



The Harriet Tubman Biopic Opens Today in Theaters

Learn About and Celebrate the Freedom Fighter at Sites Nationwide

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Written by Donna Owens

The eagerly anticipated film, [Harriet](#), a biopic about one of America's greatest heroines, premieres in theaters nationwide today (Nov. 1). Fans seeking to learn more about Harriet Tubman's legacy beyond the big screen, can do so at sites around the country that highlight her incredible life story.

Determined to live free, Harriet Tubman tried more than once to escape slavery. In 1849, she seized an opportunity.

Hiding by day and traveling by night, Tubman stealthily journeyed through her native Maryland, then [Delaware](#), and finally, Pennsylvania. There in [Philadelphia](#)—birthplace of American democracy, where the Quaker abolitionist movement thrived, and home to Seventh Ward, the largest community of free African-Americans— her new life began.

“When I found I had crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person,” said Tubman, a woman of great faith who frequently praised God for guiding her steps. “There was such a glory over everything.”

Glory, indeed. September 17, 2019 marked the 170th anniversary of self-liberation for Tubman. She was an abolitionist, Union Army scout, spy and nurse during the Civil War, a suffragist, humanitarian and more.

As America commemorates [1619](#), when “20 and odd” Africans landed at [Fort Monroe](#) in the Virginia Colony 400 years ago, her legacy feels even more relevant.

Read on for more of the locales tied to Tubman, and fellow heroes and sheroes whose contributions have shaped America.

Washington, D.C.

Around the [nation’s capital](#), museums to memorials and murals help illuminate Tubman’s story.

At the Smithsonian’s [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#), Tubman’s presence permeates the sweeping museum. Jointly acquired by the Library of Congress, an album owned by Quaker school teacher Emily Howland, displays a previously unknown photo of young Harriet Tubman. One can also view [Tubman’s beautiful silk lace and linen shawl given to her by Queen Victoria](#); items from Tubman’s household (brick, silverware, handkerchief); her personal hymnal and more.

Currently on display at the [National Portrait Gallery](#), the exhibit [Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence](#) includes artist John Derby’s 1868 wood graving on paper of Tubman. At the [Smithsonian American Art Museum](#) there’s an oil on paperboard by famed African American artist, William H. Johnson. This painting is part of Johnson’s 1945 series, *Fighters for Freedom*, which depicts various heroic figures who led the fight for equality.

The [International Spy Museum](#) tells the story of Tubman as a Civil War spy, while [Madame Tussauds DC](#) unveiled Tubman’s wax figure in 2012. If you can’t make it to the [Library of Congress](#), led by groundbreaking African-American librarian, [Dr. Carla Hayden](#), one can also learn about Tubman through

its digital archives. Last but not least, murals in the district feature Tubman. They include: [Harriet Tubman and other African American icons at historic Ben's Chili Bowl on U Street](#) by artist Aniekan Udofia; and [Harriet Tubman on a \\$20 bill by D.C.-based artist, Naturel](#), in the NoMa neighborhood.

New York

In 2013, Congress created legislation that established two national parks; one is in Maryland where she was born and the other in upstate New York, where she spent final years. [The Harriet Tubman National Historical Park New York](#) includes: the [Harriet Tubman Residence](#) (she purchased it in 1859); her church, [Thompson Memorial AME Zion](#); the [Tubman Home For the Aged](#); and [The Harriet Tubman Visitor Center](#). Tubman (who was twice married and adopted a daughter) died in 1913 around age 92, and was buried with military honors at the [Fort Hill Cemetery](#) in Auburn.

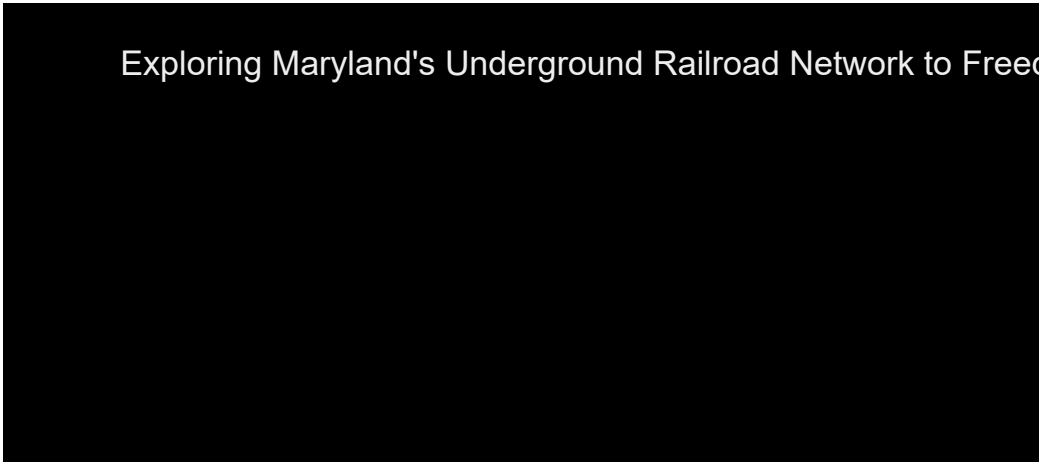
Maryland

Born Araminta Ross circa 1820 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Tubman became a famed 'conductor' on the Underground Railroad, a secret network of safe houses, churches and farms that offered shelter and safety. She risked her life to make repeated trips back to [Dorchester County, Maryland](#), ushering her family, friends and others to freedom.

In 2013, around the 100th anniversary of her death, [President Barack Obama established](#) a national Harriet Tubman monument in Maryland. Today, the [Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park](#) created by Congressional legislation honors her courage.

"Maryland has the most documented successful escapes," said Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, who recently proclaimed September as 'International Underground Railroad Month.'

From the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African-American History & Culture in Baltimore, to the Eastern Shore, sites abound in Maryland where one can experience Tubman's history. [African American](#) guides are among those providing tours. Or, you can explore the region via self-guided excursions.



Exploring Maryland's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom



The 'Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway' is a driving tour, where one can explore the secret network of trails, marshy waterways and safe houses used by freedom seekers. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center and State Park (which opened in March 2017) has exhibits, photos, research facilities and a museum store. Brodess Farm is where Tubman spent her early years. Also in this region is the Bucktown Village Store, where an overseer chasing a runaway slave threw a two-pound weight that struck young Tubman. It cracked her skull, causing periodic blackouts all her life.

Once Tubman became an abolitionist, she made several trips to Boston to speak alongside Frederick Douglass, the famed orator and abolitionist who was also born on Maryland's Eastern Shore; he escaped slavery while being hired out in Baltimore. The "Following in His Footsteps: Maryland's Frederick Douglass Driving Tour" traces his story.

Meanwhile, the National Park Service has Network to Freedom sites and the Maryland Department of Tourism has produced an 'Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Guide' that highlights other freedom fighters.

Maryland's Eastern Shore is also home to a powerful 3D mural of Harriet Tubman (the photo went viral) that shows Tubman reaching out a helping hand. The vision of Maryland-based artist Michael Rosato (with partial funding by the Maryland State Arts Council), the mural is painted on the side of The Harriet Tubman Museum & Educational Center in Cambridge, Maryland. The center is one of the oldest community organizations dedicated to her memory. For decades, their efforts have included museum exhibits, educational programming, celebrations and lobbying along with Tubman relatives for a national park.

Said Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson, chair of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, these stories can "inspire each of us today to do our part in ensuring that all people enjoy the freedoms that this nation affords."

Richmond, Virginia

When the first Africans landed in the Virginia Colony in 1619, the roots of slavery in what would become the United States of America began. Historians say one in four African Americans have roots in Richmond.

Indeed, the city's Shockoe Bottom neighborhood was once the site of America's second largest slave trading market, and there is an African burial ground under the asphalt that national and local advocates

are fighting to preserve.

Richmond is among the regional sites where the feature-length movie, **Harriet**, was filmed on location in Fall 2018. The **Focus Features** production, helmed by acclaimed director Kasi Lemmons, stars Cynthia Erivo, Leslie Odom, Jr. and Janelle Monae.

The producers, cast and crew spent time in the city, Margaret Finucane of the **Virginia Film Office** told BET.com. “Special **local promotions** around the project will be unveiled,” she said of the film.



(Photo: Focus Features)



Excitement about the Tubman movie builds on the city’s rich African American history.

“Virginia is ground zero for America incorporated,” said Gary L. Flowers, a community historian and radio host who provides **Black history tours** of his hometown. “In the heart of the Confederacy, our African American citizens made astonishing achievements that changed the world.”

Flowers cited **Historic Jackson Ward**, a neighborhood once known as “The Harlem of the South,” as the center of gravity for Black Richmond. It’s home to the **Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia**, as well as statues dedicated to classic Hollywood movie star Bill “Bojangles” Robinson and Maggie Walker, the first African American woman in history to charter a bank in 1902. The **Maggie**

[Walker Historic Site](#) tells her uniquely American story.

[Arthur Ashe](#), the only African American man to ever win a singles title at Wimbledon, is a native son of Richmond. The late tennis legend is honored with a statue on Monument Avenue, the lone African American among Confederate figures, and a local intersection was re-named [Arthur Ashe Boulevard](#) this summer.

[Graduate Richmond](#), a hip boutique hotel, pays homage to Ashe throughout the property. Rooms and hallways feature artwork with his likeness, and the onsite cafe, Brookfield, is named for the park where he once played.

Ashe, along with fellow Virginians such as [Missy Elliott](#) are part of the new exhibit “Determined: The 400 Year Struggle for Black Equality” at the [Virginia Museum of History & Culture](#).

This year, [Richmond Region Tourism](#) and The Black Experience Initiative, an advisory board of community members, launched [BLK RVA](#). The new campaign provides opportunities for residents and tourists to support Black-owned businesses and culture, while telling important stories of the historic landmarks that make the community what it is today.

“The Black experience in Richmond is rooted, yet rising,” said Enjoli Moon, BLK RVA advisory board chair, and founder of the city’s annual [Afrikana Independent Film Festival](#). “This is a place where we connect with our past, celebrate the present, and look toward a bright future.”

South Carolina

During the Civil War, Tubman was reportedly the first woman to lead an armed military operation, the [Combahee River Raid](#) in South Carolina. In tandem with Colonel James Montgomery and an African American infantry regiment, she helped defeat rebel forces and destroy their weapons. During that 1863 mission, Tubman helped shepherd hundreds of slaves on nearby plantations to freedom in boats. Apparently, say historians, some fled with food still cooking in their pots!

Delaware

Sites across Delaware, including [Greater Wilmington](#), commemorate the heroic efforts of Harriet Tubman. Delaware, a slave state, was sometimes referred to as “the last stop to freedom.”

Tubman passed through Delaware on her way to Philadelphia and returned to the state regularly over the next several years, as she repeatedly returned to Maryland to shepherd relatives and friends to freedom. Throughout the 1850s, with the help of Wilmington resident Thomas Garrett, a Quaker and ardent abolitionist who acted as a “station master” on the Underground Railroad, and his network of local operatives, Tubman led African American freedom seekers through Delaware and on to safer locations.

Today's history seekers can follow Delaware's 98-mile [Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway](#). The Delaware segment joins the Maryland byway, to create a rare two-state byway. Among the stops is downtown Wilmington's [Delaware History Museum/Mitchell Center for African American Heritage](#), where exhibits document the states' African American history.

(Photo: Dorchester Tourism)

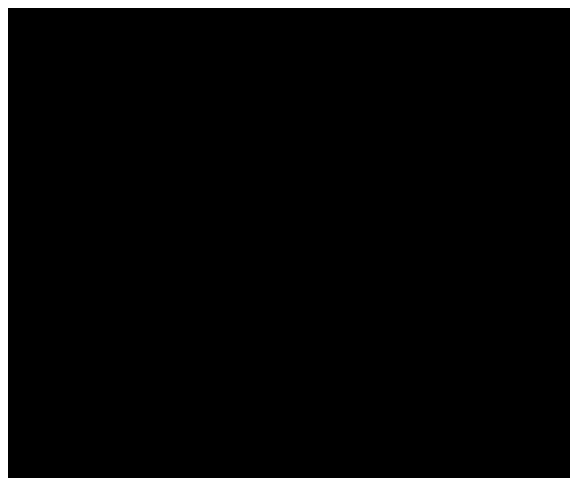
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