

Quick biography of Ann Hagedorn:

Ann Hagedorn is a former staff writer for *The Wall Street Journal* and an award-winning author of six narrative nonfiction books that embrace a broad range of topics and were widely reviewed with coverage including the Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, NPR, Time, Smithsonian, and the Chicago Tribune. She has taught writing, as an adjunct professor, at Columbia University, at Northwestern, at Xavier University, and at Miami University; and she holds masters degrees from Columbia University and the University of Michigan, plus an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from Denison University.

After living in New York City for two decades, she now writes her books in a small town on the Ohio River, which she discovered while researching her third book, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad*.

In October, 2004, Hagedorn was honored with a Resolution from the Ohio Senate as an "Outstanding Citizen of Ohio." That year, too, the American Library Association awarded *Beyond the River* the distinction of being one of the twenty-five most notable nonfiction books in America.

The testimony for HB340 from Ann Hagedorn:

I'm honored to express my support for HB 340, which will designate September as "International Underground Railroad Month" in the State of Ohio – a state now renowned for having provided one of the earliest and most frequently travelled escape routes for slaves in the nation.

Annual recognition of what transpired during the antebellum years in Ohio, which was immensely significant in the creation and the longevity of the social network later known as the Underground Railroad, will help to keep alive the spirit and memory of the many Ohioans who risked their lives and livelihoods to end human bondage.

Let us always remember that those exemplary men and women proved to future generations that blacks and whites can work together for the greater good by trusting each other.

Perhaps the greatest significance of what happened in Ohio's network – which included at least 250 safe houses statewide, from the Ohio River to the Canadian border -- is that it shows what determination and devotion to something larger than ourselves truly looks like. It would seem that upcoming generations will always learn from the example of the selfless individuals who participated in Ohio's Underground Railroad. The list is long and includes such heroes as the former slave and abolitionist and inventor, John Parker, who worked with the Rev. John Rankin in Ripley, Ohio. A renowned leader in America's abolitionist movement, Rankin was the mentor of famed Boston-based abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Rankin's prescient insight is evident in the following quote written in an 1823 letter and later published by Garrison in 1832:

“Even after a people, who have been long enslaved, are emancipated, it will require them to pass through several generations in order to regain their original strength of mind, and to give the world a fair exhibition of the powers they possess.” – John Rankin, 1823.

I must say that I am a writer who is somewhat uneasy about the now-required skill of all writers to promote their books. But to boast a bit about the story depicted in my book *Beyond the River* is something I am comfortable doing for it is a narrative about astutely brilliant and brave individuals in the State of Ohio whose courage made a difference in the lives of countless numbers of slaves in America.

Ohio’s past is brimming with the early heroes of the Underground Railroad, from Cincinnati to Cleveland, from Ripley to Marietta. The bravery and the bonds evident in the history of Ohio’s bold network saved lives and moved us closer to the level of humanity that we must all strive for.

It's an extraordinary history that must be annually celebrated and acknowledged statewide for it shows what it takes to live out the moral convictions of human rights.

Bravo for Ohio and its stunning history!