

THE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTER  
OF NEW BERN  
Post Office Box 1354, New Bern, NC 28563-1354

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Release Immediately  
For Community Calendars**

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**See attached jpg's of speaker and image with topic**

**“The Underground Railroad in North Carolina”**

**March 14, 2020 AAHCC COMMUNITY FORUM**

*New Bern, North Carolina (February 24, 2020)* - “The Underground Railroad in North Carolina” is the program for The African American Heritage and Cultural Center of New Bern’s monthly COMMUNITY FORUM at 3:30 on March 14, 2020. The African American Heritage and Cultural Center of New Bern in partnership with the New Bern Historical Society welcome Leesa Jones, Executive Director of the Washington Waterfront Underground Railroad Museum back to New Bern for this presentation which is free to the community at St. Peter’s AME Zion Church, 617 Queen Street, New Bern.

Leesa Jones will present this story and share how enslaved people in this area used common items including plants, nursery rhymes, songs, clothing, and dance to convey messages to abolitionists, ship captains, and others in obtaining their freedom. The audience will be engaged to share in the presentation and to learn more about this dark chapter of history in a creative way. With its many rivers, creeks, and seaports, the Maritime Underground Railroad was active in eastern North Carolina. This version of the Underground Railroad was so effective that runaway slaves often ran to the coast instead of heading north to reach freedom through overland routes.

Born, raised and educated in “Little Washington” Ms. Jones attended the City University of New York and was a pre-school teacher for thirty-two years before her retirement. She has also been an ordained minister for twenty-four years. Ms. Jones founded the African American Walking History Tours in 2009 and founded the Washington Waterfront Underground Railroad Museum in 2016. The Museum explores slavery, how the Underground Railroad functioned in the local area and how the enslaved planned and carried out escapes to freedom from the waterfront and the greater eastern NC overland routes. The museum is a National Park Service “Underground Railroad-Network To Freedom” site.

“The **COMMUNITY FORUM** on March 14th offers an opportunity for the greater community to learn more about this regional history” said Ann Herndon, AAHCC Vice President.

“Educators, students and community leaders are welcome to join us. Come early and bring your friends and family.”

AAHCC COMMUNITY FORUMS are presented on the second Saturday of each month and are FREE to participants and guests. Recent events have featured local musicians and historians, readings by NC's Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green, and local artist exhibits at "Gallery 919" in the NB Arts & Wellness Center, 919 Broad Street. As Board Secretary Kathy Adolph has said, "the March 14th FORUM, and all previous COMMUNITY FORUMS are made possible with support from AAHCC leadership and its volunteers, our generous donors, and with a grant from The Harold Bate Foundation."

### **ABOUT AAHCC**

The African American Heritage & Cultural Center of New Bern actively presents the historic impact and progression of African American heritage and culture in Eastern North Carolina.

AAHCC invites individuals, groups and organizations to partner in planning activities in New Bern and throughout the region. AAHCC is a 501(c)(3) NC nonprofit organization based in New Bern and serving communities throughout Eastern North Carolina. Contact information: (mail) Post Office Box 1354, NBNC 28563-1354 and (email) [TheCenterofNewBern@gmail.com](mailto:TheCenterofNewBern@gmail.com).

These early AAHCC leaders established a North Carolina 501(c)(3) nonprofit to collaborate with existing nonprofits, organizations and groups and present a broad spectrum of the African American Experience. Future AAHCC programs will include developing an oral history library, and presenting FREE COMMUNITY FORUMS each month with creative performances, seminars and lectures, exhibitions of artwork including murals, artifacts and personal collections, along with music, food and live art events.

### **ABOUT THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

The New Bern Historical Society celebrates and promotes New Bern and its heritage through events and education. Offices are located in the historic Attmore-Oliver House at 511 Broad Street in New Bern. For more information, call 252-638-8558, visit [www.NewBernHistorical.org](http://www.NewBernHistorical.org) or go to [www.facebook.com/NewBernHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/NewBernHistoricalSociety).

## **ABOUT THE WASHINGTON WATERFRONT UNDERGROUND RAILROAD MUSEUM**

The Washington NC Waterfront Underground Railroad Museum uses exhibits, dance, music, and storytelling to explore slavery and how the underground railroad functioned in the local area. Visit the museum and learn how the enslaved planned and carried out their escapes to freedom via the Washington NC waterfront and nearby overland routes. The Museum is in the orange caboose at 776 Gladden Street, the corner of Gladden and West Main in Washington, NC. Visit [www.facebook.com/washingtonundergroundrailroad](https://www.facebook.com/washingtonundergroundrailroad).

## **ABOUT ST. PETER'S AME ZION CHURCH**

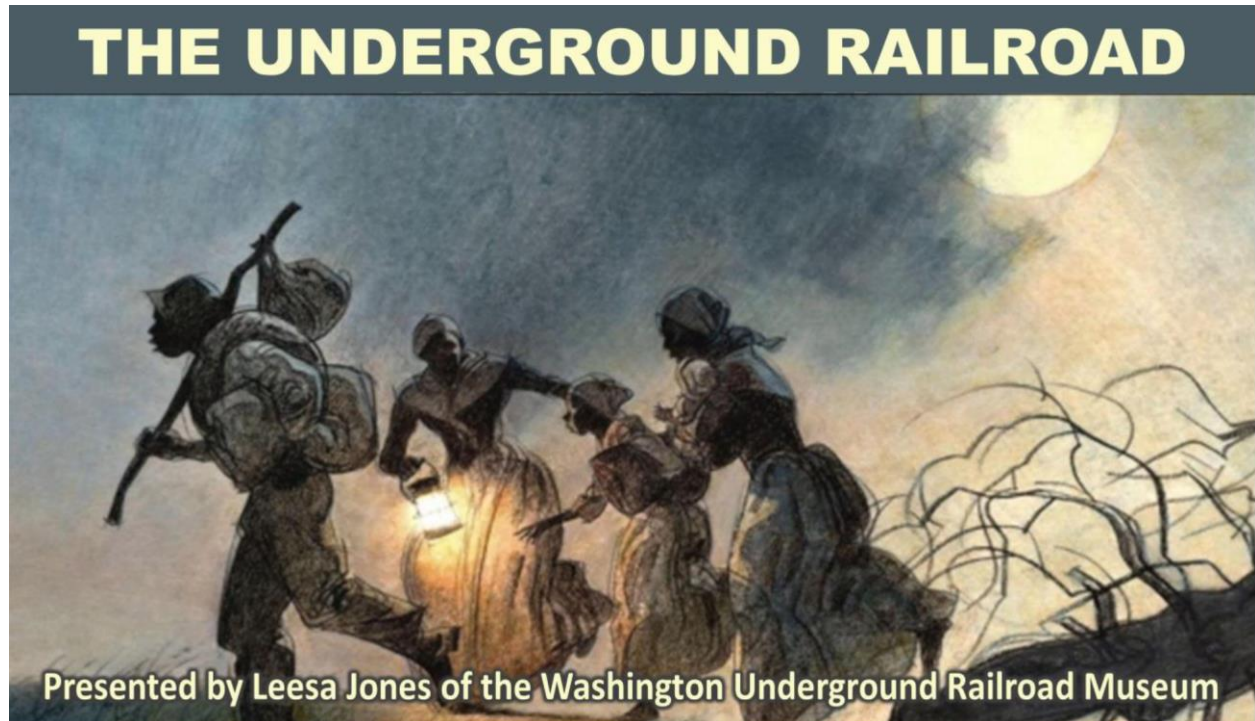
St. Peter's AME Zion Church traces its origins to St. Andrew's Chapel which was built in 1802. Under the leadership of James Hood, AME Zion bishop, the earlier St. Andrew's Chapel became St. Peter's in 1879. After the church was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1922 just as the Church was hosting the AME Zion NC Conference, the church was rebuilt in stages from 1923 to 1940. Great care has been taken over the years to preserve the building. The church is in the National heritage Registry and is recognized as the first church in the South to join the AME Zion Church and is now referred to as "The Mother Church". Reverend Garry Slade is the Pastor and host of the February 8<sup>th</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup> AAHCC COMMUNITY FORUMS.

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Photos for March 14 2020 AAHCC COMMUNITY FORUM



Leesa Jones at the Underground Railroad Museum, Washington NC



Presented by Leesa Jones of the Washington Underground Railroad Museum