

(**Note:** This is the second of a series featuring each of the 11 Underground Railroad sites in Oswego County that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

**May 15, 2002**

### **Starr Clark Tin Shop is Listed on National Register of Historic Places**



*The former STARR CLARK tin shop in the village of Mexico was a focal point of abolitionist activity in Oswego County. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

In the years before the Civil War, many Oswego County residents provided assistance to African-American slaves escaping bondage in the southern states by hiding them in their homes or helping them find transportation to Canada. These activities have become known as the Underground Railroad.

The Oswego County Freedom Trail Commission was formed by the Oswego County Legislature to coordinate surveys of Underground Railroad sites and submit nominations for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

The former Starr Clark tin shop, located on Main Street in Mexico where Routes 69 and 104 intersect, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December.

“The Starr Clark tin shop was high on our nomination priority list,” said Barbara Dix, Oswego County Historian and chairwoman of the Oswego County Freedom Trail Commission.

Starr Clark, an outspoken abolitionist and member of the Whig party, was born in Massachusetts in August 1793. In 1832, Starr and his wife Harriet moved to the village of Mexico and managed the mercantile and tin shop on Main Street. Clark was an active abolitionist and regularly attended anti-slavery meetings. He signed the first anti-slavery petition from Oswego County in 1835. The shop eventually became a focal point of abolitionist activity and the Underground Railroad in Central New York.

“Though Clark was outspoken about abolitionism, he was not vocal about his role in the Underground Railroad. Linking people to their activities in the Underground Railroad was difficult due to its secret nature,” said Dr. Judith Wellman, professor emerita of history, Oswego State University, and member of the Oswego County Freedom Trail Commission. “Clark can be placed in the company of Underground Railroad activists. We know that as a member of the Mexico vigilance committee, an organized network of abolitionists, he actively assisted fugitives.”

“Being listed on the National Register provides some protection for the property and recognizes the importance of these properties to the history of our country,” said Dix.

For more information, contact Oswego County Historian Barbara Dix, weekdays, phone 349-8460 or 1-800-596-3200, ext. 8460.