

Albany abolitionist subject of discussion

Abel Brown credited with helping 1,000 people escape slavery

By Lynda Edwards

Averill Park

Albany abolitionist pastor Abel Brown was a small, slim man whose restless energy was often mistaken for jumpiness.

But he was tough enough to endure beatings from mobs of men, stonings by a crowd and still finish his speech in the Adirondacks and suffer gunshot wounds, yet still guide escaping slaves to safety.

When pre-Civil War New York newspapers weren't examining slavery in sufficiently bold detail, he founded his own

paper, The Albany Patriot. He and his wife fought off Troy home invaders who were enraged when the couple became guardians of a Black child.

Historians credit him with helping get 1,000 Black people escaping enslavement to freedom and safety before he died a day short of his 34th birthday after being trapped by a snowstorm on a train near Rochester.

His wife, Catherine, edited his diaries, journals, letters and sermons he preached at Sand Lake Baptist Church in the early 1840s into a unique eyewitness account of the Underground Railroad.

And at 7 p.m. Tuesday, the Sand Lake Historical Society will examine the life of a slav-



Times Union historic images

Sand Lake Baptist Church in Sand Lake, founded in 1802, gave abolitionist Abel Brown a pulpit from which to preach. This photo was taken in 1975 when the congregation was celebrating their church's history in the fight against slavery.

ery fighter whose bravery and resourcefulness deserve to be better known.

Peter Finn, a trustee of the society, will talk about Brown, a leader in the radical Liberty Party and of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society.

As the founder and corresponding secretary of the society, Brown traveled widely, preaching the message of abolition, often onstage with men and women who had escaped slavery.

For a time in the mid-1840s, Brown served as pastor of the Sand Lake Baptist Church in Sand Lake.

For more information on the discussion, call 518-527-9926 or go to <http://sandlakehistory.org>.