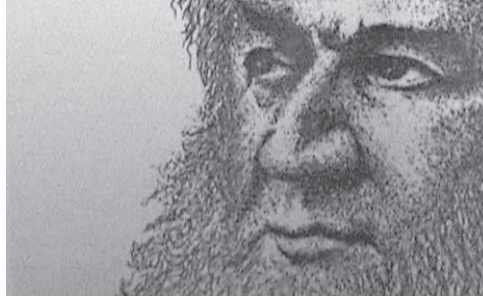


A reward poster issued by Harriet Powel's "subscriber." Onondaga Historical Association

177 Years Ago: In October of 1839, Harriet Powel, a slave from Mississippi, was in Syracuse with her owners, the Davenports, who were visiting friends and relatives. On the night before they were to head back home, a party was held in the Davenports' honor. During the festivities, Harriet slipped out a back door and climbed into a waiting buggy that had been arranged by Tom Leonard, a station master on the Underground Railroad. Her absence was noticed almost immediately and a reward offering \$200 (about \$5,000 today) was posted the next day. Over the next few weeks, Harriet was moved from place to place, staying just ahead of the people looking for her. She eventually came to the home of Gerrit Smith, a wealthy abolitionist who lived in Peterboro, Madison County. While there, Harriet had the opportunity to converse with Smith's cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Finally, after nearly a month in hiding, Harriet made it to Kingston, Ontario, where she lived the rest of her life as a free woman. The Onondaga Historical Association has commissioned playwright Kyle Bass to write a new play that will bring the events of Harriet's escape to life. The play is currently in development.

— Dan Connors for the Onondaga Historical Association



Abolitionist Gerrit Smith, left, and his mansion in Peterboro, below, where the Underground Railroad took escaped slave Harriet Powel on her way to freedom.
National Abolition Museum

