

*The Town of Hilton Head Island*

# *Proclamation*

**WHEREAS**, the Underground Railroad was the resistance to enslavement of African Americans through escape and flight, through the end of the Civil War; and

**WHEREAS**, despite the illegality of their actions, people of all races, class, and genders participated in this widespread form of civil disobedience; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Harriet Tubman, the most recognized conductor of the Underground Railroad, helped guide the freedom seekers for eight years, before having to abandon her travels in the mid-1850's due to a high bounty offered for her capture; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Tubman helped settle two black communities in Canada, was involved in abolitionist efforts throughout the North, and helped John Brown plan his raid on Harpers Ferry in the late 1850's; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 7, 1861, the Battle of Port Royal began, driving Confederate forces back to the mainland; and

**WHEREAS**, Hilton Head Island became the setting for the first self-governed town of formerly enslaved Africans; and

**WHEREAS**, due to overcrowding in the barracks in the Union camp, General Ormsby Mitchel dedicated a large parcel of land to the newly freed Blacks to cultivate and govern, later named Mitchelville in honor of General Mitchel; and

**WHEREAS**, as word spread about the humanitarian crisis around the formerly enslaved population in the Port Royal area, Ms. Tubman was asked to help with the education and resettlement of the formerly enslaved Africans; and

**WHEREAS**, men were recruited for the on-going Civil War and Black soldiers built Fort Howell to protect Mitchelville; and

**WHEREAS**, after the slaves were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, Mitchelville became a template for the creation of future freedmen towns and served as the "rehearsal for Reconstruction"; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2015, the Heritage Library Foundation earned the designation as a facility on the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom; and

**WHEREAS**, the Heritage Library Foundation, Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park and Fort Howell are facilities and sites on the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I **John J. McCann**, Mayor of the **Town of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina**, hereby proclaim the month of **September 2020** as:

## **NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD MONTH**

**IN, TESTIMONY WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused this seal of the Town of Hilton Head Island to be affixed on this first day of September, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty.

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John J. McCann, Mayor

Attest:

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Krista M. Wiedmeyer, Town Clerk