

Sloane House added to network

U.S. government agrees it was important 'depot' along Underground Railroad

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Register photo/LUKE WARK

The Sloane House on the corner of Franklin and East Adams streets will be renovated by Sanduskiian Ruth Parker.

SANDUSKY

Rush Sloane did a lot for Sandusky and its residents when he was alive. So maybe he can send a few tourists our way, even though he's been dead since 1908.

The National Park Service has put the Rush R. Sloane House, 403 E. Adams St., in the National

Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

"We found that it makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad in American history and that it meets the requirements for inclusion as a site," Diane Miller, the program's manager, wrote in a letter to Randy Koch, president of the Erie County Historical Society.

The Underground Railroad is the name given to the secret network of anti-slavery activists who helped runaway slaves from the South escape to Canada before the Civil War. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the bestselling novel of the 19th century, mentions Sandusky as an Underground Railroad destination.

Getting the house listed is part of a series of efforts the historical society is making to make the county a destination for tourists interested in history, Koch said.

Sloane himself was a history buff. The Sandusky Library's history blog records that in 1895, Sloane was vice president of the Firelands Historical Society.

Sloane also was a former mayor of Sandusky. And according to Ohio History Central, he bought Cedar Point and took the first steps to turn it into a vacation destination.

But he's best known as an abolitionist who worked to help the Underground Railroad. His home was a safe house for runaway slaves, and in 1852 he was accused of interfering with the Fugitive Slave Act. He was convicted and fined \$4,330.30, serious money back in the 1850s.

Ruth Parker owns the Sloane House and plans are under way to turn it into a bed and breakfast, Koch said.

Other local groups have tried to make Sandusky's role on the Underground Railroad better known. Sandusky's Underground Railroad Education Centers offers tours every summer.

And Lake Erie Shores & Islands also publishes a pamphlet that provides a self-guided tour of Sandusky.

Lake Erie Shores & Islands has been very supportive of the historical society's efforts, Koch said.

Koch said his organization welcomes new members who want help preserve local history. Membership is just \$10 a household. For information, contact Koch by email at rkoch@kochdoorsandwindows.com or call him at 419-625-5956.