

Awesome that Underground Railroad Trail continues to expand

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Ohioans are proud of their state's history as a vital component of the Underground Railroad. That's why it is exciting to learn from Gov. Mike DeWine, the state Department of Development and Tourism Ohio that the Ohio Historical Underground Railroad Trail is expanding.

There are now 48 stops on the trail, with new additions such as the John Gee Black Historical Center in Gallipolis, Lucy Depp Park in Powell, the Gabriel Smith Memorial Gateway to Freedom Display at the Preble County District Library in Eaton and the Black Heritage Library and Multicultural Center in Findlay.

Many of the sites are also part of the Appalachian Freedom Heritage tour.

Yes, folks, THIS is the "heritage" it is appropriate to celebrate. In fact, the Ohio General Assembly has supported \$500 million to be invested in the Appalachian Community Grants Program that is helping to make some of these sites important not just important tourist destinations, but education opportunities.

"The Underground Railroad isn't just one story, it's hundreds of stories, told in every corner of Ohio," said State Tourism Director Sarah Wickham. "This trail lets visitors piece those stories together, whether they're standing on the banks of the Ohio River in Ripley or at a museum in Gallipolis. It's history you can experience, not just read about."

Experiencing the degree to which Ohio has not just valued but fought for freedom should be truly breath-taking for those who embark on the journey. That mustn't be a revelation only for outsiders. Ohioans should take advantage of the opportunity presented by the trail, too.

Stops in our neck of the woods include Historic Lyme Village in Bellevue, the Follett House Museum in Sandusky, The Underground Railroad Historic Walking Tour in Sandusky "The Path to Freedom" at Facer Park in Sandusky and the Black Heritage Library and Multicultural Center in Findlay.