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OSV retells an inspiring story



Courtesy of Old Sturbridge Village This portrait shows Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman in her later years.



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The Sturbridge living history museum is offering free admission for children in January (a \$7 value per child). Through Jan. 31, all kids age 17 and under get free admission when accompanied by an adult (the offer does not apply to educational groups of 10 or more).

The "Mumbet" performance is based on the true story of Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, a young slave woman who won her freedom in court in 1781, citing language in the Massachusetts constitution: "all men are born free and equal." Mumbet's case was a precursor to the 1783 decision that ended slavery in Massachusetts.

Other activities on MLK Day and throughout the month include ice skating (bring your own skates), sledding on 1830s-style sleds, and sleigh rides (snow permitting). After enjoying the museum's outdoor winter activities, visitors can warm up indoors beside one of the village's many cozy fireplaces and take part in hands-on crafts and activities. Children can also spend time in Old Sturbridge Village's popular "KidStory" indoor play area.

In character as former slave Mumbet, storyteller Denease tells the story of a fascinating woman whose story has been forgotten, but whose courage had an enormous impact on the lives of millions. Mumbet spent 30 years as a slave in the household of Colonel John Ashley of Sheffield, Mass., before hiring a lawyer, Theodore Sedgwick, and successfully suing for her freedom in court. Once free, she took the name Elizabeth Freeman, and was employed by the Sedgwick family as a nurse, healer and midwife.

Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman once said, "Anytime while I was a slave, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I was told I would die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it, just to stand on God's green earth a free woman."

Storyteller Denease grew up in Mississippi listening to stories told by her own great-grandmother, a former slave who lived to the age of 125. "It's amazing to me that living now, nearly 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation that, I personally knew — and loved dearly — someone who survived slavery," Denease says. "I draw on my great-grandmother's own life story for inspiration when portraying Mumbet."

In addition to the Mumbet story, Old Sturbridge Village will also present a portrayal of famous suffragist and anti-slavery orator Abby Kelley Foster, whose Worcester farm became a stop on the Underground Railroad.

All MLK Jr. Day programs at Old Sturbridge Village are included in the cost of admission to the museum.

Located just off the Massachusetts Turnpike and Routes I-84 and 20 in Sturbridge, the village is open year-round, but hours vary seasonally. Winter hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, as well as all Monday holidays. Beginning April 2, the village will be open seven days a week. Children age 17 and under receive free admission through Jan. 31, 2011. Normal admission is: \$20 for adults; \$18 for seniors; \$7 for children ages 3-17; children under 3, free. Each admission includes a free second-day visit within 10 days. For details, visit www.osv.org or call 800-SEE-1830.