The Freedom Trails Initiative

Southeastern Indiana's Underground Railroad Routes and Operations

A Project of the State of Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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April 1, 2001
George and Jacob Wagner's farms at Stony Point (top), the old Kingston cemetery in Decatur County where many Underground Railroad workers lay buried (center), and Hunter's Bottom, Kentucky, taken from the mouth of Eagle Hollow (bottom) one of the most active crossing points during the 1850s.
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Preface

Documentation of Southeastern Indiana's Underground Railroad Routes and Operations began April 1, 2000 when the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology awarded a grant to the team assembled for this program. Elbert G. Hinds, Regional Director for the Freedom Trails Project, requested the Jefferson County Preservation Association sponsor the program. The specific Project Director was Lee Rogers of Canaan, Indiana, the Jefferson County Historian and head of the Archives of the Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison, Indiana. The Principle Researcher and author of the report was Diane Perrine Coon, historian of Louisville, Kentucky. Financial Agent for the Jefferson County Preservation Association and this project was Shirley Robbins. Pam Venard of Preston Plantation, a preservation project in Trimble County, Kentucky, provided contract services in microfilm archives at Madison, Indiana.

This project has been funded in part by a U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Underground Railroad Research Assistantship administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

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The activity that is the subject of this research report has been financed in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. However, the contents and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Department of the Interior.
Chapter One
Research Findings

Documentation of the Underground Railroad in this region took place within the context of late nineteenth century scholarship, chiefly Wilbur H. Siebert and William Still, and late twentieth century scholarship, chiefly Larry Gara, Benjamin Quarles and Charles Blockson. Methods and agendas differed substantially among previous researchers. From earlier studies at Madison, Indiana, it became apparent that kindly White Quakers did not run the U.G.R.R., the story that emerged from Siebert. Nor was it a function of slaves operating on their own or a figment of imagination by self-promoting abolitionists, the thesis promoted by Gara. In fact the vast majority of activists in the U.G.R.R. in southeastern Indiana did not publicize or self-promote their involvement. Still described the role of Philadelphia Free Blacks in the U.G.R.R.; however Free Blacks operating along the Ohio River counties and mid-western agricultural communities had no recognition from scholars. And until very recently, only the most abstract pronouncements covered the participation of slaves on Kentucky plantations. With the exception of Levi Coffin’s experiences at Newport, the history of the Underground Railroad in Indiana had been told only with obvious generalities or by minute detailing of one person or one site.

This research attempted to provide a balanced view of the U.G.R.R. in southeastern Indiana, told chiefly through original documents and analysis of public records. Anecdotes and oral history provided starting points but had to be verified in
Eagle Hollow Ravine, Jefferson County, Indiana. One of the most important Ohio River crossings during the 1850s. Reverend Chapman Harris’ cabin lay a half mile upstream against the cliffs. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

other ways, primarily through public records and physical evidence on the sites. Four different types of data proved useful in developing the U.G.R.R. routes as summarized in Table One. Original documents (1815-1862) provided the first type of data; this included anti-slavery society minutes, church minutes, civil or criminal case transcripts, letters, letters to the editor, directories, census, Negro Registers, contemporary newspaper interviews or articles. The second type included data such as nineteenth century memoirs, obituaries, interviews, compilations, family histories and genealogies, church histories, anecdotes and newspaper features (1860-1898). Often this kind of information came from children, neighbors, and relatives of U.G.R.R. workers or from memories of the workers themselves. The third type of data came from public archives. Quite important in developing the scattergrams were land records, tax lists, plats, atlas, and topographic maps. Lastly, the fourth type of information came from investigation of physical evidence on sites.

In general, all four types of information were necessary to establish a site or cell of U.G.R.R. workers. Even more significantly, the sources came from diverse
places. By taking a regional approach and by researching in ten Indiana counties and
eleven Kentucky counties, a kind of serendipity developed. The names and key
families became familiar. Frequently obscure and widely divergent bits of data were
recognized to illuminate a cell in Indiana and vice versa. One anecdote where fellow
U.G.R.R. travelers met near Liberty, Indiana, was found in a Wayne County
narrative; the story related directly to a major U.G.R.R. Free Black route between

*East Fork of Tanners Creek Methodist Protestant Church, Guilford, Dearborn County, Indiana.*
*Site of first Anti-Slavery Society organized in 1834 in Southeastern Indiana. Along with its
companion congregations at the West Fork of Tanners Creek, Pleasant Ridge, and Bonnell,
these "English" settlers from Yorkshire and New England operated the U.G.R.R. in eastern
Dearborn County for over twenty-five years. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.*
# Table One

## Determinants for Underground Railroad Routes in Southeastern Indiana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>U.G.R.R. Route</th>
<th>Maps, Plats</th>
<th>Original Document</th>
<th>19th century Oral History</th>
<th>Sample Physical Evidence Discovered on Sites</th>
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<td>Warrants, Deeds, in J.P.G. routes – Big Creek Middlefork Creek, Graham Creek. Otter Creek: 1856-60 and 1878 plats for Jefferson County: U.S.G.S. topographic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Madison Route #1&lt;br&gt;South Hanover through Kent and Lancaster to Vernon to Millhousen (1820-1861)</td>
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Lawrenceburg and Richmond, Indiana. Another example was a marriage record from Manchester in Dearborn County, Indiana; the groom was part of the local “English” group of Methodist Protestants and the bride was the sister of the station master of the Hicklin settlement in Jennings County. The location of a very early abolitionist cell in South Hanover, Indiana, was verified, in part, by land and tax records from Jefferson,
Shelby, and Oldham counties in Kentucky. Local church history provided several names and events. Then in 1938, an anecdote given the county historian by two octogenarian sisters demonstrated the point to point route and methods of concealing fugitives, traveling across open country, and providing courier or notification service ahead of the “train.”

Major Research Problems

Myths Established from Biased Samples

Setting U.G.R.R. myths aside became the first research activity. The research problems in Southeastern Indiana began with the skewed sample returns and the highly inaccurate maps published by Professor Wilbur H. Siebert of Ohio State University, the primary nineteenth century informant on the U.G.R.R. in the Midwest. Siebert sent one-page questionnaires to his contacts with the Ohio U.G.R.R. and the workers surrounding Levi Coffin at Newport, Indiana. That process led him to over-emphasize the role of the Quakers and the routes to Newport in his widely quoted book. By contrast, in the ten counties of southeastern Indiana, only two Quakers have been discovered among the several hundred people involved in U.G.R.R. Methodist Protestants (M.P.), Methodist Episcopal (M.E.), Free Methodists, Freewill Baptists, Universalists, Associate Reformed Presbyterians formed the major organized religious base of Abolitionists in this region. Among the Free Blacks, activists were
traced to separated Methodist Episcopal (M.E.), the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) and Black Baptist churches.4

Because of Siebert's methodology, entire routes were skipped in his book and in his collected raw data. For example, he developed no information on the early and important route from South Hanover in Jefferson County through Kent, Lancaster, Vernon, North Vernon, with branches to Jackson County to the West or through Millhousen to Decatur County in the East. He also missed the important routes to Governor Stephen Harding's station at Old Milan from Aurora and Rising Sun. He failed to understand that there were two Madison routes, one to the west, the other to the east. This latter route, Siebert documented, yet he drew its path incorrectly.5

Of the six boxes of Indiana research materials at Ohio Historical Society's Siebert collection, much of the material collected failed to make it into Siebert's book. Dearborn and Ohio counties, for example, were nearly blanked out with just three names catalogued. Yet, Dearborn County had over thirty years of extensive operations of the U.G.R.R., based largely on the people who first organized an Anti-Slavery Society in Indiana.6

Most significantly, Siebert missed the role of the Free Blacks in handling the dangerous Ohio River crossings and in developing relationships with the slave populations in the Kentucky counties along the Ohio River. Only recently had names and plantations of these slaves emerged from obscurity. The U.G.R.R. matured rapidly with the addition of Free Blacks Elijah and William Anderson, George De
Baptiste and Chapman Harris at Madison beginning in 1838 and ending in 1846 with large scale pro-slavery mobs that targeted the Free Black leaders. After the riot, Elijah Anderson moved his base of operations to Lawrenceburg, passing as White there, until his arrest in 1856 at The Railroad House Hotel at Napoleon, Indiana, hid fugitive slaves in a hidden double cellar with a tunnel under the old Michigan Road. Napoleon was an important Ripley County U.G.R.R. junction point. Carrollton, Kentucky. Griffin Booth(e) went to Michigan and was buried at Kalamazoo. De Baptiste continued his U.G.R.R. work in Detroit for another fourteen years. Among his many activities there, George De Baptiste purchased a freighter that traveled between Detroit and Sandusky, a major port for fugitives coming through the Ohio U.G.R.R.

**The Dynamic Nature of U.G.R.R. Populations**

Siebert wrote as if the abolitionists taking part in the U.G.R.R. formed a static population. Most of the major U.G.R.R. stations in southeastern Indiana operated for at least twenty years, many for thirty years. Very few locations had static populations. In both major populations supporting the U.G.R.R. – Free Blacks and Abolitionists –
significant changes occurred in personnel. All three of the major Free Black agricultural communities – Graysville in Jefferson County near Hanover, Richland just south of Vernon in Jennings County, and Clarksburg’s Little Africa group in the extreme northeast of Decatur County – witnessed over sixty percent population declines in the 1850-1855 period. Several of these families were traced to Cass County, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario. The outstanding cadre of Free Black leadership at Madison, Indiana, had been broken up in 1846 by the mob riots. It took at least five years after the riots for Chapman Harris at Madison to gather and train twelve trustworthy Free Blacks and Kentucky slaves to maintain the Ohio River crossings around Madison, Indiana. This group operated for the next ten to twelve years.8

Among abolitionists, in some locations, as the older generation aged or died, younger men took over the operations. Another drain on workers in southeastern Indiana occurred during the mid-1840s with the well-known political pressures to populate the Western territories with anti-slavery people. These losses were primarily to Kansas and the Oregon Territory.9
Physical Changes and Preservation

Although several Ohio River crossing points had been documented in the Siebert files and in various newspaper interviews in the two decades following the Civil War, the series of dams and flood control projects, dredging, and industrial development have severely affected the appearance of the Ohio River banks. Mentally, the researcher had to envision a significantly narrower river at least ten to fifteen feet shallower and with large encroaching sandbars at some points stretching over half way across the Ohio. Fortunately many of the streams running into the Ohio that were used by the U.G.R.R. cascaded down formidable ravines and thus have not been changed significantly by commercial interests.  

Finding the station masters and clusters of couriers, conductors and safe houses around that station proved easiest of all the research issues. The difficulty lay in detecting the nineteen-century roads or tracks used by these U.G.R.R. workers. Commercial development of many of the towns and villages in Southeastern Indiana was greatly retarded by the demise of the steamboat era. On the one hand, successive floods have destroyed the nineteenth century look of the waterfront. Conversely, the long economic decline and recent emphasis on preservation saved much of the rest of cities like Madison, Lawrenceburg or Vevay. In Aurora, often flood-damaged, significant U.G.R.R. sites—for example, John Milburn’s jewelry store, the Eagle Hotel around the corner, and Daniel Bartholomew’s log cabin on the river bank
nearby—have literally washed away down the Ohio. Of the Aurora principles only William Wymond’s house still stands. Although railroads were developed quite early in the region, the Cincinnati-Indianapolis axis pulled major commercial and industrial development along its rail bed. And development of the Great Lakes ports quickly pulled the population and political center of Indiana away from the Ohio River. Gradually these towns decayed into somewhat seedy ghosts of their former opulence.¹¹

On the other hand, much of the farm property surrounding these remote sites was held in the same families for over one hundred years or more. The tillable portions of these farms changed radically, but the woodlands, ravines and caves used by the U.G.R.R. were still detectable. In large portions of Southeastern Indiana, traces of the old nineteen-century roads were preserved by the simple fact that farmers closed them off to prevent traffic across their lands. In the 17,000 acres of the Jefferson Proving Ground, nearly all the nineteenth century roads along Middlefork, Big, Graham and Otter Creek can be seen in part and many of the fords were located in unused portions of the tract. Several of these roads were never paved. Woods have grown over the old cleared pastures.¹²
**Toward a Solution Set**

A set of methodologies and research approaches grew out of the earlier work. Table One illustrated several types of data that frequently documented stations and routes in this region. Normally, all four types of data were necessary to pinpoint the operations and routes. Use of warrants, deeds, road commissioners reports, city directories various nineteenth century plats, and current topographic maps formed a critical set of data -- a first approximation of where the people in a certain cell of the U.G.R.R. lived and how they traveled from point to point.¹³

The second set of data -- original documents -- built on church and anti-slavery society minutes, letters, diaries, memoirs, newspaper interviews, responses to Siebert's questionnaires. All of this information assisted in defining leaders and workers, types of jobs done, and especially the timelines when individuals or groups were involved.¹⁴

The third type of data -- nineteenth century oral history -- brought a richer context to describing the people who fled and the people who assisted. Highly anecdotal, this material was often buried in obituaries and family histories, letters to the editor, or county histories.¹⁵

Lastly, a substantial amount of data came from "walking the metes and bounds," i.e. getting out on the sites and investigating the barn beams, the trap doors, the "old" road or railroad embankment, wagon tracks, foundation rubble, cemetery myrtle, mill race, window frames, and a host of other physical evidence. From all four
kinds of information, a solution set emerged best fitting the paper trail and the physical evidence.  

In expanding research to the entire southeastern region, a kind of efficiency developed by building on principles gathered from the previous work. For example, the Underground Railroad was far less organized than myth suggested. Further, the operations tended to be very cellular in whatever organization did exist. Thirdly the White Abolitionists and the Free Blacks did constitute different populations that came together for some purposes but acted separately in other actions. Some Free Blacks, such as Chapman Harris and Elijah Anderson, were trusted implicitly on the routes by the Abolitionists; in other areas, the White Abolitionists assumed leadership and kept the routes secret from the local Free Blacks. In a few cases, Free Blacks had their own routes.

All of these factors suggested detecting small groups of anti-slavery populations surrounding one or more central figures. The names of these U.G.R.R. leaders came from a variety of nineteenth century sources, responses to Siebert’s questionnaires, newspaper interviews, obituaries, memoirs and diaries, collections of anecdotes, church and anti-slavery society minutes. Almost always fragmentary, these original sources invariably led to discovery of the required cluster of associated U.G.R.R. workers.
End Notes to Chapter One

1. The ten Southeastern counties included Clark, Scott, Jefferson, Jennings, Switzerland, Ripley, Decatur, Ohio, Dearborn, Franklin. Elbert G. Hinds, distinguished local historian, was designated the Southeast Regional Coordinator. Lee Rogers, County Historian for Jefferson County, served as project director. Diane Perrine Coon served as Principal Researcher. Other county historians have been extremely helpful, including Helen Einhaus and Bea Boyd at Ripley County, Chris McHenry at Dearborn County, and Pat Smith at Decatur County.

Although Jeffersonville and Charlestown were known as early centers of aid to fugitive slaves, only the barest modicum of work has been done in Clark and Scott counties. Because of the secretive nature of U.G.R.R. work, few memoirs or original sources were available. John Carr, head of the U.G.R.R. at Madison, Indiana, from 1846-62, refused to say anything until after his death because he lived too near the Ohio River and feared retaliation by Kentuckians on his property and person. A bounty of one thousand dollars had never been revoked. Carr had substantial justification for his fears. His close associate, Elijah Anderson, one of the Free Black leaders in Madison and Lawrenceburg, had been caught and sentenced to ten years in the Frankfort, Kentucky, penitentiary and had been murdered in his cell the day he was to have been released.

In this area of Indiana, research frequently began with oral traditions within family histories. Often church histories or minutes verified the presence of an individual or cell active in aiding fugitive slaves escape to Canada. Documentation from nineteenth century newspapers or public records either amplified or altered the basic stories. In Jefferson County, U.G.R.R. anecdotes had been compiled by Druisilla Cravens and Auretta Hoyt in the 1870s and preserved by the Jefferson County Historical Society and the Madison Public Library. Court records were essential. The entire Decatur County route was preserved as part of The State of Indiana vs Luther A. Donneli. This case was tried in 1848 first by a local grand jury, then a Decatur Circuit Court case, then on appeal to the Indiana Appellate Court, and finally in federal court at Indianapolis. Civil cases provided essential verification of the role of Free Blacks in Madison and Lawrenceburg. The historical societies at Ripley County and Jennings County recently compiled oral traditions in their area and provided some public record grounding of the tales.


3. Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, ibid. The six boxes of original letters and memoirs relating to the Indiana Underground Railroad sent in response to Siebert’s questionnaire provided substantial albeit anecdotal information on some routes in Southeastern Indiana. The memoir of F. M. (Frank) Merrell, station master of station No. 3 [Jennings County section of Jefferson Proving Ground] from 1852-62, produced information on other station masters and other U.G.R.R. workers in each area. It was Merrell who explained how younger men had been recruited to replace the older men who had died or moved away. Other responses explained signaling systems used in some routes.
Apparently, signals were tightened as detectives and slave catchers worked to infiltrate the U.G.R.R. routes in southern Indiana. The most elaborate system was developed in the 1850s and employed tokens given the fugitive slave at the Ohio River crossing and meant to be shown to each succeeding station master. Most all the elaborate signals were developed in the 1850s, long after the origin of most of the major routes through the region. Only one route was known to have been abandoned due to infiltration by pro-slavery forces. That was an early route from Madison up to Vernon. Pro-slavery members of the Knights of the Golden Circle placed a watch station at Latta’s Tavern on what is now Route 7, between the Lancaster Road and Dupont, Indiana. Members of the Knights of the Golden Circle controlled nearly four miles of this main artery north from Madison. The Lancaster U.G.R.R. developed alternate routes to the west that used or paralleled the old Paris Road. Another early route was abandoned due to Free Blacks turning in fugitives for rewards; that route led from Saluda and South Hanover to Graysville then north to Richland near Vernon. John Sering claimed that in 1839 he established an alternate Clifty Falls route from John Todd’s place at Clifty Falls to Graysville; after they lost a group of fifteen fugitives to the slave-catchers, Todd delivered to Rykers Ridge and Lancaster. Who turned in the fugitives was never established. In the 1850s, South Hanover and certain individuals at Graysville were once again active in the U.G.R.R. nearly depleting slaves from the Coopers Bottom area of Trimble County.

The breakthrough in determining U.G.R.R. personnel and routes frequently began with local church histories. During the 1830s a substantial number of splits in Baptist and Methodist local churches occurred because of the slavery issue. Even when a congregation was primarily anti-slavery in philosophy, the more radical Abolitionists broke away because of censure against their U.G.R.R. activities by their former church members. Such censures were documented in detail in the minutes of church discipline. One shortcut to finding the U.G.R.R. cells was to look for the Methodist Protestant, Free Methodist, Universalist, Associate Reformed Presbyterian and Freewill Baptist congregations. Examination of these church histories usually produced the initial listing of U.G.R.R. workers, and that in turn permitted more intensive examination of court and public records. Not every congregation of these types had activists in the U.G.R.R., but a large proportion did. In two cases, Rykers Ridge Baptist Church in Jefferson County and Sand Creek Presbyterian Church in Decatur County, the initial anti-slavery congregation was outvoted by later arrivals; thus the original founders of the church in question were forced to break away to found or join other congregations.

4. Siebert, *Underground Railroad*, 137-38. By giving prominence to Lewis Falley’s map of the U.G.R.R. routes in Indiana, Siebert emphasized the Michigan Road in eastern Indiana. One of Siebert’s own graduate students, Lillian Stover, pointed out errors where the map did not match original sources. Stover, “Underground Railroad Routes through Eastern Indiana,” referred to routes presupposed from Fort Wayne to Auburn; she claimed the route went from Fort Wayne to Angola. In Southeastern Indiana, Falley’s routes were ninety-five percent wrong. The entire section had to be redrawn.

5. The Dearborn County U.G.R.R. was among the earliest to organize a county-wide Anti-Slavery Society (1834) and establish anti-slavery churches (1836). By the early 1840s routes had been established with a terminal at a Quaker settlement on the Eisle Creek off the Whitewater River south of Brookville. By 1850, after Elijah Anderson moved his operations to Lawrenceburg, Boone County, Kentucky, was undergoing substantial losses of its slave population. Siebert basically blanked out the Aurora, Lawrenceburg and Rising Sun crossings. Responses from Dr. John Hansell and Ralph Collier, sons of two of the leaders of the U.G.R.R. were found in the Siebert papers. From these responses, Seth Platt at Manchester emerged as another U.G.R.R. station master. Another source of information about Ohio and Dearborn came from anecdotes from the Free Black communities.
6. Diane Perrine Coon, “Reconstructing the Underground Railroad Crossing at Madison, Indiana,” 1997 and “Reverend Chapman Harris and the St. Paul’s Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana, 1998.” These papers, completed for the University of Louisville’s graduate program in history, detailed the role of the Free Black communities in organizing the Ohio River crossings, in providing early aid to fugitives and in making the first contacts with other locations. George Evans, for example, who lived in the Free Black agricultural community of Graysville near Hanover, contacted activists at Jeffersonville, Indiana, in 1830 when he discovered they had established a secret route for fugitive slaves though Charlestown to Vernon on the Paris Road. He offered his home as a safe place. Yet another early account of Free Blacks at Graysville rendering aid to fugitives was: E. S. Abdy, Journal of a Residence and Tour in The United States of North America from April, 1833, to October, 1834, Vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1835).

7. Coon, “Reconstructing U.G.R.R. at Madison,” ibid. Elijah Anderson was best known to the Ohio Underground Railroad through his early days out of Cincinnati on the Ohio River steamboats, through his work at Madison, and later through his work at Lawrenceburg. He and his brother William Anderson were credited with operating the important terminal at Carrollton, Kentucky, at the mouth of the Kentucky River. That route continued as one of the major ways for fugitives to escape from the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky. Chapman Harris, whose early career was probably as a stevedore on Ohio River steamboats, was left to rebuild the Madison Free Black community’s leadership after the riots of 1846 when other leaders were forced to flee the area. The John Lott family history verified that Chapman Harris, Elijah Anderson and John Lott had all known each other before 1838 from their work on steamboats out of Cincinnati.

Ambassador Ronald L. Palmer of George Washington University has a book in process covering the life and times of George De Baptiste and the De Baptiste family of Fredericksburg, Virginia and Detroit, Michigan. Professor Palmer was most generous in sharing information from his files about De Baptiste’s Cincinnati and Madison activities.

8. Losses in the Free Black agricultural communities occurred nearly simultaneously with passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act as well as tightening of Indiana’s anti-Black laws, including the establishment of the Negro Register. In order to trace fleeing Free Blacks, a database with several thousand entries were compiled from Michigan federal census records (1850-1860) from Detroit (Wayne County), Washtenaw, Berrien, Cass, Kalamazoo, and Marshall (Calhoun County). Also 1845 census figures were obtained from Windsor, Ontario with particular emphasis on the city of Windsor, Colchester, and Amherstburg. Several Free Black families missing from the 1860 census in Fugit Township, Decatur County, Indiana, resurfaced in Cass County and in Windsor, Canada.

9. F.M. Merrell to Wilbur H. Siebert, 1898. Frank Merrell’s immediate family, decidedly pro-slavery, owned a major portion of Section 25 adjacent to the Hicklin Settlement in Bigger Township, Jennings County. After Frank moved to Ripley County, he was greatly influenced by his abolitionist uncle. In 1852 he organized a new Station #3 to replace Hicklin between Baxter-Elliott in Monroe Township and Waggoner Station in Shelby Township of Ripley County.

Discussion of abolitionist strategies to populate western territories was found in several Indiana histories. Donald F. Carmony, Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1998), 573-645 and Emma Lou Thornborough, Indiana in the Civil War Era 1850-1880, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1995), 69-83. Carmony cited Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries’ glowing reports of the Oregon Territory triggering a 1845-55 migration, but Carmony claimed that irritation of how Free Blacks were restricted in a so-called free territory also stimulated western movement to
Oregon. Thornborough detailed Indiana anti-slavery forces interest in the Kansas-Nebraska situation that deteriorated into the bloody Kansas massacres.

10. Clifty Falls represents one type of physical change. Although the State Park has preserved the actual ravine and waterfalls, the mouth of Clifty Creek has been altered totally by commercial encroachment. Even having platted Todd's farm location in Indiana and the sending sites in Kentucky, it was nearly impossible to decipher the landing point. John Todd's house was just to the west of the entrance to the State Park. He used the Hanover Road to reach Graysville. To reach Rykers Ridge he might have used terrain within the park or traveled through Madison up Dugan Hollow or Telegraph Hill to the ridge. Since the Vernon Road was essentially blocked by pro-slavery families that later became Knights of the Golden Circle members, Todd would not have used Route 7 near Paper Mill Road or Wirt. The mouth of Eagle Hollow Creek and Chain Mill Creek leading to Butler Cave and Butler Falls were far less changed.

11. Lester Hansell to Diane Perrine Coon, July 24, 2000, Cincinnati, Ohio: Hansell Family History, Dearborn County, Indiana. Once the cells and routes were determined, a substantial amount of surrounding history could be culled from the 19th century county histories. One of the most helpful was the 1885 history and biography of Dearborn County, F. E. Weakley & Co., Publishers. History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana, from their Earliest Settlement. Reprint. (Mt. Vernon, Indiana: Windmill Publications, Inc., 1993).

12. Until 1998 no one had challenged the 1898 assertion by Siebert that the Madison route went up the old Michigan Road. However, once the actual locations of the abolitionists described by Frank Merrell were plotted, the scattergrams showed definite neighborhoods along the old 19th century roads that paralleled the creek beds running through lands now encompassed by the Jefferson Proving Grounds. These creeks formed parallel routes that traveled southwest to northeast with northern connecting roads. The U.G.R.R. never had to use the busy Michigan Road until just south of Osgood and Napoleon, Indiana. Army representative Ken Kenute hosted the U.G.R.R. project team for field investigations on two separate days. Almost all the 19th century roads were still intact; however, all U.G.R.R. sites were within Jefferson Proving Ground's hazardous zones. Using zoom lens, many of the sites were photographed, but further site investigation was impossible.

13. Warrants and deeds formed the first level of analysis. Properties owned by the U.G.R.R. principles were plotted on the oldest possible plat map, generally from 1850 to 1870, then transferred to current township plats. This step provided the name of the current landowner, a necessary piece of information for on site visits and photographs. Lastly, the data was transferred to U.S.G.S. topographic maps with the sections expanded in size by a factor of six to ten. Several locations required a piecing of two U.S.G.S. topo maps, because the sites crossed boundaries.


15. Recently the Jennings County Preservation Association, compiled a number of oral and family histories in a book entitled, Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County. (North Vernon, Indiana: North Vernon Plain Dealer and Sun, Inc., 1998.) Local historians writing
newspaper series proved quite helpful. One major series in the Madison Courier was completed during 1938 by Jefferson County historian Charles Heberhart. Another series was done in the last five years by Decatur County historian Pat Smith. Many family histories proved to have relevant information. A family history of some ninety or more pages would have one paragraph referring to U.G.R.R. work by one part of the family. Another letter might have one small reference to an U.G.R.R. event. Newspaper interviews tantalized with descriptions of anecdotes without defining the year, the specific location or route used, and ancillary personnel involved. All references were fragmentary at best. Only when the public records and local and church histories were put together did some of these stories make any sense.

16. Field work took enormous amounts of time. Frequently the pertinent questions — where fugitives were hidden, what route or alternative routes were available in the early 19th century, how shallow and flat the creek bed, how steep the ravine, where was the mill race referred to in the anecdote — found answers only when faced with the physical layout. Discovery that an old Native American trail had been used by the U.G.R.R. from South Hanover through Kent to Neil’s Creek in Jefferson County prompted a search for further information. Archer Butler Hulbert, Indian Thoroughfares, (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1902); Archer Butler Hulbert, Paths of the Mound-Building Indians and Great Game Animals, (Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1902). The Wylie station at Kent used Wilson Cave along the Hanover to Tippicanoe path; north of Wilson Cave lay the Bennet Nay station and beyond that the Abraham Walton station where Native American burials lay on one side of the farm, two fugitive slaves that had been chewed to death by dogs lay on the other side of the farm.

17. The railroad terms possessed the romantic cachet attractive to 19th century historians writing about the U.G.R.R. In southeastern Indiana, railroad terms were used consistently only by the eastern Madison route — the seven stations from John Carr to the Decatur County line. This was the route that worked closely with the Ohio U.G.R.R. The western route rarely used jargon. The Free Blacks tended to describe their conducting activity without using the word “conductor.” Dearborn and Decatur operations began long before railroad terms were used on the U.G.R.R. These tightly knit family groupings did not require special terminology for security or for handling the fugitives.


Among the most intriguing of the criminal case records was the synopsis of the trial in Bedford, Kentucky, of Elijah Anderson, the Free Black “superintendent” of Southeastern Indiana’s U.G.R.R. Although all criminal records for the antebellum period had disappeared from Trimble County, Kentucky, James Prichard at the Kentucky State Archives found the trial record in the governor’s papers where they had been sent by his Indiana supporters attempting to win his pardon.

19. Thomas Hamilton memoir, c. 1870 from Decatur County Historical Society.

20. John Carr had participated actively in the U.G.R.R. since 1839 and his farm on Rykers Ridge to the northeast of Madison was listed as Station No. 1 of the Madison – East route. Carr’s 1889 obituary cited his close working relationship with Free Blacks Elijah Anderson and Chapman Harris and listed several men active in the Rykers Ridge U.G.R.R. Like many obituary sources, the material lacks the precision of a diary or the comprehensiveness of a memoir. The Rykers Ridge group operated
for so many years that other key sources were available to document participation by the individuals named in Carr's obituary.

The interview with former slave Freeman Anderson, who worked the U.G.R.R. from the plantation in Trimble County, Kentucky, appeared in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, (October 31, 1891). Additionally, in Madison three separate compilations were merged into one typescript, “Blacks in Jefferson County, Indiana.” The materials came from Drusilla Cravens c. 1870, from local historian Charles E. Heberhart in the 1930s, and from oral histories conducted by college and high school students as part of African-American history month. Church minutes and histories proved most helpful. Some congregations dismissed or disciplined members who broke the law by working in the U.G.R.R. Other denominations were proud of their involvement and highlighted the anti-slavery preachers and lay leaders.

For the constitutional issues denying Free Blacks any security of their property or protection under the law, see Emma Thorborough’s *History of the Negro in Indiana*, ibid.


24. From the Smith and Nay family histories, MS. Madison Public Library Indiana Room. From the Lester Hansell interview, ibid; History of the Monroe Presbyterian Church, MS, Madison Public Library Indiana Room.
Chapter Two
Jefferson County, Indiana

Introduction

This description of Underground Railroad routes and operations in Jefferson County emerged primarily from previous research by the author, “Reconstructing the Underground Railroad Crossings at Madison, Indiana, “ 1998, and “St. Paul’s Baptist Church and the Reverend Chapman Harris,” 1999, and from field research during the last year. Earlier compilations – Drusilla Cravens and Auretta Hoyt in the 1870s, Charles Heberhart in the 1920s and 1930s, and Elbert G. Hinds and Sue Livers in their 1997-1998 study of African-American history all contributed significantly to this project. Lee Rogers, the Jefferson County Historian and head of archives at the Jefferson County Historical Society, not only served as project director but also produced several critical new sources of information. In this particular study, the Harry Leman photograph collection at the Madison and Jefferson County Public Library’s Indiana Room, was extremely helpful and Janice Barnes at that library was always helpful and very encouraging. Ambassador Ronald Palmer, professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., most graciously shared information from his comprehensive study of the De Baptiste family. The staffs at the Indiana State Library, Indiana Historical Society, Ohio Historical Society, and Indiana State Archives were always helpful and competent. Among the several local historians who contributed immeasurably, one must include Louis Munier and Eddie Kidwell, who have incredible knowledge of Jefferson County sites. Locally, Jimmy Griffith at Rykers Ridge, Martha Cain, and Sherry
Chapo at Deputy, have each contributed invaluably. All of these local historians get out and investigate the sites by walking the metes and bounds. John Nyberg and Jay Breitweiser at Eleutherian College have been most supportive and effective. Ken Knouf at Jefferson Proving Ground went out of his way to guide us through the facility, and he shared his extensive knowledge quite readily. The work in southeastern Indiana could not have been completed without the assistance and involvement of Elbert G. Hinds, regional director for the Freedom Trails project; he opened doors, found sources, traveled extensively on the back roads and hillsides, and shared each major new finding.

The route maps and U.G.R.R. site locations were all compiled by the author. Primary sources used included the 1856 plat book for Jefferson County and a succession of plats from 1848 to 1860 for Madison, the 1876 Baskin Forster Illustrated Atlas of Indiana, and the 1932 Indiana Conservation Department and Historical Bureau’s map of Indian trails in the state. Additionally current U.S.G.S. topographic maps, the current plat book for Jefferson County, and various road and highways maps were used. The collection of early Jefferson County road commissioners’ reports that Lee Rogers dragged up from the basement archives also proved quite helpful. Also the succession of maps drawn for RFD postal carriers from 1910 to 1940 found by Bettie Cline, postmistress of Deputy, Indiana, contributed significantly to the project.
The U.G.R.R. at Madison and Jefferson County, Indiana

The general location and configuration of anti-slavery communities and organized assistance for fugitive slaves developed in Madison and Jefferson County almost as soon as white settlers moved into the region. A surprising number of early settlers in Jefferson County left Kentucky because of the slavery issue. They had fought unsuccessfully to keep slavery from being institutionalized in the 1792 and 1799 Kentucky constitutions, and they separated from their mainline religious denomination to create anti-slavery congregations. And finally despairing of Kentucky’s future, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century these fervent anti-slavery families moved north, crossing the Ohio River into the free territory of Indiana. For men like George Shannon and John Anderson at South Hanover, Samuel Ledgerwood at Rykers Ridge, Abraham Walton and Bennett Nay at Deputy Pike, Robert and Nellie Smith at Paris, slavery had corroded the body politic and created an immoral society. These men and women would over the next thirty years give aid and comfort to runaway slaves, and their sons and daughters would inherit an activist philosophy to thwart slavery in the South and prohibit the extension of slavery to western lands. Although many began their anti-slavery philosophy as colonizationists and gradual emancipationists, they would eventually become abolitionists.

The other major factor in the early development of an Underground Railroad in Jefferson County was the emergence of large and somewhat prosperous Free Black communities at Graysville and Madison with smaller groups at South Hanover and Kent. One
hundred and thirty Free Blacks resided in the Graysville agricultural community that stretched over 2,600 acres north of Hanover, Indiana. More than twenty of these families had their own farms, some as large as eighty acres, others only five acres. Graysville became a natural hiding place for fugitive slaves. Well before 1830, both Black and White anti-slavery people living nearer the Ohio River were sending fugitives to the Graysville community.

Georgetown Section of Old Madison was settled by Free Blacks in the late 1830s; their homes, churches and many buildings still remain. Elijah and William Anderson, Griffin Booth, Stepney Stafford, Archibald Taylor and others provided U.G.R.R. operations from the Ohio River to the Rykers Ridge abolitionists northeast of Madison. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

During the 1830s and 1840s Madison witnessed a large increase in the number of Free Blacks in the city. Some of the Free Blacks at Madison were recently emancipated slaves who had come north with their master’s family, were given some form of financial settlement, and used their skills to develop marginal businesses in the city. Others were Free Blacks from Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Kentucky, who plied the river craft as stevedores, stewards, blacksmith/machinists, and workers at the docks. The Free Black population built rapidly at Madison in large part because it was such a vital economic center for the region.

Until the mid-1840s, Madison was the largest city in Indiana. As Jefferson County’s seat of justice, Madison was located strategically between Cincinnati, gateway to the West,
and Louisville, gateway to the South. Madison developed early into a thriving regional market town with a major landing port for all types of river craft – steamboats, flat boats, kneel-boats, ferries, and the ubiquitous skiff. Not only was Madison large but it was very prosperous. The city had a base of economic wealth, and many entrepreneurs developed a commercial center and the beginnings of early industry. Early pork packing, tanning, and distillery operations were only one facet of industry; John Sering’s cotton thread factor, John Sheets’ mills, and the intriguing button factories added cachet to Madison’s industrial prowess. And, the Jeffersonville, Madison, and Indianapolis Railroad was supremely important to the bustling city. But perhaps its biggest industry was its sizeable number of attorneys, judges, and busy court calendar; Madison was the early giant in Indiana politics, and it maintained its predominance until the population centers moved north and west after the Civil War. And during the Antebellum period, the city was the focus and organizing momentum for Underground Railroad operations and activities in an area stretching from Skylight to Carrollton, Kentucky, and from Bethlehem to Broooksburg on the Indiana side of the Ohio River.
The Underground Railroad Routes in Jefferson County

1. South Hanover and Saluda to Graysville to Hicklin Station, c. 1824-1861.

The first U.G.R.R. route of any consequence led from South Hanover through Graysville to the Hicklin Station on the Little Graham Creek at San Jacinto in Jennings County. The 1824 date was established when George Shannon and John Anderson and others of the Carmel Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church called the decidedly anti-slavery Scots evangelist Reverend Andrew Fulton from Louisville to become the pastor to isolated A.R.C. communities at South Hanover, Rykers Ridge, Greenbrier, and Big Creek. The first receiving point was almost certainly the Hicklin Station on the Little Graham Creek at old San Jacinto in Jennings County. At some point in the

George Shannon and John Anderson headed the anti-slavery Presbyterians in South Hanover, Indiana. Both the Carmel and Bethel A.R.C. congregations assisted fugitive slaves for more than thirty years. Free Blacks and former slaves worked with this group, often conducting runaways to Graysville or Kent. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
1830s five Free Black families, including U.G.R.R. activists John R. Forcen, John Hackney and later the Hume family, settled in this area. These conductors brought fugitive slaves to Graysville and after 1839 to the Neil’s Creek abolitionists on Big Creek near Lancaster.

South Hanover was extremely significant geologically. The enormous bend in the Ohio River that, in effect created the entire western side of Trimble County, Kentucky, also caused large encroaching sandbars. These geologic features permitted easier river crossings for fugitive slaves. At some points of the year, runaways could walk across; at other times, swimming was possible, and skiffs were always a means of transport. For example, in September 1849, the Ohio was so low that all boat traffic was stilled and people could wade across or ride horseback across the river at Madison. Skiffs and pirogues, those rough dug-out canoes, were pervasive along the river’s edge. Further, the large ravines and limestone caves in South Hanover and Saluda permitted runaways some degree of cover until they reached the Hanover plain. A small cave lay just below the George Shannon homestead between the Ohio River landing and his home. Butler Cave, a much larger cavern, at South Hanover was used for at least three decades as a safe wait station until conductors could move the fugitives further north.

Nowhere in the early annals, before 1835, did it appear that people in Indiana actively sought or recruited runaway slaves; rather the fugitives ran away on their own and were then assisted once they arrived in Indiana. On the Kentucky side of the
Ohio, the canebrakes at Skylight (Oldhamburg) and Westport, Kentucky, gave cover for fugitives crossing the Ohio River and coming up Fourteen-Mile Creek to the Hanover Plain to Carmel and the Greenbrier Presbyterian communities south and west of Hanover. Additionally, crossing at the Saluda basin and the Cooper’s Bottom sandbar brought fugitive slaves to George Shannon’s South Hanover community. The conducting task was primarily that of the Five Free Black families in South Hanover.

During the 1840s and 1850s, Freeman Anderson, a slave on the Kentucky side near Coopers Bottom, brought runaway slaves across using Butler Cave as a deposit point. He worked with a Free Black cell recruited and managed by Chapman Harris. Among the active members of this cell were John R. Forcen, Simon Gray, and Mason Thompson. There is one reference that indicated that this Hanover group may have been recruited initially by Elijah Anderson before 1846 when he was driven out of Madison and moved to Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Freeman Anderson talked of a receiving point fifteen miles from Hanover; this could be Hicklin Station or Butlerville. The Hanover cell took responsibility to move the fugitive slaves from Butler Cave to that receiving point; the conductor there moved them further north.

2. The Paris Route - Jeffersonville to Charlestown to Paris to Vernon.

Before 1830 the first truly organized U.G.R.R. route emerged. It was managed by Free Blacks at or near Jeffersonville, Indiana. Alexander White, a Free Black preacher who had been driven from Salem, Indiana, led the effort to aid fugitive
slaves. White had to face down the local pro-slavery mobs in Jeffersonville every week he tried to preach. Finally some of the more radical anti-slavery people—Dr. T. N. Field, Harvey Campbell, Captain Dryden, and J. C. Lampton at Jeffersonville and Charlestown—helped White establish a regular U.G.R.R. route. It had stations at Charlestown, Lexington, Marble Hill and Bethlehem, making connections with the Graysville community through George Evans. Also part of this route were the Greenbrier Presbyterians that had broken away from New Washington. In the early annals of the U.G.R.R. this trail was called the Paris route. Paris had developed into a major drover center, hosting as many as seven taverns and gaining a reputation as a wide-open town. The reputation of Paris was so nefarious, in fact, that Jefferson County ceded it to Jennings County in large part because of the amount of time the county sheriff spent running out from Madison to Paris.

During the mid-1820s, an early anti-slavery Presbyterian minister, Reverend John Todd, at Goshen, Kentucky, moved to Charlestown, Indiana, and helped organize opposition to slavery at that city and Jeffersonville. The evangelist preacher Reverend John Dickey also founded anti-slavery congregations in Clark and Scott County, however, these churches were more moderate in approach to fugitive slaves. The anti-slavery church broke away from New Washington's congregation. It was located just inside the Jefferson County line in Republican Township. Another anti-slavery congregation, the Greenbrier Presbyterian Church under the leadership of
Joseph Wiley in Section 9, southeast of Kent, was founded in 1822 and was served by the pastors at Carmel-Bethel on a part-time basis.

A major safe house developed just south of Paris on the old road. The Robert Smith house stood on the east side of the Louisville-Paris road and his barn and outbuilding stood on the other side. Apparently, Nellie Smith took an active stance in aiding fugitive slaves and faced down Cass Dawson, the sheriff, at one point. From the family history it is clear that the Smith’s were originally slave-owners in Kentucky and came to some kind of religious epiphany to develop their active anti-slavery position.

Material found in the Siebert Papers at Ohio Historical Society stated that the Jeffersonville route was always organized and manned by Free Blacks. It is known that in 1830 George Evans from Graysville contacted the Jeffersonville U.G.R.R. leaders and offered his house as a station off the Paris route. A strong oral tradition claims that the Free Black leadership for the southern end of the Paris route was located at Watson, a burg about half-way between Charlestown and Jeffersonville along the railroad line. Once fugitives were moved along the Paris route, the most significant early support for fugitive slaves came from the Graysville Free Black community just north of Hanover. With over one hundred people spread over a 2,600-acre agricultural region, these Free Blacks had just recently become emancipated. By 1834, the Graysville community was hiding fugitive slaves as documented by E. S. Abdy, a British tourist.
Map 2. Native American Indian Trail

Jefferson County, Indiana
Early U.G.R.R. Sites

1. William Hicklin, 1819
2. Abraham Walton, 1819
3. George Shannon, 1819
4. Gerardus Ryker and Samuel Ledgerwood, 1816
5. Graysville Free Black Agricultural Community, 1816

Detail from: Native American Trails
E. Y. Guernsey, 1832
IN Dept. of Conservation
IN Historical Bureau
3. The Old Madison to Tippecanoe Indian Trail - South Hanover to Kent to Deputy Pike to Neil’s Creek to Hicklin Station and Vernon, c. 1830-1861.

Early in the 1830s an alternate western U.G.R.R. route emerged. It led from South Hanover’s Carmel-Bethel communities up the old Indian trail to Wilson Cave just northwest of Kent, then continued along the Tippecanoe trail to cross the Big Creek just south of Lick Branch Baptist Church. Early pioneer families from New England settled along the Big Creek and what would become Deputy Pike. Among the founders of that church were Abraham Walton, Samuel Wells and Bennett Nay and other members of the Lick Branch Baptist Church who maintained major U.G.R.R. stations. These families, in 1839 would join the Hoyts, Tibbetts, and Nelsons in creating the Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society.

Sherry Chapo, owner of the Bennett Nay House on the Deputy Pike, shows the entrance to the concealed cellar/tunnel. The Nay House sat just off the old Indian Trail near Lick Branch Baptist Church. The U.G.R.R. route led from Wilson Cave near Kent to the Walton Station and James Nelson at Neil’s Creek. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
Map 3. U.G.R.R. Route from Kent to Neil's Creek

Jefferson County, Indiana
Detail of U.G.R.R. Route
Through Graham Township

1. Wilson Cave, near Kent
2. Native American Indian Trail – Madison to Tippecanoe
3. Lick Branch Baptist Church
4. Bennett Nay, Deputy Pike
5. Abraham Walton, Walton Creek
6. Samuel Wells
7. W. H. Nay
8. Abner Hall
9. Thomas Cosby
10. W. F. Nay
11. George Shaw
12. James Nelson, Neil's Creek

Detail: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map: Deputy IN
Near Kent, Preston Wylie and George Trinkle supported the U.G.R.R. on the southern end of the old Indian trail. Bennett Nay’s home on Deputy Pike sat near the northern end of the trail that came out just behind the Lick Branch Church.

From Nay’s place, a road ran north to Abraham Walton’s and Samuel Wells and from there the road continued north to James Nelson’s place at Neil’s Creek. From Nelson’s place, one alternate route led to Paris and up to Vernon in Jennings County. The other path led up the back road to Dupont and Bennville or Butlerville or further east to the Hicklin Station at San Jacinto. There were also three caves, one large enough for two or more people, just off Big Creek north of the old town of Graham. An anti-slavery congregation, probably an early A.R.C. or Methodist denomination, was located at Graham, known as the Big Creek settlement. The cemetery for that church was located between the town center and the caves.
4. Clifty Falls to Graysville or Rykers Ridge, c. 1839-1850.

By the mid-1830s, the U.G.R.R. route from Graysville led north to Wirt, then College Hill, and ended at Butlerville. However, during this same period the rewards for fugitive slaves had increased from about twenty dollars in 1818 to over one-hundred dollars in 1830; further, the slave owners began to employ full-time slave catchers and detectives, and they mounted Kentucky posses that would raid the Indiana suspected locations. Most significantly, a cell of the Knights of the Golden Circle formed in the area around Wirt and Middlefork Creek. John Latta and several other families posted watch at Latta’s Tavern on the Madison-Vernon Road (now Route 7). The route became quite corrupted. As a result recaptures of runaways became more numerous. When a group of fifteen runaways were recaptured at Graysville and paraded in shackles through Madison, John Sering, a prominent town leader, had enough. Sering
is credited with opening up the Clifty Falls operation. This new route took advantage of the two large abolitionist communities at Lancaster and Rykers Ridge. By 1845 this extensive route with its various alternates was called the Madison or Tibbet’s route.

John Todd, who lived immediately west of the entrance to Clifty Falls State Park, received fugitive slaves from his brother on the Kentucky side. Todd had installed a Y configuration in his chimney. The one side was a normal chimney flue; the other side, the false chimney flue, had protruding bolts that could be used as a ladder, leading up to the second floor. A double bricked firewall between the two kept the heat from the fireplace from harming fugitives hidden in the false chimney flue. Todd delivered his fugitives to Graysville and increasingly to John Carr at Rykers Ridge.

At some point in the 1840s, Lyman Lathrop moved from New York State to a farm opposite Clifty Falls. The plantation of John Lammond, a slave owner, lay between Lathrop and the Ohio River. Apparently Lathrop moved runaway slaves directly across Lammond’s property to cross the Ohio to connect to John Todd’s U.G.R.R. station. Lathrop apparently operated unscathed all during the harassment of Delia Webster during the early 1850s. Webster, a notorious abolitionist from Vermont, was sent to the state penitentiary at Frankfort, Kentucky, for joining Reverend Calvin Fairbanks to help the Lewis Hayden family escape from Lexington, Kentucky. She settled in Madison in 1851 and the next year, with the help of an odd
assortment of partners, purchased land west of Milton in Trimble County. She and her partner Reverend Norris Day became the focus of attention by the slave-owners, posses and night riders in Trimble County. Her barns and outbuildings were burned and later the house. She was arrested but not convicted both at Bedford, Kentucky, and Madison, Indiana. At one point, abolitionists in Shelby Township gave Delia Webster shelter and the abolitionists at Rykers Ridge aided Norris Day.

5. Georgetown Section of Madison to Rykers Ridge, c. 1838-1846, to 1861.

With the arrival of Free Blacks from Virginia -- Elijah Anderson and his brother William Anderson, George De Baptiste, and Chapman Harris -- in Madison in 1838-9, a major shift occurred. The Madison U.G.R.R. became more aggressive and developed a far more systematic organization of signaling, routes, and operations. Much of this change was due to a number of prosperous, skilled Free Blacks who had moved into the

Elijah Anderson's brick townhouse on Walnut Street. Called the "Superintendent of the U.G.R.R.," Elijah moved to Madison in 1838. Anderson was credited with bringing 800 fugitives across at Madison, Indiana. With a $1,000 price on his head and targeted in 1846 by a pro-slavery mob at Madison, Elijah moved his operations to Lawrenceburg where he served as the main conductor for the U.G.R.R. until his capture at Carrollton, Kentucky, in 1856. He died mysteriously the day he was to be released from the state penitentiary at Frankfort. Elijah Anderson became thus a martyr of the southeastern Indiana Underground Railroad. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
new Woodburn Addition to Old Madison, an area centered at Fifth and Walnut. From this Georgetown section of Madison a re-energized, active U.G.R.R. took fugitive slaves up Dugan Hollow or Telegraph Hill to Samuel and John Ledgerwood’s homes, the first of the safe houses at Rykers Ridge.

This period also marked a substantial improvement in coordination between activities of the Free Blacks and the White abolitionists. Georgetown was very much linked to the Rykers Ridge abolitionists on the top of the ridge above Madison. Elijah Anderson, the superintendent of the U.G.R.R. at Madison, developed excellent working relationships with John Carr and the Rykers Ridge abolitionists. During this period, Elijah Anderson claimed that eight hundred fugitives moved through Madison, most through the Georgetown section. The momentum was stopped in a 1846 city-wide major race riot. A mob of about one hundred pro-slavery Whites rampaged through the city, entering Black owned businesses and homes at will, ostensibly looking for guns and ammunition. Free Black leaders were targeted for reprisals. One of the main targets was Elijah Anderson with a bounty of $1,000 for his capture. The mob tried to drown Griffin Booth in the Ohio River; he was saved only by the quick action of John Sheets and Marshal Anzio Foster. They shot round after round into the home of Amos Phillips, and they attempted to tar and feather Lewis Evans. As a result, Elijah Anderson moved his operations to Lawrenceburg, and John Carr, up on Rykers Ridge assumed responsibility for the overall U.G.R.R.
operations. That same year, Chapman Harris moved from Madison to Eagle Hollow and set up the extremely successful U.G.R.R. route there.

George De Baptiste had been raised in a wealthy Free Black family in Fredricksburg, Virginia. The young man who arrived in Madison in 1837 was educated, fearless, well traveled, and flamboyant. His home and barbershop were on Second Street running to the alley between Walnut and Jefferson streets. John and Ann Carter, his good friend, lived on the corner of Second and Jefferson. George brought one hundred and eighty fugitives from the Ohio River to Lancaster or Rykers Ridge. In 1846 he fled the mobs in Madison and became one of the three leaders of the Detroit, Michigan, U.G.R.R. Photo courtesy Burton Collection, Detroit Free Public Library.

6. From the Ohio River to Courthouse Square to Lancaster, c. 1838-1846.

Near the foot of Main Street (now Jefferson) George De Baptiste would meet skiffs at night at the river's edge and conduct the fugitive slaves up to Lancaster. De Baptiste claimed to have taken one hundred and eighty runaways up to Lancaster. His method was highly unusual. The De Baptiste barbershop and property was located on Second Street between the alley and Main (Jefferson). On the corner was John Carter's store and house. The river was two blocks south. One half block north of De Baptiste and Carter at the alley behind the courthouse was the livery stable of Right Rea, the most
notorious of the slave catchers in the region. De Baptiste would take his fugitives, stop by Rea's livery stable and borrow two or more horses, and ride to Lancaster dropping off his "freight." He would return to Madison, rub down the horses and put them back in Rea's stable. Then in the morning he would open his barbershop for business as if nothing had happened. It is quite likely that De Baptiste used the direct route up Graham Road but cut over to Middlefork Creek and to Lancaster through today's State Road 250.
7. The Eagle Hollow Route, c. 1845-1861.

After 1845 no U.G.R.R. route was more important than the well-traveled path up Eagle Hollow to Rykers Ridge. About 1846, Harris moved his family onto a twenty-three acre plot that straddled the creek and ran part way up the hill behind about five-tenths of a mile up Eagle Hollow. Immediately across the Ohio River were the homes of two wealthy brothers, George and Samuel Fern with 1,000 acres of Fern property on both sides of the Carroll and Trimble county lines. Richard Daily, a slave owned by Sam Fern brought fugitive slaves across and was met by Chapman Harris.
or John Carr. The Ohio River crossing was managed by Chapman Harris and his two
ten-aged sons, Henry and Charles Walker. After Daily fled with his family about
1855, Harris and his sons went across the river to bring fugitives to safety. In 1856,
Patsy Ann Harris purchased three hundred and fifty acres along the ridge in back of
their homestead for an incredible amount of $1,000; only through the help of Indiana
and eastern abolitionists could such a sum have been acquired.

This route was fairly well protected. At the junction of Eagle Hollow Road,
then a plank road to Lawrenceburg, and the Vevay trail along the river, lived John H.
Taylor and his wife Mary, daughter of Abijah Pitcher, financial backer of abolitionist
causes. Taylor ran a distillery, had many business interests in Madison, and just
happened to pass along information about slave catchers and posse activity to
Chapman Harris. Between Taylor and Harris was the twenty-acre homestead of
Charles Lutz, an avid abolitionist. At the top of Eagle Hollow ravine where the
tableland opened out was the cabin of Ike Johnson, a Free Black who aided the
U.G.R.R. and just beyond him was the large farm of Charles Almond, one of the
Rykers Ridge activists. At one time, the frustrated slave owners of Trimble and
Carroll counties placed a slave catcher, Caleb McQuithy, up Eagle Hollow, but he
was beaten rather severely on one foray and never became a factor again.
Map 4. From Eagle Hollow to Rykers Ridge

Jefferson County, Indiana
Detail of U.G.R.R. Route Through Rykers Ridge
1. John Carr, Station Master
2. Cave beneath Carr's House
3. John Lott
4. Old Log Ryker Ridge Baptist
5. James Allen, Patsy Harris' Brother
6. Nettles Family
7. Old Rykers Ridge Cemetery
8. Jerard Ryker
9. Samuel Ledgerwood
10. Charles Almond
11. Gerardus Ryker Homestead
12. Ike Thompson
13. Dugan Hollow Road from Georgetown Section, Madison
14. Telegraph Hill Route from Georgetown Section, Madison
15. Patsy Harris, additional 350 acres
16. K Road, to Graham Road
17. North Road to Graham Road

Detail: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map: Canaar.
8. Rykers Ridge up Graham Road to the Baxter-Elliott Station via Stony Point, c. 1839-1861.

The Graham Road was the most heavily traveled of the U.G.R.R. routes in Jefferson County. After 1839, virtually all of the Madison, Rykers Ridge and Eagle Hollow traffic went up Graham Road to Stony Point where the Wagner brothers and William Watlington provided safe houses and decoys for any pursuing posse. At Stony Point, the route followed today’s Hebron Road that ran between the Wagner farms, then into Jefferson Proving Ground. At the shunpike, the route turned due north with stations about a mile west at Robert Elliotts and the Monroe Presbyterian families and a mile and a half north at James Baxter’s settlement. This was Station #2 of the organized eastern Madison U.G.R.R. route. From Baxter-Elliott, the route went to Thomas Hicklin (Station #3) at San Jacinto then to Bennville and George Waggoner’s Station #4, then to Waddle’s Grist Mill on the upper reaches of the Graham and due north to Holton in Ripley County. After Hicklin died in 1845 and the lands were sold in 1849, Station #3 was moved to a remote section of J.P.G. about half way between Baxter-
Elliott and George Waggoner. That station was managed by Francis M. Merrell with help from his uncle, John Van Cleave, and several families at St. Maurice.


The Shelby Township U.G.R.R. workers, although loosely associated with Madison and Jefferson County, probably received most of their fugitive slaves from Craig and Pleasant Townships in Switzerland County, Indiana. The Caledonia A.R.C. Presbyterian Church was one of four decidedly anti-slavery churches in Jefferson County. Most of the Caledonia church members drew from the Scots immigrants in Pleasant Township. This probably was the early nucleus of anti-slavery sentiment in the region. The Reverend Stephenson, a Baptist, at Canaan, was another source for anti-slavery activity in Shelby Township of Jefferson County. Associated with Stephenson was Jesse Lott, a prominent landowner. The Canaan group hosted a Colonization meeting in 1850, so it is somewhat unclear how abolitionist this part of the township really became. On the other hand, it was among Shelby Township "friends" that Delia Webster took refuge after the mob attacked her in Madison in 1853, and she was an out-and-out abolitionist.

Known to have assisted the U.G.R.R. were younger scions of pioneer families, including Christopher Whitten, John Shaw, David Spencer, Thomas Voris. Because of the age and geographical distribution of these men, they may originally have been schoolmates, influenced by a pastor or teacher, or known each other from some social
events. Sending sites probably were the McKay stone house at Lamb and Captain Hildrith’s home between Lamb and Vevay. The Shelby Township U.G.R.R. cell almost certainly delivered their fugitives to Cross Plains or Olean in Ripley County.

**New Caledonia Presbyterian Church, Shelby Township of Jefferson County.** Building dates to early 20th century but congregation goes back to early 19th century. Scots and New Englanders who settled in Pleasant Township of Switzerland County and in Milton and Shelby Townships decidedly anti-slavery. One active U.G.R.R. worker from that congregation that is known by name was John Shaw. Neighboring Brushy Fork Baptist Church had a number of young men in its congregation that aided the U.G.R.R including Christopher Whitten, David Spencer, Thomas Voris. One suspects that the fugitive slaves crossing at Lamb went up this Shelby Township route to Cross Plains. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
Underground Railroad Historic Districts in Jefferson County

Based on analysis of the individual sites and routes through this county, we have proposed seven major historic districts and six minor districts as follows:

1. Graysville Free Black Agricultural Community, c. 1824-1861


(1) Site of Graysville Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery, c. 1835. East side of Grange Road south of Interstate Block road. Church removed. Cemetery, one-half acres, a few field stones, one or two isolated markers. Graves sunken.

(2) Homestead of the Booth/e family, c. 1840. South side Interstate Block Road. House removed. Cemetery a few field stones.


(4) Homestead of the Cosby family, c. 1840. West side Grange Road. House removed.

(5) Homestead of Israel Jack who sold the Graysville lots, c. 1830. South side, Interstate Block Road. House removed.

(6) Farm of Fountain Thurman, c. 1834. House removed.
2. South Hanover Carmel and Bethel Communities, c. 1818-1861

Located in South Hanover and Saluda Townships. Over fifty families forming the Mt. Carmel and Bethel Associated Reform Presbyterian congregations.

Documentation dating to 1824 with the arrival of Reverend Andrew Fulton and continuing with the calling of anti-slavery pastors through the entire ante-bellum period. Bethel cemetery with African-American gravestones. Three to five Free Black families became active conductors from the 1830s to the beginning of the Civil War.

U.G.R.R. leaders: George Shannon, John Anderson, Reverend Andrew Fulton, John G. Forcen, James Hackney, Moses Tyree, the Hume family.


(8) Site of Bethel A.R.C. Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, c. 1840. Off CR 460 W, Hanover Township. Church removed. Cemetery includes both Black and White families.

(9) Site of Hume family farm, c. 1860. Off CR 460 W, Hanover Township.


(12) Site of Carmel A.R.C. Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, c. 1824. Carmel Road, CR 625 W, Hanover Township. Church removed.
3. Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society, c. 1839-1861 (1818-1861)

One of the most important and influential anti-slavery societies in Indiana, a major factor in developing anti-slavery political parties and candidates leading up to the organization of the Abraham Lincoln Republican Party. Fugitive slaves came from South Hanover and Saluda, from Madison and from Eagle Hollow through Rykers Ridge. The Neil’s Creek geographical area stretched from the intersection of SR 250 and 7 at Middlefork Creek west along Route 250 to Paris Crossing in Jennings County, and south from Kent along the old Indian trail to Tippecanoe, moving north to Neil’s Creek, Lancaster up the back road to Dupont. Over eighty families were involved in various aspects of the Underground Railroad and in support of the Eleutherian College at Lancaster. At least nine homes were safe houses for fugitive slaves. Leaders included: Lyman and Benajah Hoyt, James Nelson, James Tibbetts, John Hays, Abraham Walton, Bennett Nay, Samuel Wells. A close relationship developed between the Lancaster abolitionists and Reverend Chapman Harris of Eagle Hollow who conducted fugitives during the late 1840s into the Civil War.

At Kent

(14) George Trinkle Homestead, c. 1845. Thompson Road, Section 27, Republican Township. House removed.
(15) Wilson Cave. Section 30, Republican Township.
(16) Old Tippecanoe Indian Trail, from Kent to Wilson Cave to Lick Branch Baptist Church.
Deputy Pike, Lick Branch and Walton Creek Area

(17) Bennett Nay Homestead, c. 1828. Deputy Pike and Lick Branch Road, Graham Township. House restored. Site of original log Lick Branch Church. Site of salt lick.

(18) Second Lick Branch Baptist Church, c. 1840. Frame, vernacular. Old Tippecanoe Indian trail comes up behind the church site from a ford over Big Creek.

(19) Abraham Walton Homestead, c. 1818. CR 410 N and CR 500 N, Graham Township. House, c. 1840, early federal stone. Indian burial site. Fugitive slave burial site. Saw mill, grist mill and sorghum mill site along Walton Creek. 19th century access paths to the mill site. Walton, Hall, McClanahan family cemetery, the original log cabin site and well on top of hill.


James Nelson from Vermont settled at Neil's Creek in 1828. His wife was Lucy, the sister of Lyman and Benajah Hoyt who settled at Lancaster about 1837. Along with the Tibbetts, Wells and Waltons and other neighbors, they formed the Neil's Creek Anti-Slavery Society. James Nelson became the most active of the conductors of fugitive slaves through this region of Jefferson County. Tintype courtesy of Mrs. Jean Dodd, Phillips Family Collection, Lowell Phillips and Historic Eleutherian, Inc.

Neil's Creek Area


(24) Founding of Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Baptist Church. Many of Neil’s Creek abolitionists buried at the cemetery on the hill.


Lancaster Area

(29) Lyman Hoyt House and Factory Site, c. 1840. SR 250, Lancaster. Stone federal. Owned by Historic Eleutherian, Inc. under preservation trust. Organizer, along with his brother Benajah, of the Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society. Active in initiating Eleutherian College. Delegate to state-wide and Jefferson County Anti-Slavery Society meetings. (See also Benajah Hoyt).


Eleutherian College at Lancaster was founded by many of the same people who created the Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society. Open to men and women, Black and White, the school made special effort to recruit and educate slaves from the South. Chapman Harris’ second son, Charles Walker, attended Eleutherian as well as Moses Broyles. The school faculty had close ties to Franklin College. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(32) Reverend Thomas Craven, c. 1852. SR 250, Lancaster. (See also John Gill Craven). House removed.
(33) Officer House, c. 1860. SR 250, Lancaster. House removed. Site owned by Historic Eleutherian, Inc. under preservation trust. House on site used as visitor's center.
(34) Indian mounds and cave, CR 700 W Lancaster.
(35) Samuel Tibbetts farm, c. 1838. SR 250 directly across from Officer House, Lancaster. (See also Dr. Earl T. and Joshua C., and John C. Tibbetts). Barn.
(36) College Hill Cemetery, c. 1850. SR 250, Lancaster. Many of the Neil's Creek abolitionists buried here, including the Hoyts and Tibbetts.
(37) Ulery Record, c. 1839. SR 250 west of Lancaster. Unknown.
(38) Lemuel Rector, c. 1839. SR 250 west of Lancaster. Unknown.
(39) John Crank, c. 1839, SR 250 east of Lancaster. Unknown.
(40) James Hibner, c. 1830, Hotel owner, between Lancaster and Dupont. House removed.
(41) Asa Judkins, c. 1830, west of Lancaster. Unknown.

Paris and Paris Crossing Area

(43) Horace Higgins, c. 1840. Montgomery Township, Jennings County. Unknown.
(45) Samuel Wells Jr., c. 1845. Montgomery Township, Jennings County. Unknown.
(46) John Wells Sr., c. 1845. Montgomery Township, Jennings County. Unknown.
(48) Amos Hutchinson, c. 1830. Montgomery Township, Jennings County. Unknown.

4. Rykers Ridge Abolitionists, c. 1839-1861 (1818-1861)

The second major abolitionist community, an extremely effective outlet of safe houses for fugitives come through Madison, Eagle Hollow and Bee Camp area. Headed by John Carr as Station #1 of the eastern Madison route, the Rykers Ridge conductors brought fugitive slaves via the Graham Road then heading west between
the farms of Isaac and John Wagner at Stony Point, moving on north and west via the Shun Pike to James Baxter and Robert Elliott’s Station #2 in Monroe Township, Jefferson Proving Ground. Leaders: John Carr, John Lott, Jared Ryker, Samuel and John Legerwood, John Trotter, James Stewart, Charles Almond, James Allen.

(51) Old Log Rykers Ridge Baptist Church and Seven Springs Pond, c. 1835. Church removed.
(52) Wolf Creek and Ravine.
(53) Jared G. Ryker’s House, c. 1870. House excellent condition.
(56) John W. Ledgerwood’s House, c. 1835. Possibly still there. To be determined.

Geradus Ryker Homestead, c. 1815. The Rykers, Ledgerwoods and Hillis were among the earliest settlers on Rykers Ridge. This became an important abolitionist center in Jefferson County, but the U.G.R.R. activity split the Rykers Ridge Baptist Church. Jerard G. Ryker whose house lay along Wolf Creek behind the Old Rykers Ridge Cemetery was closely associated with John Carr, the U.G.R.R. Station Master. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(57) Geradus Ryker House, c. 1815. Frame and stone.
(58) Charles Almond Farm, c. 1845. House removed.
(59) Aaron VanCleave, c. 1840. Unknown.
(60) James Stewart, c. 1840. Unknown.

(61) John Trotter, c. 1840. Unknown.
5. Eagle Hollow, c. 1846-1861.

No site was more important during the late 1840s and 1850s than the Eagle Hollow ravine. The bulk of U.G.R.R. traffic during the late period came through Eagle Hollow and Reverend Chapman Harris, Patsy Harris, Henry and Charles Walker Harris, the teen-age sons. Information from Madison came to Harris through John H. Taylor, son in law to Abijah Pitcher, who had a distillery at the mouth of Eagle Hollow Creek. Between Taylor and Harris lay the land of Charlie Lutz an abolitionist. At the top of the ridge, Ike Johnson a Free Black assisted, and the first of the Rykers Ridge safe houses, Charles Almond, sat at the top of the ridge at Rykers Ridge Road.

6. Georgetown Section of Historic Madison, c. 1838-1846 (1838-1861)


Stepney Stafford’s, one of the leading Free Blacks in Madison, ran a whitewashing business out of his home on Walnut Street near Fifth in Madison. Stafford hired five or six Free Blacks in the city. Several of the activists in the U.G.R.R. lived in the Georgetown Section of Old Madison and had substantial homes and supported the Walnut Street Methodist Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the neighborhood. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.


(72) Jo Davis House, c. 1845, Two-story, brick federal. East side of Walnut across from old Walnut M.E. Church.

(74) Stepney Stafford's house and whitewashing business, c. 1840. One story-brick vernacular. West side of Walnut street, northwest corner of Walnut and the alley between Fourth and Fifth.


(76) Elijah Anderson's Blacksmith Shop, c. 1838. Southeast corner Walnut and Third. Shop removed.

(77) Walnut Street M.E. Church, c. 1849. In 1839 Seventy-eight Black members of the congregation split from Wesley Chapel in Madison when the choir took the seats originally given to the African-Americans. One-story, frame vernacular. West side of Walnut Street, between Taylor's store and the first brick row house.

(78) A.M.E. Church, c. 1849. William Anderson led a substantial number of the Black Methodists into the A.M.E., a more radical anti-slavery church. North side of Fifth Street, between Walnut and Main (now Jefferson Street) near the alley. One-story, brick vernacular.

7. Old Town: Courthouse Square to the River, c. 1838-1846 (1838-1861)

On the northeast corner of Main (now Jefferson) and Main Cross was the store and home of John Sering, the man who initiated the Clifty Falls U.G.R.R. route. South of the courthouse at the corner of the alley and Main (Jefferson) was the livery stable of Right Rea, the most famous slave-catcher in the region. A half block further south at the southeast corner of Third and Main (Jefferson) was the home and store of John Carter whose note in 1845 sent Chapman Harris on his first U.G.R.R. conducting assignment. Between John Carter and the alley on the south side of Third was the home and barbershop of George De Baptiste, the most colorful and prominent
of the Free Black leaders of the Madison U.G.R.R. and later a leader at Detroit, Michigan. De Baptiste said that he used to take horses from Rea’s stables and use them to take fugitives up to Lancaster and the Neil’s Creek abolitionists, then return the horses to their stalls before morning. Leaders: George De Baptiste, John Carter, Amos Phillips.

(81) Right Rea’s Livery Stable, c. 1840. Southeast corner of the alley between Second and Main Cross (now Main Street) and Main (now Jefferson). Livery extended east along the alley. Needs further analysis if structure remains.
(82) The Courthouse Square.

Abijah Pitcher, one of several prominent businessmen of early Madison who supported anti-slavery causes. Pitcher helped finance much of the anti-slavery political movement from Whig to Liberty Party to Free Soil Party to the Abraham Lincoln Republican. His son-in-law, John Taylor, resided at the south end of Eagle Hollow and fed gossip and information about posses and pro-slavery activities in town to Chapman Harris, the main U.G.R.R. conductor.

(83) John Sering’s Store, Home, and Thread Factory, c. 1840. Northeast corner Main Cross (now Main Street) and Main (now Jefferson) where the visitor center now sits directly north of the courthouse. The store (photograph available) sat on the corner, the Sering house was to the east along Main Street, and the Thread Factory went to the alley along Jefferson Street.
(84) 202-208 Walnut Street, near High. Purchased by Henry Harris, oldest son of Chapman Harris, 1873 and left to his family upon his death. The unmarried daughters, Gertrude and Anna Maria Harris
lived at 208 Walnut the house where Chapman Harris died. Amos Philips lived nearby this location. During the 1846 riots, Amos Philips sat in his home while bullets crashed all around him and he was badly wounded, but managed to survive and went to live in Lancaster among the abolitionists.

(85) Phillips Home, Southwest corner of High and East. Family history claims involvement in U.G.R.R. with a tunnel leading to East street.

8. Madison: Third Street and Presbyterian, Vine to Mulberry, c. 1835-1861

_Jesse D. Bright, Third Street, Madison. Bright, a slave-holder in Carroll County, Kentucky, headed the pro-slavery forces in Jefferson County. Bright was Indiana State Senator and was expunged from the U.S. Senate for giving arms information to the Confederacy. His Indiana farm lay along Papermill Road near the J.M.&I. Railroad crossing and near the Francisco brothers. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon_

(86) Jesse D. Bright, leader of the pro-slavery forces in Madison and Jefferson County. Federal on Third Street.

(87) The office of Michael G. Bright, son of Jesse Bright and attorney, who took George De Baptiste’s barbershop equipment when the twelve-month note was not paid on time. Intact structure on Third Street.

(88) Roberts Chapel, an anti-slavery congregation in 1841 split from the Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church. Third Street. One of the leaders, John H. Taylor, actively supported Chapman Harris at Eagle Hollow, by supplying him with information about posses and slave-catchers. Currently a home.

(89) Southwest corner of Third and Vine at John Paul Park – site of the Second Presbyterian A.R.C. Church, an anti-slavery congregation. One of four A.R.C. congregations – Carmel-Bethel in South Hanover, Caledonia in Shelby Township, and Greenbrier, southeast of Kent. Church removed.

(90) Methodist Protestant, radical anti-slavery congregation dated back to 1829 with preaching of Asa Shinn, founder of the M.P. Church, Bethel Church built in 1845 with pastor Bob Jones. Northeast corner of Poplar and alley between Main Cross and Presbyterian. Structure now a home.

(91) Universalist Church of Madison, a decidedly anti-slavery congregation, same site as M.P. Church, Poplar Street, northeast corner of the alley between Presbyterian and Main Cross. Congregation dated back to 1833 and Madison hosted the 1844 association meeting. Structure now a home.
(92) Poplar between Presbyterian and Main Cross, Ebeneezer M.E. Church, founded by Reverend Peter Booth/e of Graysville; consolidated with the members of the former Walnut Street M.E. Church. Church being used.
(93) Wesley Chapel, later the Opera House. Main Street near Poplar. Several Methodist congregations broke away from this church in the 1830s and 1840s. Removed.
(94) Joseph Rea’s livery stable, across the alley from Wesley Chapel. Removed.

9. Madison: Fifth Street, from the Cemetery to Main (Jefferson), c. 1830-1861

(95) Broadway Baptist Church, descendent of the St. Paul’s Baptist Church. Broadway near Fifth. Church being used.
(97) St. Paul’s Second Baptist Church, c. 1849. Fifth near Mulberry. Delia Webster taught Black children at this church. Church removed.

10. Knights of the Golden Circle, Pro-Slavery, Copperhead Organization, c. 1840-1865

(99) Warren Francisco, SR 7 at Papermill Road. House being used.
(100) Jesse D. Bright farm, Structure deteriorated. Papermill Road, near the railroad crossing.
(102) John Latta Farm and Drovers Tavern, SR 7 near Middlefork Creek. Removed.
(103) R. Williams, Middlefork Creek near Foltz. See photo at right.

*Williams homestead near Foltz. Five families originated the Knights of the Golden Circle that patrolled the area between North Madison and Dupont searching for fugitive slaves and harassing abolitionists.*
11. Stony Point to Baxter-Elliott Station #2, c. 1820-1861

(104) George Wagner Blacksmith Shop and Farm, Graham Road and Hebron Road. Safe house and decoy for posses. Removed.

(105) William Watlington House, west side of Graham Road, Stony Point. Removed.

(106) Isaac Wagner Farm, Hebron Road. Safe house and decoy. Removed.


12. Shelby Township, Early Sites, c. 1828-1861


(110) Christopher Whitten House and Farm, Section 36, northwest of Caledonia Church. Unknown.

(111) Thomas Voris House and Farm, Section 7, north of Caledonia Church. Unknown.

(112) John Shaw House and Farm Section 29 north of Caledonia Church. Unknown.

(113) David Spencer House and Farm, SW Q, Section 20, north of Caledonia Church. Unknown.

(114) Jesse Lott House and Farm, Section 28, south of Canaan. Also see Reverend Stephenson at Canaan. Unknown.
12. Saluda Township, Early Sites, c. 1818-1830


(116) The Fourteen-Mile Ravine. Used by runaways moving on their own from Harrods Creek, Bethlehem areas.

(117) An early Marble Hill U.G.R.R. station was mentioned in Jeffersonville annals serving the Jeffersonville-Paris-Vernon Route. Unknown.

13. Republican Township, Early Sites, c. 1824-1845.

(118) Methodist Protestant Church at Graham, Roseberry Cemetery remains.

(119) Greenbrier Presbyterian Church, broke away from the New Washington congregation. Removed.
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**Oral Histories**


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**Printed Works**


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Plat Map of Madison, Indiana, c. 1856.


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Chapter Three
Ripley County, Indiana

Introduction

Over the last two or three years, members of the Ripley County Historical Society compiled a substantial number of Underground Railroad site identifications that integrated the oral and family histories with land and census records. This important work developed by a small group headed by Helen Einhaus, Ripley County Historian. Major contributors were: former Ripley County Historian Bea Boyd, Alan F. Smith, Helen Vayhinger Caplinger, Willard and Vada Tucker, Avanell Adams, Arriest Harrell Udey, Evelyn Hastings Martin, Warren Einhaus and several other members of the historical society. A substantial number of current and older photographs were compiled as well. The 1883 township plats were used to document the location of U.G.R.R. stations.

The historical archives at Ripley County have built on years of work by local historians. Among the most significant contributions were the 1888 History and Directory of Ripley County by Ed. C. Jerman, the Violet Toph Papers of the 1920-1940 period, Alan F. Smith’s postcard and photograph collection, and the recently published two-volume Ripley County, Indiana, completed under the leadership of Rheadawn Metz and the History Book Committee. Also quite helpful was the 1970 Sesqui-centennial history entitled Napoleon and Vicinity.
Busching Bridge at the entrance to Versailles State Park. Two John Hunter houses, one known as the Busching House, stand on the hillside above the old road that forded Laughery Creek and led from Versailles to Stringtown via Pleasant Hill Meeting House. One of these houses duplicates the Hunter house on Lot 2 in Versailles known to have hidden fugitive slaves. The Pleasant Hill Universalists had strong anti-slavery positions. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

This work was supplemented by additional information supplied by Diane Perrine Coon. This data was gathered from several remote sources, archives as far away as Columbus, Ohio and Indianapolis, taped and/or noted oral histories, and two days of photography within the contaminated areas of the Jefferson Proving Grounds. A major part of this contribution included deed and warrant analysis, plats, and on-site visits. Some of this work was completed with the assistance of a grant from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, N.P.S. Underground Railroad Initiative, administered through the Indiana DNR Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

The Ripley County study of its U.G.R.R. sites and structures generated a substantial amount of interest in the communities and dovetailed with a rebirth of
interest in preservation of historic structures. Within the last few months, one preservation organization has been created at Batesville and another one at Versailles. People at Osgood have also moved toward a more organized preservation effort. The Ripley County Historical Society has agreed to provide county-wide preservation support for these local efforts.

Flat Rock Creek in Jackson Township of Ripley County. The roads ran out at Zenas, so conductors from Vernon or Butlerville brought fugitive slaves up the Flat Rock creek bed to Harvey Marshall's U.G.R.R. Station on the Jennings-Ripley county line. When pursued by posses or slave-catchers, the Flat Rock abolitionists would be alerted by horses' hoofs clanging on the rocks. That gave them time to move the runaway slaves to safety.
Map 5. U.G.R.R. Routes in Ripley County, IN

U.G.R.R. Legend

- Madison's Eastern Route (M1): Hickory Settlement at San Jacinto to Big Graham Creek Road, Bennville to Wadley's Grist Mill to Dr. Cady at Bolivar to the Michigan Road, Otter Creek Village to Napoleon to McCoy's Station.

- Alternate M1 Route: At Otter Creek Village take Michigan Road then Fairgrounds Road to eastern side of Osgood, then over to Vevay Spring and up the Vevay Road to Napoleon.

- Alternate M1 Route: Millersville on the Little Graham to Barwvile Free Black community to Olean

- Vevay Route: Patriot and Vevay to Olean, Versailles, Vevay Spring, Laugherville, Bolivar, Morris, to Brookville

- Alternate Versailles Route: from center Versailles to Pleasant Hill to Stringtown to Pescersville to Laughery Switch or Mud Pike.

- Aurora Route: from Moore's Mill or Upper Manchester to Old Milan over the Aurora Road through Prattsburg to Napoleon.

- Raccoon Creek: from Rising Sun to Friendship to Raccoon Creek Settlements to Olean and the Vevay Trail

- Lawrenceburg Pike: from Upper Manchester to Medoraville to Napoleon to McCoy's Station.

- Lawrenceburg to Greensburg: from Lawrenceburg to Yorkville to New Albany to Morgantown to Marvin to Brookville or Batesville to Rutledge.

- Flat Rock/Lockspring: from Vernon...
The Underground Railroad in Ripley County

One of the earliest and best organized Underground Railroad routes in Indiana occurred in Ripley County. It is fairly well agreed that Governor Stephen S. Harding of Old Milan headed the abolitionist cause in the county. However, key people emerged in strategic locations –

Stephen S. Harding at Old Milan (Station #7 from Aurora)
George Waggoner near Bethel (Station #4 from Madison)
Dr. Andrew Cady, Adin Knapp and James A. Creath near Holton (Station #5 from Madison)
Harvey Marshall, Charles Hull, and Joseph Judd at Flat Rock
Charles F. Styer at Olean
William Love, William H. Howe, Elias Conwell and Jacob Barrickman at Napoleon
Robert J. B. Roberts at Laughery Switch
Gustave Vayhinger and Irving Taylor at Union, south of present-day’s Delaware
John Ewing, John Andrews, Isaac Levi, Dr. Jehiel Mullin and James H. Cravens at Osgood
Allan Burton at Vine Springs
Stephen Andrews and Harman Smith at Otter Village
Francis M. Merrell near the Jefferson County line, Shelby Twp. (Station #3 from Madison)
Moses and Henry Green, Archibald Lewis, George Watts, and John Clark of the Free Black community centered at Raccoon Creek

James H. Cravens in his later years resided at Osgood. He was a firebrand orator and attorney at Versailles. When first married, Cravens’ wife was given two slaves in a will. In moving to Madison, Indiana, he entrusted his wealth to the slave woman who followed behind some weeks. Upon reaching Indiana, the woman returned his gold, and she and her husband were freed. Cravens moved to Versailles and became a dedicated anti-slavery political figure in state politics. Working first within the Whig Party, he then broke with them in 1846 and ran for governor of Indiana on the Free Soil ticket. Photo from Ripley County Historical Society.
At least five Underground Railroad routes went through the county. In the early days of the U.G.R.R. red gates were used to signal a safe house. If a local farmer painted his gate red, it was destroyed at night. Later, tokens were used, on the M1 route runaway slaves were given a big copper cent with a small hole in the middle and black tape to tie around their neck. This told the U.G.R.R. workers to the north that these were genuine slaves, not decoys set out by the detectives and associations of slave owners.

(1) The eastern Madison route (M1) originated about 1839; the route started at Rykers Ridge just northeast of Madison, Indiana. This heavily traveled eastern Madison route moved fugitive slaves through generally secure and remote country. Important safe houses were located at the Baxter-Elliott station on Middlefork Creek, the St. Magdalen settlement north of Big Creek, at Millersburg on the Little Graham and at Benville and Bethel Hole on Graham Creek. This route was developed and operated by experienced U.G.R.R. personnel, ones closely linked with the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society, and with U.G.R.R. leaders in Ripley, Decatur, Jennings, and Dearborn counties. Most of this traffic was directed toward Levi Coffin’s U.G.R.R. activists at Newport.

Although the Michigan Road did not appear to be used further south, from Holton to Napoleon, fugitives did travel on a section of the old Michigan Road. Extra
care was taken on so public a roadway. For example, there were safe houses about
two miles off the road at Otter Village, and alternate routes from Holton to
Lockspring or along the Fairground Road to Claytown and Vine Springs, provided
extra security. North of Napoleon the main route traveled to Slabtown and turned off
at Knarr’s Corner heading toward old McCoy’s Station in Decatur County.

George Waggoner’s
U.G.R.R. Station #4 was
located near Big Graham
Creek. This 19th century
bridge over the ravine
leading to Bethel Hole lay
along Waggoner’s farm.
Benville, about a mile west,
sent the fugitives to
Waggoner. There he and
Free Black Duncan
McDowell conducted them
to Waddle’s Grist Mill then
on to Dr. Andrew Cady’s
Station at Holton. Photo by
Diane Perrrine Coon.

The best known
conductors along this
route were Elijah
Anderson of Madison,
John Carr of Rykers Ridge, Francis Merrell near Millersburg, George Waggoner and
Free Black Duncan McDowell near Bethel Hole. Several of the Rykers Ridge or
Benville U.G.R.R. men would have shared conducting along this eastern route.
Conductors and fugitive slaves traveled generally by horseback through what is now
J.P.G. on old pioneer or Indian traces along the creeks. However, once at Bethel
Hole, George Waggoner was known to have used a false-bottomed farm wagon, taking fugitives as far as McCoy Station in Decatur County.

From Graham Creek, the U.G.R.R. route went nearly due east from Benville until it hit Waddle’s Grist Mill on the upper reaches of the Graham. There an access road led from the mill north to the Holton area to Dr. Andrew Cady’s station; also available as safe houses there were his cousin Adin Knapp who lived across the road and various properties in the area owned by James A. Creath. From Holton the regular U.G.R.R. route followed the old Michigan Road going north west of Osgood to Napoleon. This section of the route offered safe houses with Stephen Andrews and Harmon Smith within two to three miles of the Michigan Road at Otter Village. From Holton fugitive slaves could also be sent north via a covered wagon to Lockspring and the Flat Rock community.
The Jerry and Clementine Hull Homestead at Lockspring. Charles Hull, Joseph Judd and Harvey Marshall were among the early settlers in Flat Rock and Lockspring and headed the anti-slavery community there. Jerry Hull opened a country store across the road from his house. A half-mile to the west lay the farm of Israel Cooper, a pro-slavery advocate who attempted to catch the abolitionists in the act of harboring fugitives. In the 1850s fugitive slaves came up the old supply route from Dr. Cady’s station at Holton. Members of the Hull family conducted runaways to Decatur County. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Stephen S. Harding’s home at Old Milan was the center of U.G.R.R. activity in Ripley County and western Dearborn County. An attorney at Versailles, Harding’s relatives and children spread over an area from Elrod to Prattsburg and formed a large, active, U.G.R.R. cell. Mrs. Harding and her friends sewed clothing for the runaway women and children from a distinctive bolt of red calico. Photo c. 1920 from the Alan F. Smith Collection.

Ripley County’s coordinated organization came about chiefly through anti-slavery society meetings, but there were some anti-slavery churches scattered across the county. Also many of the participants were related by blood or by marriage. Frequently, the names of Stephen S. Harding or James H. Cravens, the two anti-slavery attorneys at Versailles, were penned at the bottom of deeds, wills, and other legal documents of known U.G.R.R. workers.
Map 6. Flat Rock and Locksprings

Map 6. Flat Rock and Lockspring U.G.R.R. Sites

U.S.G.S. Topo: Millhausen

Sending Sites: Zenas and Holton
Receiving Sites: McCoy Station and Kingston
Harvey Marshall House at Flat Rock. Greatly altered over time, this was once a simple log house with a hidden cellar that was used when the sheriff came to take back fugitive slaves. If the sheriff came from Versailles, the runaways would be moved over to Marshall's property in Jennings County. Slaves were also hidden at Joseph Judd's and other families in the neighborhood. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(2) Vernon to Flat Rock. An alternate spur off the western Madison route (M2), the Flat Rock route formed in the mid-1840s simultaneously with the formation of a Freewill Baptist organization at Flat Rock. The local anti-slavery leader, Harvey Marshall, offered his home as a station house. The earliest fugitives probably came through the Hicklin Settlement near San Jacinto, but after 1849, the sending location would have shifted to the Quaker settlement at Butlerville. The route led northeast to Zenas where the road ran out. From Zenas U.G.R.R. conductors and chasing posses went up the Flat Rock creek-bed to Harvey Marshall, Joseph Judd, Charles Hull and the other Flat Rock families in the far western section of Jackson Township. Unlike most of the U.G.R.R. routes that tended to move runaway slaves through very quickly, fugitives tended to stay at Flat Rock for some period of time before heading further north. This feature may have stemmed from the extreme remoteness of the area, or because of
work schedules of the U.G.R.R. activists. From Flat Rock, fugitive slaves were taken north by wagon through Millhousen or Westport to Decatur County stations. Later an U.G.R.R. route developed from Holton following the supply route north to Lockspring.

Because the Flat Rock community was so isolated, and because several of the pioneer families remained in the area, anecdotes about the U.G.R.R. were kept intact through family and church histories. The exploits of Harvey Marshall and his main nemesis, Israel Cooper, were told in several different incidents. At least fifty fugitives stayed in the home of Harvey Marshall and perhaps another fifty runaways passed through other nearby safe houses.

*Martin Hull's House at Lockspring.*

Once four brick structures sat on the side road. Jerry Hull's country store was at the corner and three other Hulls built homes and businesses here. Hannibal Hughes constructed a sawmill that sent huge poplar timber to Cincinnati by way of the railhead at Holton. Great oxen dragged the timber, wagon wheels, spokes and other sawed products. It is said that many of the public schools in Cincinnati were built with cross timber from Lockspring. At night, fugitive slaves came up to Lockspring from Holton in a covered wagon. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
Map 7. The Vevay Trail at Cross Plains

Underground Railroad Sites & Structures
Ripley County, Indiana
U.S.G.S. Topographic Map – Cross Plains, IN

Salem Separated Free Will Baptist Church at Cross Plains, c. 1840.
Now the Salem Christian Church. Founded by Reverend Andrew Sebastian.
The Vevay and Patriot routes were among the earliest U.G.R.R. routes in Ripley County. Anti-slavery activity at Vevay goes back to 1824, and by 1840 Patriot had well established anti-slavery forces. From Patriot, the U.G.R.R. trail came almost due west through Quercus Grove and East Enterprise and then connected with the main Vevay-to-Versailles Road going north. Fugitive slaves from Vevay and Craig Township along the Ohio River came through Cross Plains to Olean, up to Versailles. In all likelihood, much of this traffic continued up the old Vevay-Versailles-Brookville trail to Vine Springs and continuing through Laughery Township. Important stations on this route were located on C. F. Styer’s church-lot one mile south of Olean, at John Hunter’s house in Versailles, at Allan Burton’s homestead at Vine Springs.

One important development in the Ripley County U.G.R.R. was the use of complex and confusing switching points where fugitives could be shunted east or west off the main route. As the number of slave catchers and detectives increased, it became increasingly important to have alternate routes and safe houses. At Versailles, for example, fugitive slaves could be sent east to the ford over the Laughery Creek at Busching Covered Bridge and be assisted by families belonging to the Universalist Church at Stringtown. From Pleasant Hill at Stringtown, the conductor could take his charges to the Harding House at Old Milan and go up the Aurora Road.
Map 8. Raccoon Creek and Olean Routes

Underground Railroad Sites & Structures
Ripley County, Indiana
U.S.G.S. Topographic Map – Cross Plains, IN.

3. Raccoon Creek Cemetery, Site of Church and Free Black Community, Henry Green, William Thompson. U.G.R.R. route from Rising Sun through Friendship, IN.
Map 9. Claytown (Osgood) and Vine Springs

Underground Railroad Sites & Structures
Ripley County, Indiana
U.S.G.S. Topographic Map – Osgood, IN

1. John Andrews Home, c. 1850, and the Fugitive Trail
2. Isaac Levi Home, c. 1840, removed
3. John Ewing Home, c. 1840, removed
Another example was the connection between Burton's station at Vine Springs, located strategically where the Vevay-Versailles-Brookville Road crossed the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad, and a nearby community of neighboring safe houses. This cluster of safe houses included John Andrews, Isaac Levi, John Ewing, and Dr. Jehiel Mullin. They located about 1836-38 on the eastern edge of Claytown, an area that, when the railroad was constructed, became Osgood. Almost certainly, runaway slaves came to this Osgood group not only from Vine Springs but also from the main Michigan Road route via Fairgrounds Road. If the traffic came east, they would be sent on to Vine Springs. The old trail between the homesteads of John Andrews and Isaac Levi was nicknamed the "Fugitive Trail." These families had a number of inter-marriages and had strong ties back into Switzerland County.

Allan Burton's farm at Vine Springs served as a major U.G.R.R. junction point on the Vevay-Versailles-Brookville Road. Burton was located on the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad and was within two miles of John Andrews, Isaac Levi, John Ewing and Dr. Jehiel Mullin at Claytown (Osgood). Up the rail bed at Laughery Switch was the safe house of Robert Roberts and beyond him to the east lay Gustave Vayhinger and Irving Taylor. The Vine House dates from a later period. Burton's home stood a little to the southeast of this house. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
From Vine Springs, fugitive slaves could be sent east along the Ohio and Mississippi rail-bed to safe houses at Laughery Switch and Union, near Delaware, or traffic could continue north.

Jacob Barrickman’s Inn at Napoleon was one of the U.G.R.R. safe houses at this important junction point in Ripley County. The adjacent lot held Elias Conwell’s grocery store. Barrickman placed a lantern in an upper window to notify U.G.R.R. conductors on the old Michigan Road that it was safe to bring fugitive slaves to the inn. In case of trouble, a false wall provided a narrow hiding place on the first floor. An important drover center, Napoleon was served by many roads. Like a spoke, roads led from Napoleon to Brownstown, to Millhousen, to McCoy Station, to Aurora, to Lawrenceburg, to Holton, to Versailles. In 1850, the abolitionists at Napoleon hosted a regional meeting to object to passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Photo- Ripley County Historical Society.

of Vine Springs. Several options were available to the conductor to the north; the Vevay trail crossed the Aurora Road and the Lawrenceburg Pike, both enabled the fugitives to be sent through Napoleon to McCoys Station and the Decatur U.G.R.R. If the conductor traveled the Vevay to Brookville Road further north, apparently there were safe areas among members of the Union Club and Temperance Hall at Laugheryville and at the stagecoach tavern near Morris.

Elias Conwell House at Napoleon, National Register. Conwell, a wealthy and prominent businessman, operated a busy drovers inn and residence. Old timers say that this house had a double-dug cellar similar to that under William Love’s Railroad House Inn on the Michigan Road. One part of the cellar had a hidden entrance that led out into the woods behind the building. Almost certainly Conwell would have known about the U.G.R.R. activity in Napoleon and given tacit if not active assistance. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
(4) The Rising Sun route, run chiefly by Free Blacks, came through Friendship over Raccoon Creek to the Free Black community there. The Rising Sun route continued along Raccoon Creek to Olean then up the Vevay-Versailles-Brookville road to Napoleon where this traffic went to Miles C. Meadow's station at Kingston and then:

Raccoon Creek Trail. Two Free Black settlements, one along Raccoon Creek and the other west of Rexville provided additional safe houses off the main U.G.R.R. routes. These 19th century African-American communities tended to be well off the main roads accessible only by tracks or footpaths. Another Free Black family lived near Elrod and Duncan McDowell served as conductor from the George Waggoner station at Bethel Hole.

on north to Clarksburg in Decatur County then to Liberty in Union County. Because of the length of the trip and the many switching points, almost always a conductor accompanied fugitive slaves when this route was used. The Decatur U.G.R.R. was known to have sent conductors from Clarksburg all the way to Rising Sun to pick up "freight." The option was to travel up to Old Milan, then across the old road north of Pierceville to connect with the stagecoach route near Morris to Brookville Moses and Henry Green probably acted as leaders for this community. It is believed a close relationship developed between the Raccoon Creek Free Blacks and those at the Rexville settlement.
Even the best of 19th century roads were nothing more than wagon tracks leading through forest and over fords of the many creeks watering Ripley County. A few such roads still exist within the Jefferson Proving Grounds and on farms or woodlands around the county. These were the roads traveled at night that led fugitive slaves from slavery in the south toward freedom in Michigan and Canada.

Lawrenceburg-Aurora route. A major U.G.R.R. route, dating to about 1835, came from Aurora Landing through Manchester and Upper Manchester in Dearborn County then to Old Milan and across the Aurora Road to Napoleon. A vital station on this route was Stephen S. Harding’s home in Old Milan. Some of Harding’s children and other relatives settled out toward Prattsburg, providing additional safe houses. From Napoleon most of the U.G.R.R. traffic went north to Slabtown and Knarrs Corner where the route turned northeast to McCoy’s Station.

Almost all of these Ripley County routes converged into Decatur County “just south of McCoy’s Station.” Many alternate safe houses and routes were developed over the more than thirty years of U.G.R.R. operation in Ripley County as new people.
were recruited, sons grew to manhood and participated like their fathers, and key people died or moved and were replaced by others. By 1855, if the Underground Railroad had ever mapped its routes, it would have looked like a spider web of intersecting nets.

Charles F. Styer's house at Olean. His brother William Styer lived north and west of Olean. Local tradition says that fugitives were kept in C. F. Styer's house just north of town, but the Madison U.G.R.R. annals claim that fugitives were dropped off at the Styer place one mile south of Olean. That would place the safe house at the Universalist Meeting House, left, built on Styer land one mile south of Olean on the west side of the road. The trail from the Free Black Settlement at Raccoon Creek came out at this site as well. Photos by Diane Perrine Coon.
Underground Railroad Historic Districts in Ripley County, Indiana

Six multiple-site historic districts have been developed from the raw data. A number of sites within these districts had sufficient intact structures to identify them as potential for detailed station analysis. These are marked with an asterisk.

1. The Jefferson Proving Grounds to Holton District
   (Western Shelby Township and Southwestern Otter Creek Township)


   (2) Francis M. Merrell’s Station #3 near Little Graham Creek (photos) J.P.G. Inaccessible area. House removed. Merrell moved here and opened the U.G.R.R. station in 1853 to replace the Hicklin Settlement. He worked closely with U.G.R.R. workers at Madison, Benville, Butlerville, Bethel and St. Magdalen.

   (3) * George Waggoner’s Station #4 near Bethel Hole, c. 1819. J.P.G. Accessible only with guide. House Removed. Sites and structures remaining include the nineteenth century roadways, a nineteenth century bridge over the ravine, stone steps where the church stood, planted daffodils and other cultivated plants, graveyard where graves have been removed in 1940-41. Creek-bed and ravine leading to Hughes Cave to the east and Bethel Hole to the west. (photos).

   (4) * Henry Hughes Cave, east of Bethel Hole. Hughes owned over one hundred acres north of the Graham Creek pioneer trail and south of Holton. The Hughes homestead was listed as Kingswood. A Kentuckian whose in-laws were slaveholders, Hughes is a problematic figure as an U.G.R.R. activist, but oral history claimed the cave was used to hide fugitives.

   (5) Dr. Andrew Cady’s Station #5 just outside Holton. House removed. (photo, 1960)
(6) Adin Knapp’s House, directly across the road from Dr. Cady. House removed.

(7) James A. Creath, west of Holton. Unknown.

(8) Rexville Free Black Community, c. 1840. A mile and a half west of Rexville at the edge of J.P.G. About five Free Black families from Georgia, North and South Carolina. The rude log cabins removed.

The old Michigan Road coming into Napoleon was one of the major highways of 19th century Indiana. This part of the road—from Holton to Napoleon—was used by Underground Railroad conductors from about 1830 to 1861. Napoleon was a favorite stopping place for drovers taking their livestock to market. So the U.G.R.R. workers had to be careful in using the Michigan Road. One way of preserving secrecy was to establish several safe houses off the road. At Napoleon, traffic could be switched just like a railroad. Traffic could be sent east, west, northwest, or northeast. Ripley County perfected the use of routes angling off the major roads.
The Flat Rock Freewill Baptist Church was founded at the home of Harvey Marshall in 1846 and the congregation supported the U.G.R.R. activities of some of its members. Marshall would bring fugitive slaves to church services and Sunday School lessons. One time Israel Cooper came looking for fugitives but the men in the congregation shielded the runaway and led him out to safety. This church building replaced the earlier frame church that stood on the same plot. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

2. Flat Rock Creek and Lockspring Stations
   (Western Jackson Township and Northwestern Otter Creek Township)


   (10) * Flat Rock Freewill Baptist Church. Frame church removed. Stone church built on same site. Cemetery contains graves of many of the abolitionists here at Flat Rock and Lockspring. (photos)

   (11) * The Hulls and Lockspring Locations. Some of the original brick Hull houses still stand. The country store, saw mill, and brick kiln removed. (photos)

   (12) Isaac Cooper, Slave Catcher. To be investigated. The house still stood about twenty years ago.

3. Osgood, Otter Creek Village and Napoleon Stations
   (Center and Jackson Townships)

   (13) * Jacob Barrickman’s Inn, Lot 48 at Napoleon. House removed, now a barren lot. (photo of the building that served as Conwell’s store and Barrickman’s Inn dates to about 1920)
(14) * Elias Conwell’s House at Napoleon. National Register. The unique double-dug cellar existed thirty to fifty years ago. (photo)

Detail of the double-dug cellar at William Love’s and William Howe’s Railroad House Hotel in Napoleon, now the Bonaparte Restaurant. The northern cellar was accessible only via a trap door from the Inn and contained a tunnel leading under Michigan Road to Love’s wagon and livery shop. During the last renovation, the old closed wall was broken through and the trap door removed. The southern cellar contained two rooms and was used to hide horses from the Morgan Raid during the Civil War. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(15) * William Love’s and William H. Howe’s, “Rail Road House Hotel” at Napoleon, Lots 18 & 23. Now the Bonaparte Restaurant. Structure of the double-dug cellar visible, opening of the tunnel under the old Michigan Road still visible. Trap door leading from the north side of the building into the closed portion of the cellar and the tunnel was eliminated in the last renovation, but the contractor could attest its location.

(16) Isaac Levi Homestead at Osgood, c. 1836. Location known as Claytown prior to the coming of the railroad and founding of Osgood. Off Fairground Road. House removed. Site contained more than one Levi house. (photos of site)

(17) John Ewing at Osgood, c. 1845. Ewing was called the governor of Napoleon. House removed. (photos of site)
The James H. Craven's House at Osgood, probably constructed by John Andrews in the 1860s. Cravens, a famed anti-slavery politician and attorney at Versailles, purchased this lot from Dr. Jehiel Mullin who had been active in the U.G.R.R. The original fruit cellar and great flagstones still exist from the Mullin home. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(18)* Dr. Jehiel Mullin/James H. Craven's House at Osgood, c. 1845/1860. Italianate. Original Mullin fruit cellar and foundation stones still visible under the later home. Enormous flat stones form the back terrace and walkway to the barn. Cravens was the notable anti-slavery attorney who moved from Versailles about 1860; Cravens broke with the Whigs and ran for Governor of Indiana on the Free Soil ticket in 1849; he garnered over 3,000 abolitionist votes in southeastern Indiana. (photo)

(19)* John Andrews House at Claytown/Osgood, c. 1845. Italianate. House exists in excellent condition. Andrews was a famous carpenter and was called to supervise the building of schools in Cincinnati. Almost certainly he built his own house and that of James H. Cravens, and others in the Osgood area. He also invested in mills in Osgood. The Fugitive Trail ran between his house and the Levi property.
(20)* Robert J. B. Robert’s Station at Laughery Switch, c. 1840. Vernacular. Near Laughery Creek. Original house and cellar still exists. Added on over time. Sits on a slight rise above the old O & M Railroad track, now SR 350. (photo)

Robert J. B. Robert’s Homestead at Laughery Switch on the old Ohio & Mississippi rail line, now SR350. Roberts, Gustave Vayhinger and Irving Taylor all offered safe houses to the U.G.R.R. Fugitive slaves came from Vine Springs, from Old Milan, or from Napoleon. This route was a double-blind east-west trail that enabled the U.G.R.R. workers to off load the heavily traveled Michigan Road, Aurora Road, and Lawrenceville Pike. Such devices enabled the U.G.R.R. to operate in Ripley County more than thirty years. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(21) Stephen Andrew’s Station at Otter Village Cemetery. His home and that of Harman Smith have been removed. During the days of the Underground Railroad both of these men provided safe houses just off the old Michigan Road. They would have received “freight” from Dr. Andrew Cady or Adin Knapp or James A. Creath at Holton then forwarded the “packages” to William Love, William Howe, Jacob Barrickman, Elias Conwell and others at Napoleon. An eyewitness said that hundreds of fugitive slaves passed through Holton during the days of the U.G.R.R. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(22) Harman Smith’s Station at Otter Village. House removed.

(23) The old Michigan Road, major U.G.R.R. artery between Holton and Napoleon.
4. The Aurora Road - Old Milan to Napoleon
(Franklin and Delaware Townships)

(24) * Stephen S. Harding’s Station, c. 1840. Old Milan. Original Mid-Atlantic Federal structure greatly altered. (photo c. 1920, 2000) Harding headed the anti-slavery organizations in Ripley County and greatly influenced the direction of the Dearborn County anti-slavery movement. He frequently attended meetings at Moores Hill and Manchester. As a young lawyer, he faced down a pro-slavery mob on the steps of the old courthouse in Versailles. Harding ran for Lt. Governor of Indiana on the Liberty Party ticket in 1843 and again in 1846; he was appointed Governor of the Utah Territory by President Abraham Lincoln, but encountered massive negative reaction to his anti-Mormon positions. His wife headed a sewing circle that fashioned distinctive red calico dresses for the fugitive slave women.

*Stephen S. Harding’s House at Old Milan, greatly altered since the early 19th century. Harding, an attorney active in state-wide politics, headed the anti-slavery forces in Ripley County and western Dearborn County. Outspoken as an orator, Harding ran for Lt. governor on the Liberty Party ticket of 1843 and 1846. He was appointed governor of the Utah Territory by President Abraham Lincoln. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(25) Freewill Baptist Church at Old Milan, Removed. Site directly across from the Harding home.

(26) Freewill Baptist Church at Pierceville. Sons of Stephen Harding were founders of this church and settled nearby just off the Aurora Road and within easy travel to the Vayhinger and Taylor stations at Union.
(27) Pierceville Cave. To be located. Oral history claims this was used occasionally to hide fugitive slaves.

(28) Gustave Vayhinger's Station near Union, Delaware Township. House removed. (photo c. 1910)

(29) Irving Taylor House near Union, Delaware Township.

(30) The Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, now SR 350. This rail-bed connected Claytown/Osgood with Vine Springs, Laughery Switch and the two Union U.G.R.R. stations.

Gustave Vayhinger's homestead on Greasy Run sat west of current day's Delaware, Indiana. Vayhinger and Irving Taylor, his neighbor, provided safe houses along the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad, now SR 350. A tunnel led from the cellar out the north wall about 250 yards to a sinkhole at the edge of an apple orchard that sat in front of woods. Family history claims the fugitive slaves rolled off of boxcars, but the railroad cars before 1860 would have had no space in or under the cars for anyone to hide. It is more likely that conductors brought them along the rail bed by horseback. Since trains only ran a few times a day, and hardly ever at night, the rail bed would have served as a perfect clandestine roadway with some moonlight.

John Hunter and Elias Conwell were early settlers and prominent land developers at Versailles. Both men apparently favored the anti-slavery cause and became supporters of the U.G.R.R. Hunter stayed at Versailles. Conwell operated out of Napoleon and had family ties back at Aurora, the center for U.G.R.R. activity in Dearborn County.
5. **Versailles**  
(Johnson Township)

(31) John Hunter's Station in Versailles, c. 1830. Early Federal cottage style. House removed. (photos c. 1920) This building later was used as a church building by the Seventh Day Adventists. John Hunter was one of the founders of Versailles, and along with Elias Conwell helped develop the city. He also had a home next to the Busching house just east of Versailles. And he also built a principal home in the city later.

(32) *The Hunter and Busching Houses, Section 7-7-12, near Covered Bridge, Versailles. (photos c. 1930) Since the Buschings did not arrive until after the U.G.R.R. period, almost certainly these were Hunter and Smith family properties.

Throughout southeastern Indiana the early Universalist churches provided active anti-slavery workers. Generally supported by settlers from New England, these churches preceded the Quakers in maintaining a plank demanding equality of all men of all races under God. Another active congregation was sited one mile south of Olean. Photo from the Alan F. Smith Collection, Versailles.

(33) The Universalist Church at Pleasant Hill, Stringtown, c. 1840. An anti-slavery congregation may have provided aid and safe houses between Versailles and Old Milan. (photo, c. 1930) Meeting house removed. Graveyard still exists. A similar Universalist church and graveyard also named Pleasant Hill was constructed on C. F. Styer property one mile south of Olean.
(36) *The Weakman/Pleasant Hill Cemetery and Site of Universalist Church one mile south of Olean. Property owned by C. F. Styer. Meeting house removed. Graveyard intact. (photo)

(37) *Separate Baptist Church at Cross Plains, now Salem Christian Church, c. 1835. Founded by Reverend Alexander Sebastian from New Liberty Church between Quercus Grove and East Enterprise on the Patriot U.G.R.R. route. In the late 1820s, Sebastian was chased out of his pulpit in Warsaw, Kentucky, because of his anti-slavery preaching. He preached at Florence, Indiana, but was heckled by pro-slavery forces. He then founded the Separate Baptist Church that later merged with the Freewill Baptists to form New Liberty Church.

(38) *Henry and Moses Green and Free Black Church, Raccoon Creek. Church building removed. Cemetery intact. Four or five Free Black families lived between Friendship and Olean along Raccoon Creek. This community would have assisted conductors coming from Rising Sun through Friendship and heading toward Clarksburg, Indiana, in Decatur County. Another five families lived near Rexville and may have supported the Raccoon Creek church.

7. Vevay-Versailles-Brookville Road Northern Extension

The Old Stagecoach Tavern, Route 46 east of Morris in Adams Township. Strategically located on the main route to Brookville, oral tradition claims these cellars hid fugitive slaves. However, more documentation on the families and owners is required. One cellar room, said to have housed African-Americans is open only to the outside. The home is in the process of restoration. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(39)*Stagecoach Tavern, Route 46, Adams Township, c. 1830. To be determined. (photos)
*Allan Burton House, Vine Springs, c. 1845. Important U.G.R.R. site at junction of the Vevay-Brookville Road and the O & M Railroad. House Removed. Existing Vine house and resort built a few yards from the old Burton home. (photos) The Ewings, Burtons and Levi families were all inter-married and had strong ties back into Switzerland County.

Lot 2 in Laugheryville, owned by William Love and business associates. c. 1850. West of Laugheryville, Site of Union Club, Temperance Hall. Owners included William Love, known U.G.R.R. leader at Napoleon, Charles Wise, and Margaret Barrickman, a family also known to be involved in the U.G.R.R. Other families in the immediate area included the Thackerys and Reverend Williams of the United Brethren Church.

Photos by Diane Perrine Coon.
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Chapter Four
Jennings County, Indiana

Introduction

In 1998 the Jennings County Preservation Association published a compilation of African-American oral and family history entitled, Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County. The study made a survey of current information and identified several U.G.R.R. stations that were remembered in oral history and confirmed by various forms of family and county records. The task for the Freedom Trails project was to verify the sites and develop the public record around them. Lastly, the U.G.R.R. routes had to be ascertained where possible. Elbert G. Hinds, who worked on that project also served as regional coordinator for the Freedom Trails project, and gave generously of his time and knowledge about Jennings County.

In addition to the 1998 study, major contributors to this project included Denise Schaeffer at the Jennings County Public Library Indiana Room who has been pulling sources together for more than a year. The recently compiled history of Bigger Township proved essential to the project. In particular, this book confirmed the location of the anti-slavery Methodist Protestant Church and some of its members and the location of several of the ante-bellum roads. One of the principles of that study, Opal Sullivan Schuck, granted an interview and reviewed materials on the Hicklin Settlement at San Jacinto. Eric and Cathy Johnson, who are restoring the Hicklin
homestead, provided excellent cooperation and support for the project. Considered above and beyond all reasonable aid, Larry Alsop, of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife, gave up the major part of a holiday to trek through the Richland Free Black settlement and Tunnel Mill on a photographic expedition in the wild woods. The current owners of the William Lee property on Indian Creek, the William VanVoorhies, came down from Indianapolis and spent a long afternoon guiding the team through the woods and up the creek bed. Lastly, a 1994 transcript history of Montgomery Township helped define part of the anti-slavery community at Paris Crossing.
Map 10. U.G.R.R. Routes in Jennings County
The Underground Railroad in Jennings County

The Jennings County involvement in the Underground Railroad was far more fragmented and cellular than discovered in other parts of the southeastern region of Indiana. In some ways, the Jennings County U.G.R.R. can be defined as before and after the Hicklins. Another way to describe the situation is to talk about the eastern or western routes, or the White and the Black abolitionists.

Hicklin Settlement: The earliest known assistance to fugitive slaves occurred at the Hicklin Settlement on the Little Graham Creek near old San Jacinto. William Hicklin and his four sons – John Lindsey, James, Thomas and Lewis -- came up

The Hicklin homestead on the Little Graham Creek near old San Jacinto dates back to April 1819. The brick home was constructed by William Hicklin and his four sons about 1830. Reverend Thomas Hicklin inherited the home and operated a significant U.G.R.R. station here from 1834-1845. Candles in the upper windows alerted fugitive slaves that all was safe. Upon his unexpected death, the lands had to be sold to settle the estate. The two older Hicklin sons – John L. and James – moved to Oregon in 1850 with a number of other Jennings County anti-slavery families. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
from Kentucky in April 1819 and acquired about a section and a half of lands straddling Graham and Little Graham creeks. Before William wrote his will in 1834, the Hicklin Settlement was a well-known safe house for fugitive slaves. In 1839 the Hicklin Settlement became Station #3 on the eastern Madison route to Decatur County, receiving fugitive slaves from the Baxter-Elliott Station #2 in Monroe Township of Jefferson County, and sending them on to the George Waggoner Station #4 near Bethel on the Jennings-Ripley county border. Hicklin continued serving as a major U.G.R.R. station until 1849 when the lands were sold and the remaining Hicklins moved to Oregon.

The Vernon Row Houses opposite the Courthouse. A persistent oral tradition in Vernon, Indiana, states that these row houses were used to hide fugitive slaves during the Underground Railroad. From the early 1830s continuously to the Civil War, these buildings were owned by Molly Logan and Achilles Vawter. A tunnel extends the length of the row houses on Lots 22 and 23 leading from the Muscatatuck River. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Vernon: About 1830, a route to aid fugitive slaves was established between Jeffersonville and Vernon, informally named the Paris route. At that time Paris was far larger than Vernon, and North Vernon was barely a village. Initiated by Free Blacks and White
supporters in Jeffersonville and Charlestown. the route involved safe houses at Bethlehem, Marble Hill, Graysville, the Free Black community just north of Hanover. Robert Smith’s house south of Paris and one or more safe homes in Vernon. The oral tradition in Vernon remains strong that the row houses west of the courthouse square (Lots 22 and 23) were used to hide fugitive slaves. A tunnel transverses the entire block of row houses, running toward the Muscatatuck River. Lot 22 in Vernon belonged to Robert Marshall until January 1834 when Achilles Vawter, son of John Vawter, purchased the property. Achilles owned the site continuously through the 1850s, but since he had a principal dwelling, this would have been rental property. Molly Logan purchased the adjacent property of row houses, Lot 23, in July 1821 from John Vawter. Apparently Logan operated a boarding house or inn. There were no further transactions on that lot through the 1850s.

**Benville:** An important U.G.R.R. junction point developed by the late 1820s at Benville, located just north of the Hicklin Settlement. Benville sat on the old mail stagecoach road from Madison to Vernon, and also on the major east-west road along the Graham Creek to New Marion in Ripley County. The pioneer families at Benville known to have participated in aiding fugitive slaves included John Haden, Noah, Osborn, and Thomas Bland, Peter and John Vancleave, and Robert Doughart. Later a number of Quakers moved into the area, including Joseph and George Passmore, Hiram L. Smith, John and James Dolan (also Doland).
Bigger Township (35001-024)

Map (above) from the Interim Report, Historic Sites and Structures of Jennings County, Indiana. The black dot on the Little Graham locates the William Hicklin homestead. Southeast at location 018 was the homestead of Benjamin Merrell, a pro-slavery advocate whose son, Francis, became an U.G.R.R. station master on Big Creek. North along the Big Graham was Benville, location of several active U.G.R.R. workers.
**Butlerville:** During the 1850s, a number of Quakers moved from Ohio into the Benville-Butlerville area. One U.G.R.R. supporter was Joshua V. Millhaus who came into the area in 1854 and purchased two adjacent farms between Benville and Butlerville. To the northeast of Butlerville, Arvin(e) Quier purchased land in 1857, and became a major conductor of fugitive slaves from Benville through Zenas to the Flat Rock community. Quier also sent traffic east through Benville to George Waggoner’s Station #4 at Bethel Hole, to Waddles’ grist mill and north to Holton in Ripley County.

**Indian Creek:** In 1826 Free Blacks William and Catherine Hood settled on the Muscatatuck River in Section 22, Township 6, Range 8 East. Their daughter, Ellen married William Lee, a noted military veteran who served in the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Civil War. Lee moved out from Madison in 1837 and purchased land along Indian Creek north of current day’s SR 50 east of North Vernon. By 1850 a number of Free Black families had moved to Indian Creek, including John and Anthony Valentine, George Petyford (later Pettiford), Eagan Millburn, Hannible (Hannibal) and William Hood, and Sampson Bigg, Timothy Stapp, Malinda Newby. William Lee, who had established roots in the Madison U.G.R.R. became the major conductor of fugitive slaves going up the western U.G.R.R. routes in Jennings County.
Several miles of the Old Louisville Road are still visible near SR 3 north of Paris. This section passed the site of the old Richland church, believed a Methodist congregation. The cemetery for this Free Black community lay across SR 3, and several farms of about ten to twenty acres sat in a rugged woodland cut by ravines, all now part of the Crosley State Park. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Richland: The Richland Free Black community lay astride the old Louisville to Vernon Road, most of which lay west of present day’s SR 3 approaching the Muscatatuck River. These farms and house lots were purchased in the late 1830s from Achilles Vawter. It is believed that at least some of these men worked at the Tunnel Mill west of Vernon. Among those in situ by 1850 were Westley and Henry Phillips from Georgia, Spencer King from Virginia, Nilbury Conaway and Artimas Hill from Masssachusetts, Allan Vickery from South Carolina, George and Elisha Kersey from Georgia.
Scipio, Hege, Queensville, and Tannersville: Among the most perplexing of the attempts to document the U.G.R.R. in Jennings County, are the persistent local stories of aid to fugitive slaves at Scipio, near Scipio, at Hege, and at Queensville. The Jennings County Preservation book on Black American historic sites, referred to Hege as the likely site, and claimed that Blacks and Whites lived there comfortably. The land and census records for 1850 show a rather large Free Black community residing outside of Queensville on land purchased by Jonathan Thurman, son of Fountain Thurman, the pioneer leader of the sizeable Graysville community north of Hanover. The Thurmans were extremely light skinned, and had been involved in assisting fugitive slaves come out of Kentucky from 1834 and probably some time before that. As one of Fountain Thurman’s sons, Jonathan would have been well versed in getting fugitives from place to place.

Hege was located west of Tannersville along the old JM&I Railroad. The history of Scipio claims that Ansel Pease was a “red hot abolitionist” in the area. A Free Black named Robert Pryor from Hege served in Co. A, 17th Regiment Tennessee Volunteers. Photo from Historic Black American Sites & Structures in Jennings County, Indiana.
Frequently Scipio was mentioned as an interim U.G.R.R. stop between Vernon and Seymour, but there is little documentation to date. Even more to the point, at Tannersville and easily reached from Hege, a road led directly to Azalia, the major U.G.R.R. station in Bartholomew County. Whether William Lee conducted fugitive slaves to Queensville, to Scipio, to Hege or to Tannersville, is not yet clear. That Lee conducted fugitive slaves through western routes of Jennings County is fairly certain.

During the 1840s at least some Indian Creek and Richland Free Blacks met conductors at the “Narrows” of the Muscatatuck River near Vernon to bring the fugitives further north. Hellen Ochs, writing in the *North Vernon Sun* during the early 1920s described an incident where “S...,” the leader of the slave-catcher gang in Vernon, attempted to catch the Black abolitionists in the act of aiding fugitive slaves and thus shut down the Underground Railroad. A man named Don Pedro Alphonso Maltier Chansey Clinton Rich, called Clint Rich for short, gathered a gang of his own that followed then “wiped up the ground” with the pro-slavery gang. Vernon had a strong anti-slavery citizenry at the time. They were particularly incensed over the capture by “S...” of a Free Black named Kersey (also Carsey) who lived in Richland, had married a local woman, and worked at various jobs in the area eking out a living and respected by his neighbors. An earlier account of this incident, stated that a familiar citizen was seized and hurried off under the cover of night by two men armed with muskets. Angry citizens of Vernon rescued the Negro from jail and sent him into the abyss of the U.G.R.R.
Ochs claimed that the Texas and Mexican campaigns were discussed everywhere in those days. Clint Rich became the captain of a company in the Fifth Regiment, John Lattimore his first lieutenant, Ed Arnold, the second lieutenant, and Tom Lane the colonel. One suspects that these men probably were part of Rich's anti-slavery gang.

Comminsky and Paris Crossing Area

A recently compiled history of Montgomery Township refers obliquely to anti-slavery Kentuckians who moved into the Paris Crossing area. There were also a number of men from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire who moved into Paris, including the physician, Dr. Goodhue. Further, several members of the Neil's Creek Anti-Slavery Society lived in Paris and north of Paris in the area where Graham Baptist Church was built. Thomas Ammons purchased lots in Paris in 1825 and 1828; Horace S. Higgins and Eli H. Higgins moved to Paris in 1848. In the mid 1839s Lemuel Wells purchased lots 24, 75, 54, 53, 47 and 108 in Paris, although his principal farm of eighty acres in Section 14 had been given him in 1829 by Abraham Walton Sr. Also in Section 14 were farms of other active abolitionists -- Abraham Walton, Jr. and Ira Wells.
Home of Eli Wells, west of Comminskey, recently restored. Several members of the Wells family resided in the Paris Crossing-Comminskey area. They were charter members of the Neil's Creek Anti-Slavery Society. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

The Jennings County Preservation Association’s book detailed the Daniel Day-Lewis family history, a strong oral tradition that fugitive slaves were hidden in the attic and hidden west bedroom. This house, recently renovated, sits in Marion Township.
Zenas and Flat Rock: Although the main discussion of Harvey Marshall's U.G.R.R. Station at Flat Rock was detailed in the Ripley County chapter, the route from Butlerville through Zenas to Flat Rock was very important as an alternate route off the Louisville and western Madison fugitive trails.
The Underground Railroad Routes in Jennings County

Jennings County actually provided a number of hub configurations as the Underground Railroad developed over time. The first and earliest hub was at Vernon. Although it is tempting to draw a straight line from Madison to Vernon, Indiana, generally following today’s Route SR 7, that is not how the U.G.R.R. routes were laid out. Probably half or more of all Jennings County U.G.R.R. traffic came up the Louisville-Paris-Vernon route, created before 1830 by abolitionists and Free Blacks in Jeffersonville and Charlestown, Indiana. This route precedes the founding of Richland and the arrival of William Lee in Jennings County by eight to ten years. The Paris route probably linked to early safe houses such as the row houses in old Vernon and east to the Bethel area of Ripley County’s Shelby Township just inside the Jefferson Proving Grounds.

Some of the early Madison traffic came up to Vernon as well, but in the late 1820s and early 1830s almost certainly fugitive slaves were directed north along the old stagecoach road from Madison through Millersburg on the Little Graham Creek to Benville then due west to Vernon. By the late 1830s, this western Madison route had been compromised by the activity of the pro-slavery forces between Wirt and Dupont. Alternate paths emerged. Lancaster became a significant sending location, and a back road up to Dupont was used. Once the Neil’s Creek abolitionists were organized in
1839, much of the fugitive slave traffic conducted by James Nelson at Neil’s Creek went west up the Paris road and straight through the Richland community. At Richland, a back route went to William Lee’s cabin on Indian Creek, to Hayden and Scipio. The old railbed of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad was probably used by William Lee to get into Hayden by the quickest route.

After 1849 when the Hicklin Settlement closed down, U.G.R.R. traffic came up to Vernon then was shifted to Butlerville and points north to Zenas or east into Ripley County. The road ended at Zenas, and Flat Rock Creek was used as the roadway to the Harvey Marshall Station in Jackson Township of Ripley County. The Flat Rock abolitionists claimed they could hear the hoof beats of the posse ringing on the creek rocks and that gave them ample time to hide any fugitives in residence. At least fifty fugitive came through the Jennings County route to Flat Rock. Another fifty came north from Holton to Lockspring.

At least some of the fugitive slaves from the Free Black agricultural community at Gravsville, just north of Hanover, would have been brought north to the Hicklin settlement on the Little Graham Creek, others would have been sent up the Paris road to Vernon. By the late 1830s, the Richland Free Black community provided safe houses along the Paris route and William Lee’s western route to Queensville/Scipio would have been in full swing.
Routes to and from the Hicklin Settlement (c. 1830-1845)

The Hicklin Underground Railroad Station provided an important early and very remote route north from the Madison and Hanover Ohio River crossings. Almost certainly, the Hicklin U.G.R.R. station predated the 1835 death of William Hicklin and the 1839 formation of the Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society of Lancaster, Indiana. It probably began in the late 1820s simultaneously with the development of the Carmel-Bethel communities in South Hanover along the Ohio River. Also significant to the development of the U.G.R.R. nearby were other areas formed in the early 1820s – Millersburg on the Little Graham and Benville on the Graham creeks, the Graysville Free Black community north of Hanover, and the Baxter-Elliott settlements in Monroe Township, Jefferson County, Indiana. Anti-slavery families that became active in operating the Underground Railroad settled in all these areas.

After 1839, Hicklin Station formally became part of the seven stations leading from John Carr’s Station No. 1 on Rykers Ridge northeast of Madison to the Decatur County stations in Fugit Township. These stations all led to Newport, Indiana, and the Ohio U.G.R.R. Further, both Thomas and Lewis Hicklin show up on records of the Neil’s Creek anti-slavery group at Lancaster. Thomas spoke of going down to Big Creek to pick up groups of fugitive slaves. Therefore, Lancaster to the south became a sending station as well as John Carr and the Rykers Ridge abolitionists.

The earliest Hicklin land warrants date to February and April 1819 and one can assert that the family cleared some fields and erected a rude pioneer log hut that first
spring. The Hicklins were the sixth family to settle in Bigger Township. The
homestead was cleared and constructed by William Hicklin and his four sons – John
Lindsey, James, Reverend Thomas, and Reverend Lewis. The station included about
900 acres -- all of Section 23 and about one third of Section 22 and one half a quarter
of Section 24 all in Bigger Township. These

Tombstones (right) of Thomas, William and
Margaret Hicklin in the family graveyard on the
south bank of the Little Graham Creek just west
of the Hicklin homestead. Photo from Historic
Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings
County, Indiana.

lands straddled the Little Graham Creek
about two miles from present day’s San
Jacinto, Indiana. The use of the Eagen/Short/Edwards Cave to the West along Graham
Creek may date from an earlier period or have been a temporary safe holding place
along what locals called the fugitive trail. Hicklins’ U.G.R.R. station sent fugitives on
to the Waggoner Station No. 4 on the Graham Creek. After the Quakers settled nearby,
Thomas Hicklin may also have sent fugitives due north to Butlerville and then further
north to the Harvey Marshall Station in Jackson Township of Ripley County.

Site Features, 19th Century Roads and Fords: Looking at Bigger Township today, one
gets a distorted picture of a backwater rural area that has lost its population, its
hamlets, and one-third of its territory to the Jefferson Proving Grounds. However,
before the Civil War, major routes came through this region. Between the Thomas Hicklin house and the Little Graham Creek remnants remain of the old pioneer trace.

Map (left) showing location of Old San Jacinto and present day San Jacinto and other noteworthy sites in the immediate area. John Lindsey and James Hicklin lived near Graham Baptist Church. Thomas Hicklin lived just south of the M.P. Church at Old San Jacinto south of Little Graham Creek. The old trace to Benville went north along the Jefferson Proving Ground fence. Drawing by Opal Sullivan Schuck from Memories of Bigger Township.

that criss-crossed the creek in several places. The trace, or fugitive trail, is visible on an east-west line along the creek-bed north of the Hicklin homestead. The ford over Little Graham Creek not more than two hundred yards from the Hicklin house led to Old San Jacinto, a location two miles east of today's San Jacinto. From Old San

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Jacinto, the pioneer trail connected to the main road at Benville along Graham Creek that led east to New Marion, Indiana, in Ripley County. The mail stage-coach road from Madison to Vernon, Indiana, went via Millersburg (P.O., 1823) on the Little Graham then crossed Graham at the Benville ford, then went due west along the Rush Branch/Cherry Park Road to Vernon. Millersburg and Benville were associated with very active anti-slavery families. The Graham Creek road was never much more than a wagon trace; this road was used by the U.G.R.R. in the 1830-1860 period and was later used by the Morgan Raiders moving east from Dupont. The old road that followed Graham Creek to the northeast led to George Waggoner’s Station No. 4 and from there north through an access road from Waddle’s grist mill to Holton. There one found Dr. Andrew Cady’s Station No. 5 on the U.G.R.R. route to Napoleon, Indiana. Once a fugitive reached Benville a nineteenth century road cut north among friendly Quakers to Butlerville and a back roads led north to Zenas, Indiana. From there roads ceased, and the U.G.R.R. conductors used the Flat Rock Creek itself as the access road to Harvey Marshall’s Station in Jackson Township, Ripley County.
The Western Routes through Paris, Richland, Vernon, Indian Creek and Scipio

The original western route, dating to about 1830, had to come straight up the old Louisville Road from Paris to Vernon then on to Seymour. One suspects that very few fugitives actually were guided by a conductor at this period, but rather were fed and sheltered at various safe houses such as Robert Smith's just south of Paris then sent on with instructions how to find the next friendly homestead. In the late 1830s this pattern changed radically. First, abolitionists through the anti-slavery societies were beginning to see the advantage in conductors taking the fugitives through from station to station. Earlier at the Hicklin settlement, a lantern or candle in the upper window signaled safety for fugitives, but later Thomas Hicklin spoke of going down to Big Creek to pick up "freight." And James Nelson from Neil's Creek was delivering fugitive slaves further north. After the Knights of the Golden Circle, a pro-slavery organization, was established at the John Latta drover's tavern on SR 7 near Middlefork Creek, it became increasingly dangerous to send fugitives up to Vernon on their own. The recapture rate was increasing as detectives and bounty hunters sought the lucrative finders fees.

It was during 1838-1846, a period of intense involvement by Madison Free Blacks that the Free Black routes were established up the western part of Jennings County. This western route depended upon the arrival of William Lee at Indian Creek and the settlement of emancipated slaves around Richland and Indian Creek and
Queensville. The deed to Lee’s property just north of SR 50 on Indian Creek required the landowner to keep the creek bed clear as a trail to the Hayden Road. After driving part way up Indian Creek and examining the terrain, it appears that the creek bed formed the U.G.R.R. route. William Lee picked up the fugitive slaves at Richland, came across a lower ford on the Muscatatuck, then came up Indian Creek to the top of the hill where the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad crossed east-west to Hayden. This is the same rail bed, although much further west, that was used by the U.G.R.R. east of Osgood to off load fugitive traffic from the Vevay, Aurora, and Michigan Roads. Roads or tracks cutting north would provide William Lee a way to avoid Vernon if necessary. For a military man, one rumored to be part Indian, this would have seemed a relatively easy distance to travel by horse.

It is also believed that by 1845, much of James Nelson’s Neil’s Creek traffic was heading to Paris and up the old Louisville Road to Richland where William Lee could pick up the fugitive slaves. The U.G.R.R. route from Neil’s Creek had several safe houses to protect the cargo if chased including Thomas Ammons, Horace and Eli Higgins and Lemuel Wells at Paris, Abraham Walton Jr. and Ira Wells near Graham Baptist in Montgomery Township. There were others at Paris Crossing and Commissiny, but the annals do not specify the names.
Map 11. U.G.R.R. Routes through Richland
Map 12. The Indian Creek Station
1. San Jacinto, Bigger Township

Among the most active of all the early U.G.R.R. stations, Hicklin Station was established well before the middle 1830s, because William Hicklin, the progenitor, who died in March 1835, is credited with initiating the station. This U.G.R.R. station closed operations sometime after the unexpected 1845 death of Reverend Thomas Hicklin, the station master, and the subsequent 1849 sale of the Hicklin lands. Although other family members were involved in the U.G.R.R., and probably James ran the operations after Thomas' death, the Bigger Township land had to be sold to pay debts. In 1850 both James and John L. Hicklin moved their families to Oregon. In 1840, Reverend Lewis Hicklin and his wife had already moved to Madison and then in 1850 to Noble County, Indiana, where Lewis was engaged full time as a circuit rider in organizing anti-slavery societies and Methodist churches in Indiana.
How did such an early U.G.R.R. station get organized? The links were probably forged through the early Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches, dating to 1824 with the arrival of Reverend Andrew Fulton at Carmel, South Hanover. Although William and Margaret Hicklin were married in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, it is not certain whether or how he maintained that affiliation after moving to Indiana. The closest mainline Presbyterian Church was that at Middlefork. This congregation later splintered forming Monroe Presbyterian, an anti-slavery church led by Robert Elliott, a station master, along with John Baxter, of Station No. 2 leading to Hicklin’s settlement. There was also a small fragment of an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on Graham Creek in the western section of Shelby Township in Ripley County. These early congregations were supplied by A.R.C. clergy from Carmel, the church of the South Hanover Scots-Irish settlements. That clergy, very strongly anti-slavery, also served the fragment A.R.C. congregation surrounding Samuel Ledgerwood on Rykers Ridge. All of these locations were later U.G.R.R. stations.

Standing on the cellar steps, Reverend Thomas Hicklin faced down Right Rea and the posse from Madison. Hicklin said there were no fugitive slaves in this cellar. The runaways had already gone through the tunnel into the western cellar. So technically,... Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
Lewis Hicklin was originally sent out as circuit rider by the Baltimore organization of the Methodist Protestant (M.P.) Church in 1840, but he soon devoted full time to organizing anti-slavery societies in Indiana, working extensively with Arnold Buffin, the Quaker, and Reverend John Clark of the M. P. Church. Thomas is listed on Methodist Protestant conferences of the 1840s as clergy.

Through the evangelizing work of Thomas and Lewis Hicklin, an extremely strong relationship developed between the Hicklins and the Neil's Creek abolitionists at Lancaster, the Benville-Millersville families in Ripley County and the “English” families of Manchester and York Townships in Dearborn County, Indiana. Common interests included the new anti-slavery denomination, Methodist Protestant, local and statewide anti-slavery societies, anti-slavery political candidates, operating successful U.G.R.R. routes, and keeping slavery out of the western territories.

The Hicklin women married into strong anti-slavery families. The youngest sister, Martha Hicklin, married Henry King, an acknowledged U.G.R.R. worker in the Waggoner Station No. 4 along Graham Creek in Ripley County. Anna Hicklin married William Stephenson, also believed to come from an anti-slavery family. Nancy Hicklin married Hugh Gordon, but died before her father’s 1834 will was filed in Jennings County, Indiana. Elizabeth Hicklin married a Mr. Hughart and went to California. Emily Hicklin married Benjamin Hall, son of Joseph Hall, very active U.G.R.R. worker at the West Fork of Tanners Creek, Dearborn, County; Benjamin Hall accompanied the Hicklins and Hansells to Oregon.
Of Jane Hicklin there was no information. She may have accompanied John L. and James to Oregon.

_The Methodist Protestant meeting house at Old San Jacinto, c. 1832._
_Drawing by Opal Sullivan Schuck._

When Thomas Hicklin died so unexpectedly, Reverend Thomas Bland apparently served as pastor of the M.P. Church at Old San Jacinto. Asberry Bland married Jane Ann Hansell, daughter of Thomas Hansell and Elizabeth Smith Hansell. Until he went to Oregon in 1845, Thomas Hansell headed the U.G.R.R. on the East and West Forks of Tanners Creek at Guilford. Asbury Bland's son, John Hall Bland, married Jane Ann's sister, Mary Catherine Hansell. The Blands who were active in the U.G.R.R. at Benville, may have joined with some of the Stotts and Dennys still in the area to continue to operate the Hicklin station. In 1852 strongly influenced by his maternal uncle, John Vancleave, Francis M. Merrell, son of a decided pro-slavery father, organized a replacement Station #3 in what is now the Jefferson Proving Grounds. Merrell's station, located nearly equidistant between Baxter-Elliott in Monroe Township of Jefferson County and George
Waggoner's station on the Graham Creek, became a very active location during the next decade.

*William/Thomas Hicklin*

*house undergoing reconstruction. The foundations, c. 1830 and roof framing show well in this picture of the rear of the house. The hand dug cistern shows just to the right of the house. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon, summer 2000.*

(1) *William Hicklin, Thomas Hicklin House, c. 1835. (Eric Johnson)*

675 E. I-house/Federal. Two-story brick with central staircase. Double-blind cellar on west side of house, entered through a tunnel from the east side cellar. Brick kiln on site. Outbuildings: English barn, smokehouse, summer kitchen. Hand dug cistern lined with brick and stone. Current owner initiated major renovation of the home, planted a vineyard. William Hicklin, the father, purchased land in Bigger Township in early Mayring 1818, and operated a station on the U.G.R.R. perhaps as early as the late 1820s. His son was active in U.G.R.R. and anti-slavery politics. After Reverend Thomas Hicklin died in 1845, debts forced the family to sell out by 1849 and move out west.

*U.S.G.S. - San Jacinto, IN: 838-848*

NW and NE Section 23 Township 6 North, Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN. The house faces the Little Graham Creek and the old nineteenth century trace that followed the creek bed. The road, 675 E, that provides access today did not exist as a road; however there was an early ford over the Little Graham that led to San Jacinto and Graham Baptist Church and the Methodist Protestant Church.
(2) Hicklin Family Cemetery.
Family cemetery on south side of Little Graham Creek west of the house along the old nineteenth century trace. Tombstone inscriptions read as follows:

In memory of Margaret, Consort of William Hicklin,
Died 3 August 1842, age 60 (or 69) years, 2 months and 3 days.

To the memory of William Hicklin. Died 10 March 1835
70 years, 10 months, 6 days.

Thomas Hicklin an Ardent Preacher of the Gospel and an Advocate of Human Rights, Died 26 December 1845,
Age 37 years, 7 mos, 3 days.

In 1974 these tombstones were viewed by Homer Dell, president of the Jennings County Historical Society and Pasha Palombi Smith, the Hicklin family history compiler. At that time they were described as eroded and sunken. Thomas Hicklin’s stone was tilted at a 30 percent angle. Part of the crest of William Hicklin’s tombstone had broken off and was lying on the ground. Margaret’s stone had fallen flat. The inscriptions then were nearly illegible.

U.S.G.S. – San Jacinto, IN: 838-848.
NE Section 23-6-9.
The cemetery lies south of the Little Graham Creek less than a quarter mile from the William/Thomas Hicklin house.

(3) Nineteenth Century Trace along the Little Graham and Graham Creeks.
Access into these remote sections of Jennings County followed the creek beds. The old trace following the Little Graham Creek was still visible in front of the Hicklin House. The ford over the Little Graham at the Hicklin Settlement led to Old San Jacinto and the Methodist Protestant Church. The Graham Creek Road was a major pioneer trace going northeast-

(4) Benjamin Merrill House, c. 1830.
400 S. 1-house/Federal. Francis M. Merrell, claims that his family was very pro-slavery. He moved to Shelby Township of Ripley County (Jefferson Proving Grounds) and organized an U.G.R.R. Station #3 in 1852, replacing the Hicklin Station. He credits his uncle John VanCleave with converting him to a radical anti-slavery position.

Section 25 Township 6 North Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN
(5) Site of San Jacinto Methodist Protestant Church, c. 1840.
640 E. Frame Vernacular.
Removed. When Thomas and James Hicklin were dismissed from the Graham Baptist Church because of their U.G.R.R. activities, Thomas helped to organize an M.P. Church at Old San Jacinto on the east side of the Forks of the Graham. After Thomas died in 1845, Reverend Thomas Bland of Benville was pastor to this congregation and his lands lay just across the road from the church.

U.S.G.S. – San Jacinto, IN: 848.
East side of the Forks of the Graham on the north side of the San Jacinto trail. Presently this site is a pasture rising just above the creek bed.

(6) Site of Samuel J. Stott and James Stott, c. 1837-1839.
The Stotts and Dennys were brothers-in-law to William Hicklin and cousins to Thomas, James, Lewis and John L. Hicklin. Locally, the Stotts and Dennys were known to be involved with the Hicklin U.G.R.R. station and may have been members of the M.P. Church at San Jacinto.
Part SE and SW Section 26 Township 6 North Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN
(7) Graham Baptist Church and Cemetery, c. 1840.

240 S. Gable front Church. 1848/1898. Cemetery: 1857. John L. Hicklin donated the land for the Graham Baptist Church, and he later was a Baptist minister in Iowa. Two of his brothers – James and Thomas – were dismissed from this congregation for their U.G.R.R. activities.

Graham Baptist Church, building c. 1839, on lands of James and John Hicklin and James Hughes. Congregation goes back to 1829. After James Hicklin was dismissed for his U.G.R.R. activity, several families left Graham church and joined the Methodist Protestant anti-slavery church at Old San Jacinto. John Lindsey Hicklin apparently stayed at Graham church and later became a Baptist minister in Oregon. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

(8) Sites Owned by John L., James, and Lewis Hicklin, 1837-1850.
The Hicklins owned nearly all of Section 23 and most of Section 22. Over the years, the sons acquired additional acreage, some of it given to Martha Hicklin and Elizabeth Hicklin, at the time unmarried sisters.

Expansion of the Hicklin Homestead, c. 1837.
U.S.G.S. – San Jacinto, IN: 840-848.
The Hicklin sons purchased land by deed to expand the family holdings. Eventually all of Section 23 was purchased, and Thomas Hicklin purchased the W ½ NE Section 24.

John L. Hicklin Farm
U.S.G.S. – Vernon, IN: 840-848.
SE Section 22 Township 6 North Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN
John Lindsey Hicklin’s farm lay south of Graham Creek west of San Jacinto. He donated the lands for the Graham Creek Baptist Church and cemetery. The access road was the old nineteenth century trace that criss-crossed Graham Creek and
Little Graham. He also purchased land NE 22-6-9.

**Martha Hicklin’s Lands.**  
*U.S.G.S. – Vernon, IN: 777.*  
Part SE Section 32 Township 6 North Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN

(9) **Edwards Cave.**  
Oral history claims this cave used to hide fugitive slaves if pursued. Access from this cave to the Hicklin Station by way of the Graham Creek trace.  
*U.S.G.S. – Vernon, IN: 822.*  
Located south of Graham Creek, NW of Broomsage Ranch, and east of the J.M.&I. Railroad tracks. Access from the cave to the Hicklin Settlement.

(10) **James Hibner Lands.**  
*U.S.G.S. – Vernon, IN: 803-810.*  
SW Section 34 Township 6 North Range 9 East, Bigger Township, Jennings County, IN  
James Hibner was a hotel keeper located on the J.M.&I. Railroad between Lancaster and Dupont. He was a member of the Neil’s Creek Anti-Slavery Society.
Ruins of Tunnel Mill, Vernon. This mill was believed to have hired some of the Free Blacks at Richland and Indian Creek settlements. In 1839 the owner of Tunnel Mill, Ebenezer Baldwin, was arrested and charged with harboring and employing Anthony Phillips, a Free Black from Richland who had failed to post a $50 bond required by anti-Negro legislation passed by Indiana’s legislature. According to Hellen Ochs who wrote for the North Vernon Sun in 1982, a paid slave-catcher named “S...” lived in Vernon. “S...” actively pursued the Black Abolitionists from Richland and Indian Creek who were running the U.G.R.R. Many in the town were incensed when “S...” captured a well-known Free Black named Kersey (also Carsey) and led him in chains through the city. When “S...” and his gang went out to surround the Free Blacks, a man named Clint Rich gathered a number of White anti-slavery men and trounced “S...” and his gang of slave-catchers. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

2. Vernon, Indiana

(12) Vernon Row Houses, c. 1840. Intact structures, modernized. Lot 22-23, Vernon. Tunnel transverses the length of the row houses to the rear.

(13) Stanford Tavern, c. 1830. Remnant, deteriorated. Lot 25-26, Vernon. Believed to have been the center of pro-slavery activity in Vernon. Recaptured fugitive slaves were said to have been held within the building until their owners could recover their property. This may have been the mysterious “S...” that led a slave-catching gang in Vernon.


The Hood house that sits on the old Louisville Road is the last remaining structure in Richland. The Free Black community was called “Africa” and “Nigger Hill” at various times in history. William and Catherine Hood came into the area in 1831; they purchased land at Indian Creek as well as Richland. Photo from Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County.

3. Richland, “Africa”

(16) Old Paris Road. Several miles of the old road from Louisville to Vernon can be traveled from just south of Paris almost to Vernon. Sections within the Crosley State Game Preserve resemble old 19th century tracks.

(17) Richland’s African Methodist Episcopal church site. West side of SR 3 in Crosley Game Preserve. Church removed. One stone marker remains.

(18) Richland Cemetery. East side of SR 3 in Crosley Game Preserve.


(20) Phillips site. Further east from the Bluford Hill site. House removed.

(21) William and Catherine Hood sites. Southwest of Richland Church. Exact site to be determined. House removed. One Hood house, Anna Hood, altered extensively from the original log house.
Ruins of Bluford Hill's cabin, in the southern section of Richland. Several Free Black families had purchased farms of five to ten acres from Achilles Vawter. The land was marginal as farmland and had only the barest accessibility. Today it is part of Crosley State Game Preserve. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

4. Indian Creek Station

(22) William Lee, c. 1838. Cabin removed. Property of forty acres lay along present day's SR 50 along Indian Creek on the east side.

(23) Indian Creek Apparently used as an access road to the Hayden Road and Ohio & Mississippi Railroad bed on the top of the hill.

(24) Ohio & Mississippi Railroad bed. On hill above Indian Creek ravine.


Hege Country Store, early 20th century. Oral tradition claims that Hege, an integrated community along the old JM&I Railroad track, aided fugitive slaves during the days of the U.G.R.R. From Hege fugitives could be sent to Azalia, Bartholomew County's major U.G.R.R. Station or on to Seymour. Photo from Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County, Indiana.
4. Scipio, Queensville, Hege, Tannersville Station

(26) Jonathan Thurman, Forty acres in the southwest part of the northwest Section 17/7/8 near Queensville. The son of Fountain Thurman, one of the founders of Graysville, a Free Black community north of Hanover. Very knowledgeable about U.G.R.R. activities in Madison and Hanover.

(27) Hege County Store Site. Removed.

6. Benville and Butlerville Stations

(28) Arvin Quier, also referred to as Arvin Inier, also Ervin Queer. Section 14, Butlerville.

(29) George and Joshua Passmore. Section 18, Benville, now J.P.G.

(30) John and Francis Dolan. Section 18, Benville, now J.P.G.

(31) Thomas Bland, Noah and Osborn Bland, Section 18, Benville, now J.P.G.

(32) Joshua V. Milhous Farm, c. 1855. Central-passage/Italianate. Joshua Milhous and several other Quaker families moved from Ohio to northeastern Bigger Township in 1854. He later served as pastor for the congregation at Butlerville. Although there apparently was no connection between the Hicklins and Milhous, the Quaker was known to have befriended Black families after the Civil War. Joshua was the source for the book and movie Friendly Persuasion, by his grand-daughter Jessalynn West.

(33) John Haden, Section 18, Benville, now J.P.G.
7. Paris

(34) Thomas Ammons House. Lots 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, Paris.


(38) Ira Wells, Lot 32, Paris.

(39) Dr. Walter Goodhue, Lot 27, Paris.

8. Comminsky, Paris Crossing, Marion Township

(40) Daniel Day-Lewis, Marion Township. House restored.

(41) Eli Wells, west of Comminsky. House restored.

(42) Graham Baptist Church. Church in use.

(43) Abner Hall Jr., Section 13, Montgomery Township. Unknown.

(44) Abraham Walton Jr., Section 14, Montgomery Township. Unknown.

(45) Lemuel Wells, Section 14, Montgomery Township, Unknown.
Vernon Row Houses, right top, prior to modernization, c. 1920. Owned by Achilles Vawter and Molly Logan from 1830s through the Civil War. A tunnel ran the length of the two row houses, and a false wall hid a room behind. Many people in Vernon were anti-slavery and helped to recapture a Free Black named Kersey (also Carsey) who lived in Richland and was captured by two men with muskets and put in the Vernon jail. Since the other Carseys were in Richland through the 1860s, it must have been Elisha Carsey who was rescued and sent north on the U.G.R.R. Photo from Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County, Indiana.

Just a block south sat the Sanford Tavern, on the left of Cadbys, a site remembered as the focus for the slave catchers in Vernon and perhaps the home of the notorious "Mr. S..." who headed the pro-slavery gang. Photo from Historic Black American Sites and Structures in Jennings County, Indiana.

The mill race at Tunnel Mill, Vernon. Did the Free Blacks from Richland and Indian Creek help construct Ebenezer Baldwin's famous mill? Baldwin was accused of hiring and harboring Free Blacks moving into Indiana. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
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Chapter Five
Switzerland County, Indiana

Introduction

Special credit for information about Switzerland County's role in the Underground Railroad goes to Lee Rogers of Canaan, Indiana. Rogers, the Jefferson County Historian, initiated correspondence with several key people. Among those most helpful included Ardeth Blue, who shared the Pavy family history, Robert W. Scott of Hiawatha, New Jersey, who was working on local church histories, and Wilma Washmuth Lohide, compiler of the New Liberty Church History.

Other major sources included: The History of Switzerland County, Indiana by the Weakley, Harraman & Company publishers in 1885, reprinted in 1993 by Windmill Publications of Mt. Vernon, Indiana. Several articles on the history of Vevay and Switzerland County appeared in the early 1920s in the Indiana Magazine of History by Perret Dufour. "The Bicentennial Edition of Cotton Twp. History" was printed as a typed manuscript in 1976 by a local committee and found quite by accident in a Louisville used-book store. The profile on Judge Stephen C. Stevens in W.W. Woolen's Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana presented some information on Judge Stevens' early career in Vevay. It was in Switzerland County where began elected office. The remarkable travelogue, John Parson's 1840 diary of his travels through southern Indiana provided a very interesting portrait of Patriot and Vevay at that time.
Helen Einhaus, the County Historian from Ripley County, provided a substantial amount of information on Switzerland County residents who migrated to Ripley County, and also much information on early residents of Craig Township and the McKay house in Lamb. She also assisted greatly in obtaining key deeds, court orders, and other public records at Vevay. Donna Bumstead, owner of the Wright/Hildreth House between Lamb and Vevay, shared information she has researched about the house and its use as an U.G.R.R. Station.

In this particular part of southeastern Indiana, the Ohio River Navigation Charts produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, proved essential to determine the location of sandbars and other constrictions or barriers along the river.
The U.G.R.R. in Switzerland County, Indiana

Switzerland County hugs the Ohio River along miles of gently sloping bottomlands punctuated by narrow shelves where the hills come down almost to the shoreline. As the river snaked through the region, glacial deposits piled up into a giant sandbar at Lamb. Vevay had encroaching sandbars all around the town, with a large Vevay bar at Ghent on the southern shore and the Vevay towhead bar on the north side across from Plum Creek. Craigs bar sat on the north side just down river. All of these narrows permitted runaway slaves to cross, particularly in drought conditions or when the ice packed the channel. Stories at Lamb tell of fugitives swimming across the Ohio.

Although just a fraction the size of Madison, Vevay was a major market town in the early nineteenth century. Packet steamers and keelboats and flatboats frequented the landing. Over time, a substantial New Orleans traffic developed in hay and grain and lumber. Some of the great hay press barns that made Switzerland County famous in the region still dot the countryside. Many of the farmers and their older sons made the trip to New Orleans, walking back along the Natchez Trace. Whether pro- or anti-slavery, these Indiana farmers would have been fully aware of slavery as an institution in the Deep South as well as seeing slavery on the Kentucky side. By 1821 the first newspaper notice of a reward for the recapture of runaway slaves from neighboring Gallatin County appeared in the Lawrenceburg *Oracle*. Peter Shelly, a forty-four year old slave belonging
to Benjamin Waller, escaped by using a pass written ten years prior. Waller offered a two-hundred dollar reward for Shelly's recapture.

The county gets its name from its Swiss settlers, yet over forty percent of Cotton, Craig, Pleasant and Jefferson township residents came from New York, New England and Pennsylvania. Another thirty percent came from Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland and Tennessee. The remainder of the population were Scots and English emigrants. The strong anti-slavery pockets can be traced chiefly to these immigration patterns. New Englanders settled as merchants and manufacturers in Vevay, Patriot and Lamb, and they brought the stores into the interior hamlets. There were only a handful of Free Blacks, most of them recently freed slaves from nearby Kentucky counties or Virginians coming down river from Pittsburgh.

Markets and commerce did not develop solely for down-river trade. Two busy crossings of the Ohio River occurred between Carrollton, Kentucky, and Lamb, Indiana, via the ferry run by the McKay family. The Vevay, Indiana, to Ghent, Kentucky, ferry was an important inter-state route. It is quite possible that these ferries were used to bring some fugitives across. And, like all the river areas, skiffs and dugouts were available.

The county had strong anti-slavery and strong pro-slavery opinions and politics. Judge Stephen C. Stevens, noted Indiana anti-slavery advocate, moved to Vevay in 1824 and was elected as legislator, then as Speaker of the House. In 1826 and again in 1828,
The 1864 Vevay Courthouse replaced the earlier structure where Steven C. Stevens, noted anti-slavery political figure, practiced law from 1824 to 1831 when he moved to Madison. Stevens had been elected to the Indiana House and Senate from Switzerland County. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Stevens was elected to the Indiana Senate from Switzerland and Ripley counties. Before 1831, Stevens moved to Madison where he was immediately appointed a Judge of the Indiana Supreme Court until 1836 when he returned to private practice in Madison. There he represented a number of anti-slavery and Free Black causes and cases. While in Vevay, Judge Stevens was an officer in the Vevay branch of the Bank of Vincennes. In addition to Stevens' house in Vevay, he had farmland property in Craig Township.

The leader of the pro-slavery forces appeared to be William C. Keen, the editor of the Vevay Weekly Messenger who was backed by the politically powerful Dufour family. From 1834 to 1851 Keen advocated pro-slavery Whig positions and ran numerous articles on abolitionists being lynched in the South, reported slave insurrections, and sensationalized any blacks convicted of crimes in the United States. He favored the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act and called abolitionists "wooly heads." He was particularly incensed at Michael Garber, editor of the Madison Courier, for breaking with Senator Jesse D. Bright and supporting the Free Soil Party, "the enemy of Compromise." Closely
associated with John Francis Dufour and Robert Burchfield, Keen finally in 1852 took the paper to Warsaw, Kentucky.

The ambiguity arising from such strongly opposing political positions shrouds much of the beginnings of organized assistance to fugitive slaves in Switzerland County, Indiana. Those aiding the U.G.R.R. along the river had to maintain the utmost secrecy. Underground Railroad crossing points clearly occurred at Patriot, Vevay, and Lamb on the Ohio River. Knowledge about the fugitive slave losses came from the Kentucky side and U.G.R.R. stations further north knew that the runaway slaves were being delivered from these Switzerland County locations. However, there are no written reports or documents other than in family histories and oral tradition. Vevay's extensive court records have testimony and depositions intact in many cases, and a more thorough examination of these materials may provide documentation. From court order books and probate records there are a few references to U.G.R.R. workers already identified. Township histories written to date fail to mention the Underground Railroad or indeed any reference to African-American history in these places. The Dufour history of Switzerland County was particularly deficient and biased. And the Vevay newspapers that have been saved were decidedly pro-slavery.
Map 13. U.G.R.R. Routes in Switzerland County
Local histories told of activist anti-slavery preachers at Vevay from the mid-1820s and extending through to 1840 and beyond. In 1823 John Pavy, Baptist preacher at Fredericksburg (Warsaw), was run out of town for his strong anti-slavery views. He, his wife Jane Wynn Pavy, and his family that included seven sons, three of whom became ministers of the Gospel, crossed the Ohio River into Indiana. John then went to Vevay and preached there for many years before moving to Decatur County where he died. Samuel H. Pavy, one son, lived in Craig Township. Absalom Pavy, another son, was missionary to Indians in the west. Eli Pavy worked as a cooper and lived in Vevay.

The next year, in 1824, James Duncan became Presbyterian minister at Vevay. An associate of the anti-slavery preachers James Dickey and John Todd, Duncan wrote and published "A Treatise on Slavery: In Which is Shewn Forth the Evil of Slave Holding,
both from the Light of Nature and Divine Revelation.” He urged voters to support men who favored freedom. Judge Stevens was a member of this congregation. In 1840 Reverend Duncan was associated with formation of the Liberty Party that favored immediate emancipation.

The old Universalist Meeting House at Vevay sat on Liberty Street on the east side of courthouse square next to an alley. This was an active anti-slavery congregation dating from 1826. A new building was constructed in 1895 and sold in 1916. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

The Universalist congregations at Vevay and Patriot go back to 1826 and 1839 respectively. The Universalist Church founded at Vevay, Switzerland County, in 1826 was the first of such churches outside Cincinnati in the Ohio River Valley. Closely associated with New England intellectuals at Concord, Massachusetts, the Universalist Church had a strongly worded anti-slavery plank dating back to 1787, predating the Quakers by ten years. Other early Universalist churches were at Madison (1830), Patriot (1839), Rising Sun (1840), Manchester (1843), Versailles (1845), Saluda (1848) and Milan (1859).

By 1840 when young John Parsons traveled by steamboat from Cincinnati, the Universalists were a sizeable influence at Patriot, and the regional association meeting
was held there in 1844. Reverend Lewis Hicklin who was actively planting Methodist
Protestant churches and anti-
slavery societies in southeastern
Indiana had a number of
acquaintances at Vevay.

The Methodists constructed Ruter
Chapel in 1859, but the congregation
went back to 1828 when Charles
Henderson, Francis L. Lindley, and
George G. Knox were elected trustees
to build a meeting house for the
Methodist Episcopal Church.

We do not yet know how
many, if any, of the Methodists were involved in U.G.R.R. or anti-slavery political
activity. There did not appear to be sufficient numbers of radical anti-slavery people in
the congregation to create a split, forming a separate Methodist Protestant denomination.
Two major Underground Railroad routes crossed Switzerland County, Indiana.

By far the earliest and most traveled was the Vevay-Versailles-Brookville Road with U.G.R.R. stations eventually developed at Cross Plains, Olean, Versailles, Vine Springs, Napoleon. A second major route started at Patriot and came west to Quercus Grove then East Enterprise and on to meet up with the Vevay Road south of Cross Plains. Another U.G.R.R. route led from Lamb up through Pleasant Township to the U.G.R.R. workers associated with the Brushy Fork Baptist and the Caledonia Presbyterian churches. This route also led to Cross Plains and Olean.

The first documented U.G.R.R. station in Switzerland County was established about 1824 by John Pavy, a Baptist preacher at Vevay, and his brother-in-law Stephen R. Girard. They operated the Vevay U.G.R.R. station for many years. John Pavy’s lands straddled today’s SR 56 one-mile north of Vevay on the way to Mt. Sterling. Fugitive slaves were brought from the Ohio River, then hidden, fed and protected in the Pavy barn. Whenever fugitives were there, the younger children were told not to go into the barn. At night, Stephen Girard would take the fugitives north in his flax wagon. The next station north was located at Olean, then on to Osgood and Napoleon. Girard never owned any land but lived with John Pavy. He was a boisterous roustabout who frequently got into fights and altercations, most likely with pro-slavery advocates in the taverns of
Vevay. One such episode brought him a three-hundred dollar fine for defamation of character. Apparently Girard did not apologize to the offended party.

The family annals state that the slaves would swim the river to get to the Pavy farm. But one suspects that this refers to a later period when Samuel H. Pavy, John’s son, purchased land in Craig Township. That operation went on into the 1850s. Samuel H. Pavy was commissioned a captain in the Civil War and raised three companies for the federal armies, including three of his own sons. One son died and was buried at Gettysburg.

Also dating to a very early period was the Cain-McKay house at Lamb. This was an important U.G.R.R. station, because it faced Port William (later Carrollton), one of the largest

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Moses McKay entered forty acres of land along the Ohio River at Lamb in 1835 along with William Shaw for an adjoining one hundred and twenty-three acre property. On the eastern side David Cain had entered seventy-seven acres in 1831. These families would inter-marry over time. The McKay house, built c. 1835, served as an U.G.R.R. station bringing fugitive slaves across from Carrollton, Kentucky. McKay ran the ferryboat between Lamb and Carrollton for many years. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
towns on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River at the confluence of the Kentucky River. Beginning in 1838, Elijah Anderson, head of the U.G.R.R. at Madison, and his brother, William Anderson, aided by local Free Blacks at Carrollton, established a major U.G.R.R. crossing that brought fugitives up the Kentucky River from the Bluegrass region around Lexington and Frankfort, Kentucky. It was long rumored that the stone house at Lamb helped fugitive slaves escape. The McKay house was far too exposed to retain fugitive slaves for very long. One suspects that the slaves were off-loaded immediately up the nearby ravine to the safe houses of Pleasant Township in Switzerland County and to those in Shelby Township in Jefferson County. The Cain, Shaw, and McKay family had strong connections in Moorefield. One mile south of Moorefield was the old log Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church, Trustees of that congregation included Samuel Bellamy, Ebenezer Gray, Edward Kern, John Protsman, James Adams. The church plot was purchased from James Alfray. The Moorefield route would have been the safest route from Lamb.

Between Lamb and Vevay, in 1838 Thomas T. Wright built an imposing house on the bluff facing the Ohio River. His brother, John W. Wright built his home just to the east. Local oral tradition claims this was used as an U.G.R.R. station. Clearly there was a strong anti-slavery link since John ran for Indiana Lieutenant Governor on the Free Soil ticket in 1840 with James H. Cravens of Ripley County for Governor. Later, during the 1850s, Captain Hildreth, a riverboat captain purchased the Thomas Wright property.
The Wright/Hildreth House, c. 1838. Strong oral tradition that this home hosted an U.G.R.R. station between Lamb and Vevay. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Oral tradition claims U.G.R.R. stations at Markland and at Thomas Wright’s home between Lamb and Vevay. However, documentation on these sites is still very light. In the case of Markland, we do not yet have a name or names of people involved. In the case of Hildreth, we do not yet have any verification of anti-slavery associations.

Persistent oral tradition claimed an U.G.R.R. station at Markland, however, the required documentation is not yet in hand. In 1840 there were anti-slavery people in Florence, because they invited Alexander Sebastian, a noted anti-slavery Baptist, to preach. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
The Patriot U.G.R.R. trail clearly was dependent on the Universalists at Patriot for the crossing point to the Steeles Creek and Big Bone area of Gallatin and Boone counties in Kentucky.

The only name found to date is that of Daniel H. Howe who was a fellow traveler of John Parsons on the steamboat from Cincinnati and was quoted liberally by the young Virginian:

"the next small village...Patriot, whose principal families I was assured by a member of the Universalist Church whom I had encountered on the boat, a follower of Erasmus Manford, he informed me, who at this very time was making a tour of Indiana, were of liberal faith, excellent people and practical Christians. They loved the truth, said he, loved to talk about it, and loved to attend services at the sanctuary." That place, he declared, was an "oasis in the desert – no controversy, no denunciation, but peace, love and harmony combined."

About the same time, in October 1841 to be precise, Alexander Sebastian, a Baptist minister, preached strongly against slavery in Kentucky. Forced to leave that state, Sebastian founded a church at Bryants Creek near Florence, but Kentuckians crossed the river to heckle his preaching there. He moved inland. Because of his anti-
slavery positions, Sebastian was deposed from the Regular Baptists; he was called to pastor a Separate Baptist church between East Enterprise and Quercus Grove in Cotton Township. Elders who founded this church included Richard Kelly, Abraham Adkinson, and Chauncey Monger. Others included Joseph McHenry, who had come to Grants Creek in Cotton Twp in 1818, founding a Freewill Baptist Church. He became an early teacher and preacher. Abram, Nicholas and Sarah Sedam, Samuel Adkinson, Eleanor Long, Eliza Stone, James McHenry, Catherine Connor, Lydia Myers were others joining the combined Freewill and Separate Baptist Church in 1854.

A second Freewill Baptist church was founded at Cross Plains, Ripley County. Later this became the Salem Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Settlers in Cotton Township had strong anti-slavery positions. In 1850 over sixty-eight percent of the Cotton Township families had moved there from anti-slavery locations: Thirty-three families came from New England, one hundred and sixty-seven from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio.
Like most areas along the Ohio River, Free Blacks of Gallatin and Carroll counties in Kentucky and in Switzerland County in Indiana rendered aid to fugitive slaves. However, in Switzerland County there were no large Free Black agricultural communities, nor did many Free Blacks live in Vevay, the largest town. Therefore, small pockets of one or two families were extremely exposed to harassment by pro-slavery posses or detectives and slave-catchers.

The Indiana Negro Registers for Switzerland County in 1853 listed two Free Black families – the Isaac Niveys of Giles Co., Virginia, and the George Andrews family that had migrated from Gallatin Co., Kentucky. The Andrews moved to Switzerland County about 1849. Additionally James William Mackney, 24, of Shenandoah Co. VA, and Vina Blanton, 60, of Gallatin County were listed.

In the 1850 census for Cotton Township, there was one family of twelve Free Blacks headed by Benoni Dickson, 78, a chair maker born in South Carolina. In Craig Township, two families of Free Blacks were both headed by women – Leticia Rogers, 40, born in Virginia had two children in Kentucky and one in Indiana, c. 1838. The other family was headed by Nancy Smith, 45, born in Kentucky. Her oldest son was a convict in the state penitentiary at Jeffersonville. In Pleasant Township, there were fifteen Free Blacks. George Andrews, a farmer born in Virginia, headed one household. The other household was headed by Kentuckian Reuben Bowen, and a William Blanton and his wife from Kentucky lived with Bowen. A Thomas Hoffman family in Jefferson Township had a woman age 40 and six mulatto children listed; Hoffman came from
Kentucky and was White or passing as White and had $6,600 in real estate. Whether these were his children or former slaves or both remains uncertain. In York Township, a William M. Dickson, 40, from Pennsylvania was listed a mulatto but had Whites in his household.

In Gallatin County, John Brookings and his three sons – John, Henry and Preston, age 22 to 12 -- lived outside of Warsaw not far from the river. Brookings, a farmer with a small tract of land, was later arrested and accused of aiding fugitive slaves escape. Lewis Hamilton, a blacksmith, with a much younger family lived outside of Sparta. His aged mother and aunt lived in a White household but were listed as Free Blacks. Additionally, Nathan and Abram Davis, two brothers age 42 and 35 respectively, lived near Sparta.

A number of Free Blacks lived in Carrollton and the vicinity. The Free Black heads of household included Wheeling Gaunt, a teamster; Moses Smith, a farmer with a small plot; John Patience, Jude Duke, and Alex Hartley, farm laborers; James Monroe and Clem Johnson, working in the cooperage; Thomas Epps, a porter; and Ambrose Willis, a farmer. Several of these men had wives and families. These are the men, along with some slaves, who were trained by Elijah Anderson. Anderson headed the Madison U.G.R.R. from 1838-1845 and then transferred his operations to Lawrenceburg from 1846 to 1856 when he was captured on a steamboat. Elijah was tried at Carrollton, acquitted, then taken to Bedford for trial, convicted and sent to the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Frankfort.
U.G.R.R. Historic Districts in Switzerland County

The most significant historic districts in Switzerland County were Vevay, Patriot, and Lamb where the trail started for so many fugitive slaves over a thirty-year period. Some additional work must be done to provide documentation for the sites at Markland and Hildreth’s home near Vevay and the Pavy farm north of Vevay.

1. Vevay Historic District

(1) Old Baptist Meeting Place, Pike Street, Vevay, c. 1838. Simple federal style. John Pavy, head of the U.G.R.R. at Vevay, preached here.

(2) Universalist Church, Liberty Street, across from the courthouse, Vevay, c. 1859. Congregation goes back to 1826. Anti-slavery congregation.

(3) Otis Waldo House, c. 1860. Italianate. Waldo was a trustee of the Universalist church at Vevay and a leading merchant in town.

(4) Presbyterian Church, between Market and Main, now Switzerland County museum, Gothic Revival, c. 1860. Congregation, c. 1820. Reverend James Duncan, a radical anti-slavery minister, was called to this pulpit in 1824 and Judge Stephen C. Stevens, famous anti-slavery lawyer, was a member.

(5) Eli Pavy house, to be determined.

(6) Ferry landing, now a public park.
2. **Patriot Historic District**

(7) Universalist Church, Main Street between Third and Fourth, c. 1839. Active anti-slavery congregation.

(8) Daniel H. Howe house, to be determined. Howe was a member of the Universalist congregation and accompanied John Parsons on the steamboat Cincinnati to Patriot. Also aboard the steamboat was Arnold Buffin, head of the American Anti-Slavery League and Reverend Lewis Hicklin, evangelist for the Methodist Protestant Church and spokesman for anti-slavery societies in southeastern Indiana.
3. **Lamb Historic District**

(9) Cain/McKay House, Stone, Deteriorated, c. 1835. On the banks of the Ohio River at Lamb. McKay was the ferryman from Lamb to Carrollton, Kentucky.

![Kitchen wing of the McKay House at Lamb, c. 1835. A large stone house with substantial cellars all open to the exterior and close to the ravine created by Turkey Run. Strong oral tradition existed on both the Kentucky and Indiana side of the Ohio River that this house had been used as an U.G.R.R. station. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.](image)

(10) Thomas T. Wright/Captain Hildreth’s House, c. 1838, on SR 56 between Lamb and Vevay.

Family and local history claims the house was used as an U.G.R.R. Station. John Wright, Thomas’ brother who lived next door, ran for Lt. Gov. on the Free Soil ticket, with James H. Cravens, anti-slavery attorney from Ripley County.

4. **Quercus Grove Historic District**

(11) New Liberty Baptist Church, c. 1841, combined Reverend Alexander Sebastian’s Separate Baptists with the Freewill Baptists, both of which were anti-slavery churches. Sebastian also founded the Separate Baptists at Cross Plains, later the Salem Christian Church.

5. **Caledonia/Brushy Fork Historic District**

This group of U.G.R.R. activists took fugitives from the Lamb and perhaps Brooksburg area and delivered them to Cross Plains or Olean. These young men may have gone to school together or been influenced by some preacher or teacher.

(13) Caledonia Presbyterian Church, c. 20\(^{th}\) c., congregation to 1818. Pleasant Township. John Shaw and perhaps others were involved in the U.G.R.R.

(14) Brushy Fork Baptist Church, SR 250, west of Pleasant, Indiana, on Switzerland and Jefferson county line, c. 1818. Thomas Voris, Christopher Whitten, and David Spencer were all involved actively in the U.G.R.R.
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Email Six  
Dearborn County, Indiana

Introduction

This part of the project would have been impossible without the superb knowledge and scholarship of Chris McHenry. Chris not only shared her sources at the Dearborn County Public Library's Indiana Room, but also introduced the project ably at a meeting of the Dearborn County Historical Society. Chris also spent a considerable amount of her time helping to set up the photographs and tours as well as finding additional documentation in the courthouse and newspaper files. In short order, she compiled a substantial amount of information on the African-American history at Lawrenceburg. Alberta Parker at the Dearborn County Historical Society not only aided greatly in accessing those resources, but lent her own minutes of the Shiloh Baptist Church at Rising Sun and shared memories of growing up in Rising Sun.

The wonderfully detailed history of the Hansell family came to life through an oral history completed with Lester Hansell who lives in Cincinnati, but still maintains the family farm on Mt. Pleasant Ridge Road in Dearborn County. Dick and Clara Lewis were most gracious hosts in narrating the history of the Collier Ridge area. Also the descendents of Ralph Collier gave us much information and a delightful tour of the old house up Collier Ridge Road. A tour of Joseph Hall's house and barn by the current
owner, Rosalie Jones, greatly aided the project. Several townspeople at Manchester helped provide parts of the story of the New England route from Aurora to Old Milan.

One of the better nineteenth century histories was F. E. Weakley's 1885 *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana*, reprinted in 1993 by Windmill Publications of Mt. Vernon, Indiana. Judge Cotton's *Cotton's Keepsakes* shed a little light on the subject. And Henry Ward Beecher's book on his early days in Indiana also helped somewhat.

The newspaper collection at the Lawrenceburg Public Library was very helpful, and the courthouse records were, as in most areas of Indiana, very accessible and readable.
Map 14. U.G.R.R. Routes in Dearborn County
The Underground Railroad in Dearborn County, Indiana

So much of the early settlement of Dearborn County tied directly to Cincinnati as a gateway city for New Englanders or Mid-Atlantic folk coming west to get land or to bring merchandise to the frontier. Conversely southerners came north through Boone County, Kentucky, or down river from Pittsburgh or Maysville. And until 1844, what is now Ohio County was part of Dearborn; therefore some of the early annals of Rising Sun are part of the Dearborn story. Settlement patterns established a fundamental dichotomy about the institution of slavery – northeastern sentiment and southern feelings. As the political agitation spread from the pulpits of New England into the frontier, the question of slavery spreading into the new western territories culminated in the mid-1830s. Southerners who fed on the issue of states rights as the core of Federalism, and New Englanders who may never have seen an African-American person except as an exotic, now confronted the impact and effects of slavery along the Ohio River. For many residents of Dearborn and Ohio counties, slavery became the moral issue of the third decade of the nineteenth century. Anti-slavery societies formed in southeastern Indiana, protesting first the spread of slavery and later the institution itself. Simultaneously strong opposition developed. The commercial centers of the region, the river ports – Lawrenceburg, Aurora, Rising Sun -- contained a continuous brew of pro- and anti-slavery politics.
Of the three river towns, Lawrenceburg was particularly dangerous for abolitionists and U.G.R.R. workers. In addition to a sizeable percentage of pro-slavery families with relatives in Kentucky, a number of detectives and slave-catchers also resided in the city. Furthermore, Lawrenceburg had well over one hundred free people of color, most of them compressed into a small area near the courthouse. Almost all of these residents were former slaves. The city fathers expressed hostility toward any new Free Black families settling in the town. Elijah Anderson, for example, was accepted chiefly because he passed as White.

Rising Sun, by contrast, in 1850 had only three Free Black families, but a high percentage of New Englanders had settled that town, providing a generally amiable view toward aiding fugitive slaves. By far the greatest number of runaway slaves came through Aurora, especially via the Manchester Landing west of the city. A number of leading citizens of Aurora were aggressively anti-slavery and became involved in the U.G.R.R.

A few miles away from the banks of the Ohio River, the danger lessened somewhat, because large pockets of anti-slavery families lived in the upper townships. When southeastern Indiana’s first anti-slavery society was created in 1838 at East Fork of Tanners Creek at Guilford, a pro-slavery mob came up from Lawrenceburg to disrupt the meeting. The abolitionists not only defended themselves, they sent the mob away and continued the organizational meeting. The initiative for this anti-slavery organization and its subsequent Underground Railroad routes stemmed from a unique combination of settlers, the English from

This map of York Township shows two of the U.G.R.R. routes radiating from William Wymond's Aurora operations. To the right bottom are the English – Thomas Hansell, John and Ralph Collier along Collier Ridge Road leading to Joseph Hall's farm just west of Guilford. The other route, Universalists, went north from Manchester through Bonnell, shown in the left bottom. From that point the route went directly north to James Angevin's station just north of Yorkville.

At the Junction of Manchester, Miller, and York Townships.

An extremely strong, dedicated group of anti-slavery families, generally associated with the East Fork and West Fork Methodist Protestant churches, lived in the northeast sections of Manchester Township, western Miller Township and southeastern York Township. We know the most about the English families – Joseph Hall, Thomas and John Hansell, John and Ralph Collier, William Wymond, Thompson, Thomas Smith, M. C. Ewbank – that ran an U.G.R.R. route from Aurora up to Quaker settlements in Franklin, Union and Wayne counties.
The old country store at Bonnell sat along the old Cincinnati to Indianapolis Railroad. A M.P. Church in town since destroyed served as the focus for the anti-slavery men that provided a safe route from Manchester to Yorkville. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Abandoned residence at Bonnell, Indiana. Almost a ghost town, Bonnell once served as one of Indiana's many railroad market towns. Located in a remote section on the edge of Manchester and York townships, it sat directly on the northern route from Manchester to James Angevin at Yorkville. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
The Universalists.

Two Universalist churches existed in Dearborn County in the 1848-1870s period. One was at Manchester with member families – Isaac, Benjamin, Amos Noyes, Gilbert and Seth Platt, Alden Jumper, James P. Milliken, Matthews, Morris and others – the other was in Aurora with Daniel Bartholomew, the Shattuck and Shockley families and others. Associated with the New England Puritans and Concord Unitarians, the Universalists were the first church in America to adopt in 1790 a very strong anti-slavery plank, demanding full equality for all African-Americans. The Dearborn Universalists were very active in anti-slavery societies and development of the Liberty and Free Soil parties. It is believed that Seth Platt headed their involvement in the U.G.R.R. and that they used Stephen Harding’s station at Old Milan. Manchester in particular had scores of New England settlers who had decidedly anti-slavery leanings. Among these were three Tibbetts families from Maine whose relatives were leading abolitionists of Lancaster, Jefferson County. Seth Platt, the son of early settler Gilbert Platt, one of these New Englanders was involved in the U.G.R.R.

The Methodist Protestant churches at the Forks of Tanner’s Creek. East Fork (of Tanner’s Creek) and West Fork Methodist Protestant Churches.

A strong anti-slavery group lived in the Guilford-Yorkville area of Dearborn County, along Tanner’s Creek. In 1836, anti-slavery feelings grew so heated, that the old Union Church split, and the anti-slavery group met in Joseph Hall’s barn. The Hansells,
the Smiths and the Halls were leaders of the radical anti-slavery group. Later that year, they built the old stone West Fork M.P. Church.

Thomas and John Hansell, Benjamin Metcalf and several other members of the East Fork M.P. Church formed an Anti-Slavery Society in 1838. Pro-slavery forces, alerted by a news article in the Lawrenceburg paper, came to the meeting and harassed the members with guns and heavy canes before they were escorted out of the building.

Wilbur Siebert listed John Hansell, Thomas Smith, and John and Ralph Collier as leaders in the Dearborn U.G.R.R.

**Reverend John Clark and the Dearborn College.**

One of the strongest anti-slavery preachers in the 1830s and 1840s was John Clark, sent by the Ohio Methodist Protestant conference as an evangelist into Indiana. But like most M.P. preachers, he immediately founded an anti-slavery society. Clark also along with Thomas Hicklin of San Jacinto’s M.P. Church in Jennings County and Reverend Moses H. Wilder of Brookville’s M.P. Church in Franklin County convened the first Indiana Anti-Slavery Society in 1839. They were aided by Reverend Lewis Hicklin then of Madison.

John Clark helped found the two churches at the Tanners Creek Forks. Clark was most famous, however, for his involvement as a financial officer of the Dearborn College, a manual labor M.P. institution, charted by the Ohio M.P. Conference of 1835 meeting in Madison. While Brother Nathan Snethen, the college president, and John Clark were fund-raising in Baltimore and West Virginia, the abolitionist and pro-slavery
students began a controversy. Snethen arrived back in Lawrenceburg with a new student from Wheeling whose wealthy father had donated $100 to the college. Some students began a whispering campaign that the new student had Negro blood. Massive outside agitation was whipped up by Nathan McElfresh and his son. McElfresh was cited as a detective and slave-catcher. Also included in the pro-slavery forces were David Crall [or Krall] and Lytle [Lyttle] W. Johnson, the latter lived in Dearborn County. Dearborn College closed under the pressure. Reverend Clark was accused of stealing bed linens from the university, but was cleared of all charges by the circuit meeting. Reverend Thomas Hicklin testified in his defense. Civil charges were then made against those who bore the false witness against Clark.

**Henry Ward Beecher**

A major figure in Lawrenceburg in the late 1830s was Henry Ward Beecher, son of the nationally famous Presbyterian minister, Lyman Beecher, and brother to Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The Lawrenceburg Presbyterian Church was Henry Beecher’s first pulpit as a minister fresh from Lane Seminary. When he arrived at Lawrenceburg, Henry Ward Beecher was no abolitionist. In the early Spring of 1834, he had been a close witness of the Lane Seminary uprising led by Theodore Weld. During the subsequent race riots when pro-slavery forces attacked the Free Blacks of Cincinnati; Henry Ward Beecher had been drafted as a citizen policemen to protect the lives and property of the Black citizens of the city.

The reference is somewhat mystifying since there is no evidence in any of Henry Beecher's writings or biographies that indicate that he was an abolitionist early in his career or that he ever had a direct link to the U.G.R.R. He certainly did not preach against slavery from the Lawrenceburg pulpit. In fact, he did not seem involved in the U.G.R.R. at Indianapolis either. His sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe and her husband Calvin E. Stowe, who lived in Cincinnati were abolitionists actively involved in the Ohio U.G.R.R. What appears most likely is that Henry Ward Beecher met the trio of Free Blacks at Lawrenceburg and they were given some type of introduction to the Lane Seminary students that had set up a school to teach Blacks in Cincinnati. It is certainly clear that Elijah Anderson had strong links to the Cincinnati U.G.R.R. and to Levi Coffin at Newport prior to coming to Madison in 1837, and that he maintained those contacts over the years.
Lawrenceburg's claim to Uncle Tom.

Slaves who fled the institution of slavery were unusually courageous and determined. Most slaves, no matter what the conditions, did not flee, and feared what freedom would bring. Others felt that although menial servants, they were part of a family. Among African-Americans this displaced loyalty and fawning allegiance to the owning White family is known as being an "Uncle Tom." Although many historians claim Josiah Henson as the original model for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom, her brother, Henry Beecher, nominated one of Thomas Noble's slaves and claimed that Harriet visited this Uncle Tom Megruder in Indianapolis. This Tom served as overseer of the Noble's Kentucky plantation until both master and mistress died. The children, including Noah Noble, set him free and sent him to Cincinnati. He did not like the Free Blacks there, and he asked the family to take him back. Tom was provided a log cabin on the corner of Vine Street and the alley in Lawrenceburg. There he stayed until Noah Noble's sister, Lavinia Vance went to Indianapolis, and Tom followed the family there and was a dependent until he died.

William Wymond and the Aurora Abolitionists.

Beginning in the mid-1830s and continuing through to the Civil War, the most active U.G.R.R. site in all of Dearborn County was connected to William Wymond's operations in Aurora and Manchester Landing. Aiding him in the U.G.R.R. were John Milburn who had a jewelry store in Aurora, Daniel Bartholomew, a trustee of Aurora,
John Hope, the teen-age helper at Milburn’s jewelry store, and the Shattuck and Shockley families, all active in the Universalist church at Aurora.

One incident serves to illustrate the dedication and leadership portrayed by William Wymond. This article was written by Chris McHenry based on Milburn and Cobb family histories.

During the last few years before the Civil War, an Aurora teenager named John Hope was employed by John Milburn as a clerk in Milburn’s jewelry store. The Hopes and the Milburns were related, and there is evidence that the Milburns had at one time been Quakers and were opposed to slavery.

During those years the Wymond family, who lived in a farm house which is now part of the Dearborn Country Club, built a secret basement room, which they used to hide escaped slaves on their way to freedom in Canada. It was dangerous and illegal work. The Fugitive Slave Law required northerners to return any escaped slaves to their southern masters.

Not all the escapees made it to Canada. Many were caught and returned to the south by their owners or by bounty hunters seeking rewards.

One stifling hot summer day, two runaways had been caught as they tried to make it out the Manchester Pike to temporary safety at the Wymond farm. They were dragged back to Aurora, where their captors took a second floor bedroom at the Eagle Hotel. The room faced on the long veranda across the river side of the building. The slaves were tied hand and foot, and to each other, and the captors celebrated by getting drunk.

They were sober enough to be aware that the slaves might try to escape, so one of them lay down across the doorway into the hall, and the other at the door to the veranda. Both were armed, and sure that they would be able to foil any plot to free their two prisoners, they left the doors open because of the hot weather.

About 10 that night, Wymond went looking for John Hope, and asked if he would find a way to cut the slaves loose and help them escape. Young Hope readily agreed, despite the danger. He climbed a tree which was growing conveniently close to the veranda and crept along it until he came to the room where the slaves were being held. Hope stepped cautiously over the sleeping southerner in the doorway, silently warning
the slaves to remain quiet. Quickly he cut the ropes that held them, and all three climbed noiselessly down the tree. Soon the two men were once again on their way to the Wymond farm.

In the morning the Southerners raised the alarm, demanding to know how the slaves had gotten away, but by then they were securely hidden, and they were not found.

And John Hope, who later moved to California, didn't tell anyone about his adventures until more than 60 years later, in 1925, when he wrote to his nieces, Mrs. O. P. Cobb and Miss Nellie Milburn.


From 1846 to 1856, Elijah Anderson, a Free Black leader of the U.G.R.R. in Indiana and Ohio, lived in Lawrenceburg. Elijah had established a blacksmith business and a major U.G.R.R. operation in Madison in 1838; he had been targeted in 1846 by pro-slavery mobs and driven from Madison. Elijah Anderson was a blacksmith trained in making the fine wrought iron fences and fancy ironwork. He moved his U.G.R.R. operations to Lawrenceburg. A very light skinned mulatto, Anderson "passed as white" in the 1850 Federal Census. Apparently about the same time his brother William Anderson was founding an African Methodist Episcopal Church in Madison, Elijah Anderson was working with Lawrenceburg Free Blacks to build an A.M.E. church in this city. The A.M.E. church, historically, was the most radical and active anti-slavery denomination among the Black churches. Particularly in Kentucky's largest cities and in southern Indiana's river towns, the A.M.E. supported local U.G.R.R. work. Sanford Moody, a
prominent and wealthy barber, contributed significantly to the A.M.E. building. In 1855, Reverend William McAllister was posted to this congregation.

Known as the "superintendent of the U.G.R.R.," Anderson made dozens of forays into Kentucky to bring slaves to freedom and convey them to Michigan, Sandusky or Cleveland. After passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, Anderson increased his efforts and is said to have brought over 1,000 to safety. In November 1856, Elijah was recognized on board a steamboat at Cincinnati and subsequently captured by detectives at Carrollton, Kentucky. The rumor in Madison is that "Rock" Anderson, a former colleague in the U.G.R.R. turned Elijah in to the Pinkerton Detective Agency for the $1,000 reward. Elijah Anderson was convicted at Bedford, Kentucky, of stealing slaves and sentenced to ten years at the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Frankfort. He was found murdered in his cell in February 1861, the day he was to have been released.

Once Elijah Anderson arrived in Lawrenceburg, his first task was to organize the local Free Blacks and involve them directly in the U.G.R.R. He established a major U.G.R.R. route leading from Lawrenceburg directly to Richmond, and he conducted larger and larger groups of fugitive slaves north to Cleveland, Sandusky or Detroit himself. At one point he took fifty runaways to Levi Coffin’s station.

Elijah Anderson’s arrival in Lawrenceburg signaled a number of changes. He had learned at Madison that bringing fugitives across one by one was inefficient. Anderson was determined to bring larger groups out of slavery. Further, the U.G.R.R. leaders had long concluded that conductors were necessary to take fugitives north from the Ohio
River at least ten to twelve miles and to move them north as rapidly as possible thereafter. By using experienced conductors who knew the routes, the safe houses, and the alternates, recaptures of fugitive slaves were brought almost to a standstill.

But perhaps the most significant change in U.G.R.R. operations at Lawrenceburg was the placement of a number of White abolitionists, American Anti-Slavery League spies, in the region. It is known that one such spy acted as the ferryman near Lawrenceburg and Aurora. Other A.A.S.L. workers traveled as peddlars into Kentucky: these men not only informed slaves of escape times and places, but they also provided changes of clothing for the escape. The distinctive slave clothing were dead giveaways that these were runaway slaves: the U.G.R.R. learned over time to dress the fugitives in clothes likely to be worn by Whites and Free Blacks.

In the early 1850s, slave losses in Boone County and other northern counties in Kentucky, mounted drastically. Northern Kentucky counties lost forty slaves in one month in April 1853, and Boone County lost fifty slaves in a three-month period in 1855 as reported in the Lawrenceburg newspaper. As a result of this hyper activity, several of the Free Blacks in Lawrenceburg were targeted and harassed to leave town. In 1861, Charles Capehart complained that Levi Jones was a "Negroes or Mulattos" living in Lawrenceburg contrary to Indiana's "anti-black" statutes. Bonds were set for $100 in cash or chattels, an enormous sum for poor black families.

In response to the slave losses, Kentuckians increased the use of detectives and slave-catchers on the Indiana side of the Ohio River. On February 13, 1855, Jeremiah
Crosley, mayor of Lawrenceburg and Justice of the Peace, bound over to custody one fugitive slave named Peter, owned by W. P. Hahn of Louisville, Kentucky. Charges were brought by Charles Elerick, possibly one of the slave-catchers.

In addition to Elijah Anderson, the following heads of household lived in Lawrenceburgh in 1850:

- James Townsend, 34, boatman, born in Virginia
- William Townsend, 41, cook, born in Virginia
- Sandford Moody, 38, barber, born in Ohio
- Bush Kirtley, 38, laborer, born in Kentucky
- Moses Gray, 32, engineer, born in Kentucky
- Maria Jenkins, 22, born in Ohio
- Alexander Moody, 35, barber, born in Ohio
- Richard Horner, 54, farmer, born in Kentucky
- William Wells, 39, farmer, born in Kentucky

**Development of Anti-Slavery Political Action Parties.**

Abolitionists in Indiana were divided over the strategy and tactics of mounting anti-slavery third-party campaigns in 1843, 1846, and 1849. Those in Wayne, Union, Ripley and Decatur came out in large numbers to support third-party candidates. Dearborn, however, cast only 25 votes for the Liberty Party's 1843 candidates, Elizur Deming for Governor and Stephen S. Harding of Old Milan for Lt. Governor, in spite of
Harding’s close ties to the Manchester and Moore’s Hill people. In 1846, citizens of Dearborn cast 23 and Ohio cast 8 votes for Stephen C. Stevens, formerly of Vevay, then of Madison, for Governor and 22 and 4 votes, respectively, for Stephen S. Harding for Lieutenant Governor. During the 1849 campaign the Free Soil candidates, James H. Cravens of Versailles received 8 Dearborn votes for Governor while John W. Wright, who lived just outside Vevay, received 4 Dearborn and 0 Ohio votes for Lieutenant Governor.

Freewill Baptist vs. Old Regular Baptists and Methodist Episcopal Churches.

In Ripley and Dearborn counties, among the Baptists, anti-slavery congregations were generally to be found in the Separate Baptist or Freewill Baptist Churches. There were several Freewill Baptist congregations in Dearborn and eastern Ripley County. One of the most important was that at Old Milan, directly across the road from Stephen S. Harding’s house. His children help found Freewill Baptist congregations at Pierceville and Prattsburg along the old Aurora Road to Napoleon, a major U.G.R.R. route. The most famous of all the U.G.R.R. Freewill Baptist congregations was the Union Flat Rock Baptist Church located in a remote area of Ripley County near the Milhausen trail where the Madison M1 route led into Decatur County. Harvey Marshall was the best known of the several U.G.R.R. workers there.
The Old Regular Baptist Churches, like Pilgrim, between Old Milan and Lawrenceville, tended to ignore the slavery issues or be pro-slavery. In Lawrenceburg and Aurora, the Baptist churches tended toward the pro-slavery side of the question.

Although the Methodist Episcopal churches at Madison appear to have had large segments of their congregations favoring anti-slavery, such did not seem to be the case at Lawrenceburg. However, there is some evidence that some of the faculty and townspeople at Moore’s Hill were abolitionists. In Dearborn County the separation of the Methodists into radical Methodist Protestant churches versus the more moderate Methodist Episcopal North denomination seems to have demarked the dividing point.

The Presbyterians at Lawrenceburg appeared to follow the more conservative position of favoring Colonization, a plan to raise funds and send Free Blacks back to Africa. This plan was promoted widely by John Finley Crowe at Hanover College and other leading Presbyterian churchmen, both north and south of the Ohio River.
The Underground Railroad Routes in Dearborn County, Indiana

The first real organized U.G.R.R. routes were initiated in the mid-1830s as a direct result of the formation of the Dearborn County anti-slavery society, and in 1838 the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society. Simultaneously anti-slavery societies were formed in Ripley County, in Decatur County, in Jefferson County and at Neil’s Creek.

A key figure from Dearborn County was Reverend John Clark, also spelled Clarke, the Methodist Protestant evangelist in this region. He was aided by the Reverend Lewis Hicklin of Madison who traveled extensively for the M.P. church and the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society. In 1840 when Lewis Hicklin met Arnold Buffin, the organizer of the American Anti-Slavery Society, on a steamboat from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, they were both on their way to see Levi Coffin at Fountain City.

The U.G.R.R. Routes Radiated from Manchester Landing at Aurora

Before the 1846 arrival of Elijah Anderson in Lawrenceburg, all Underground Railroad routes in Dearborn County were run by White abolitionists. The three major routes dating back to the mid-1830s radiated from William Wymond’s station at Aurora. The route began at the Ohio River, probably at Manchester landing just west of Aurora and just south of William Wymond’s homestead. Wymond was station master at Aurora. He was aided by John Milburn, the jeweler, and his young teen-age clerk John Clark. This boy may have been the son of Reverend John Clark, Dearborn County’s delegate to
Daniel Bartholomew, the local magistrate at Aurora, was actively involved, and the Shattuck and Shockley families were among several Universalist members involved. Almost certainly these Aurora routes were linked closely to the men placed and paid by the American Anti-Slavery League along the Ohio River near Lawrenceburg.

The main route led north to Wright’s Corner. From that point three different routes emerged. One major route, the English route, was managed by Thomas Hansell and led up Collier Ridge Road to Guilford, to Harrison, and up to the Quaker settlement south of Brookville. The second major route led through Manchester to Moore’s Hill to Stephen S. Harding’s station at Old Milan in Ripley County. The third route turned north at Manchester and headed for James Angevin’s station south of Yorkville, then on to Cedar Grove and the Quakers south of Brookville.

The James Angevin Homestead just south of Yorkville served as a station between Manchester and Brookville. An early settler to this region, Angevin’s brick federal house dates back to 1830s. Photo from Indiana Landmarks Dearborn County Inventory of Historic Sites and Structures.

The Yorkville Route

The James Angevin family history claims that the route led from Aurora through Manchester to the Angevin station south of Yorkville then on to Cedar Grove and Brookville. This U.G.R.R. route was established by Quakers and
on to Cedar Grove and Brookville. This U.G.R.R. route was established by Quakers and Universalists. In fact, James Angevin, an early settler in York Township, had become a Universalist in New York City before he came west to Indiana. He joined with Gilbert Platt, Amos Noyes, Alden Jumper, Benjamin and Charles Noyes, and James P. Millikin to found the Manchester Universalist Church and the Manchester Academy.

The old inn at Bonnell, a tiny hamlet whose people once led a dangerous role aiding fugitive slaves along the route to Yorkville. The town is derelict and abandoned now, but it once held a Methodist Protestant anti-slavery church. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

The English, or Guilford Route

The Tanners Creek Underground Railroad route was unique. Methodist dissident families emigrated from Yorkshire, England, and planned and operated the route approximately thirty years. Arriving in the United States between 1818 and 1820, these inter-related families settled along the East Fork and the West Fork of Tanners Creek in north central Dearborn County. Speaking a
heavy Yorkshire dialect, they established farms along Collier’s Ridge Road leading from Wright’s Corner to Guilford. The road passed the West Fork Methodist Protestant Church (1824) and cemetery on the way to Guilford.

At least six farms along this route participated actively as conductors, couriers and safe houses. Thomas Hansell, the station master, his brother John Hansell, his brothers-in-law Reverend John Murray and Robert Cornforth, John Collier and his eldest son Ralph Collier, Joseph Hall, were all involved. This community was centered at the

![John Collier's homestead on Collier Ridge Road north of Wrights Corner. The Thomas Hansell farm lay just to the south adjacent to Colliers. After Hansell moved to Oregon and John Collier died in 1848, Ralph Collier continued the U.G.R.R. route continuing to work with Joseph Hall and others along the route. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.](image)

West Fork stone church. Usually William Wymond brought the fugitives from the Ohio River to Thomas Hansell’s farm or to Joseph Hall’s place. From West Fork, either
Thomas Hansell, John Collier or Joseph Hall took the fugitives the twenty miles to the Brookville station. They used Hansell's covered wagon prior to 1845 when he moved to Oregon. After that they used farm wagons or horses.

From Guilford, the eastern U.G.R.R. went up Mt. Pleasant Ridge Road. This was a remote and safe route. Near the base of the ridge lay the farm of Martin C. Ewbank, an anti-slavery activist who may have also conducted fugitives. About two miles further were farms of William Luke Hansell and Robert Hansell, younger brothers of Thomas and John Hansell. Near neighbors on either side were the Grubbs and Liddles, families related by marriage and belonging to the Mt. Pleasant Methodist Protestant Church. In the 19th century, there was a track across the hills to Bright. There the route picked up Jameson Road into West Harrison, crossed the Whitewater River and via Chappelow Ridge Road headed North toward a Quaker station on the Eisle Creek just South of Brookville.

*Joseph Hall's Barn on Bonnell Road west of Guilford where the first meeting of the M.P. West Fork congregation was held in 1834. This was a radical abolitionist group that supported the U.G.R.R. for many years. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.*

The Tanner's Creek U.G.R.R. activists were supported by four Methodist Protestant Church
congregations, all of them holding anti-slavery positions to one degree or another. There certainly were differences of opinion in these churches during the formative 1830s, a time when the radical Methodists were breaking away from the Methodist Episcopal Convention to form the Methodist Protestant Church. At one time, tensions ran so high that those who favored immediate abolition and assistance to fugitives met for services in Joseph Hall's barn. Reverend John Clark, one of the founders of the M.P. Conference, was evangelist and preacher in the Tanners Creek area. The East Fork M.P. Church, just North of Guilford, was initially a Methodist Episcopal congregation (1821); the first anti-slavery society meeting in Dearborn County in 1834 was held at East Fork stone church. Subsequent meetings of the Dearborn Anti-Slavery Society were held in Manchester (Muletown) at the Universalist Church, in Moore's Hill at the Temperance Hall, and in the West Fork M.P. Church. The West Fork M.P. Church dated from 1824, and in the early 1840s, the Bonnell M.P. church and the Mt. Pleasant Church M.P. Church were added.

The original Universalist Church building at Manchester dates back to 1843. The entryway and belfrey were added in 1852. The congregation at Manchester goes back to 1817. The building was converted to commercial use in the 1980s. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
The New England Route to Old Milan

Although this route was identified with the Universalists at Manchester and at Aurora, it is equally akin to Stephen S. Harding and his Freewill Baptists at Old Milan. Harding is known to have attended anti-slavery meetings in Moore's Hill in western Dearborn County and he was well-known by the Manchester and Upper Manchester abolitionists. After 1855 some of the faculty at Moore's Hill, a Methodist institution, may have participated in U.G.R.R. activities as well.

Elijah Anderson's Free Black Route from Lawrenceburg

This U.G.R.R. land route was established after Elijah Anderson moved to Lawrenceburg in 1846 and was noted for its extremely high volume of traffic. Sometimes as many as twenty and once as many as fifty fugitives were handled at one time. Apparently Elijah was the prime conductor until his arrest and conviction in 1856 and incarceration at the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Frankfort. He said that he took the groups of runaway slaves all the way to Sandusky or Cleveland, and he was also known to have gone to Detroit at least once.

A very experienced conductor for the U.G.R.R. from his days at Madison, Elijah Anderson would have avoided the city itself. There was a sizeable Free Black population in Lawrenceburg, but there were too many slave-catchers resident. Therefore, the Free Blacks needed to meet the fugitives at the crossing points and then skirt the city. To the
west, Samuel and William Wells, son of the original settler, Ben Wells, lived on a small farm on the outskirts of Lawrenceburg near the mouth of Tanners Creek. It is possible that the Lawrenceburg Free Blacks used that site as a place to off-load fugitives that would present a danger in the city itself. The 1854 murder of William Wells by a White man named Nicholas Evans could have been personal or political.

There was also swampy land to the east of Lawrenceburg that might have provided cover under night to transport eight to ten fugitives at a time. There is nothing to indicate how closely Elijah Anderson worked with William Wymond at Aurora, but the pattern Elijah set in Madison was to forge very strong links with the White abolitionists active in the U.G.R.R.

What we know of this route from a chance meeting coming back from Liberty between Gabriel Smith, an old Free Black living in Brookville, and the Quaker station master in Union County. As they rode along together, they discovered they both worked with the U.G.R.R. Gabriel Smith explained that his route led from the Ohio River at Lawrenceburg, north along the main White Water River to Brookville, then up the east fork of the White Water, to Richmond and New Garden then to Wayne County. Smith claimed to be a singing master and to have piloted fifty fugitives over this route.
The U.G.R.R. Historic Districts in Dearborn County, Indiana

Lawrenceburg

1. Henry Beecher’s pulpit at the Presbyterian Church, 1828.
2. Tom Magruder’s cabin.
3. African-Methodist Episcopal Church site.
4. Elijah Anderson and Free Black home sites.
5. William Wells farm at Tanners Creek
6. Site of Dearborn College, to be determined.

Aurora

7. William Wymond’s homestead, c. 1830.
8. Manchester Landing.
10. The Eagle Hotel site, c. 1845.
11. Daniel Bartholomew’s cabin site, c. 1820.
12. Universalist Church site.
13. Shattuck Family
14. Shockley Family
English Route from Aurora through Harrison to Brookville

15. Thomas Hansell’s farm, Collier’s Ridge Road, Manchester Township. Some structures left on the northern part of his farm along the railroad track, Thomas Hansell’s general store, probably in Wrights Corner, later Hansell Station, a Hansell tannery and railroad station.

16. John and Ralph Collier’s frame homestead, Collier’s Ridge Road, Manchester Township. The original house foundation stones preserved when concrete poured. Home is inhabited by descendents of the Colliers. Other descendents live across the street. Foundations of small cabins built out by the tree lot remain as homes of children of John Collier; two of these cabins were later used as rear additions to the main 1820 cabin. Existing barn and shed date to early twentieth century. The old barn foundation stones preserved. The original staircase was on the side opposite the cooking fireplace.

17. Old railroad trestle, crossing West Fork of Tanners Creek. The original railroad line curved along a man-made embankment following the north side of West Fork. It was this right of way that forced the congregation to abandon the West Fork stone church. The railroad right of way then crossed Tanner’s Creek at the trestle and went along the south side of the creek to Bonnell, Indiana.

18. Joseph Hall’s stone homestead and barn, Guilford Road, York Township. Two-story stone house (c. 1820) is intact and inhabited. Three bay threshing barn with wooden pegs with hay loft and straw loft. This was the Joseph Hall’s stone house c. 1835. One of the leaders of the U.G.R.R. route from Aurora to Brookville by way of Guilford and Harrison. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
site of the first meeting of the radical Methodists who formed the M.P. Church at West Fork. Also on site a mid-nineteenth century stone crusher and a stone horse trough. Features in the house include one original fireplace with iron pot holder and poplar trim for the mantle. A narrow and steep stairway in the center of house originally had walls to the ceiling on both sides. There were three rooms on the second floor, the east room was full width of the house and contained a fireplace. On the northwest corner was a smaller room with an odd door with wooden slats to adjust for temperature changes. An L-shaped room went across the front of the house to the southwest corner.


20. Town of Guilford at Forks of Tanners Creek, Miller Township. The U.G.R.R. route went through Guilford at the ford, then headed southeast along the main road to Lawrenceburg one mile to the start of Mt. Pleasant Road.

Thomas Hansell headed the U.G.R.R. at Guilford until he moved to Oregon in 1846; at that time John and Ralph Collier picked up the leadership of the route.
The English Route ran from Bonnell Road through Guilford and up Mt. Pleasant Ridge Road past the safe houses of M.C. Ewbank, Robert and William Hansell, and the Mt. Pleasant M.P. Meeting House. An old trail since closed led directly down the hill to Bright and thence to West Harrison and Cheppelow Ridge.

The old Methodist Meeting House on the East Fork of Tanners Creek near Guilford. This was the site of Indiana’s first anti-slavery society meeting in 1834. Reverend John Clark, the minister, was the delegate from Dearborn County to the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1838. Martin C. Ewbank’s tombstone is in this cemetery. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

22. Martin C. Ewbank’s homestead, Mt. Pleasant Road, Miller Township. Currently inhabited.

23. Robert Hansell’s homestead, Mt. Pleasant Road, Miller Township, Currently inhabited by Hansell descendants. Both Robert and William Luke, younger brothers of Thomas and John Hansell, helped form the Mt. Pleasant Methodist Protestant Church. However, there was no family history that they were directly involved in the U.G.R.R. Rather, these properties and their nearby kinfolk represented a safe passage for the Collier Ridge conductors.


25. 19th Century Track across the hills to Bright, Harrison Township. This track was passable by horseback in the early 20th century. The Hansell family believed that this was the primary route to Harrison and Chappelow Ridge.
26. Jameson Road, Town of Bright, Harrison Township. The old track came down to meet the Jameson Road in Bright. The U.G.R.R. route, according to Dr. John Hansell, went across a ferry on the Whitewater River.

27. Ferry Crossing of Whitewater River, West Harrison, Harrison Township. The ferry was owned and operated by a widow with decidedly pro-slavery leanings. Thomas Hansell took great delight in taking fugitive slaves in his closed covered wagon right under the widow’s nose.


29. Eisle Creek, Union county. An important early Station house serving the “English” route as well as those coming from Sunman and Lawrenceburg. This Quaker family moved further west about 1845 and it is not certain how the station was replaced. A very dangerous station existed in Richmond that was run by local Free Blacks. A substantial number of pro-slavery forces lived in Richmond and a number of Quakers who did not favor abolition lived nearby.
The New England, or Universalist, route led from Manchester Landing at Aurora north to Manchester. There the Noyes and Platt families were surrounded by other anti-slavery members of the Universalist Church at Manchester, including the Millikens, the Jumpers, the Bennetts, and the Ketchams. Map from Inventory of Historic Sites and Structures of Dearborn County.

New England Route from Aurora through Manchester to Old Milan

At Manchester

30. The Universalist Church in Manchester, c. 1826.

31. The Universalist Cemetery in Manchester.

Amos Noyes cabin, the oldest building in Manchester. Amos, Charles and Benjamin Noyes were all charter members of the Manchester Universalist Church and supporters of the U.G.R.R. in the area. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

33. Strange Noyes House, c. 1850. Manchester


36. Seth Platt’s farm, house removed. SW SW Section 22

37. James P. Millikin’s farm site. W ½ SW Section 21 and NW Section 21, also in 1856 part SE Section 29 and part Section 30.

38. William Dunn, 1860 and 1861.
The County Home in Manchester, c. 1875. This building was constructed by Seth Platt, son of Gilbert Platt and one of several activists in the Underground Railroad route leading from Manchester to Old Milan. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

At Upper Manchester

39. Israel Noyes, 1817, 160 acres, NE Section 20 and 160 acres SE Section 17.


41. John Bennett, 1828, 80 acres, E \( \frac{1}{2} \) NE Section 18.

42. David Ketcham and Gilbert Platt, 1817, 160 acres SW Section 17.

43. Alden H. Jumper, 1844, E \( \frac{1}{2} \) 64 acres and 56 acres, Section 20.

44. Benjamin Noyes, 1829, W \( \frac{1}{2} \) NE Section 20 and pat SW Section 20 in 1842 and 1843.

45. Charles Noyes, 120 acres, SE Section 20 in 1841; 160 acres, SW Section 20, 1843.
At Moore's Hill

46. Temperance Hall, meeting site for anti-slavery society.

47. Moore's Hill College.

At Wilmington, Hogan Township

48. Orthaniel Reed's homestead. See Rising Sun routes.
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Chapter Seven
The U.G.R.R. in Ohio County, Indiana

Introduction

Little attention has been given to African-American history in Ohio County. The local histories provide a modicum of background, one photograph of Shiloh Baptist Church's building, that was the old Presbyterian Church at Rising Sun, but no listing of where African-Americans were buried, or stories about the people who lived there and raised their families in the county.

Alberta Parker, who was born and raised in Rising Sun and now lives in Lawrenceburg, graciously lent her copy of the Shiloh Baptist Church records that proved very helpful. She also had access to the Ohio County Negro Registers that were not picked up in Coy Robbins' book. The manuscript census of 1850 and 1860 filled in some gaps.

The major local history is the Weakley 1885 tome on Dearborn and Ohio counties. It is directed chiefly at pioneer settlements and at military listings; although the biography section does give some information about key people.

The information about the Rising Sun to Clarksburg U.G.R.R. route came from the testimony and subsequent memoirs of State of Indiana vs. Luther A. Donnell, a Decatur County trial. And information about Orthaniel Reed's U.G.R.R. route from Rising Sun came from the Decatur County newspapers.
The Underground Railroad in Ohio County, Indiana

Even though Rising Sun was laid out in 1814, the town had to wait to become a seat of justice until 1844; until that time Ohio County and the eastern part of Switzerland County were part of Dearborn County. Much of the county's early history is linked intricately to Lawrenceburg and Wilmington, the former county seats, and to the chain of river towns bringing commerce to the frontier settlements inland. Rising Sun was a normal stop by packet steamboats and flatboats plying the Ohio between Cincinnati and Louisville.

One finds no documentation of early responses to fugitive slaves crossing at or near Rising Sun or North Landing. Whatever active anti-slavery sentiment existed appears to be centered on members who in 1840 organized the Universalist Church at Rising Sun. This congregation was headed by early pioneer Colonel A. C. Pepper and industrialist Nathan Steadman. Apparently they had very strong ties established with the Universalists at Manchester. The New England settlers at Manchester formed a congregation that dated back to 1817 but organized officially in 1843 as a Universalist church. Colonel Pepper was an early settler at Rising Sun and a noted Indian fighter and held office in the local militia. He was known to have aided several churches in the immediate area.
Another noted Universalist was Nathan R. Steadman born in New York City in 1814 then moving to Connecticut where he learned the foundry trade. After a short stay in Cincinnati in 1837, Steadman moved to Rising Sun and took a partner, Colonel Pinkney James, opening Steadman & Co, in Rising Sun. Two years later they moved the operation to Aurora and began to manufacture engines, car wheels, hay and cotton presses, and general machinery. The Gaff family then joined in the foundry business. It operated for thirty years and in 1885 was listed as hiring eighty to one hundred men. Steadman was school board trustee in 1856 of Judge Holman's Aurora Academy. This was the same school that in 1826 had hired Stephen S Harding as assistant professor. Steadman was credited with noble and charitable acts during his lifetime, particularly in providing care for the needy. The Universalists at Manchester, who operated the U.G.R.R. route from Aurora to Old Milan, credit Steadman with forging and donating their church bell.

Rising Sun during the 1840s and 1850s was a prosperous river town with a vibrant economy. Over twenty New England families lived in Rising Sun. There is no indication they were active in the U.G.R.R. but they did provide a generally tolerant atmosphere. It is quite probable that the bulk of aid to any runaway slave came from the Free Black community at Rising Sun. Two mulatto families, the Samuel Barkshires and the Joseph Edingtons, and a family headed by Rebecca Minister of Virginia lived in Rising Sun in 1850. During the next decade, Septia Wright, a mulatto from Kentucky, and his family moved in to Rising Sun as well as a Lee family from Virginia. These Free
Blacks knew how to direct fugitives to the U.G.R.R. Quaker stations in Union and Wayne counties.

One anecdote about the Underground Railroad helps to explain how it operated in the early period. A slave named John White escaped from Boone County, Kentucky, and made his way with the help of "light skinned" Free Blacks at Rising Sun (Either Septia Wright, the Barkshires or Edingtons) to Levi Coffin's station at Newport, Indiana. The next year, he came back to get his wife and six children, but every attempt failed. Finally Laura S. Haviland, an abolitionist of Adrian, Michigan, came down from Michigan to Rising Sun. In company with a Free Black woman from Rising Sun, Haviland crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky presumably to get blackberries but actually to make arrangements with John White's wife to escape. During the attempted escape of the White family, the Ohio River current was particularly strong. The skiff missed its target at Rising Sun, and dumped the White family down near North Station. The Kentucky posse recaptured John White's wife and children, but he found refuge at the hut of a Free Black. The only Free Black at North Station was Edmund Toliver, and he was immediately targeted by the posse. Right Ray, the notorious slave-catcher, captured John White and instead of turning him over to the Boone County posse took the slave to Madison. White had enough presence of mind to tell the court that his owner was a widow White living down near Maysville, Kentucky. Rather than contact a slave-owner so far away, Right Ray decided to sell the slave himself and take the money. In a bizarre set of arrangements, abolitionists in Cincinnati negotiated John White's purchase if Right Ray
would bring him to Cincinnati on the steamboat. Once in Cincinnati, they brought charges against the slave-catcher for trying to sell a Free Black. As a result, Right Ray was jailed in Madison for several weeks. White's wife and children were sold to the Deep South and he never saw them again.

Several fugitive slaves crossed the Ohio River between Rabbit Hash, Kentucky, and Rising Sun, Indiana. In the 1840s and 1850s, the American Anti-Slavery League spies were very active along this stretch of Boone County. Some of these fugitives could have been related to the free people of color that lived in Rising Sun. Until 1850 Free Blacks from the Clarksburg (Decatur Co.) area were known to have gone down to Rising Sun to pick up fugitives hidden there by Free Blacks. Once in Decatur County, the series of U.G.R.R. station houses were used to hide and move the fugitives further into Franklin County and to Levi Coffin's place at Newport, Indiana. After 1850 many of the Free Blacks at Clarksburg moved to Canada or Michigan. However, they may have been replaced or supplemented by a White abolitionist at Wilmington, Orthaniel H. Reed, who was known to have gone to Rising Sun to pick up fugitive slaves and take them to Decatur County.

One major anomaly occurred in the 1850 census for Division 2 and North Landing. Some families living in that area had African-Americans born in Mississippi and Virginia living in their households. For example, former Mississippi slaves – Rebecca Stevens, 31, and her three children, Jacob Norris, 26, and Catherine Stephenson, 9, all lived with Bradley and Isaac Loring, wealthy farmers who migrated to Ohio County.
from Massachusetts. The Loring family history claims they managed unspecified large-scale operations in Mississippi; in the twentieth century they managed a drug store at Rising Sun. It is inconclusive whether these people were aiding former slaves or simply acquiring servants for the households.

Also in 1850 Rhoda McCarry, 97, a pauper from Virginia, lived with Morris Mitchell, age 36 who farmed in the area. Additionally Edmund Toliver, 60, and Rachel Toliver, 30, lived in his own hut along the Ohio River.

The Story of Shiloh Baptist Church and the Underground Railroad

After the Civil War in 1867, slavery had been banned by the Emancipation Proclamation and by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the
Constitution. A number of former slaves crossed from Kentucky and settled at Rising Sun. They called Reverend Chapman Harris from Madison to become the first preacher for the Shiloh Baptist Church. The congregation met first in the old Universalist Church on Fourth Street in Rising Sun and later purchased the old Presbyterian Church on Second Street, a building that was destroyed in 1980.

Chapman Harris was a distinguished leader of the Underground Railroad at Madison, and, in fact, led a coterie of Free Blacks in Indiana and slaves on the Kentucky side that managed the dangerous Ohio River crossings for fugitive slaves during the 1840s and 1850s. He and his teen-aged sons Henry and Charles Walker handled the busy U.G.R.R. route from Eagle Hollow up to the abolitionists at Rykers Ridge and Lancaster. Harris was also one of the founders in 1849 of St. Paul’s Second Baptist Church on Fifth Street in Madison.

In 1869 a major falling out occurred between some of the deacons and Reverend Harris. Chapman Harris claimed he was owed $335.02 but would deduct $175.02 from the whole debt owed him if the congregation would pay him $10 within two weeks. The deacons then held a secret meeting to call a new preacher. Harris heard about the meeting and stormed in, quite angry, to denounce the proceedings. The deacons thereupon wrote a formal letter to Second Baptist Church at Madison requesting that they institute a ministerial inquiry and trial. And they requested John Carter, Chapman Harris’ old friend in the U.G.R.R. to represent Shiloh at the trial. They accused Harris of breaking the Seventh and Tenth Commandments. The deacons applied pressure on Patsy Allen Harris,
Chapman's wife, to denounce him, but she strongly supported Chapman, and was instantly dismissed from the Shiloh congregation. The trial found Chapman Harris guilty of the charges, but he claimed that time would vindicate him. And, in fact, he died a celebrated hero of the Underground Railroad at Madison.

**Benoni Dixon, also Dickson.**

Born in South Carolina, Benoni Dixon came into Lawrenceburg before the 1830 census and is listed as a Free Black. Before 1840, he and his large family had moved to the Ohio-Switzerland county line and he was listed as colored. In the 1850 census, Dixon is listed in Switzerland County as a chair maker, a highly skilled cabinetry position. The two locations were probably the same and the county line was adjusted. During the Civil War, Benoni's son Frederick served in a regular Indiana unit and was not identified as a Free Black but was described as dark complexioned. The family history claims some Cherokee ancestry. Although isolated, it is quite likely that Dixon aided fugitives whenever possible.
Map 15. U.G.R.R. Routes in Ohio County
The U.G.R.R. Routes in Ohio County, Indiana

Basically there were two Underground Railroad routes north from Rising Sun. One was opened in the late 1830s and ran until shortly after passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. The fugitives were picked up from the Free Black community at Rising Sun by conductors from the Africa settlement outside Clarksburg in Decatur County. The most famous of these Free Black conductors was William Thompson who worked closely with James Shannon at Clarksburg. This Free Black route went north from Rising Sun, then branched west beyond Friendship into the Raccoon Creek. Along this safe route, lived a number of free people of color including Moses and Henry Green, Archibald Lewis, George Watts, and John Clark. Continuing west along Raccoon Creek, the route came out onto the Vevay-Versailles Road at the Universalist Church and cemetery one mile south of Olean on Charles F. Styer’s land. At that point, the route merged with the eastern Madison route heading for McCoy’s Station through Napoleon.

The second major route was forged by a White abolitionist with strong Decatur County ties. His name was Orthaniel H. Reed, and he lived in Wilmington, from 1836 to 1843 the county seat of Dearborn County. Reed was listed as a leading businessman in 1836. His daughter, writing in 1914, stated that Reed would hitch up two fast black horses, and he and his team would be gone several days. He conducted from Rising Sun and Aurora, meeting fugitives hidden at the Ohio River edge, and conducting the
runaways north to the Decatur County Presbyterians in Fugit Township. Reed attended meetings with Luther Donnell, Cyrus Hamilton and Andrew Robinson, all leaders of the U.G.R.R. in Decatur County.

It is not likely that Reed went up to Friendship and Raccoon Creek. Since he had a wagon and team of horses, he probably followed the road to Dillsboro and then turned north toward Old Milan. He could also have found safe passage with the Universalists at Pleasant Hill, near Stringtown, north of Elrod.

On one episode near Rising Sun, the famed Madison slave-catcher Right Ray fired a shot at Reed. Right Ray was close enough that the shot he fired burned one side of Reed’s face with powder burns. During the Civil War, Reed served in Company G, 47th Indiana Infantry and was killed in action. Five sons also served in the Union cause.
The U.G.R.R. Historic Districts in Ohio County, Indiana

At Rising Sun

1. Site of Shiloh Baptist Church, Second Street, the old Presbyterian Church building, removed. Reverend Chapman Harris, Free Black leader of the U.G.R.R. at Madison, served as first preacher at Shiloh Baptist.

2. Site of Rising Sun Universalist Church. Fourth Street.

3. Samuel Barkshire house, to be determined.

4. Nathan R. Steadman house, to be determined.

5. Colonel A. C. Pepper house, to be determined.

At North Station

6. Landing at North Station where John White’s family went aground and were recaptured by the posse. Free Black Edmund Toliver’s hut lay along the Ohio River bank. General location only.
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Chapter Eight
The U.G.R.R. in Decatur County, Indiana

Introduction

Much of the history of the Underground Railroad in Decatur County has been written in the local histories and Greensburg’s newspapers. A particularly fine collection of nineteenth century portraits of some of the abolitionists in Fugit Township was carried in 1931 in a major retrospective by the Greensburg Daily News. Further, the J. H. Beers 1882 Atlas not only had high quality plats for each township, but also printed much of the information surrounding State of Indiana vs. Luther A. Donnell. The Atlas also carried a substantial amount of family history for the McCoys, Donnells, and Hamiltons.

The project, however, would have been much more difficult but for the help given by Charles Metz of Kingston and Pat Smith of Greensburg. Pat Smith shared graciously from her collection of historical anecdotes and drove us out for a tour of the Kingston and Springhill area. Charles Metz spent a long day taking us to the individual sites at Kingston, Clarksburg, and McCoy’s Station. His knowledge of the families and their interrelationships is extensive. In addition, Dr. Don Marlin shared his nineteenth century photographs, and Mary E. Mitchell of Indianapolis provided clippings and family archive materials on the Donnells.
The key case, State of Indiana vs. Luther A. Donnell is well documented and was given an historical interpretation just a few years ago by Gwendolyn Crenshaw. Over the years the Greensburg newspaper has highlighted the U.G.R.R. in their locality, and particularly the role of the Hamiltons, McCoys and Donnells. Buried in letters to the editor were additional information about Herman Cravens and Orthaniel Reed.

The courthouse and library staff always proved courteous and helpful.
The Underground Railroad in Decatur County, Indiana

The Scots Presbyterians of Washington and Fugit townships in Decatur County operated one of the most successful Underground Railroad routes in Indiana, and they handled very large volumes of traffic on their routes. Unlike many of the southeastern Indiana routes that seemed to spring up almost accidentally, the Decatur County abolitionists had a thoroughly planned and organized set of operations.

Over the thirty some years of operation, they handled several hundred fugitives.

Underground Railroad routes coming from Madison, Vevay, Patriot, Rising Sun, and Aurora ran as independent lines up through Ripley County and then converged just south of Alexander McCoy’s Station. The large families or clans that provided sustained support for the U.G.R.R. were located along a north-south axis through Washington and Fugit townships of Decatur County.

First were the McCoys – Alexander, George, James, John C., and Angus C. -- the most active in the U.G.R.R. Once fugitives were handed off to the McCoys, they were moved along through the Hamiltons, led by brothers Cyrus, Thomas and Robert Marshall Hamilton located just south of Kingston. From there the next major station north was that of Miles Meadows, a Free Black living south of Clarksburg on the J.C. Donnell/Quincy and Camilla Donnell’s lands. The next stations and safe houses north belonged to Luther or Samuel Donnell at Clarksburg or Thomas or John R. Donnell at Springhill. Which station was used depended on the degree of danger of a posse or slave-catcher nearby.

The most commonly used station east of Clarksburg was the Free Black agricultural community called “Africa.” Over two-hundred Free Blacks, just recently granted their freedom from slavery by emancipation or by escaping, lived on Andrew Robison’s property near the Franklin County line. The spiritual leader of “Africa” was Sabra Mathews. The U.G.R.R. station there was managed by James Shannon, “one of the smoothest colored fellows ever in this section of the country.” William Thompson was a very active conductor from “Africa.” He was known to have gone all the way to Rising Sun to pick up “freight.”

Once at Clarksburg, fugitive slaves were taken, usually by wagon, to Levi Coffin and the other Wayne County stations by way of Metamora and Brookville in Franklin County or through Liberty in Union County. Using the periodic Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society meetings, the Decatur County U.G.R.R. forged strong relationships with their counterparts in Ripley County and the Ohio River counties.
The McCoy and Hamilton families controlled much of the land lying between McCoy Station (bottom right) and the junction with the Greensburg-Kingston-Clarksburg Pike. The vast majority of fugitive slave traffic came up from McCoy Station to Kingston. Of the more conservative families, Judge Hopkin's property lay to the east along the road to Greensburg and the Antrobus and Ardery farms lay just north of Hopkins. From the Beers 1882 Atlas of Decatur County.
Orthaniel Reed, who lived near Aurora and conducted fugitives from both Dearborn and Ohio counties, spoke of meeting the Decatur County principals at various planning meetings. George Waggoner, the intrepid conductor from Station #4 near Benville in what is now the Jefferson Proving Grounds, apparently was well known by the Decatur County U.G.R.R.

**The Western Routes**

Only one other U.G.R.R. route is documented through Decatur County. The Hull family stated that that route began at Harvey Marshall’s station at the Lockspring/Flat Rock Creek and went north to Greensburg and Milroy and the Quaker settlements in Rush County. One mile to the southeast of Greensburg, Herman Cravens ran an U.G.R.R. station, apparently serving this western Decatur route. His daughter described the location as being on a busy roadway. About two miles west of Westport in Jackson Township, a very isolated farmhouse is said to have been an U.G.R.R. station. This site would have served as an alternate for the U.G.R.R. in Bartholomew and Jennings County.
At Kingston, the Hamiltons, Donnells, Robisons, Rankins, and Preston Hopkins all provided safe passage for fugitive slaves. Free Black Miles Meadows built a cabin that served as the U.G.R.R. Station at Kingston on the lands of John C. Donnell located at the big turn in the Pike one mile north of Kingston. Plat from the 1882 Beers Atlas of Decatur County.

Stations and Safe Houses in Washington and Fugit Townships

Many alternate safe houses existed among the various members of the three major families or sons-in-law who lived nearby. By the 1840s, the Fugit Township lines looked more like a network of interconnected links. Although there was a trap door leading to the attic in the Miles Meadows cabin, for the most part the Decatur County U.G.R.R. used outbuildings that were easily camouflaged as normal farm buildings.

Cyrus Hamilton (Fugit Township: E ½ SW and W ½ SE Section 8 T11N R10E) used his barn and a thicket as well as a hollow spot in a hayrick that had a blind entrance.
Luther Donnell's house, since removed sat on the east side of Donnell Corners, CR 550N and 600E. His father-in-law, William Braden's lands lay on the west side of the junction, and noted pro-slavery advocate Woodsen Clark lived just north. Photo from the collection of Dr. Don Marlin.

Luther Donnell (Fugit Township: E ½ SW Section 8, T11N R11E and W ½ SW Section 9 T11N R11E) had an out-of-the-way corn-crib that was often used to harbor fugitives.

Miles Meadows, Free Black, who lived on Quincy and Camilla Donnell's (Fugit Township: NW 23 T11N R11E) farm just north of Kingston, constructed an overhead loft in his log hut; this became a main station.

William Hamilton (Fugit Township: S ½ Section 6 N ½ Section 7 of T11N R11E) near Clarksburg, concealed fugitives in a rail pen covered with straw.

Andrew Robison's farm housed a large portion of the Clarksburg "Africa" Settlement. This main station was managed by James Shannon, "one of the smoothest colored fellows ever in this section of the country." He was a terror to the slave hunter.
Associated with him was William Thompson, who was one of the most active and successful conductors, often going to Rising Sun to pick up "freight" and bringing fugitives through Alexander McCoy's station.

Portrait of Reverend Adam T. Rankin, son of famed abolitionist John Rankin of Ripley, Ohio. Rankin was one of several second-generation U.G.R.R. activists. Adam came to Kingston to take the pulpit of the anti-slavery church but stayed thirty years to reconcile all the area Presbyterians into the Kingston congregation. Photo from History of the Sand Creek Presbyterian Church.

Reverend Adam T. Rankin, son of John Rankin of Ripley, Ohio, and a noted anti-slavery minister in his own right, often participated in foiling slave-hunters, including the infamous Wright (Right) Ray. His house was located just north of Kingston on the side road leading to the Seceder/Associate Reformed Church's frame building that later became the Kingston schoolhouse. (Fugit Township: NW corner Section 26 T11N R11E).

Some anecdotes about the Decatur County U.G.R.R. operations have more than one side of the story. The case of the Ammerman involvement was one of these questionable accounts. The first story is extremely colorful and interesting, however the second story negates several important factors. Complicating the situation is that there were three Ammermans living nearby, Albert, subject of these stories, Daniel Ammerman at E ½ SE 10-10-10, and John R. T. Ammerman at SW ¼ SW 10-10-10.
The station on the farm of Samuel L. Jackson, was run by Albert Amerman who died suddenly while harboring fugitives, a woman and two small children. Slave hunters were close behind. The Amerman family dressed the fugitives in mourning clothes, put them in the last carriage, and as the funeral procession went to the gravesite, the last carriage with its fugitives turned toward the Clarksburg Free Black community.

The second account is quite revealing about the Amerman family and the participation of those who gave assistance to the U.G.R.R in the years following passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act.

Robert M. Hamilton's house south of Kingston was the scene of one rescue of fugitive slaves. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Thomas Woodson Hamilton, son of Robert Marshall Hamilton, described a scene in 1850, shortly after passage of the federal Fugitive Slave Act, when a number of Negro slaves jumped from a wagon and ran into his father's house. "There were seven in all, two men, two women and three small children." The slave-hunters – Jim DeMoss, Jim McKay, Wright Ray [Right Rea of Madison] overtook the wagon about a mile east of home, but returned to Greensburg empty handed. R.M. Hamilton sent his hired men into
the fields so they would not know that he was harboring fugitive slaves. Wishing to hide
the runaways in a large cornfield nearby, R.M. Hamilton queried his neighbor Albert
Ammerman who claimed he would aid any runaway slave. When Aunt Eliza Hamilton
took food to the fugitives, she overheard Ammerman quizzing the slaves about their
masters and home plantations and she alerted R. M. Hamilton. “That night another
conspirator, Preston Hopkins, came in a covered wagon and took the fugitives to ... Miles
Meadows... who conveyed them to a Negro settlement east of Clarksburg known as
“Africa.” About a year later Ammerman told Uncle Jack [John] Hopkins, another
neighbor, of the fugitive slaves. Hopkins wrote to the slave owners who appeared in the
area to investigate and bring charges against R.M. Hamilton. “They called on Ammerman
and found him seriously ill and he died within a day or two thereafter.” Hopkins
continued pursuing evidence for the case, but he too died before any prosecution could
take place against Hamilton. “Often have I heard my father remark that the hand of
providence removed the men who were bent on his financial ruin.”

Although Luther A. Donnell’s homestead burned some years ago, photographs
have been preserved. The J.C. Donnell (Quincy and Camilla Donnell) house stands
between Kingston and Clarksburg as does the Andrew-J.B. Robison home north of
Kingston. Miles Meadow’s cabin has long since fallen down as have all the log cabins of
the “Africa” community east of Clarksburg. Where Cyrus and Thomas Hamilton’s
homesteads once stood at Kingston, their sons’ homes – Samuel H. and Chester – are in
excellent state of preservation. Further south along the Kingston Road, the Robert A.
Hamilton home, Auburn Hills, stood at the corner of the road to McCoy's Station. It is sadly dilapidated however still shows the original structure. South along the Kingston Road the T. L. Donnell home is in excellent condition as is the Robert M. Hamilton house on the Kingston Road as well the house he built south of McCoy's Station. At Springhill the brick home of Thomas Donnell stands. The Kingston A.R.C. Anti-Slavery frame church stood across the road from the Robison site and eventually became the Kingston schoolhouse. The current Presbyterian Church building at Kingston was erected after the Civil War. At Springhill, that church building, too, dates from the 1870s, although the congregation reflects continuity with its Anti-Slavery past. Most of the McCoy homes have vanished, and what is called McCoy's Station today, is located about one mile south of its original site. It moved when the I.C. & L. railroad moved. The original rail bed is barely visible where it once crossed the McCoy Station Road.

The Free Black Community at Clarksburg

A Free Black, Sabra Mathews, headed the 200-person "Africa" community near the Franklin County line east of Clarksburg. He was spiritual and political leader. Shortly after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, most of these people left for Canada and/or Michigan.

The “Africa” community in Decatur County was spread over two to three sections in the extreme northeast of Fugit Township. These families formed clusters of agricultural workers, all recently arrived from the South. Almost all of them worked for
wages for the various abolitionist families. Some had small landholdings leased or
granted by the landowner. There is one mention of a horse mill on the edge of the colored
settlement.

Miles Meadows lived on John C. Donnell’s farm north of Kingston, a farm later
owned by Quincy and Camilla Donnell, his children. L. Miles Meadows, born in
Vicksburg, Mississippi, came to Cincinnati as a small child. He came to Decatur County
as a young man to work for Marshall Hamilton of Springhill, later he worked for twenty-
six years for Thomas Donnell at Kingston.

Meadows used a two-horse farm wagon to convey fugitives, hidden beneath farm
produce. Once when he took a man and woman and their six children he noticed two
suspicious men loitering near a bridge; he took his team down to the creek as if to water
them, then casually forded the stream and went up the other embankment to safety.
Another anecdote tells of a fugitive slave woman who got lost from her group and hid in a corn shock until hunger forced her to stop at a farmhouse. She was captured and held in the house with three guards. Meadows and others from the Free Black community rushed the house and saved the woman, taking her north to the next U.G.R.R. station.

Meadows frequently kept fugitives until the next night; he had outfitted his cabin with a trap door access to the attic. One time both he and his wife were away from home when four fugitives arrived and were secreted in the attic. Slave catchers forced entry to the cabin and ordered the children to take them up to the loft. One of the girls had enough presence of mind to blow the candle out each time they ascended as if a puff of air extinguished it. By the time the slave catchers finally made it to the attic, the fugitives had escaped through the window and hidden in straw stacks.

One of Meadows children was named U.S. Grant, after the president, because he was born on election day in 1872 when Miles was first able to cast a vote in Indiana. Men from the community carried Miles Meadows to cast his last vote, in 1892, because he was too ill to walk. Closely associated with the Kingston Presbyterian Church, it is believed that Miles Meadows is buried at the Kingston cemetery with other members of the Meadows family. His funeral in 1892 was preached at the church by the Reverend A.T. Rankin.

The Revels from North Carolina and Jane Speed's family from Louisville, Kentucky, lived near Clarksburg on land owned by Buford Peyton, listed as an out-of-state landowner, adjacent to E. B. Dobyns to the north and to the south, Woodsen Clark.
the slave-catcher who aided George Ray of Trimble County, Kentucky. Caroline and her
four children were taken to Jane Speed when Mr. Pernell became frightened of the slave-
catchers. That is when Woodsen Clark saw the children taking food to the empty house.
He then captured the fugitives as narrated in *State of Indiana vs. Luther A. Donnell.*

The Mathews, Gilman, Snelling, Perry, Williams and Hunt families lived on
Andrew Robison's property east of Clarksburg in NE Section 4 almost to the Franklin
County border. The cemetery that served the "Africa" community was located in the
same area. The cemetery was deeded October 3, 1848 to the African Methodist Episcopal
(A.M.E.) Church. The one stone was marked Henry Speer, died April 17, 1856, age
twenty-two years. Another grave had a stone wall. There was no documentation of a
church building. The community may have used Sabra Mathew's cabin or some open-air
site for worship services. After the Civil War, an A.M.E. church was established at
Greensburg. Since Samuel Donnell Sr., one of the most radical of all the abolitionists,
taught school at an early period, it is possible that some one or more Free Blacks were
taught to read and write. Those from Carolinas and Virginia were marked illiterate in the
1850 census.

A close working relationship developed between the White abolitionist leaders,
particularly Andrew Robison and Luther A. Donnell, with the Free Black U.G.R.R.
leaders – Miles Meadows, James Shannon, and William Thompson, all of whom were
experienced conductors. Usually, fugitives could melt into the larger "Africa" community
with changes of clothes, using hidden sections of wagons, and making all moves in the
darkest nights.

As the years progressed, Woodsen Clark and his three sons – William, Levi, and
Richard led the pro-slavery faction at Clarksburg. Apparently when anything went
wrong, the “Africa” community turned to E.B. Dobyns, William M. Hamilton, Andrew
Robison, or Luther Donnell immediately.

Once the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act passed, many of the “Africa” families moved to
Michigan or Canada for greater safety. A large portion of the Mathews family—
Alexander, John Joseph and William – also Aaron and John Revels, and Lewis, Aaron,
Joseph and William Snellings moved to Cass County, Michigan. Wiley and Agnes Jones
wound up in the first ward, Windsor, Canada. Sabra Mathews stayed with the remnants
of the community into the twentieth century. Never more than huts or log cabins, these
dwellings have long disappeared. In 1945 a school group from Dayton, Ohio, found the
cemetery and catalogued its few markers.
Much is known about the operators and operations of the Decatur County Underground Railroad because of the details contained in the transcripts of State of Indiana vs Luther A. Donnell. Although a substantial amount of information surfaced during the trial as observations from the plaintiff’s witnesses, the defendants were reluctant to provide information that would harm the U.G.R.R. locally or statewide. When all proceedings were completed, and the War and the U.G.R.R. was long ended, William Hamilton, one of those indicted, gave a full account.

In the Spring Term 1848, this case was sent to a grand jury at Greensburg, Indiana, where an indictment was rendered against Luther A. Donnell and William M. Hamilton. A year later, a local trial jury of sixteen men found the defendant, Luther A. Donnell, guilty. The composition of the jury and the actions of the trial judge were
questionable at best. In June 1850, the Indiana Appellate Court overturned the verdict on the basis of judicial error. Meanwhile, George Ray of Trimble County, Kentucky, brought suit in federal court at Indianapolis for recovery of the value of his five slaves and a charge of trespass against the defendants. That judgment was for the plaintiff, and Luther A. Donnell paid $1,500 in fines and an additional $1,500 in court costs. He was promptly reimbursed by Indiana and Ohio abolitionists.

Luther A. Donnell, son of Samuel Donnell and one of the most prominent leaders of the U.G.R.R. in Decatur County, was charged with aiding fugitive slaves. Separate indictments were given for harboring a slave girl Frances and a slave boy named Henry on November 3, 1847, and on November 10, 1847 for harboring a mulatto boy John. The plaintiff was George Ray who lived between Bedford and Milton in Trimble County, Kentucky. He owned Caroline and her four children who escaped through the Madison U.G.R.R. For the loss of five of his slaves in late fall 1847, he set in motion an emotional and legal quagmire between a slave state, Kentucky, and a free state, Indiana. The case brought out angry partisans for and against slavery in Greensburg, and challenged the 1787 federal law requiring return of slave property to their owners. And the case became part of the deliberations of the U.S. Congress and Senate in formulating the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. That federal legislation, in turn, infuriated the northern anti-slavery activists and eventually led to the election of Abraham Lincoln just ten years later.
Timeline of the Case:

**October 31, 1847** – Caroline and her children – Frances, John, Amanda “Mandy,” and Harry – escaped, aided by the Madison, Indiana, U.G.R.R. They were taken up the “Eastern” route through what is now the Jefferson Proving Grounds. The secure route from Madison carried the fugitives through John Carr’s station at Rykers Ridge then on to the Baxter-Elliott station in southern J.P.G. then on to Hicklin’s Settlement and then to George Waggoner on Graham Creek.

*Note:* An alternate version told to N. T. Rogers in 1914 states that Caroline and her children came up from Rising Sun by way of the Free Black conductor William Thompson; however William Hamilton’s account clearly stated that George Waggoner brought the family north and handed them off to George McCoy. Waggoner, a frequent conductor who used a double-bed farm wagon, was always associated with the eastern Madison route, not Rising Sun. From Bedford in Trimble County, it is extremely unlikely that any fugitive would be taken to Rising Sun a substantial distance up river. While the U.G.R.R. could conceal young males on steamboats, it would have been impossible to hide a family with four children on river craft. Further, fugitive families were extremely difficult to hide on land as well. At Rising Sun only two to three Free Black families supported the U.G.R.R. activities. The eastern Madison route, on the other hand, went through remote territory with numerous U.G.R.R. supporters available to conceal and thwart any posses in pursuit.
November 1, 1847 – George Waggoner, station master at Station No. 4 on Graham Creek (Madison’s eastern route) now in the Jefferson Proving Ground, brought the fugitive family through Holton and Napoleon in Ripley County and about 2 to 3 a.m. delivered them to George McCoy at McCoy Station, Decatur County. There the family was transferred and George McCoy set out immediately. As daylight was approaching, McCoy left the family at the home of Free Black Mr. Pernell one and a half miles from Clarksburg. William Hamilton, who lived nearby, rode to Luther Donnell’s farm on the other side of Clarksburg. Donnell said he would get someone from the Free Black settlement to retrieve the woman and her children.

November 2, 1847 – Pernell was located on the main route in a highly visible site and became very nervous. Pernell loaded Caroline and her children on horses and in broad daylight took the family to Jane Speed’s further to the east beyond Clarksburg. Speed, who lived on Buford Peyton’s lands, hid the family in a house full of hay on a remote part of Peyton’s lands. Woodsen Clark, a personal friend of the slave owner -- George Ray of Kentucky-- observed the Speed children when they took food to the family. Clark, who claimed he had seen the posted notice of runaway slaves, captured the fugitive family and locked them in his son Richard Clark’s fodder house used for his livery stable in Clarksburg.

The men alerted E. B. Dobyns just outside Clarksburg that the fugitives had been taken by Woodsen Clark. In turn, Dobyns and the Free Blacks went to Luther A.
The 1882 Clarksburg plat shows the location of William M. Hamilton’s residence just south of the original town plats. Lots 45 and 46 were owed by Woodson Clark’s sons as in-town property. Lots 25 and 26 held the anti-slavery Presbyterian Church, an off-shoot of the anti-slavery church at Kingston. When the Free Blacks went to get help from E.B. Dobyns, it was not clear whether they went to his business at the corner of Main and Northwestern streets, or to his residence, shown here as Elizabeth Dobyns. Woodson Clark’s farm lay east a mile, and Luther A. Donnell’s place was south of Clark’s farm. While the Free Blacks took the children north, around Clarksburg, Luther Donnell and William Hamilton brought Caroline, dressed as a man, on horseback right through the town. Plat from the 1882 Beers Atlas.
Donnell’s house just south of Peyton Corners. Luther was away from home so the crowd went home. One person returned to Donnell’s home after dusk when he was finally apprised of the problem. Luther Donnell told the men at the “Africa” settlement to watch Woodsen Clark’s house. These men began to gather and arm themselves with knives and other implements to prevent the Clarks from removing Caroline and her children from the neighborhood.

Portrait of Cyrus Hamilton from the 1931 Greensburg Daily News. Among the older generation of abolitionists, Cyrus Hamilton was most active in operating the U.G.R.R. in Fugit Township.

Meanwhile, Luther Donnell rode to the house of Cyrus Hamilton near Kingston. Cyrus and Luther A. Donnell upon advice from an Attorney Davidson rode to Associate Judge John Hopkins’ house on the Greensburg Pike to obtain a writ of habeas corpus to search Woodsen Clark’s premises. They then rode to Greensburg to obtain the writ from Sheriff Michael Swope and then returned to Kingston.
November 3, 1847 – Very early morning: Robert A. Hamilton, son of James E. Hamilton and nephew to Cyrus Hamilton, accompanied Luther A. Donnell as he rode back to Clarksburg to get John Imlay, the local constable, to serve the writ. As they neared Clarksburg they awakened William M. Hamilton who was sent to look for the party of Free Blacks who were armed with twenty corn knives, clubs, and other more deadly weapons. William tried to keep a lid on the action at Clarksburg. Luther Donnell, John Imlay and Robert A. Hamilton shortly thereafter arrived at the home of Woodsen Clark. It was nearly three o’clock in the morning when they searched Clark’s premises but found no fugitives.

The Free Black crowd split up to extend the search to the other Clark family properties. Alerted by several armed Free Blacks, Robert A. Hamilton, his cousin, William Hamilton, and Luther Donnell, William’s brother-in-law, went under cloak of darkness to Richard Clark’s stables and rescued Caroline and her children. The family was taken to a deep ravine on Butts Fork of Salt Creek Township in Franklin County for security.

Morning: Robert A. Hamilton returned to his home south of Kingston. William Hamilton stayed with Luther Donnell until the Free Blacks reported back. As William Hamilton rode home to Clarksburg, he encountered four to five men, led by Joseph McKinney of Greensburg, and a stranger who later turned out to be George Ray, the slave owner. William went home and changed horses and kept watch on this posse that rode to the horse-mill on the edge of the colored settlement.
Afternoon: The posse demonstrated around the Free Black community and tried to search a couple of houses but found it unsafe, and so abandoned the expedition. A Free Black couple, cited as Chase or White, had two children the same age as the fugitives. They had recently moved from Union County and were in the habit of traveling back to their original home. In broad daylight, Mr. Chase and Mr. White rode with a woman and four children at a fast pace toward Metamora in Franklin County. Two of those four children were Caroline’s children. The Free Black party was observed by Logan Perry and by James Hall who both testified at the trial. The entourage delivered the fugitives to William Beard, the U.G.R.R. Quaker at the next station north.

During the day, Woodsen Clark had attempted to get a writ from the local Justice of the Peace to return the slaves to Kentucky. He failed to secure such an order. Later one of his sons accompanied by Elisha Hobbs rode to Greensburg to get a writ to take the fugitive slaves to Kentucky. Meantime, George Ray of Kentucky filed a complaint in Decatur County courthouse that Luther A. Donnell and William Hamilton had given aid to his fugitive slaves and had harbored the fugitive slave children.

After dark: Caroline and her children were retrieved from their hiding place. She dressed as a man and rode a horse with two Free Black riders on either side. This group rode west, straight through the dangerous town of Clarksburg. The two remaining children were taken around the town and met the party about one mile beyond the town. The Free Blacks then returned to their homes.
At daybreak: Luther Donnell and William Hamilton then took the partial family to the home of his brother, Thomas Donnell, a mile west beyond Springhill. Thomas hid the family in an out of the way building. William Hamilton took care of the horses. The fugitives were fed by Jane and L. L. Donnell and by the other Donnell children.

November 4, 1847 – At 10 p.m. that night: Luther Donnell and William Hamilton rode to Springhill to the home of John R. Donnell who provided a closed carriage with side curtains. Caroline and the children were provided plenty of warm woolen clothing and she was double veiled. The carriage was accompanied by Luther A. Donnell, William Hamilton, John R. Donnell, Lowry Donnell, Robert Stout and Nathaniel Thomson. The last two went only as far as New Salem in Rush County. The others continued on to William Beard’s home in Union County. The family was there reunited and taken to Levi
Coffin's station in Wayne County. Caroline wrote a thank you to Luther Donnell after she reached Canada. The men and horses returned to Springhill worn and fatigued, and the carriage springs were broken, but, claimed William Hamilton, they had a great experience.

**Spring Term 1848** — Before George N. Dunn, president judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Indiana, a grand jury brought in indictments against Luther A. Donnell, *et al.* It was an odd grand jury. Woodsen Clark, the chief accuser, sat on the jury as well as his near neighbor Joel H. Cartwell of Clarksburg. On the other side, Preston E. Hopkins, Robert Hamilton and James Hamilton, avowed abolitionists and related to the defendants, also served on the jury. Others included Andrew R. Forsyth, foreman, William Keyes, Alex Inman, Joseph Rouse, Henry Mozingo, William V. Keichevall, Jesse W. Chissman, Robert G. Swails, Benjamin Boyer and Nathan Crume. The four indictments included aiding fugitives and three counts of harboring fugitives.
Paul Huber, a local historian, developed this map of the key sites and direction taken by Luther A. Donnell as mentioned in the trial and other memoirs. Huber references the property owner in 1849 and the property owner in 1981. The map was printed in the Decatur Historical Society's newsletter.

Numbers Correlate to Map No. 9

1. Antrobus House (Removed)
   N side Kingston-Clarksville Pike, Washington Twp, photograph from IN Sites & Structures Inventory, Decatur Co.

2. Hopkins Place
   S side Kingston-Clarksville Pike, Washington Twp, no photo, sites from Paul Huber’s 1981 Map

3. Herman Cravens (Removed)
   One mile SE of Center of Versailles, Washington Twp, no photo, from Greensburg News, January 2, 1914

4. R. M. Hamilton/S.H. Rankin House
   100 S – one mile south of old McCoy’s Station
   Lazy T/Italianate, c. 1886 Washington Township
   Photograph: Diane Perrine Coon, August 2000

5. J. T. McCoy Sites (Removed)
   Site of Old McCoy’s Station and Indianapolis & Cincinnati Railroad
   Washington Township
### Photographs and Drawings Series

*Numbers Correlate to Map No. 9*

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<td>R. M. Hamilton</td>
<td>1216 NE 80; Center-gable. I-House/Italianate 1834/1868/1910 Data from <a href="#">IN Sites &amp; Structures</a>, ibid. Photograph: Diane Perrine Coon, 1998 Washington Township, Greensburg to Kingston</td>
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<td>23. Dobyns Homestead</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>24. Adam Rankin/Andrew Rankin</td>
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<td>25. William Hamilton (Removed)</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>26. Springhill Presbyterian Church. c. 1850</td>
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<td>From “Pioneers of Fugit Township” ibid.</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Springhill</td>
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<td>27. Thomas Donnell/J. C. Donnell</td>
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<td>Photograph: Diane Perrine Coon, August 2000, Clinton Township, Springhill</td>
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<td>28. Woodson Clark/Page Snelling. No photo</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>29. Robert B. Donnell, No photo</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>30:c Luther A. Donnell House</td>
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<td>30:e Donnell Corners</td>
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<td>Photograph: Diane Perrine Coon, August 2000, Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>31. Braden Homestead</td>
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<td>From “Pioneers of Fugit Township” ibid.</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>32. Africa Free Black Agricultural Community. No photo</td>
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<td>Fugit Township, Clarksburg</td>
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<td>33. Old Decatur County Courthouse. Greensburg, IN</td>
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<td>Trial of State of Indiana vs Luther A. Donnell, 1848, 1849</td>
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The Old Courthouse at Greensburg, site of the grand jury and circuit court trial of Luther A. Donnell for harboring fugitives and aiding them to escape. The testimony and subsequent memoirs of this famous case, preserved a substantial amount of information about the Underground Railroad in Decatur County. Photo from the 1931 Greensburg Daily News.

**Spring Term 1849** — President Judge George H. Dunn, Associate Judges John Hopkins and Samuel Ellis, heard the case against Luther A. Donnell. A trial jury included:

William Magnus and Louis F. N. Jocelyn both of Marion Township; Moses Rutherford and Benjamin Martin of Sand Creek Township; William McNabb, Harvey Lathrop, and Henry S. Burk of Washington Township, James Mandlove, Angus Forbes, and Eli Douglas of Clay Township, and Philip Ballard and David Misner of Adams Township.

No known abolitionist served on the jury.

The prosecuting attorney was John S. Scobey, assisted by Andrew Davidson. For the defense, John Ryman of Lawrenceburg, and from Greensburg’s bar, Joseph Robison
and Philander Hamilton, brother of Robert A. Hamilton all served as the attorneys. An immediate move to quash the indictments on ground related to an 1842 case, Prigg vs Pennsylvania in which Edward Prigg, a slavecatcher, broke Pennsylvania state law when he abducted a black woman and her children and returned them to their slaveholder in Maryland. The ruling in that case stated that state legislation to recover fugitives from labor in another state or aiding in escape was unconstitutional. The motion was overruled.

Fall Term 1849 - Witnesses were summoned as follows:

July 12, 1849 – Woodsen Clark, Richard Clark


Luther A. Donnell did not speak in his defense and no Free Black was permitted to give testimony in the trial.
The case turned on the positive statement of Richard Clark who testified that the woman and children were placed in the fodder house at 2 p.m. on Monday. Between 3 and 4 a.m. the fugitive slaves were taken by Luther A. Donnell and William M. Hamilton. He recognized Luther Donnell by his hat and clothes. Robert A. Hamilton and John Imlay testified to the legality of the search at the premises of Woodsen Clark. Peter Noah, who was then residing as a hired hand at Luther Donnell's, claimed that Luther did not return to his home until dawn.

**May 1850** - George Ray sued Luther A. Donnell in the United States District Court at Indianapolis, claiming trespass and requesting twice the value of his five slaves. The court awarded the plaintiff $1,500 and required Donnell to pay $1,500 in court costs. Donnell wrote out a check for the correct amounts the same day. Ohio and Indiana abolitionist groups repaid his outlay.

**November Term 1852** – The Indiana State Supreme Court under Judge Isaac Blackford, past president of the Indiana Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society, and Justices Samuel Perkins and Thomas L. Smith reviewed the Donnell case. The case was overturned. The justices ruling that in light of *Prigg vs Pennsylvania*, the Indiana statute "punishing the enticing away and secreting of slaves from citizens of other states, in aid of the esceucion [sic] of the constitution and laws of the United States, only and not for the punishment of wrongs perpetuated upon their own citizens" is unconstitutional.
Therefore, the Decatur Circuit Court erred and "the conviction was therefore erroneous."

The case was remanded to the lower court with orders to quash the indictments.

Outcomes - William Hamilton, who demonstrated an obviously partisan view, claimed that the case proved unfavorable to slave catching interests and caused many to get off the fence and decide for or against the issue. In the long run, the Hamiltons, Donnells, and McCoys were strongly entrenched in the business, financial and political affairs of Decatur County for many decades. In the 1882 Decatur County Atlas their lands were prominently displayed in Fugit, Clinton and Washington townships. Woodsen, Richard, Levi and William Clark had vanished as had others who testified against Luther A. Donnell.
Kingston Presbyterian Church is the result of combining the old Sand Creek Presbyterian Church that sat across the road and the anti-slavery Free Presbyterian Church that sat up the road a quarter mile across from the Andrew Robison place. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

The Role of the Presbyterian Churches

Perhaps nowhere in Indiana did particular families wage such a sustained fight against slavery in so many places and over so many years and generations. The progenitors of the McCoys, Hamiltons, Donnells and related Scots Presbyterian families of Decatur County, Indiana, formed their anti-slavery philosophy in the post Revolutionary War period in Pennsylvania. Between 1784-1790, Samuel Donnell, William Henry, John C. McCoy, James Thompson, William Thompson, and Robert Hamilton brought these families from Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, to Stoner’s Creek and the South Licking River in Kentucky. There, in the heart of the Bluegrass Region, they founded the Concord Presbyterian Church in 1792.

The congregation was greatly influenced by the pioneer anti-slavery Presbyterian evangelist, Reverend David Rice and later by Adam Rankin’s views that contributed to
the New School/Old School split. In Bourbon County, as they struggled mightily to keep slavery out of Kentucky during the state constitutional battles, they became more radical. Led by William Henry and Samuel Donnell, several members formed an anti-slavery society and developed tracts against slavery. Then in 1817, when Reverend John Rankin fled Tennessee because of slavery, he stopped at Concord and found over two hundred members and only one slave-owner. Rankin delayed his move to Ripley, Ohio, where he later provided so much Underground Railroad leadership. During his tenure at Concord, Rankin forged lifelong friendships with these vigorous anti-slavery partisans. Rankin authored a very flattering short memoir on the life and times of Samuel Donnell.

Finally despairing of Kentucky’s allegiance to slavery, from 1821-1823, these families moved, once again, to the Kingston neighborhood in Fugit and Washington townships, Decatur County, Indiana. Along with the Hopkins, Henrys, Arderys, Antrobus families, the McCoys, Hamiltons and Donnells purchased large landholdings and cleared the thick forest. Thomas Hamilton, some seventy-five years later, recalled giant beeches and sugar maples, vast wetlands, and barely ten acres of cleared land per farm in the beginning.
The old Seceder Presbyterian Church, a radical anti-slavery congregation with many U.G.R.R. operators, was built across the road from the Andrew Robison place just north of Kingston. Later it became the public schoolhouse. Reverend A.T. Rankin lived just to the east of the Robisons. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Building Anti-Slavery Churches -- Sand Creek and Seceder Presbyterian

The first congregation met in 1823 in the home of William Henry; Reverend John Moreland, a well-known Kentucky Presbyterian minister, organized the Sand Creek Church with four elders – Samuel Donnell and John C. McCoy and John Hopkins and William O. Ross. The following year, pioneer Indiana evangelist John Dickey held a two-day meeting at the home of Cyrus Hamilton and ordained John McCoy and William O. Ross as ruling elders and installed Samuel Donnell and John Hopkins who were already ordained. Dickey returned in 1825 for a short preaching stint. The elders presided over prayer meetings and Bible examinations on Sundays.

Reverend S. G. Lowry came in 1826 and in 1828 he transferred twelve members from Sand Creek to found the Greensburg Presbyterian Church. John Hopkins and
William O. Ross formed the leadership at Greensburg, a congregation far more conservative on the slavery question than the church at Kingston. In the fall of 1828, Lowry held a revival and brought thirty-five young people into the church at Kingston, including the younger Hamiltons, Donnells, McCoys, Antrobus, Ardery, Braden, Robison. The next year, new elders were appointed – Thomas Hamilton, and representing new families – John Kirkpatrick and James A. Thompson.

In 1833 Reverend John Weaver, from the Presbytery of Indianapolis came to Kingston. Camilla Donnell described him as aggressive, with a temper, and a strict disciplinarian. Dissention over slavery permeated the Presbyterian Church during the 1830s and Sand Creek was no exception. By 1835, Weaver began a series of heated charges, admonishing members at session, acting on slander and generally acting to exacerbate an already divided congregation into “two hostile and irreconcilable camps.” During the September 1836 session, Samuel Donnell criticized the General Assembly for its moderate stance on slavery. In response, the Presbytery voted that Samuel Donnell and John C. McCoy were unacceptable to continue as elders. The same day, Thomas Hamilton resigned his position as elder. The replacements at Sand Creek were Joseph Graham Sr., Robert Hamilton, and James Ardery. The Seceder Church had been created at Kingston with thirty-seven of the one-hundred and sixty-eight members moving to the new anti-slavery church just up the road across from Andrew Robison’s house. The Seceder Church was comprised of nearly all the Hamiltons, the McCoys, the Donnells, the Robisons and Preston E. Hopkins.
Initially, they took shelter within the Congregational Church with Reverend Moses H. Wilder of Franklin County, Indiana, serving as pastor. Wilder's credentials were apparent, he had convened and served as first president of the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society. At Brookville, he was listed as a Methodist Protestant. But the Presbyterian A.R.C. had a special relationship with the Congregational Church. At Kingston the anti-slavery congregation built a frame church on the west side of the Kingston-Clarksburg Pike, a building that later served as the Kingston schoolhouse. In 1840, Reverend Benjamin Nyce, principal of Greensburg Seminary, took a two-year supply position. Nyce married Melissa, daughter of Cyrus Hamilton. In 1842, Reverend Charles Chamberlin arrived and helped the congregation become affiliated with the New School Presbyterians. He was very popular, but went East to marry. An Episcopalian priest, Reverend Mr. Boran, supplied for a year. The in 1844 Reverend Jonathan Cable, an energetic anti-slavery minister arrived for a three-year tour. In 1847, Reverend Benjamin Franklin, an Englishman just fresh from the West Indies, came to Kingston and helped form a separate Associate Reformed Church at Clarksburg for the convenience of members living nearby. Luther A. Donnell was the first elder at Clarksburg.

In 1850 Benjamin Nyce returned to the pulpit at Kingston. That winter the most radical of the congregation seceded to affiliate with the Free Presbyterian Church, a branch favored by John Rankin and members of the Ohio U.G.R.R. The Associate Reformed Presbyterians, in spite of their anti-slavery stance, proved too conservative for those most actively involved in the Underground Railroad. The Free Presbyterians
excluded all slaveholders and members of secret societies. Nyce and the rest of the
congregation soon joined the Free Presbyterians. Camilla Donnell described them: --
“temperance and abolition written on their door posts – they attended anti-slavery
meetings in their old fashioned carriages, running with great successs their branch of the
Underground Railroad, voting most extreme reform tickets.” In 1857 the Free
Presbyterian synod met at Kingston and the Reverend William Perkins, a
“controvertionalist” of Cincinnati was called to Kingston for three years. He continued to
live in Cincinnati, boarding out when he came to Indiana.

The Sand Creek Church, meanwhile, had virtually collapsed as lack of leadership
and zeal led to a drain of families toward either the conservative Old School Greensburg
or to the anti-slavery Kingston Church.

Abolitionists that operated the successful U.G.R.R. in Fugit Township are buried in
the same Kingston cemetery as their neighbors who opposed them. The two
splits of the congregation were reconciled after the Civil War chiefly through the
auspices of Reverend Adam T. Rankin.
Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.
When Reverend A. T. Rankin arrived in Kingston in 1860, he began a thirty-year ministry that meshed totally with his congregation's anti-slavery tenets. Rankin not only built up the church but also reconciled Sand Creek and Kingston in one congregation again. He knit the remnants together into a congregation of great growth and prosperity. During his ministry, Kingston built a parsonage, added land, developed a cemetery fund, and built a new church building. A.T. Rankin was the son of the U.G.R.R. leader John Rankin of Ripley, Ohio, who was, in turn, lifelong friend of the Donnells, Hamiltons and McCoy's of Decatur County and founder of the Free Presbyterians. So, in many ways, the Presbyterians of Fugit Township came full circle with their Kentucky roots and their anti-slavery heritage. In A.T. Rankin, they found the strength of conviction and action for their abolitionist views and their Presbyterian heritage.

According to Mrs. James Wirt, the Springhill Presbyterian Church was built in 1824 by pioneers James McCracken, Andrew Rankin, James R. Patton and William
Anderson. The building was thirty-feet square and constructed of hewed logs. Until 1872 the congregation there called itself New Zion after the Rankinite mother church in Lexington, Kentucky. The first settled preacher was Reverend James Worth who ministered at Springhill from 1830 to 1852 and built up the congregation sufficiently that a frame addition was constructed in 1832 and a new frame building built just five years later. N.T. Rogers' compilation included reference to a rift in the Springhill church during the 1840s over the slavery issue. Among those with the more radical abolitionist positions were the Donnells, Rankins and Andersons. This Springhill Presbyterian church, too, reconciled after the Civil War.
The Anti-Slavery Organizations of Decatur County:

- 1830: Decatur County Colonization Society formed at the home of Luther Donnell.

- 1836: Those favoring Abolition withdrew support from the Colonization efforts and in 1837 the Presbyterian churches in Kingston and Springhill split over the issue of immediate emancipation. The radicals at Kingston were Luther A. Donnell, Cyrus Hamilton, Alexander McCoy, Samuel A. Donnell, John C. McCoy, Thomas Hamilton, James McCoy, Andrew Robison, Campbell McCoy, Samuel Donnell, Angus C. McCoy, plus the Logans, Andersons, Rankins and others of the Springhill neighborhood.

Samuel Donnell's Portrait from the 1931 Greensburg Daily News.

Indiana Anti-Slavery Organization, Decatur County's Participation

- 1838: At the organizing meeting to create an Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society, John C. McCoy, Luther A. Donnell, George McCoy, James McCoy represented the Decatur County U.G.R.R. and Anti-Slavery Society as delegates. They met in the public schoolhouse in Milton, Wayne County, Indiana. James McCoy was elected Secretary Pro-Tem. John C.
McCoy was appointed to the committee to prepare business for the Convention. When the slate of officers for the Convention was elected, John C. McCoy served as vice president and James McCoy as secretary. Officers nominated for the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society included James Donnell, vice president representing Decatur County, James McCoy as Recording Secretary, and A. T. Rankin who was then in Allen County but would move to Kingston in 1850 and stay more than thirty years.

**Voting for Anti-Slavery Candidates**

- In this region of Indiana, only Wayne County cast more votes for anti-slavery slates for state-wide office. In the 1843 election, Decatur County cast 63 votes for Liberty Party candidates --Elizur Demining for Governor and 70 votes for Stephen S. Harding, head of the Ripley County Anti-Slavery Society, who was running for Lieutenant Governor. In the 1846 election, Stephen C. Stevens, attorney at Madison, drew 68 votes for the Liberty Party in his bid for Governor and Stephen S. Harding drew 74 votes. During the 1849 election, the Anti-slavery forces were fractured over wasting their votes for minority parties or attempting to influence through the major parties. In that election Decatur County cast only 49 votes for Free Soil candidate James H. Cravens of Ripley County and a recent Whig activist and the Lieutenant Governor candidate, John W. Wright drew only 23 votes.
Underground Railroad Routes in Decatur County, Indiana

The Underground Railroad routes followed nineteenth century roads and trails. Therefore, the warrants, deeds, and 1882 Atlas of Decatur County, Indiana, are far more pertinent in defining the stations and routes and homes of antagonists. The 1882 Atlas, in particular, shows the location of the houses and principle outbuildings. These were checked against current plat maps and also on-site visits. Some of the road changes occurred within memory of living local historians. Wherever possible, we have defined the accurate nineteenth century locations. In order to avoid confusion in bridging various maps and plats, we have used the Section-Township-Range notations.

The main U.G.R.R. route came north from Napoleon into Decatur County east of Millhausen. The Presbyterian route began at Knarr Corners on U.S. Highway 421, Township 7 North Range 8 East and proceeded along the old back road to McCoy Station which, before the Civil War, was located one and a half miles north of the existing town. This was the major route carrying U.G.R.R. traffic from the Ohio River crossings north from Napoleon, Ripley County.
Lowrey Donnell's house at McCoy Station, Washington Township. This land was owned by Robert M. Hamilton. The house was built by S. H. Rankin, and by 1882, Lowrey Donnell of Springhill had purchased it. The old McCoy Station was located one half mile north on the old I.C. & L. Railroad. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

From Knarr Corners to McCoy's Station, Washington Township

- R. M. Hamilton/S. H. Rankin House, NW ¼ NE 16-10-10 and NE ¼ NW 16-10-10.
- Off County Road 350E at the tree line near the road to McCoy Lake - embankment of the old I. C. & L. Railroad, site of the original center for McCoy Station. NE and SE 9-10-10 and NW and SW 10-10-10. Original McCoy homestead.

- North on 350E to the Kingston-Clarksburg Turnpike, now County Road 80 NE. Robert A. Hamilton's "Auburn Hills" sits at the corner on the right. Robert M. Hamilton's house to the left. Thomas W. Hamilton's house across the road on the west side. SW 33-11-10.

- At the T-junction of 80NE with 200N on the south side sits the home of T. L. Donnell NW 34-11-10.

- Spur along 200N to site of Preston E. Hopkins home, SE 24-11-10.
Kingston Neighborhood, Fugit Township

- Back to main road north along County Road 80NE one half mile on the west side of the road, the home of Cyrus Hamilton and son Chester Hamilton. SE and SW 27-11-10.

- North on 80NE three quarters of a mile on west side of road, the home of Thomas Hamilton and son Samuel H. “Squire” Hamilton, NW and W ½ NE 27-11-10.

*Squire Hamilton’s home at Kingston was built on the old property of Cyrus Hamilton. It sits just south of the Kingston cemetery. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.*

- At Kingston, Kingston cemetery and site of the original Sand Creek Presbyterian Church, west side of road. This church split over immediate emancipation vs colonization. The radicals organized an A.R.C. Presbyterian Church one half mile north of Kingston. W ½ and E ½ 27-11-10.

- North along 80NE to 300N, turn east one half section, on south side of road, home of vigorous anti-slavery preacher, Reverend A.T. Rankin, son of Reverend John Rankin at Ripley, Ohio. E ½ NE 27-11-10.

- Continuing east on 300N, north side of road, original homestead of Samuel Donnell, head of the Donnell clan and lifelong friend of John Rankin. SW and SE 23-11-10.

- Continuing east on 300N, north side of road, homestead of George S. McCoy, active in U.G.R.R. and Anti-slavery society at local and state level. SE 24-11-10.

- Back along 300N to Kingston, then north along 80NE to Andrew Robison’s home on the east side of the road. The site of the Anti-Slavery A.R.C. church and schoolhouse on the west side of the road. SE 22-11-10.
From Kingston to Clarksburg, Fugit Township

- North along 80NE to junction of 400N, on south side of 80NE, home of John C. Donnell, later Quincy and Camilla Donnell's house, and Miles Meadows' cabin. NW 23-11-10

- East along 80NE, site of Thomas Throp, first of the several pro-slavery families around Clarksburg. SE 14-11-10. Also John Hopkins owned the northern quarters of section 14-11-10 as well as NW 13-11-10.

- At junction of 650E and 80NE on south side of 80NE, home of Thomas Ardery, moderate anti-slavery family that, like the Antrobus and Graham families, stayed with the more conservative Sand Creek Presbyterian Church during the split. NE 24-11-10.

- North on 650E, east side of the road, home of strong anti-slavery advocate Columbus McCoy. SE 13-11-10.

- North on 650E to 700N, to Clarksburg. Lands and home of William Hamilton. NE 12-11-10, NW and NW 7-11-11 and SE and SW 6-11-11.

- Clarksburg, town lots of Richard and Robert Clark, sons of Woodsen Clark, the principle pro-slavery leader in Decatur County. Clarksburg outlots # 45 and 46.

The Alternate Route to Springhill, Fugit and Clinton Townships

- East on 640N toward Springhill, Woodsen Clark's lands at Clarksburg. SE 1-11-10.

- South on 400E, homesteads of Andrew E. Rankin, SE 4-11-10 on west side of the road, home of Adam Rankin NW 10-11-10 on east side of road.

- Return north on 400E to Springhill, turn east on 640N, to Springhill Presbyterian Church, split over slavery issue then reconciled the congregations after the Civil War.

- Continue west on 640N to Andrew E. Rankin's lands on south side of road, NW 4-11-10.

- Thomas Donnell's lands on north side of road, NE and E ½ NW 6-11-10 and NW 5-11-10.

From Springhill, tracks led up into the Quaker settlements of Rush County.
Clarksburg to the “Africa” Community to border of Franklin County, Fugit Township

• Back to Clarksburg, now heading east on 640N at junction of 860E lands of Woodsen Clark NW and NE Section 5-11-11. Clark purchased this land from Page Snelling in 1839.

• North on 860E, Robert B. Donnell’s lands at SW 32-11-12.

• Go south on 860E to the junction of 550N, this is Donnell Corners, named for Luther A. Donnell and Samuel Donnell, SW 8-11-11. Route 550E going west apparently was a back trail that avoided the toll to Clarksburg.

• Back to 640N going east, the “Africa” community spread along the north side of the road, NW 4-11-12 and NE 4-11-12. This land was owned by Andrew Robison, brother-in-law to Luther A. Donnell, during the U.G.R.R. days.

From “Africa” the route could continue due east toward Brookville into Franklin County or it could veer up the old Metamora Road.
Map 16. U.G.R.R. Routes in Decatur County
U.G.R.R. Historic Districts in Decatur County, Indiana

Kingston Area

1. Samuel Horace Hamilton House (Charles Metz), c. 1855, Decorative additions in 1870s. Two-story brick. Simple Italianate. Modestly curved limestone lintel over windows. Simple limestone sash. Two over two windows on south side, east, north and west side of the wing. Large front parlor in the wing. Somewhat more ornate trim inside the door and windows. Narrow front door. Porch added later. Immediately south of Kingston on the west side of the road to Greensburg. House was built by Samuel H. Hamilton, the eldest son of Thomas Hamilton. S.H. was also known as Squire Hamilton. Built on the original 1821 homestead grounds. It sits on a knoll. Adjacent to Kingston cemetery. Current owner: Charles Metz, local historian. Photo Credit: Diane Perrine Coon.


5. Andrew Robison Sr. House, c. 1850/1875. 2894 N NE 80. I-house. Two story brick with carved porch. Thomas Shannon, the station master of the Clarksburg Free Black agricultural community called “Africa,” lived on the Andrew Robison property. Part of the Robison farm was deeded for use by Reverend A. T. Rankin, the pastor of the Kingston Presbyterian Church for thirty years. Robison and his son Andrew Robison Jr. were active members of the U.G.R.R., the development of the anti-slavery church at Kingston, and organization of anti-slavery and temperance political parties. Across the Greensburg-Clarksburg
Pike stood the frame Associate Reformed Church/Free Presbyterian that later became the site of the Kingston schoolhouse. A second Robison property was located east of Clarksburg in Section 4; that site contained many homes of the Free Black "Africa" community and its cemetery.

6. Site of Kingston A.R.C./Free Presbyterian Church and Kingston School. C. 1840. The anti-slavery church was frame vernacular, built in 1840. It sat opposite the Andrew Robison Sr. house on the Greensburg-Clarksburg Road. After the reconciliation of the two factions of the Sand Creek and Kingston Presbyterian churches under the leadership of Reverend A. T. Rankin, this church building was used as the Kingston schoolhouse. In 1910 a Neoclassical two-story Fugit Township school was constructed here.

7. Site of A. T. Rankin's House, c. 1860-1890. The son of Reverend John Rankin, noted U.G.R.R. station master at Ripley, Ohio, A. T. Rankin's anti-slavery position meshed well with his congregation at Kingston. But he also had sufficient charm to reconcile the two factions that had split apart over the issue of immediate abolition of slavery in 1837, and he melded the Sand Creek and Kingston churches back together into one congregation.

South of Kingston to McCoy Station. Fugit and Washington Townships

Robert A. Hamilton's House, Auburn Hills, was considered a showcase in the late 1800s. Today it is deteriorated. The house sat strategically at the junction of the Greensburg-Kingston-Clarksburg Road and the road to McCoy Station. The vast bulk of runaway fugitive slaves came past this home during twenty years of U.G.R.R. operations. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

8. f Robert A. Hamilton House - Auburn Hills (Wenning Farms, Inc.), c. 1850. NE 80. I-house, Italianate. Two story brick with kitchen wing in the back. Bracketed cornices. Adaptation of the verandah or piazza porch. Abandoned. Deteriorated. Owner said to plan to destroy the home. Sits on a knoll on the east side of the Kingston Road. Stands at junction of the Kingston-Greensburg Road and the McCoy Station Road. The bulk of all U.G.R.R. traffic through Decatur County came past this house. Robert A.
Hamilton was the eldest son of James E. Hamilton and the house stands on the original 1821 homestead. Photo Credit: Diane Perrine Coon

9. ***Robert Hamilton Homestead, c. 1823.***

10. ***T. L. Donnell House, c. 1855.***


11. ***Robert M. Hamilton House, c. 1834/1868/1910.***
    1216 NE 80. Center-gable I-house. Italianate. Outbuildings: transverse-frame barn, well house, garage. "Robert M. Hamilton, the brother of Cyrus and James E., encountered some difficulties with Albert Ammerman and Judge John Hopkins who both died before prosecuting him for aiding fugitive slaves."

12. ***Lowrey Donnell House, c. 1860.***
    McCoy’s Station. Italianate. Property owned by Robert M. Hamilton. During the ante-bellum period, McCoy’s Station was located about two miles further north along the old railbed of the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Railroad. The embankment of the old right of way can still be seen along the tree line leading to McCoy Lake. Several McCoy families were active in the U.G.R.R., local and statewide anti-slavery societies, and in development of anti-slavery political parties.
13. Railbed of Indianapolis & Cincinnati Railroad at McCoys Station, c. 1855.
The ante-bellum McCoy's Station was located about two miles north of the present site.

5369 E 300 N. Early central passage. Outbuildings: English barn, garage. Preston E. Hopkins was active in the U.G.R.R. along with his in-laws.
North of Kingston to Clarksburg, Fugit Township

   5100 E 400 N. Italianate. Two story-brick. Quincy and Camilla Donnell inherited this house from their father. The Miles Meadows U.G.R.R. station was located on this farm. Meadows, a Free Black, constructed access to and from the attic of his cabin to be used for fugitive slaves. He served as station master and conductor in this region for many years. Camilla served as historian for the Kingston Presbyterian Church.

   Italianate. Orlando was the son of Cyrus Hamilton. He and his brother-in-law went to Cleveland, Ohio, and established a manufacturing concern. When he returned to Fugit Township, he built this showcase home and purchased several hundred acres of farmland between Kingston and Clarksburg.

Orlando Hamilton's House just north of Kingston, built after the Civil War. The Hamilton family handled the middle part of the U.G.R.R. route while the McCoys lay to the south and the Donnells to the north. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

17. Dobyns Farm, c. 1855.
   7198 E 649 N. I-house/Greek Revival. Outbuildings: English barn, sheds. A near neighbor of Buford Peyton and Woodsen Clark, E. B. Dobyns is the person that the Free Blacks notified when Caroline and her four children were apprehended by the Clarks. Dobyns took the Free Blacks to Luther A. Donnell's farm south of Peyton corners.

   5766/6178 E 640 N. Double-entry I-house/Queen Anne. Outbuilding: transverse frame barn. The Kincaids, like most of the residents of Clarksburg, did not favor the abolitionist cause. Some, who came from Kentucky or Virginia or the Carolinas, actually favored slavery. Others felt that slavery was a matter best left to the
individual state government; what happened in the South was no business of anyone from Indiana. And still others like Woodsen Clark and his sons, actively sought to recapture fugitive slaves and return them to their masters in the South.

Looking east at Donnell’s Corners. Luther A. Donnell’s house stood on a very slight rise to the left. He constructed a large cistern with a ledge wide enough to sit on, and if necessary a fugitive slave could hide very effectively when pursuit was near. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

Photograph of single pen. Front Adams porch. From 1847 to 1850, Luther A. Donnell was the subject of a lengthy U.G.R.R. court case accusing him of aiding fugitive slaves to escape.


Jane Speed and her family lived on this site. Mr. Pernell brought Caroline and her four children to Jane Speed in November 1847 during broad daylight. When Jane’s children went to take food to the fugitives, they were seen by Woodsen Clark, who subsequently apprehended the runaway slaves.
Springhill Area, Fugit and Clinton Townships

Springhill Presbyterian Church, the major landmark at Springhill. Photo by Diane Perrine Coon.

2622 E. 640. Small brick double pen. Outbuildings. Summer kitchen. Transverse-frame barn. Midwest three-portal barn. Thomas and John R. Donnell were brothers of Luther A. Donnell. Thomas Donnell built a double-pen frame house. His outbuildings were used to hide Caroline and two of her children in November 1847; the Donnell children fed the fugitives and collected warm winter clothing for their escape to Canada. The frame house is gone. John R. Donnell, who lived on the next farm provided the carriage with top and side curtains to carry Caroline and two of her children to Union County.

23. Springhill United Presbyterian Church, c. 1830/1892.
640 N. Late Gothic Revival. Built in 1892. A simple frame church stood on the south side of the Springhill Road next to the cemetery. Photograph c. 1912. This congregation, like its sister church at Kingston, split during the anti-slavery debates of the 1830s and 1840s. The two parts of the congregation rejoined after the Civil War.
Greensburg Area, Washington Township

24. ff Decatur County Courthouse, c. 1840.
The grand jury and trial jury for the State of Indiana vs Luther A. Donnell took place in the Decatur County courthouse. Lithograph, c. 1882.

25. f Antrobus Family Homestead, c. 1855.
Greensburg-Kingston Pike. Italianate, two story brick. Removed. Photograph from Decatur County Sites and Structures Inventory. The Antrobus and Ardery families made the trek from Kentucky in the early 1820s; they were anti-slavery but not as radical as those who operated the U.G.R.R. There is no indication that these families ever contemplated recapturing fugitives or compiling evidence against any of the Hamiltons, McCoys or Donnells.

The Antrobus homestead lay northeast of Greensburg and near Judge Hopkins's place. Hopkins sought actively to obey the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act by recapturing and returning fugitive slaves to their masters in the South. Antrobus, like the Arderys and other families, disapproved of slavery as an institution, however, they also disapproved of breaking the law. But they would not turn in their neighbors active in the U.G.R.R. Photo from Interim Report of Historic Sites and Structures of Decatur County, Indiana.
John Hopkins represented those who held to existing law. Although he granted a \textit{writ of habeas corpus} to Cyrus Hamilton and Luther A. Donnell upon advice of attorney, Judge Hopkins opposed any actions that broke the law. He served as one of the three-judge panel that heard the \textit{State of Indiana vs Luther A. Donnell} in Greensburg. Also Hopkins apparently was gathering evidence against Robert M. Hamilton for aiding fugitives when he suddenly died.

\textbf{Legend}

\textit{f} Site identified in \textit{Decatur County Interim Report, Historic Sites and Structures Inventory}. Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1999.

\textit{ff} From the \textit{Decatur County Atlas of 1882}.

\textit{fff} From \textit{The Greensburg Daily News}, 1912.

\textit{ffff} From Paul Huber's 1981 Map for the Decatur County Historical Society.
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Chapter Nine
The Underground Railroad in Clark, Scott and Franklin Counties

This project did not investigate the Underground Railroad in Clark, Scott or Franklin counties. The geographical span proved too great in the time span covered by the Freedom Trails project. What is offered, then, are observations gathered from the work in the other counties reported on in this document.

Clark County. The beginnings of organized anti-slavery groups in Clark County date back to Reverend John Todd, a Presbyterian minister, coming from Goshen, Kentucky, to Charlestown in 1824. Todd, influenced greatly by David Rice, the pioneer evangelist of Kentucky, was radically anti-slavery and had preached against institutional slavery at Goshen Presbyterian. Goshen was located in an area of sizeable slave population. The Black Maria slave wagon came out from Louisville to pick up excess slaves from Goshen. Several local planters were suspected of engaging in slave breeding. Todd found a somewhat more compatible congregation at Charlestown, the home of Jonathan Jennings who had fought so hard to keep slavery out of Indiana.

There is little question that one of the first organized Underground Railroad routes in Indiana began in Clark County prior to 1830 and that the route essentially was managed and operated by Free Blacks at Jeffersonville. After 1850, the Free Black
community at Watson, a railroad town on the Baltimore & Ohio line between Charlestown and Jeffersonville may have provided operational aid to the U.G.R.R. route. Lewis C. Baird’s 1909 history ignored the history of free people of color or the Underground Railroad. Like many nineteenth century local historians, Baird may have been totally unaware that the U.G.R.R. existed, because they never communicated with African-American citizens. The race relations at Jeffersonville were strained, perhaps not so violent at those at New Albany, but nevertheless not very charitably disposed toward fleeing fugitive slaves.

The earliest U.G.R.R. route from Jeffersonville to Paris to Vernon is credited to Reverend Alexander White, and White abolitionists Dr. T. N. Field, J. C. Lambert, and Captain David M. Dryden. Dr. Field established his medical practice at New Washington. Captain Dryden was a licensed river pilot out of Jeffersonville, and a George W. Lambert was also a river pilot.

Siebert’s records show intermediate safe houses at Charlestown, Bethlehem and Marble Hill. The likely assistance at Charlestown would have come from either the few Free Black families there or by members of the Second Presbyterian Church. At Bethlehem, known anti-slavery advocate Reverend John Dickey taught at the Bethlehem Seminary during the 1830s, a school founded by Thomas Stevens. Dickey at the time was heading the New School Presbyterians at Pisgah and serving as evangelist opening other rural churches in Clark and Scott counties.
Scott County. A somewhat mysterious breakaway congregation named Greenbrier separated from the New Washington Presbyterians. Reverend John Dickey at Pisgah, a New School congregation, was affiliated with New Washington. One account states that the separated congregation built in New Washington, but another account says the Greenbrier Presbyterian church was constructed over the line in Jefferson County. Although the separation occurred at the time when many anti-slavery congregations were being established, it is not at all certain that slavery was the major cause of this disruption.

The only name we find definitely part of the Underground Railroad route to Paris was Dr. T. N. Field, the local physician at New Washington.

Franklin County. Most of the eastern routes coming up from Ripley and Dearborn counties came through Franklin County.

The terminus for the English route from Guilford was a Quaker settlement south of Brookville headed by a Mr. Maxwell. This Maxwell was a Quaker, probably Hugh Maxwell of Pennsylvania.

The Scots-Presbyterians and Free Blacks of Fugit Township in Decatur County conducted their fugitive slaves to Metamora, Blooming Grove, Quakertown and Liberty.

The other Decatur County route, aided by Herman Cravens south of Greensburg, went up through Greensburg to Milroy and then to the Quaker settlements in Rush County.
Elijah Anderson's Free Black route from Lawrenceburg led to the Free Black community in Richmond. A description from the Siebert papers cites assistance at Richmond, "a place of fierce opposition" where lived "two colored men, Calvin Outland and a Mr. Overman." Younger Free Blacks who joined the 8th Regiment U. S. Colored Troops included Harrison Allen, Nixon C. Cazy and Peter Jones, all from Franklin County. One major conductor other than Elijah Anderson has been identified, Gabriel Smith, a singing master. Described as "an old collered [sic] man," Smith said that his route crossed the Ohio at Lawrenceburg went by direct route to Brookville, then up the East Fork of the White Water to Richmond and New Garden to Wayne County and then all the way to Canada.

In Franklin County there were several anti-slavery congregations kindly disposed to aid the conductors bringing fugitives through to the Wayne County and Ohio U.G.R.R. stations.

At Blooming Grove, Amos Neptune and the Reverend Joseph Williams headed the Methodist Protestant Church in the Sherwood neighborhood.

At Brookville, a small brick M.P. Church was built on James Street east of the public square in 1850. Reverend Moses H. Wilder was pastor at this church, and he also was the co-convenor with Reverend John Clark of Dearborn County, of the first Indiana Anti-Slavery Society. For a short period, Revered Wilder preached at the anti-slavery Presbyterian Church at Kingston. He clearly was known well by the Fugit Township abolitionists that managed the successful U.G.R.R. route there.
And Bethel Chapel, another M.P. church was located at Laurel, just off the main Decatur County route. A Milton Curry was associated with that church.

A Universalist Church dating back to 1841 was quite active at Fairfield. Members included Hezekiah Ogden, Thomas Thomas, James Barrickman, Thomas Hayward, George Fish, Daniel St. John, Harrison Buckler, James Wright, Daniel Langdon, and Henry Husted. The preachers between 1841 and 1848 included Henry Gifford, W. Y. Emmett, C. Crane, W. Brooks.

At Springfield, the Mt. Carmel Universalist Meeting House dates to September 15, 1850. The congregation included M. V. Simonson and Reverend Jones. Both of these Universalist Churches were part of the Laughery Association, an organization that included the active anti-slavery congregations of Dearborn, Ripley, Ohio, and Switzerland counties.

In addition, the history of the Franklin Presbyterian churches describes to some extent the anti-slavery positions of some of the New School congregations.
Chapter Ten
Underground Railroad Historic District

This report proposes that a number of historic districts specific to the Underground Railroad be established in southeastern Indiana. In fact, it may make good sense for the rest of Indiana as well. The major reason for such a proposal is the enormous cost that would be associated with individual historic markers required to commemorate the full U.G.R.R.

We had not gone very far into the mapping for the project when it became apparent that clusters, or cells of abolitionists, either Black or White, maintained an historic presence along the U.G.R.R. routes. The location of station masters every ten to twelve miles along the routes provided natural breaking places. It was not necessary for the U.G.R.R. historic districts to adjoin, however some do.

The U.G.R.R. operated by cells of friends and family surrounding a stationmaster or a mainline conductor, also called a "route" man. Almost always one or more churches were found central to these cells. Often the Underground Railroad leaders were founders or elders or deacons or ministers in generally anti-slavery churches. These operational cells strung together on a north-south axis, and sometimes on east-west axis; the route did not function without all the members. Safe houses were required to off-load fugitive slaves when chased or hunted. Couriers were needed to alert the next stations of coming "freight." Frequently these couriers were responsible teen-agers or men in the neighborhood who did not normally conduct the fugitives. If more than one fugitive was being transported by horseback, two or
three U.G.R.R. workers would group together to provide an outer flank. When covered wagons, covered carriages, or farm wagons with hidden sections were available, one conductor could manage the load. However, our research indicated that horseback or walking became the most common methods of travel. Frequently the women in the immediate neighborhood provided food and clothing for the runaway slaves.

The neighborhoods also contained pro-slavery forces. In many of these neighborhoods, slave-catchers, bounty-hunters or pro-slavery activists confronted the abolitionists at every opportunity. Members of polite society might be known as favoring the anti-slavery position, but to be labeled an abolitionist or U.G.R.R. operator was a social solecism of major proportions. After passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, some of the Universalist ministers, among the most fervent supporters of anti-slavery positions, spoke out against breaking the law.

The peculiar position of free people of color in Indiana is yet another part of the U.G.R.R. story. In antebellum Indiana, Free Blacks nominally were free, yet no matter now large their income, they could not vote, and they were harassed at almost every turn by law and by local sentiment. In certain pockets of this region, White leaders provided a protective arm to enable Free Black agricultural communities to exist and sold town property to those with financial means. With the exception of a few American Anti-Slavery League workers, the Free Blacks were among the most active in recruiting, conducting and providing safe houses for the fugitive slaves. Elijah Anderson, George De Baptiste, and Chapman Harris were among the most intrepid and well-organized of all of the U.G.R.R. leaders. Much of the
success of the southeastern Indiana U.G.R.R. operations are due to their courage and ability to forge long-lasting relationships with White abolitionists. Yet in most cases they ran the Ohio River crossings and conducted their own lines up to Union or Wayne counties.

To memorialize only the station-master or conductor is to tell only part of the story. And to interpret the U.G.R.R. stations without memorializing the dangerous Ohio River crossing points would be senseless. Lastly, the historic districts need to show the pro-slavery elements that thwarted or attempted to recapture the fugitive slaves. Often these southern sympathizers lived near or among the abolitionists.

Historic districts enable one to memorialize and interpret the U.G.R.R. in a cooperative national, state, and local system. One example, is the opportunity at Madison to create a specific U.G.R.R. historic district for the Georgetown section of Old Madison and to use the African-American Methodist Episcopal Church as the interpretive center. Historic Madison, Inc. is moving in just such a direction. However, Elijah Anderson’s presence at Georgetown is of regional, state and perhaps national moment. Who else brought 1,800 fugitives out of bondage? Because Historic Madison is a fully operational preservation group with much experience, this district might be most suitable as a national and local venture.

For the Jefferson Proving Grounds sites, however, the interpretive center must be placed at the visitor’s center, controlled chiefly by state and federal and military interests. The U.G.R.R. story is one of three major interpretations there — the J.P.G. military history, the Morgan Raid, and the U.G.R.R. One must rely on photographs and perhaps videotape to tell the U.G.R.R. story there. The case is not quite so drastic at Crosley State Fish & Game
Park; however, the existing visitor’s center could be expanded to include interpretation of the U.G.R.R. at Richland and Indian Creek and the role of Free Blacks at Tunnel Mill. Clearly this is a major interest of the current game warden who has invested a substantial amount of personal time and effort investigating the history of the African-Americans in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

At Osgood and Vine Springs, on the other hand, the U.G.R.R. sites have been maintained in excellent condition as residences. For the most part visitors would not be welcomed within the premises on any kind of regular basis. Thus a local and state system might be appropriate where historic markers could be placed at public roadways – for example at the “Fugitive Trail” by James Andrew’s house. Local tasteful signs could be developed for the individual sites and placed by the residents or preservation or civic groups. At Napoleon, on the other hand, a major commercial enterprise, the Bonaparte Restaurant, sits on the most prominent U.G.R.R. site in town. The owners would be most interested in developing an interpretive capability to showcase the site and the town.

At Neil’s Creek, Graysville, Eagle Hollow and Rykers Ridge where so many of the original sites have been destroyed, the historic markers must be relied upon to make the commemoration until such time as someone or some entity makes an effort to restore what remains. Yet each of these districts provides an opportunity to witness nineteenth century roads and relatively unspoiled terrain by driving through with an automobile tour guide or audiotape to provide the interpretation. Where possible old photographs can be used to enhance the visual reality.
Where an existing organization such as Historic Eleutherian College, Inc., is willing to spend time and effort to become an interpretive center for a region and can acquire key properties to develop a park capability, then the historic district they sit in could be much larger. I have proposed here that the entire Neil’s Creek area stretching some twelve miles east-west and eight to ten miles north-south be centered at Lancaster. This makes sense only if Jennings and Jefferson counties can cooperate and coordinate with the Eleutherian people. Yet even with a major interpretive center available, one still would need historic markers at Neil’s Creek, at Paris, at Comminsky, at some of the Lancaster sites and those leading down to the Deputy Pike.

Lastly, the establishment of historic districts would enable individual landowners interested in preservation or restoration to seek grant monies necessary or simply to protect the site from encroachment by road straightening proposals. Historic districts would greatly assist people in the Georgetown Section of Madison, the Chapos on Deputy Pike, the Johnsons at San Jacinto, and the owners of the Stagecoach Tavern east of Batesville, and the stone McKay house at Lamb, to move forward on their projects.

If the Freedom Trails Initiative ends with the scattering of a few historic markers around the state championed primarily by particular individuals, a major educational and preservation opportunity will have been lost. Working cooperatively with local historians, these Underground Railroad operators, sites and routes can be uncovered. To develop the historic districts and chart the route maps is an essential element of telling the U.G.R.R. story.
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