

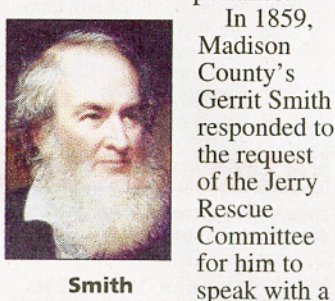
# Impact of Syracuse's Jerry Rescue revisited

**One important abolitionist was displeased with later attitudes.**

The following was submitted by Dorothy Willsey, of the Smithfield Community Center in Peterboro.

On Oct. 1, 1851, a captured fugitive slave named Jerry was freed by a mob of Syracuse citizens.

For seven years after that, Central New York abolitionists celebrated the Jerry Rescue with an event that commemorated its importance.



Smith

In 1859, Madison County's Gerrit Smith responded to the request of the Jerry Rescue Committee for him to speak with a

refusal, because he felt people had not maintained the high level of commitment to abolition that the Jerry Rescue had demonstrated.

On Saturday, 160 years after the Jerry Rescue, John M. Rudy will present "The Jerry Level: Gerrit Smith and the Memory of the Jerry Rescue" at 2 p.m. at the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark, 4543 Peterboro Road in Peterboro.

The events of Oct. 1, 1851 in downtown Syracuse drastically altered the course of the lives of countless Central New Yorkers. As abolitionists battered down the door to a Syracuse police station and freed



**THIS PORTRAIT**, owned by the Onondaga Historical Association, portrays Jermain Wesley Loguen, of Syracuse, one of the main rescuers Jerry McHenry.

fugitive slave Jerry Henry, they embarked on a journey that would span the course of the next decade. The Jerry Rescue was a catalyst for Upstate's abolition activity from 1851 until the dawn of the Civil War.

Among those who turned the freeing of one man on Clinton Square in Syracuse into mass action were Gerrit Smith and Jermain Loguen. Smith advocated living life to the "Jerry Level," regarding the need for radical action.

Loguen took the Jerry Rescue as inspiration to become more active in the Underground Railroad in Central New York. Throughout the 1850s the two men grew more radical every year until, by 1859, civil war seemed inevitable.

On the event's 160th anniversary, historian John Rudy

will share some of the interesting tidbits of research that he unearthed during his thesis preparations, investigate Central New York in the turbulent 1850s, and recognize the enduring memory of the Jerry Rescue.

Rudy's thesis centers around four personalities who had connections to the rescue:

■ Daniel Webster, in his May 1851 speech in Syracuse, which challenged the abolition community, leads off the study.

■ The next chapter centers on Jermain Loguen, Syracuse's "king" of the Underground Railroad.

■ Third, is a discussion of Gerrit Smith's disillusionment with the Upstate abolition community over the course of the 1850s, and his eventual alliance with John Brown.

■ The final chapter discusses Samuel May and the "death" of the Jerry Rescue spirit in Syracuse at the coming of the war. It seems that the abolition world, for about 10 years, revolved around Syracuse and its personalities — Smith being key among that community of thinkers.

Smith was one of the first five abolitionists to be inducted into the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum in 2005. Jermain Wesley Loguen will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on Oct. 22 in ceremonies at Colgate University.

A native of Pompey, Rudy has been studying the history of Upstate New York's abolition community since 2005. He holds a master's degree in



Ellen Blalock / The Post-Standard, file photo

**THE JERRY RESCUE** monument in Syracuse's Clinton Square was created in 1994 by sculptor Sharon Bu-Mann. Saturday marks the 160th anniversary of the rescue of the escaped slave. One speaker will talk Saturday about Gerrit Smith's later disillusionment with the public's commitment to abolition.

applied history from Shippensburg University and a bachelor's in history, with a minor in Civil War era studies from Gettysburg College. Rudy lives in Gettysburg and works with the National Park Service's Interpretive Development Program in Harpers Ferry, W.Va., creating training materials for park rangers across the entire park system.

The public is invited to attend the program at the Smith estate. Admission is \$2. Students are admitted free.

This program is one of a series of programs provided by the Stewards for the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark during 2011 and partially supported by a PACE grant from the Central New York Community Foundation.

For more information, visit [gerritsmith.org](http://gerritsmith.org), or call 684-3262; or contact the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, 5255 Pleasant Valley Road, Peterboro at AbolitionHoF.org; phone. 684-3262.