

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

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Home of Oswego Abolitionist John Edwards is Named to National Register



This home at 144 E. Third St., Oswego, was owned by abolitionist John B. Edwards from 1836 to 1895. Edwards worked with Gerrit Smith to help many former slaves escape to Canada.

Oswego County was a significant site in the anti-slavery abolitionist movement of the 1840s and 1850s. Eleven Underground Railroad sites in the county have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the John B. and Lydia Edwards house at 144 E. Third St. in Oswego.

John B. Edwards hosted many fugitive slaves and arranged shelter and transportation for many others. He worked as Gerrit Smith's agent in Oswego.

Gerrit Smith served in the United States congress, and was the only declared abolitionist to do so. He was a candidate for President in 1848, 1856, and 1860. Smith was born in Utica in 1797 and lived in Peterboro. He played a key role in many anti-slavery and temperance societies.

On July 17, 1847 Edwards wrote Smith that:

“Nine poor fugitives from slavery's prison left this port last evening for Canada.

They were I am told in much fear that pursuer's were after them. They said that they left in a company of 100 and that about 60 of their number were captured before they got out of the slave states.”

Edwards was president of the village, alderman, president of the Oswego County Savings Bank, and trustee of the orphan asylum and the public library. He was a member of Trinity Methodist Church. He purchased the land on East Third Street in 1836, and owner the property until his death in 1895.

The John B. Edward house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 2001. Rick Goodman now owns the home.

“Being listed on the National Register recognizes the importance of the property to the history of our nation and provides it with a measure of protection,” said Oswego County Historian Barbara Dix, chairwoman of the Oswego County Freedom Trail Commission.

The Freedom Trail Commission, which was formed by the Oswego County Legislature, conducted research and nominated several Underground Railroad sites to be places on the National Register of Historic Places.

For more information, contact Dix at 349-8460 or 1-800-596-3200, ext. 8460.