

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Designating the Howell House as the Official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum

09/17/2020

CAPE MAY – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (A3201), which designates the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New Jersey as the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum. The Governor participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony today for the museum. The Howell House is owned by the Macedonia Baptist Church. In 2018, the church gave Robert, Zach, and Cynthia Mullock permission to renovate the house into a museum honoring Harriet Tubman. Harriet Tubman has a special connection to Cape May, having spent a significant amount of time during the 1850s in the area, gathering funds to support her work through the Underground Railroad. The museum will inform current and future generations of the great sacrifices and efforts that Tubman made on her mission to save enslaved African-Americans and bring them to the free North. The museum opened virtually on June 19, 2020, a date recognized as “Juneteenth” and recently designated an official State holiday in New Jersey.

"It gives me great pride in announcing that the Howell House in Cape May is now the official Harriet Tubman Museum of New Jersey," **said Governor Murphy**. "Harriett Tubman's extraordinary efforts helped establish and run the Underground Railroad, and her fearless actions during her lifetime led to the freedom of many. I am proud of the role that New Jersey and Cape May were able to play in her mission to free Black men, women, and children from slavery. This is just one small step in acknowledging the plight and struggle of the Black community, and we will continue to recognize and fight against all forms of racism."

"Harriet Tubman was arguably the most well-known activist and abolitionist in US history. Her intellect, determination and iron will saved the lives of many enslaved Americans. She is our North Star. When we fight for equality, we think of her name," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. "This museum, which is dedicated to her legacy, will now officially ensure that her name will forever be revered and honored in New Jersey history."

"Our work here in Cape May for the last two years has been dedicated to preserving and creating a space worthy of magnifying Harriet Tubman's life, and the life of so many luminaries who worked with her or followed in her footsteps in the struggle for racial and social justice." **said Cynthia Mullock, Executive Director of the Harriet Tubman Museum**. "Among our many supporters was the Murphy administration. In particular, we want to thank Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, Secretary of State Tahesha Way, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the New Jersey State Historical Commission, and the grant programs through the Cape May County Department of Tourism, as well as the State's neighborhood preservation program.

Primary sponsors of A3201 include Assemblymembers Carol A. Murphy, Gordon M. Johnson, and Antwan McClellan, and Senators Ronald L. Rice, Michael L. Testa, and Shirley K. Turner.

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"Harriet Tubman was a hero who not only freed herself, but returned to the South over a dozen times to lead at least 70 other slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad. Despite personal health problems and the threat of enslavement or death if caught, she courageously risked her own life in order to rescue others from slavery," **said Assemblywoman Carol Murphy and Assemblyman Gordon Johnson in a joint statement.** "It is a source of pride for our state that such an inspirational figure spent time in Cape May, earning money to support her Underground Railroad operations. Cape May is further connected to these historical efforts with countless escaped slaves having passed through the town on their way to freedom and the area having served as a center of abolitionist activity. This museum will honor her legacy and recognize our state's connection to an important movement, while simultaneously preserving this historic building. It's only fitting that we recognize Howell House as the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum."

"I am excited and proud that Harriet Tubman is being honored and that there is a dedicated place here in New Jersey where people can go to learn more about this extraordinary woman who truly is an American hero", **said Assemblyman Antwan McClellan.** "The more we learn about the Underground Railroad and the dangers faced, the more we understand the heroic, brave actions of the men and women who worked to abolish slavery."

"Harriet Tubman was fiercely committed to equality for all people, black or white, male or female," **said Senator Michael Testa.** "Through her tireless persistence, this determined woman helped bring about two historic society advancements that changed American society forever – she personally helped lead dozens of southern slaves to freedom in the north, and she was instrumental in the women's suffrage movement."

"Harriet Tubman was an abolitionist, a hero and a conductor of the Underground Railroad that ran through New Jersey. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this recognition. Ever since they began renovating the Howell House, there has been mounting excitement around the new museum, even being highlighted as one of the most anticipated museum openings of 2020 by the Smithsonian Magazine," **said Senator Shirley Turner.** "On the date of their opening, the formal designation is a small token of our gratitude for the work their team has done to memorialize Harriet's time in New Jersey, and educate us on its significance."

Governor Phil Murphy

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