

‘Towards Freedom’ unveiled in Lexington on Juneteenth

By Jamie Lucke
Kentucky Lantern

LEXINGTON — In 1844, Harriet and Lewis Hayden and their son, Joseph, set off from Lexington on the Maysville Road.

They crossed the Ohio River to Ripley, Ohio, made their way to freedom in Canada and later crossed back over the border to settle in Boston. There they helped lead the abolitionist movement, provided refuge to other freedom-seekers on the Underground Railroad and became renowned patrons of education.

On Thursday, the Haydens returned to Lexington — in bronze, at least, as several hundred people gathered on a steamy Juneteenth morning for the dedication of “Towards Freedom,” a monumental depiction of the couple by Jamaican sculptor Basil Watson.

The unveiling comes after years of imagining and work by volunteers and neighbors of the statue’s North Lime-stone site, near where the Haydens would have begun their escape from enslavement.

And it comes as historians and educators warn of efforts by the Trump administration and others to sanitize racism and remove Black history from view, an effort alluded to by Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear who spoke at the dedication.

“We cannot ignore the mistakes of our past,” Beshear told the gathering. “We cannot turn away from even the most painful moments and pretend they don’t exist. Instead, we must learn from them and make progress for that better tomorrow. And that’s what we’re doing right here today.

“While our federal government tries to erase a lot of our history, today in Kentucky we’re celebrating it. We are celebrating it and committing to preserving important people like Lewis and Harriet.”

The statue of the Haydens is on the grounds of Lexington Traditional Magnet School. As a choir sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” students helped Beshear and sculptor Watson unwrap and reveal the monument, a man and woman, fac-



Attendees surround “Towards Freedom” after the formal dedication of the statue. It depicts Harriet and Lewis Hayden who escaped slavery in Lexington on the Underground Railroad.

ing north, their clasped hands raised to the sky.

Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton said the city’s Public Arts Commission had made its largest contribution ever — \$245,000 — to the sculpture.

Larry Kezele, a founder of Lexington Freedom Train, which is raising money for the statue, a park to surround it and also to organize educational events and curriculum, said more

than \$600,000 has been raised; he said the goal is \$875,000. Kezele thanked LexArts for its help. “I want to thank every single person who has supported this project. Hundreds of people have contributed through donations, time, ideas and passion,” Kezele said.

Mark Steven Watkins, a member of the Freedom Train committee and father of an 11-year-old son, told the Haydens’

story, including that when Lewis decided to leave the slave state of Kentucky he had already lost his family twice to slavery.

Hayden was a child when his mother and siblings were sold and the family separated. Later, his first wife and their child “were sold down the Mississippi River and he never saw them again, never heard from them again,” said

Watkins. “That would have broken me. It would have destroyed me. But Lewis Hayden kept going towards freedom.”

Watkins said Lewis was determined not to lose Harriet and her son, Joseph, when they became a family.

A ministry student from Oberlin College, Calvin Fairbank, and Lexington school teacher Delia Webster helped the Haydens and Joseph escape and were imprisoned by Kentucky for their courage.

Joseph died in the Civil War, Watkins said.

In Boston, Lewis ran a clothing store and was elected to the Massachusetts legislature.

As a widow, Harriet left her estate to the Harvard Medical School to educate Black students, a legacy that is educating students still.

Kezele told the gathering, “The energy we feel now, the spirit in the air, is the presence of Lewis and Harriet Hayden, the abolitionists who aided them and the countless formerly enslaved from Lexington, whose voices have waited about two centuries to be heard.”

Public Notice

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Seeking bids for Annual Service Contract for Water and Sanitary Sewer Repair

GEORGETOWN MUNICIPAL WATER & SEWER SERVICE

NOTICE TO BIDDERS FOR 2025-2026 Annual Services Contract for Water and Sanitary Sewer Repair

Georgetown Municipal Water & Sewer Service (GMWSS) is accepting sealed bids for the “2025-2026 Annual Services Contract for Water and Sanitary Sewer Repair” which includes furnishing all labor and equipment, select materials as directed, and performing all work on an as needed basis as directed by GMWSS and set forth in the Request for Bids. Sealed Bids shall be submitted to the



Georgetown Municipal Water and Sewer Service

offices of GMWSS located at 1000 West Main Street, Georgetown, Kentucky, 40324 until 10:00 A.M., Local Time, Thursday, July 3rd, 2025, and then read aloud via conference call. To join the conference call, dial 502-603-5680 and enter access code: 01122#.

A digital PDF version of the Bid Documents can be obtained from GMWSS by emailing Jeremy Wood at jwood@gmwss.com.

Paper copies may be obtained from GMWSS by calling Jeremy Wood at 502-863-7816 ext. 1206 and scheduling a pickup time. Questions or inquiries pertaining to the bid must be submitted on or before June 19, 2025.

GMWSS reserves the right to waive any bidding informalities and to reject any or all bids, for any reason. The sealed bid must be clearly marked on

the outside of the envelope: “Sealed bids for 2025-2026 Annual Services Contract for Water and Sanitary Sewer Repair”. The bid form may be mailed to: Georgetown Municipal Water & Sewer Service, 1000 West Main Street, Suite 1, Georgetown, Kentucky 40324, Attn: Jeremy Wood.

For any additional information, please contact Jeremy Wood at 502-863-7816.

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