

NETWORK TO FREEDOM

Elizabeth and Henry Hamer have been nationally recognized, honored, and verified as freedom-seekers by the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Their story illustrates that all humankind embraces the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression. They are buried along with their descendants in the Royal Oak Cemetery.



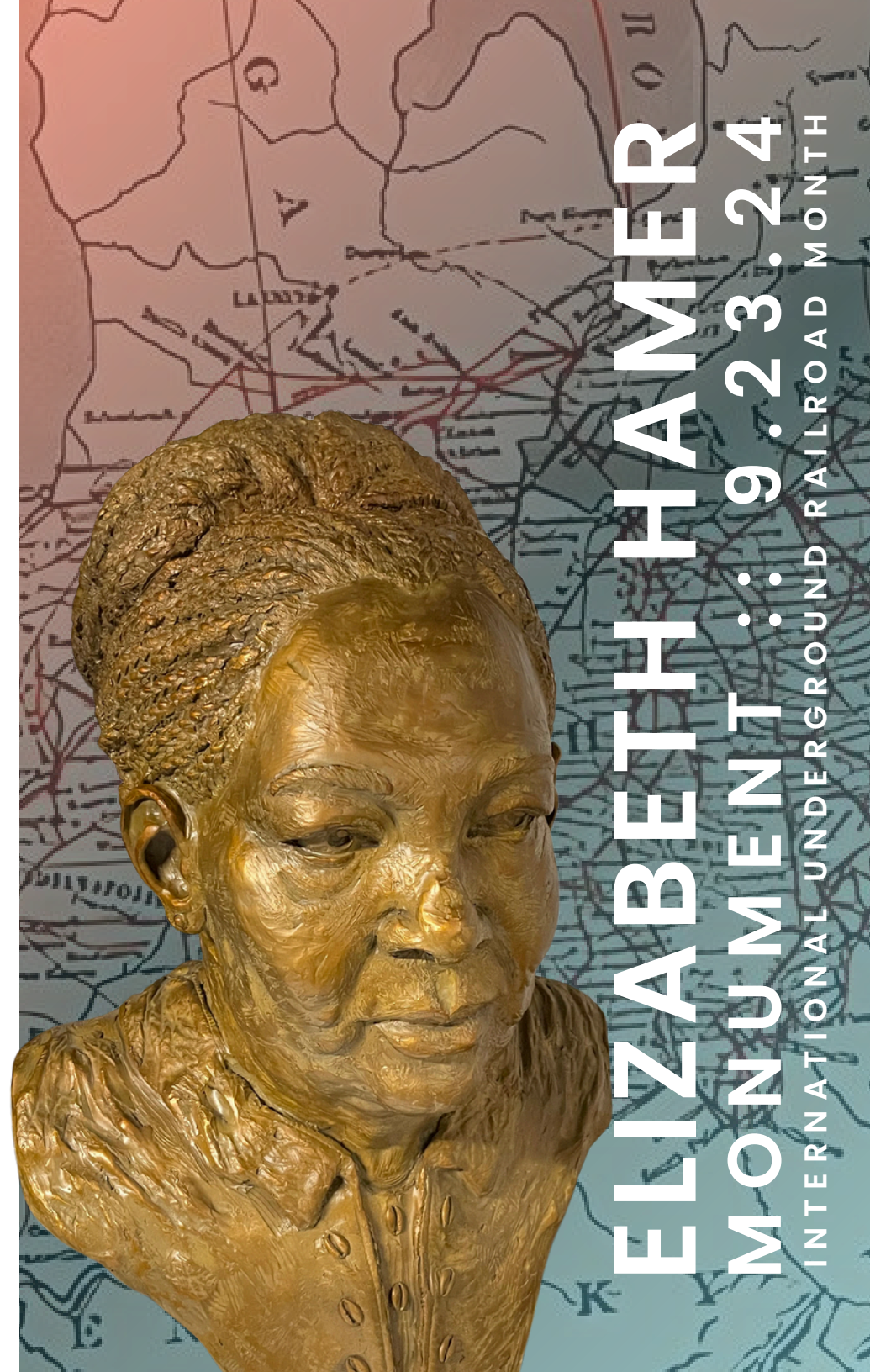
NATIONAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

This monument and the surrounding park improvements have been made possible through the generous support of the Oakland County Parks 2023 Community Park and Trail Grant, a kind donation from The Boji Group, and contributions from the Royal Oak Commission for the Arts and many other supporters. We extend our deepest gratitude to all who have helped bring this project to life.



COMMISSION
FOR THE ARTS

Left: Lakeesha (Wilkins) Morrison, activist and Hamer descendant.



ELIZABETH HAMER
MONUMENT... 9.23.24
INTERNATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD MONTH

A black and white portrait of Elizabeth Hamer, an elderly African American woman with short, dark hair, wearing a dark, high-collared dress with a white lace or ruffled trim at the neck. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression.

PROGRAM

Unveiling of the Elizabeth Hamer Monument

In honor of International
Underground Railroad Month

Hamer Finch Wilkins Park
September 23, 2024 | 2:00 p.m.

Welcome Remarks

Mayor Michael Fournier

International Underground Railroad Month Remarks

Rochelle E. Danquah
Chairperson for the Michigan Freedom
Trail Commission/Oakland University

Descendant Remarks

Lakeesha Morrison

Artist Remarks

Austen Brantley

Unveiling of the Sculpture

Light Refreshments

Elizabeth Hamer (c.1824–1913) and Henry Hamer (c.1816–1899)

Life in Covington, Kentucky

Elizabeth and Henry Hamer were enslaved in Kentucky. Both worked as domestic servants in the home and businesses of their enslaver. Henry's additional duties included traveling to his owner's family plantations to deliver letters and cash. The Hamers were highly dependent upon and trusted by their enslaver Henry Bruce, Jr. and his family members.

The Journey of Freedom-Seekers

In August 1856, Elizabeth and Henry self-emancipated and fled from Covington, Kentucky, and crossed the Ohio River into Cincinnati, Ohio. Both cities were riverfront communities situated directly across from one another on the Ohio River. Cincinnati's Underground Railroad community was known for assisting freedom-seekers. The journey was dangerous, yet the Hamers safely arrived weeks later in Windsor, Ontario. In March 1857, Elizabeth gave birth to their son Charles in Canada, which was the Hamers' motivation for escape.

Early Life in Royal Oak Township

By 1860, Elizabeth and Henry had settled in Royal Oak Township. They worked and saved enough money to purchase five acres of land in the community. Henry worked on farms, while Elizabeth maintained the home and worked as a midwife. The Hamers became beloved members of the community. Presently, the descendants maintain ownership of a part of the Hamers' original homestead and some still live in Royal Oak.

Legacy

Elizabeth and Henry Hamer's story from slavery to freedom demonstrates their resistance to the system and their self-determination for a better future for themselves and their family. Today, the Hamers remind us of the courage and bravery it took for African Americans to escape from slavery and build new lives for themselves.