

Anthony Cohen Biography

Anthony Cohen is a historian, author, and explorer of the American past. An early purveyor of experiential history, he launched his career in the spring of 1996, embarking on a two-month journey to explore the Underground Railroad, the secret network that thousands of enslaved Americans traveled to attain their freedom.

Cohen began his trek on May 4, 1996 in Sandy Spring, Maryland, traveling 1,200 miles by foot, boat, and rail to his final destination in Amherstburg, Ontario, on July 7, 1996. He traced the steps of freedom seekers along wilderness trails and waterways, to fugitive slave communities and Quaker sanctuaries, while stopping in towns along the way to chronicle their stories through artifacts, documents, and oral accounts.



Anthony Cohen. Image courtesy of Schoolhouse Farmhouse.

Following the success of his first walk, Cohen embarked on a second in 1998, traveling for three months from Mobile, Alabama, to Windsor, Ontario. His third and final expedition, in 2015, followed the route of his great-great-granduncle who fled slavery in Savannah, Georgia, in 1849 for freedom in Canada. This journey will be chronicled in a documentary, *Patrick & Me: A Personal Journey on the Underground Railroad*.

Cohen is founder and president of The Menare Foundation, Inc., a national nonprofit organization dedicated to “Preserving the Legacy of the Underground Railroad,” and operates the Button Farm Living History Center, a 40-acre farm that depicts 1850s plantation life in Maryland. He has served as a consultant to the National Parks Conservation Association, Maryland Public Television, and NASA, among others, and trained Oprah Winfrey for her role as Sethe in the 1998 motion picture *Beloved*.

Cohen has served on the Governor's Board for Tourism Development for the State of Maryland and has worked for the past decade as an interpretive consultant for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway in Maryland and Delaware, on the design review team for the National Park Service's Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center in Blackwater, Maryland, and, most recently, as Director of Historical Interpretation for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. He is a founding member of the Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project.

Cohen received his B.A. in American Studies from American University. He makes his home near Washington, DC.