



HOPE NOTES

A newsletter of Restore Cleveland Hope,
a grassroots community organization

Spring 2006

WE DID IT! Now what?

Dear Friends,

Where to start? I am still spinning several feet above the ground. I find myself grinning in any old place at any old time. University Hospitals has donated the house and land. City Council has landmarked Cozad-Bates. Can you believe it?

It is all so beautiful, it is hard to breathe. The first stage of Restore Cleveland Hope's mission has been accomplished. *Cozad-Bates has been saved!* NOW, onto restoring and transforming Cozad-Bates into the Underground Railroad Teaching Center that will celebrate the creativity, courage and collaboration of this historic sacred space.

This next phase is equally ambitious. We are going to be very busy:

- Raising millions of dollars for rebuilding and redesign.
- Deciding additional use (e.g., bed and breakfast? teahouse? office space? meeting rooms?).
- Expanding the education program I began even before I took my first step "in their path."
- Welcoming other groups that offer complementing expertise to our vision of a vibrant center that celebrates Cleveland's courageous anti-slavery past.

Our mission will also increase opportunities for collaboration among the Glenville, Little Italy, Hessler Road and Fairfax neighborhoods. Our grassroots organization's name, Restore Cleveland Hope, is poetic and apropos.

Our thanks go out to all who attended our community meeting on March 25th and to all who signed up for specific committee work. In collaboration with University Circle Inc., the exciting planning has already started. The immediate focus is an architectural assessment of the property and, of course, fund raising.

We are shaping several volunteer committees and will be contacting you by e-mail and phone in the next few weeks.

The Teaching Center does not have to wait until the house is restored and redesigned. I "conducted" a group of 30 Fremont, Ohio middle schoolers and their chaperones to Cleveland's historic sites, Cozad-Bates and St. John's Church, and then to Ashtabula's Hubbard House and Giddings Law Office. This is the sort of thing I have been doing for the last several years, but I designated this April 15th trip as *The First Cozad-Bates UGRR Center Tour*. Professor Gilbert Doho quickly arranged space on the Case campus for an informational session, and Chris Ronayne pulled together a Power Point presentation with pictures Michael Ruffing took of the inside of Cozad-Bates.

The teaching will expand; in fact, several people have approached eager to work with us. We had a great conversation with people from the Anti-Defamation League, and their program would be right in sync with ours. Last week I was honored by the Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers, and during table chat we imagined a community story session on the front lawn of Cozad-Bates.

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Honoring Cleveland hero John Malvin

During the April meeting of the Cleveland Planning Commission, Councilman Kevin Conwell spoke passionately about the need to designate the Cozad-Bates House a Cleveland landmark. Conwell added that he would like to rename the street running next to the house, East 115th Street, for a heroic figure tied to the Underground Railroad.

We at Restore Cleveland Hope knew just the right choice – John Malvin.

So who was John Malvin and why should Clevelanders care?

John Malvin is a remarkable example of accomplishment and activism. Malvin helped runaway slaves to freedom, but he also helped those accused of aiding freedom seekers fight the legal charges against them. He helped integrate Cleveland's churches and its schools, and he led petitions to overturn Ohio laws that denied blacks the same rights as whites.

Malvin was born free in Virginia in 1795. His father was a slave, but his mother was free. In 1827, Malvin left Virginia for Ohio. On arriving in Cincinnati, he learned of Ohio's Black Laws, which required a \$500 security bond to immigrate, denied the right to testify against a white person, barred entrance into public institutions and even refused access to asylums. "Thus I found every door closed against the colored man in a free State, excepting the jails and penitentiaries, the doors of which were thrown wide open to receive him."

Malvin quickly set about organizing the first of many petitions to the state legislature to repeal the Black Laws. He also managed to liberate some slaves he found aboard a steamboat docked in Cincinnati.

In 1832, Malvin and his wife, Harriet, traveled up the Ohio Canal to Cleveland. He found doors shut to him because of his race, but often managed to open them with his character and persistence.

Malvin took a carpentry job building pews at the newly formed First Baptist Church, where he occasionally preached. There, he took a stand, refusing to segregate a number of pews for black congregants. His view won out, and black worshippers were able to sit anywhere in the church.

Malvin organized a state convention for black men, one of the first nationwide, in Columbus in 1835, from which sprang the School Fund Society. The group established schools for black children in Cincinnati, Columbus, Springfield and Cleveland. He continued to challenge the state's Black Laws, organizing meetings, petitioning the legislature and providing \$1,000 bail money to get black defendants out of jail until their day in court. The outbreak of war encouraged Malvin to engage in more community organizing – rallying black military companies to fight for the Union.

Despite the inequities Malvin spent a lifetime confronting, he died an optimist. He believed all obstacles could be overcome by actively working for change and progress. He wrote: "Distinctions which were founded on human policy ... and which tend to the degradation of a set of human beings, cannot be lasting, and must sooner or later succumb to the dictates of reason and humanity."

One day soon, we hope to celebrate this remarkable man and this remarkable time with a celebration at the Cozad-Bates House on John Malvin Street.

Letter from Joan

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An anthropologist from Tri-C introduced herself wondering how to involve her archeology students as the Cozad basement is explored. Robert Madison mused, "The restored John Hay will have architecture classes" imagine high school students as part of this project. To have young people involved as this Center develops is a dream come true.

For nearly 30 years, established organizations such as the Cleveland Landmark Commission and the Cleveland Restoration Society have protected Cozad-Bates, the last surviving pre-Civil War structure in the University Circle area, from demolition by neglect. We are so grateful for their steady behind-the-scenes work that has kept this grand, old, red-brick building in place. And thank you, University Hospitals, for your gracious donation. We will make you proud of the *community space* that this historic site will become.

Peace and Love,
Joan

If you signed up...

If you signed up to serve on a committee, expect to hear from a Restore Cleveland Hope member soon. We are organizing for the next phase of our mission: restoring the Cozad-Bates House and creating an Underground Railroad Teaching Center.