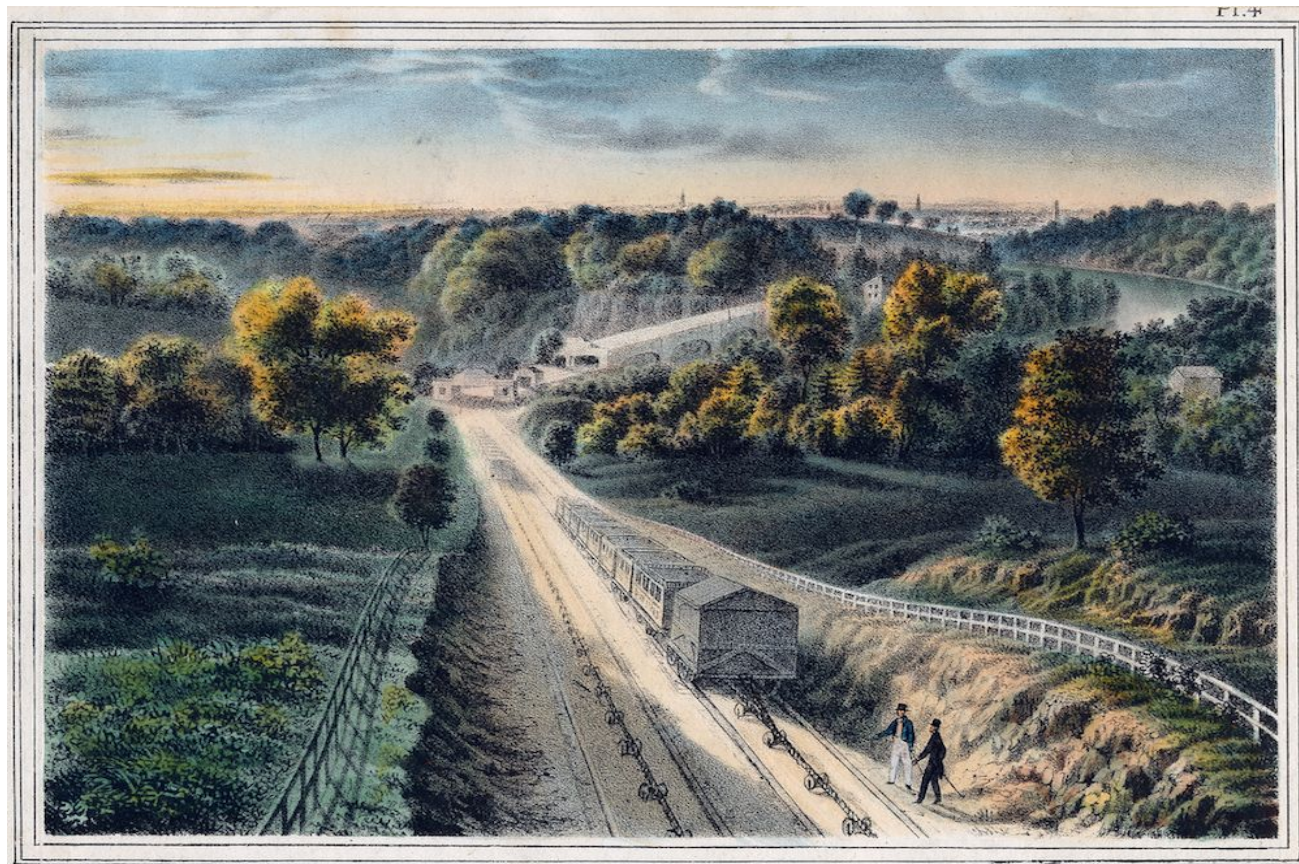And go home to my Lord and be free.

Belmont Plateau in the mid-1800s

STOP 4: Belmont Inclined Plane

View of the two-track inclined plane that ran 2,805 feet from Belmont Plateau to the Schuylkill River's western bank, lowering one foot in 15 for a total descent of 187 feet. Once down the plane, the train crossed the Columbia Bridge and terminated at Broad & Vine Streets. The Belmont Inclined Plane used a stationary steam engine and rope to pulling the railcars.

When the city-bound trains came to a stop to be pulled down the inclined plane, this was the time and place for freedom seekers to furtively escape into the woods and farmlands of the Belmont Plateau before the Vine St. Depot, where bounty hunters awaited.
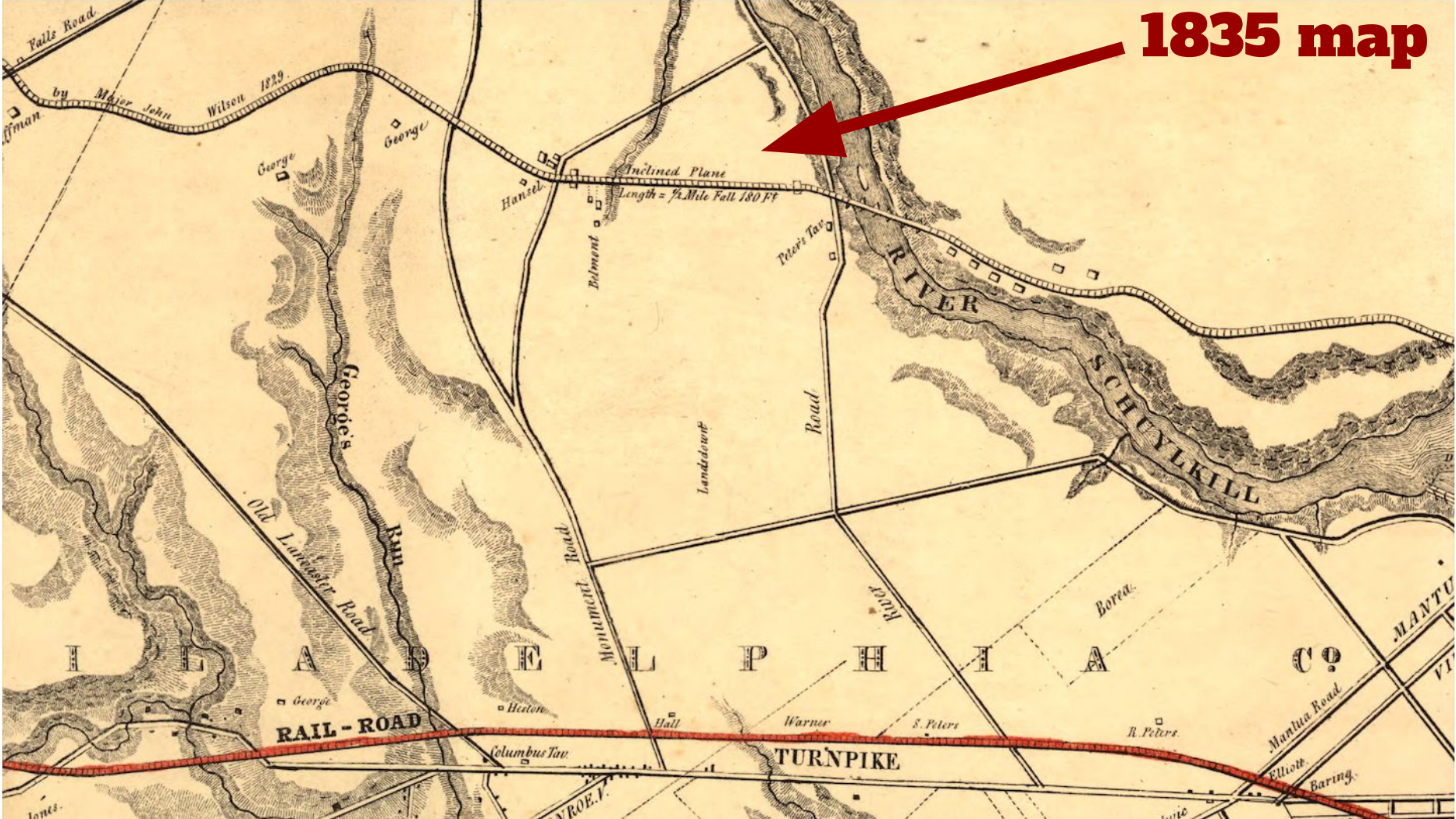

Pl.4

Lith. of J.T.Bowen, Phil.ᵃ

VIEW from the INCLINED PLANE, near Philadelphia.

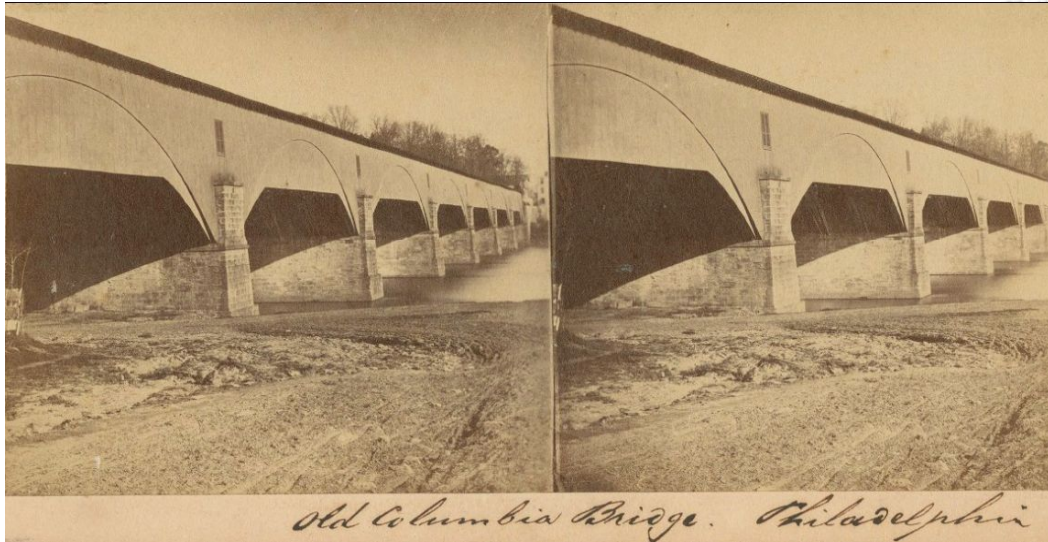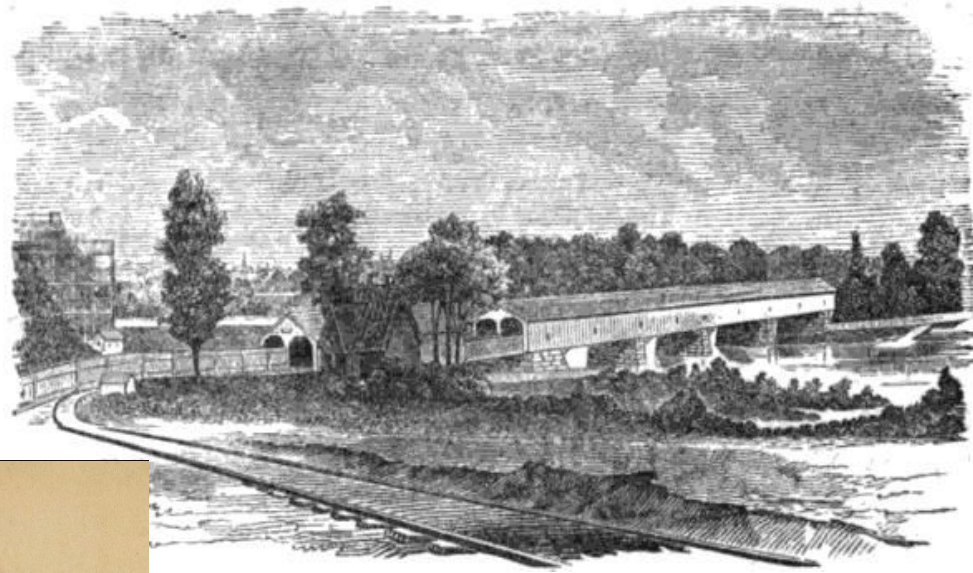Published by J.T.Bowen at his Lithographic & Print Colouring Establishment, 94 Walnut St. Phil.ᵃ

Entered, according to act of Congress in the year 1840 by J.T.Bowen in the Clerk's Office of the D.ᵗ C.ᵗ for the E.ⁿ D.ᵗ of Pennsyl.ᵃ

1835 map

STOP 5: Columbia Bridge

- The Columbia Railroad Bridge, one of the oldest railroad bridges in the United States, was completed in 1834 after being commissioned by the state legislature for the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad.
- Designed as a 7-span white pine covered bridge

1859 stereoscopic photo showing the Columbia Railroad Bridge, one of the oldest railroad bridges in the United States, completed in 1834.
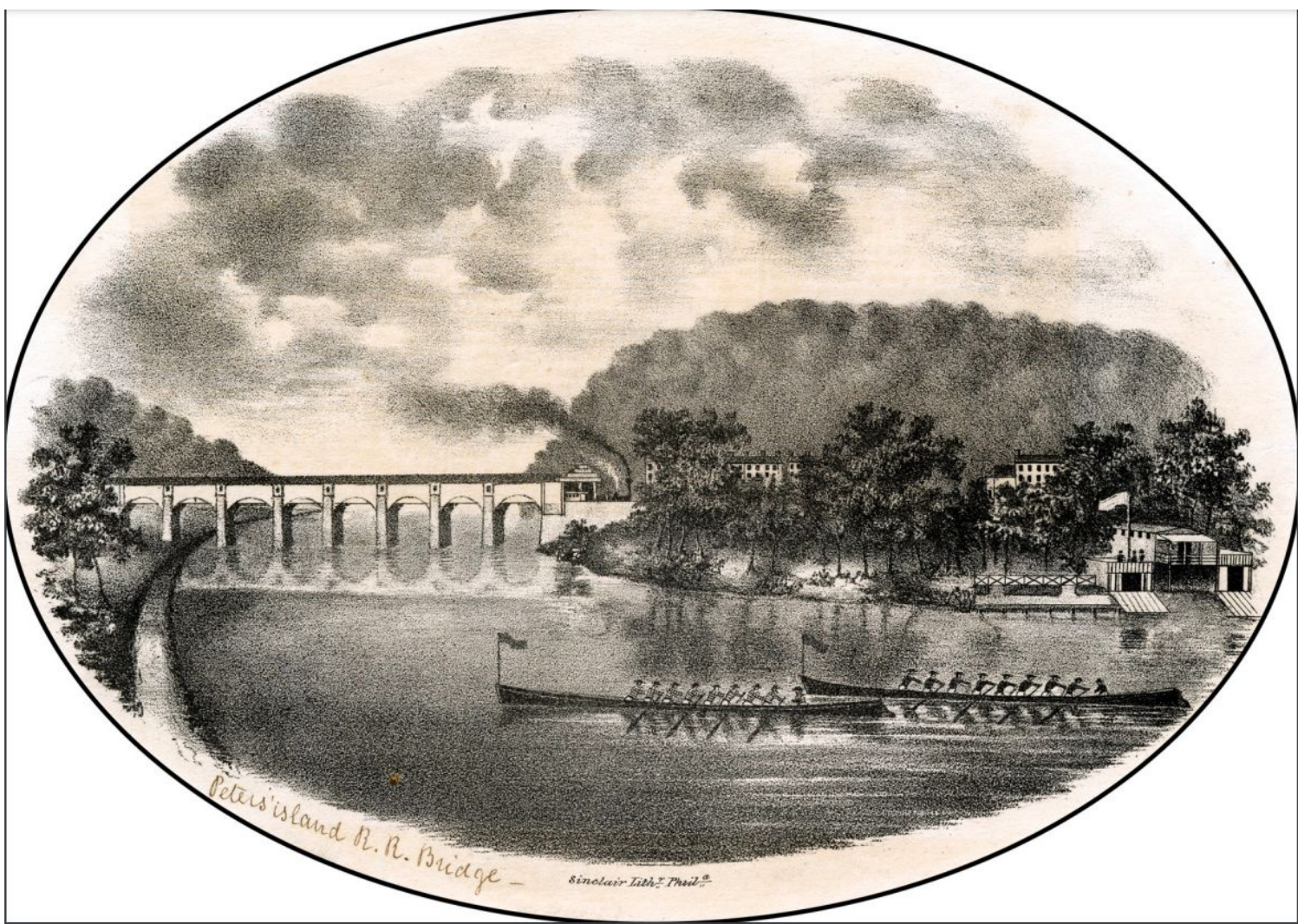
- 1886: to accommodate increasingly heavy freight loads, Reading Railroad replaced with wrought iron truss & column design
- 1920: current concrete version built.
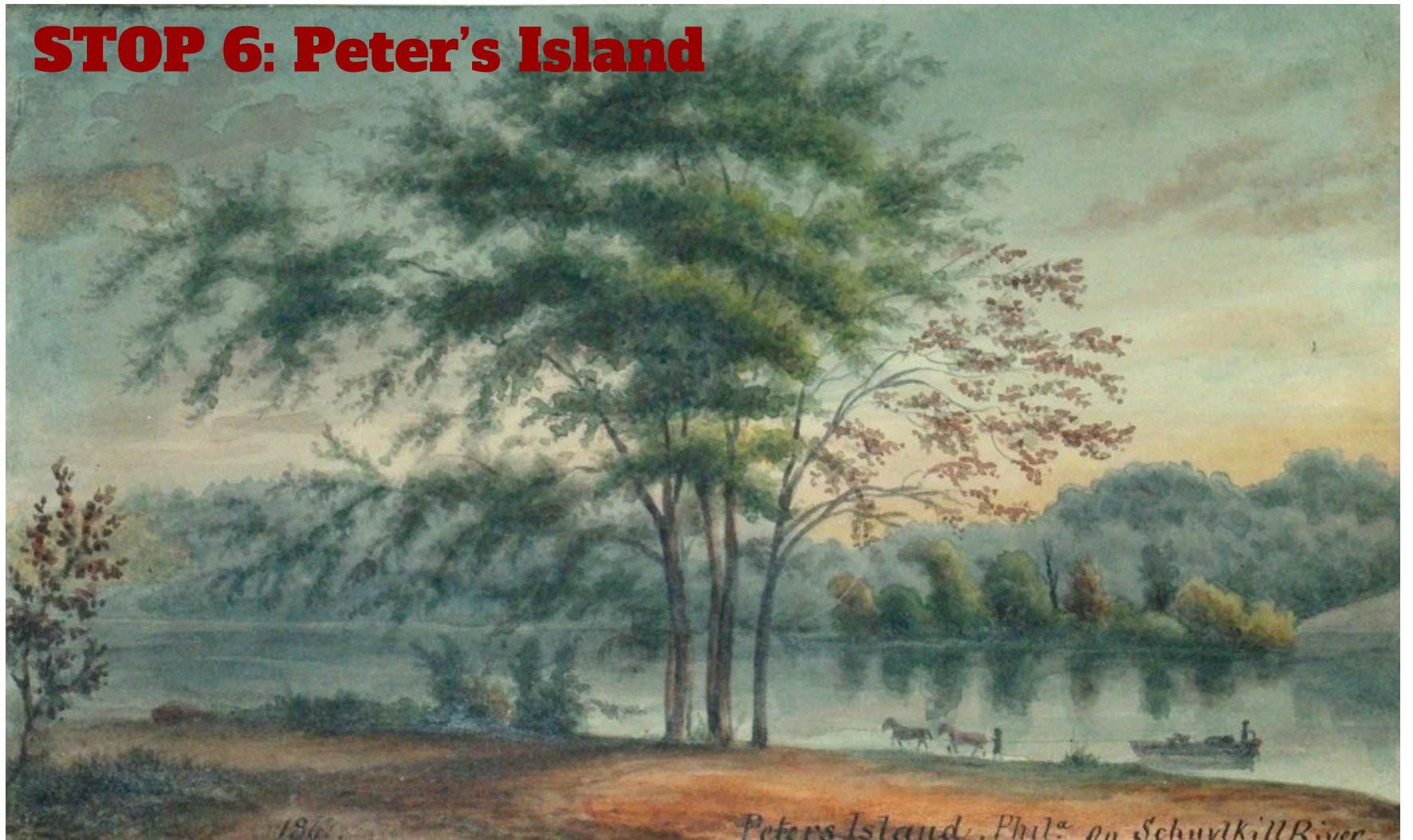- The original 1834 stone abutments still remain on either side

Runaways in a place of Recreation

This 1842 print shows two sculling barges on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. Each barge has a crew of eight and a coxswain. In the background are Peter's Island and the Columbia Railroad Bridge. A boat house is on the shore of the island and a train is seen exiting the covered bridge. This print was used as a sheet music cover for "Schuylkill Boat Song" Poetry by Thomas Dunn English M.D.

Peter's island R.R. Bridge —

Sinclair Lith. Phil.

STOP 6: Peter's Island

Man walking with mule on a footpath along the shore of the Schuylkill River with Peter's Island on the left and the Columbia Bridge just ahead. Memorial Hall Art Gallery for the 1876 Centennial Exposition is under construction in the background.

By James Fuller Queen

STOP 7: Boelson Cottage
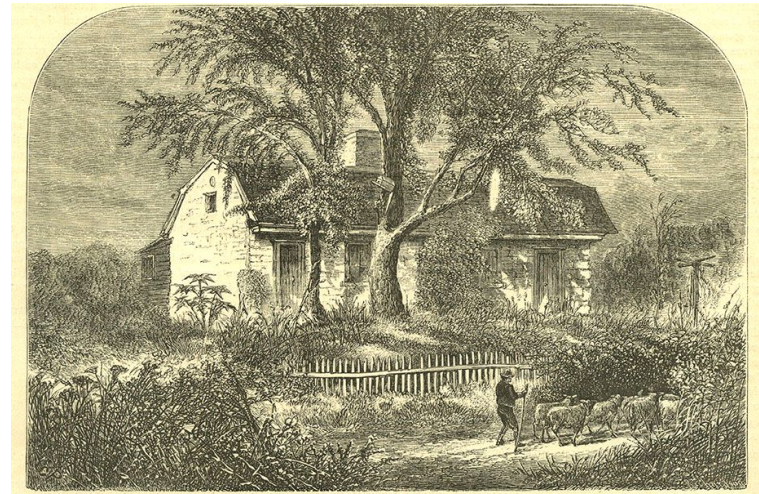## *Tom Moore's or Aunt Cornelia's?*

This tiny cottage is the oldest surviving structure in Fairmount Park. Built between 1678-1684 on land granted to John Boelson (or Jan Boelsen in some documents) in 1677 by the colonial Swedish authorities.

Composed of wood and fieldstone in Dutch and Swedish-style, the house has changed ownership and its name many times over its existence.

Also known as Belmont Cottage, Pig's Eye Cottage, and often as Tom Moore's Cottage because the Irish poet Thomas Moore purportedly stayed here during his visit to Philadelphia in 1803 - 1804.

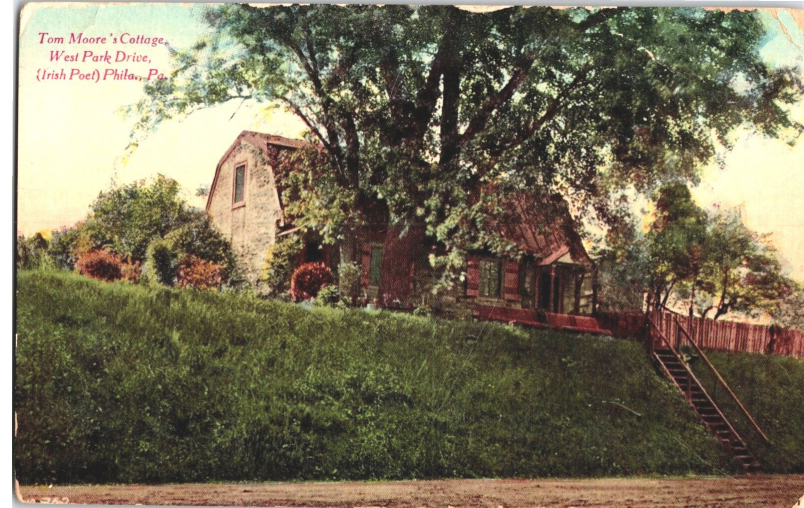However, there's no evidence he stayed at the cottage named after him.

Belmont Mansion has found evidence that freed African American Cornelia Wells was the occupant at the time, yet her story is seldom told and images always name "Tom Moore"

TOM MOORE'S COTTAGE ON THE BANKS OF THE SCHUYLKILL, PHILADELPHIA.

Tom Moore's Cottage on the Schuylkill.

Tom Moore's Cottage, West Park Drive, (Irish Poet) Phila., Pa.

Cornelia Wells

- purchased in 1811 by Judge Peters as an indentured servant
- Purchased the freedom of herself and daughter Jane. Moved to the Boelson Cottage
- Hid and fed freedom seekers arriving to the area by train and by boat
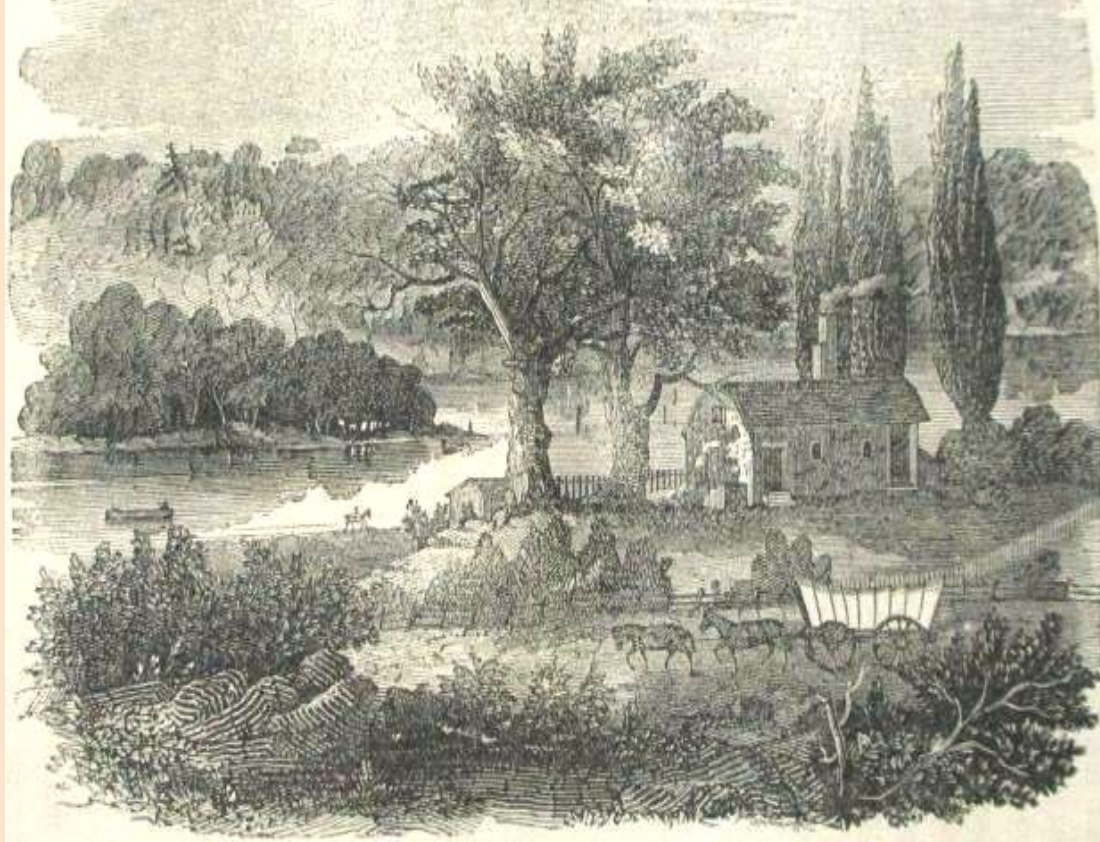- Ran her own restaurant, selling spruce beer and ginger cakes

~~ CORNELIA'S GINGER CAKE RECIPE ~~

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups flour all-purpose
2 Tablespoons ginger root grated
2 sticks unsalted butter
3 large eggs
1 cup whole milk
1 cup white sugar

1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt

Instructions

~ Grease and flour two bread loaf pans.
~ Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit
~ In large bowl hand mix flour, baking powder, ground ginger, cinnamon and salt.
~ In another large bowl, cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy with a mixer.
~ Add in eggs, one at time, the grated ginger root and vanilla into the butter mixture.
~ Add the milk, mix in the flour mixture until incorporated.
~ Pour 1/2 the batter into a prepared pan and repeat with the other half.
~ Bake 45 to 50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.
~ Let cool in pan for 10 minutes, and then turn out onto a serving plate.

STOP 8: Belmont Mansion

Built in 1742, Belmont Mansion is one of the finest examples of Palladian architecture in the United States.

The property became part of **Fairmount Park in 1869**.

Currently operated as the **Underground Railroad Museum** by the **American Women's Heritage Society**. The AWHS is a non-profit historic preservation organization

To tour the museum, please visit their website at: **belmontmansion.org** or call 215-878-8844 for details and up-to-date information.

Belmont Mansion & a colonial abolitionist

In 1742, an English loyalist named William Peters brought the Belmont from the Penn family. The property next went to his son **Richard Peters**, a prominent State Senator and judge with ties to the Founding Fathers.

Peters became one the first non-Quakers member of the local abolition movement and frequently bought enslaved people to free them and also hid fugitives.

W. Park 1854. Belmont Mansion.