

Slave's tale to be told

By JESSICA KUMOR

STURBRIDGE – Honoring the state's civil rights movement, Old Sturbridge Village will present "Honoring a Slave Heroine: The Mumbet Story" on Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday.

The village will host historical performance educator Tammy Denease for a presentation of the true story of Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, said Ann Lindblad, director of marketing and communication.

Freeman was a young slave woman who won her freedom in a Massachusetts court in 1781, by citing the state constitution's passage, "All men are born free and equal."

"The Mumbet case was a landmark event," Lindblad said. "(The case was) a precursor to the Massachusetts' Supreme Court ruling in 1783 that ended slavery entirely in Massachusetts."

The performance will honor people important in the civil rights movement as a way to mark the King holiday, Lindblad said.

"Bringing history to life is what we do. (The Mumbet story) is a true story based right here that occurred just a bit before the time period the village portrays," Lindblad said. "The timing is so close that villagers from that period might remember the Mumbet case in their lifetime."

Denease will perform in character as Mumbet, who, after spending 30 years as a slave in the household of Col. John Ashley, of Sheffield, hired lawyer Theodore Sedgwick and successfully sued for

her freedom in court, Lindblad said.

She then changed her name, a common practice of the time, to Elizabeth Freeman and began employment as a family nurse, healer and midwife for the Sedgwicks.

"Equality and personal freedom if often taken for granted today," Lindblad said. "Equality wasn't the case in (Mumbet's) time."

The Mumbet performance is just one activity planned for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, however, it is sure to highlight the historical purpose of the Civil Rights movement and the day's namesake. "One person can make a difference," Lindblad said. "Mumbet demonstrates that beautifully, especially for the occasion."



Submitted photo

Storyteller Tammy Denease will play Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman on Monday at Old Sturbridge Village.

IF YOU GO

Event: "Honoring a Slave Heroine: The Mumbet Story"

When: Jan. 17, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Cost: Included with admission to village; adults, \$20, adults; seniors, \$18, children, free when accompanied by adults during January (excludes educational groups)

For info: Call (800); online, www.osv.org



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