

Museum for businessman who helped slaves short on funds

By David Dagan

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William C. Goodridge has a mural in his honor and a business center bearing his name in York.

Many people think that's not enough to tell the story of a man who went from slavery to freedom to prosperity – and risked everything to help others follow him.

"I think a lot of people still don't understand who he was and what he did," said Scott Butcher, who has researched Goodridge's life.

Now, an effort to tell Goodridge's story through a museum has been delayed because of a funding shortfall. The nonprofit [Crispus Attucks Association](#) is planning to open the museum inside Goodridge's former home at 123 E. Philadelphia St., but a target date of February has come and gone.

Crispus Attucks began renovating the building last fall and finished most of the exterior work, said Carol Kauffman, the group's community development director. The job is now on hold because hoped-for funding that would have paid for the remainder did not materialize, she said. Crispus Attucks has raised about \$240,000 so far, but it needs about another \$200,000, she said. The nonprofit is making applications for the money and has put out feelers in the business community to gauge interest, she said.

Besides renovation money, Crispus Attucks hopes to raise \$500,000 for an endowment to fund the operations of the William C. Goodridge Freedom House and Underground Railroad Museum.

The former York Federal bank donated the Goodridge house to Crispus Attucks in 1997, Kauffman said. Planning for the museum began in 2002, and it originally was expected to open in 2006, she said. That timeline was pushed back when a close inspection of the house uncovered features that require special attention to preserve, Kauffman said.

"It's been delayed a couple of different times for different reasons, and now it's just the money," Kauffman said.

Separately, Crispus Attucks is nearing completion of a \$7.2 million fundraising campaign for a new child care center the group will operate at the corner of Boundary Avenue and Duke Street in York, said Bobby Simpson, the nonprofit's leader.

Goodridge was born a slave in Maryland, but was sent to York County and later freed at age 16. He rose to become a wealthy businessman. His role in the Underground Railroad is comparable to that of Harriet Tubman, or possibly just a notch below, Butcher said. Goodridge hid slaves in his home and helped spirit them out of the county in rail cars that he operated, Butcher said.

Butcher is director of business development for Springettsbury Township-based [Nutech Group](#), a family of companies that provide architectural, engineering, facilities-management and construction services. Nutech did design work for the Goodridge Freedom House.

Once it opens, the museum will become part of [Quest For Freedom](#), an Underground Railroad-based marketing campaign run by a coalition of tourism bureaus. The Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau refers bus groups to private tour guides who can take them through significant Underground Railroad stops in Lancaster County, said Alice Sanders, the bureau's special markets consultant. The bureau also has launched "Quest for Freedom" based book discussions. The next event will feature ["The Colors Of Courage: Gettysburg's Forgotten History"](#) this Saturday at the bureau's [Headquarters](#). A free breakfast will be served at 9:30 a.m. and the discussion will run from 10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.