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THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
IN KANSAS, NEBRASKA, AND IOWA.

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BY

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## PREFACE

This thesis aims to provide the general reader and student of history with a brief, clearly-written, well organized introduction to the significance of the events and changes which occurred in the activities of the Underground Railroad in Iowa from 1835 to the disappearance of need for its service. It makes no claim to be a final and complete history of the period. The writing of such a volume must remain the task of future historians. The need of the present generation and of future generations to obtain as clear an understanding as possible of one of the little known romantic parts of our history, is the justification for this work.

In addition to the mass of material collected by Professor Siebert from those who were connected with the operation of the road or relatives or friends of workers on the "line to freedom," many studies in Iowa history, local, church, and political, have been drawn upon. Grateful acknowledgement is due to Professor Siebert, both for the effort he put forth in thirty years of collecting material and for his kind and helpful suggestions in preparation of this manuscript. To my mother also I make acknowledgement for her efforts in helping to collect material.

Cecil Turton.

## INTRODUCTION

At the present time, hundreds of our intelligent citizens are ignorant of the significance of the terms "Underground Railroad." It is a strange thing, indeed, when subjects of interesting and thrilling narrative are so much in demand as at the present time that the history of the Underground Railroad remains yet to be fully recorded. The incidents connected therewith and the results ultimately accruing from the operation of that secret and widespread system, so closely interwoven with the vital interests of universal liberty in the United States, surely furnish a rich field in which to delve for fascinating material with which to enliven the pages of history. In the annals of the Underground the accounts of the suffering of ignorant slaves in quest of freedom, of their perilous journeys by land and water, and of their hairbreadth escapes, are not wanting to thrill the heart and quicken the pulse of the student interested in the great progressive movement of human liberty in the past, these annals forming one of the most striking chapters in the nation's history.

At the time of which I write, embracing in Iowa about eight years previous to the outbreak of the Civil War,

a sad state of affairs prevailed with respect to the question of human slavery in the South. It was said by a celebrated writer of that time, that, "the pulpit is muzzled, it cannot speak: the press is fettered, it cannot move: the right arm of the law is manacled, it cannot stretch forth to maintain its own authority and supremacy."

From most pulpits came no warning note of impending national danger, or words of sympathy for the flying fugitive. Many newspapers of the North only referred to the anti-slavery question and the Underground Railroad as unclean things, and branded their advocates and adherents as fanatics, lunatics and dangerous agitators. Notwithstanding this disheartening condition of affairs, the managers of the Underground Railroad, in the meantime, conscious of the justice and nobility of their aims and objects, and never thinking of the obloquy and social ostracism leveled at them by even those who should have been their friends, continued to pursue the very uneven tenor of their way: enduring abuse, vituperation and shame, besides subjecting themselves to the liability of having a heavy fine and imprisonment imposed upon them by an unjust law, in order that the higher law of love and mercy might be practiced and maintained, and that their enslaved fellows might be enabled to realize though in a distant country, that liberty

which they themselves enjoyed. The pages which follow attempt to narrate the activities and adventures of some of the persons who were connected with the road in Iowa.

## CHAPTER I

### ANTI-SLAVERY ELEMENTS IN IOWA

By the Missouri Compromise Iowa was made a free state. Bordered on the south by the slave state of Missouri and on the east by the free state of Illinois, just across the Mississippi River, Iowa received fugitive slaves in considerable quantities at various points along her southern boundary from Nebraska City at the western end to the Mississippi at the eastern. These were supplied with "transportation" over various lines of the Underground Railroad passing northeast or north from the upper edge of Missouri through counties in the first tier of Iowa and in some instances through those of the second and the third to reach the northernmost route of its branches, which ran east from Audobon County to cross the Mississippi in Clinton and Scott Counties. From the western part of Cass County, in the third tier, a parallel line ran through to Muscatine County and there crossed the river, and another parallel line from Mills County passed eastward through the next three counties and through two-thirds of the fourth, where it turned north to connect with the line above. Perhaps there was a connecting branch east across Lucas and Monroe Counties as a feeder to the network of routes in the southeastern part of the state, which derived most of its "passengers" from the adjacent border of Missouri and passed some of them across the "Father of Waters" in Lee and Des Moines counties. Once across the Mississippi, these seekers for freedom had to travel by the slow and tedious methods of the Underground system two hundred miles, more or less, in an eastern or northeastern direction across Illinois

before reaching Chicago and neighboring ports on Lake Michigan in order to be put aboard vessels for the region of Upper Canada (Ontario) east of the Detroit River, where the British flag assured them safety from reclamation.

As the population of Iowa was made up of diverse elements, including people from the southern Piedmont, New Englanders, Ohioans, and settlers from other mid-Western states, not a few of whom were Quakers of strong anti-slavery principles, one should know something of local conditions to understand why some communities were centers of Underground activity and others not far removed in distance were not. Of course groups holding the same views on the slavery question generally settled together, and the Underground routes were determined not by the topography of the land but by the location of the anti-slavery communities. L. F. Parker, an inhabitant of Grinnell in the heyday of its Underground activity on the "Jim Lane route," tells us that Quakers and Oberlin College graduates were the principal nameable groups concerned in the business, although Methodist ministers were also usually active.<sup>1</sup> Salem is an example of an Underground center conducted by Quakers and Tabor, of one where the leaders in the work were Oberlin men.<sup>2</sup> The Sabins in their little book on The Making of Iowa state that many Southerners were among the settlers of the state, not all of whom had been slave owners but nevertheless considered slavery the natural order of things. Hence there were "people in Iowa who openly favored slavery" and "others who by their

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Letter from Mr. Parker, Aug. 30, 1896, letter from J. P. Walton, Nov. 4, 1896, quoting J. B. Lee.



passiveness encouraged this sentiment." Some "either were in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law, or did not frankly oppose it, and disapproved of the abolitionists and the "nigger stealers," as the more virulent called those persons who assisted fugitive slaves to freedom. Such a community lived in Clinton, where the audience that listened to an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society showed itself to be unsympathetic, When the same agent went to Camanche, Clinton County, to speak in the Baptist Church, although the arrangements had all been made, the sexton refused to light up the church "for any black Abolitionist." On going to the hotel this agent and a companion were maltreated and only avoided a coat of tar and feathers by hasty flight. Glenwood, which lies a few miles west of Silver Creek, was strongly pro-slavery; and Hamburg, on the Missouri line of Fremont County, was settled by Missourians. Hence no runaway slaves were passed through there to Sidney, Thurman and Tabor, in the same county. The antagonism between Tabor and Hamburg was intense. A large section of Louisa County, at the eastern end of Iowa in the third tier, was strong in opposition to running off slaves, and only one branch of the Underground Railroad has been found passing through that county, namely, that extending from Crawfordsville through Columbus City to Muscatine, where the Mississippi was crossed.<sup>3</sup>

Salem, which was an unusually active Underground center in southeastern Iowa, as well as the most important Quaker community

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<sup>3</sup>Henry and Edwin L. Sabin, The Making of Iowa, 244, 245-6; conversation with Harold Foster, an Iowan, Apr. 30, 1935.

of that section, should be spoken of more at length. It was first settled by Isaac Pidgeon and his family in 1835 when the Pidgeons crossed the Mississippi to find a home. They located on what is now Little Cedar Creek, in Salem Township, Henry County. Being a Quaker, Mr. Pidgeon wrote to others of his sect of the richness of the soil and the other advantages of the region in which he had settled. Two years later others came, namely, Peter Boyer, Thomas Cook, Reuben Henry, Thomas Frazier, Abraham P. Joy, Gideon Stephen, and Aaron Street. The father of the last named had emigrated from Salem, New Jersey, to Salem, Ohio. Thence father and son had moved farther west and helped to build up Salem, Indiana, and finally had removed to Salem, Iowa.<sup>4</sup> Others of these Quakers had come to Iowa from North Carolina by way of Ohio and Indiana and therefore were acquainted at first hand with the evils of slavery. The fundamental doctrine of the Quakers was the "inner light" by which every man could be informed of his duty and enabled to do it.<sup>5</sup> One duty which the Salem people did not neglect was that of aiding runaway slaves. A meeting of the anti-slavery branch of the Friends' Society was established at Salem by Thomas Frazier, Eli Jessup, and others, but the original body of the Society held that their duty as Christians would be fulfilled by entering a solemn protest against the detested institution and using every reasonable means to create sentiment against it. The radical element on the other hand, while accepting the above

<sup>4</sup>Garretson, Travelling on the Underground Railroad, 421.

<sup>5</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 424.

views, felt obliged to aid enslaved mortals to gain their freedom, and even sent emissaries into Missouri to tell the slaves of their readiness to assist them. This action so aroused the fears of the slaveholders in the northeastern corner of Missouri that they posted patrols along the section of Des Moines River extending from the southern boundary of Iowa diagonally to the Mississippi River, to prevent their human chattels from crossing to gain refuge in Salem. However, the plan was not successful, and the Missourians became more incensed than ever at the Quakers.<sup>6</sup> When Elihu Frazier, of Salem, was in Missouri, presumably on a mission to the slaves, he was captured by patrollers and hanged to make him confess the nature of his mission, but they gained no information and speedily released him.

Some of the Iowa Quakers, like other operators of the Underground system, resorted to sly methods to avoid detection and keep their "passengers" out of the hands of man hunters. One of these Quakers went to a flour mill for a load of bran, with which he drove boldly along the highway while his sacks concealed a number of fugitives. Another familiar method was to hide the negroes in a hollow load of hay, and still another was to disguise the Underground traveler in the dress, bonnet, and veil of a Quakeress. Nathan Kellum, of New Garden,

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<sup>6</sup>Garretson, Op. Cit., Iowa in Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 440.

gained the admiration of his fellows for his cleverness in throwing watchers and slavehunters off the scent when he had runaways about his premises.

It has been claimed that no fugitives who reached Salem were ever returned to bondage. While this was doubtless true of Salem, which had no less than five branches by which its refugees could be spirited out of the town, two running northwest, one north, and two to the Mississippi, it was not true of New Garden, a Quaker way-station between Salem and Denmark. There a fugitive was hidden in the barn of Nathan Bond until he could be sent on to Denmark, but he was discovered and seized by two brothers named Berry, who returned him to his master for a reward of \$200. The Berry brothers were warned that "the judgment of the Lord would surely be visited upon them," and to the satisfaction of the prophets their crops dwindled and failed. One might surmise that this result was probably due to the shiftlessness of men who would engage in slavecatching.

One of the Underground operators at Salem was Joel C. Garretson, who was not a Quaker but had been reared in the Society and adhered to many of its precepts. While traveling over Prince Mountain, in Virginia, he had seen a coffle of twenty slaves handcuffed to a chain followed by a slavedriver on horseback, with a black-snake whip in his hand and pistols in the holster of his saddle. This sight so impressed young Garretson that he vowed there and then to strike at slavery whenever he should have the opportunity. After settling in Iowa, in 1837, he became a prominent speaker against the hated institution,

aided Eli Jessup and others in organizing the Free Soil party in Henry County, and was nominated, along with Samuel Howe, for the legislature, stumping the county vigorously during the campaign.<sup>7</sup>

Crawfordsville, which lies about thirty miles north of Salem and was connected with it by an Underground road, was settled by Presbyterians, who were known as "seceders" and "psalm singers." In this village stood a hall known as the "House of all Nations," in the basement of which thirteen fugitives were concealed at one time.

Crawfordsville is credited with having been the birthplace of the Republican party. In 1854 the Liberty and Free Soil Parties and other bodies that opposed the extension of slavery, began to unite. A state convention was summoned to meet there in February of the year named, and assembled in the Seceders' Church, which stood where the United Presbyterian Church stands to-day. Among those who attended were the noted educator, Samuel Howe, and his son Edward from Mt. Pleasant, Joel Garretson and Eli Jessup from Salem, and Dr. Curtis Shed from Denmark. Edward Howe was the chairman of the committee on resolutions, which retired to the "House of All Nations" to deliberate. This house stood on the spot now occupied by the Second National Bank.<sup>8</sup>

As the convention at Crawfordsville preceded that at Ripon,

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<sup>7</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 424.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., XXII, 435.

Wisconsin, where the Republican party is often said to have been formed, the Iowa town has the priority of claim.

Springdale and West Branch were also Quaker settlements where fugitive slaves found shelter and transportation to other Underground centres. Even in Pella, a settlement of Hollanders from Utrecht founded in the 1840's in the north-eastern part of Marion County, aid was cautiously given to runaways traveling from Oskaloosa northwestwardly to Franklin. In January, 1848, the legislature had granted these Hollanders the privilege of choosing their local officials from among themselves, and they had first exercised this privilege in the following April. The ablest leader among the Pellaites was H. P. Scholte, who declared that the removal of slavery from the American soil would be a blessing; but for the present he could see nothing to be done except to remove some of the evils from existing conditions. In a series of editorials printed in his newspaper, the Pella Gazette, Scholte discussed the whole slave problem, starting early in June, 1855. About a year later he sent to the United State Senate and House of Representatives a number of proposals to be embodied in an act for settling the difficulties in reference to the new territories, the surrender of fugitive slaves, and other matters. In these proposals he recommended that fugitives be delivered up to their rightful claimants on presentation of an accurate description and statement of the time of escape, that interference with recapture be punished as a felony, but that no one

be required to aid in slave catching, and that the refugee should have counsel and a fair trial. He further advocated that a state's sovereign power to exclude slavery should not be interpreted to prevent citizens of slave states from crossing its borders with their slaves unless the latter were being taken to market, and he urged that any attempt to dissolve the Union be made an act of treason.

During the early months of 1856 Scholte became dissatisfied with the Whigs on account of their general impotence and began to write in favor of the Democrats. He feared that the Republicans, comprising diverse elements, would adopt either abolition or revolution. But a number of the Hollanders deserted to the Republicans in the autumn elections of 1856, and Scholte was attacked in verses of abolition spirit and by the Burlington Hawk-Eye, the Fort Des Moines Citizen, and the Keokuk Gate City. In August he had addressed the people of Pella and vicinity in both Dutch and English and was pleased when Lake Prairie Township gave an overwhelming majority to Buchanan. In the spring elections of 1858 Pella remained Democratic, but Scholte was already becoming disgusted with the policy in Kansas of the Buchanan Administration. In the next year he left the Democrats and attended the Republican State Convention on June 22, 1859, but he failed to change the party affiliations of the Hollanders, although they were unalterably opposed to slavery. In the case of Pella therefore we have the singular instance of a community voting the Democratic ticket by a large majority and among its people certainly a few who were willing to take the risk of helping fugitives

because they antagonized the institution of bondage cherished<sup>9</sup> by the Southern Democracy.

College Springs, or Amity, in the southern part of Page County, was established by a company formed at Galesburg, Illinois, under the leadership of the Rev. B. F. Haskins, William J. Wood, and others. This company sent a committee into southwestern Iowa, which selected a large tract of <sup>en</sup>unentered land in Page County in 1854 or 1855. The Rev. John Todd tells us that almost all of the orthodox denominations were represented in the company, which became active in reforms, including the anti-slavery movement.<sup>10</sup> As College Springs was less than five miles from the Missouri boundary, it did not take long for the slaves of the neighborhood to learn of the new settlement's interest in them and to take refuge there on their way to Red Oak.

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<sup>9</sup> Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXVI, 173. 177-8, 185, 187, 191-2, 196-7.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. John Todd, Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa, or Reminiscences (1906), pp. 168.



## CHAPTER II

## METHODS AND INCIDENTS ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.

As sentiment varied in every locality, and especially between localities, the methods used varied with the necessity for secrecy and the nearness of pursuit. In some localities the people were so nearly unanimous in opposition to slavery that little effort was made to hide the negro. In other places the negro was forced to stay out of sight for days until a different method could be devised. As we shall see, almost every method was employed in the course of the years of activity in Iowa. From moving on foot to being sent by train, the negro went slowly or rapidly on the way to freedom. That the methods were successful is seen from that fact that a very, very few were ever taken back to human bondage.

In those early days people moved in covered wagons, which provided a very good method of transportation. As it was sometimes a considerable distance to the mill, the bondman was often moved along at the same time as the operator needed flour. At other times this proved only a disguise. The slaves were loaded into the wagon and hay placed over them. In this way many were moved in daylight when not closely pressed. At other times the fleeing negro was moved under cover of night and with great secrecy, sometimes only one or two of the family knowing of the matter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Mr. Elliott, Cedarville, Ia., Nov. 18, 1895.

About two years before the war a large family of slaves belonging to a man by the name of McQuitty, at Lancaster, Missouri, were booked for freedom. Arrangements were made by friends in Missouri to meet this entire family of slaves consisting of father, mother, and several children, near the Missouri line. The night arrived and George Elliott and Albert Corner were entrusted with the adventure. They drove from Drakesville to the meetingplace designated, and found all was well except one of the children was sick and had been taken to the master's house for care. But a great crisis was on, so the little one was left, and the rest were on hand. All were loaded in Elliott's wagon and, before sunrise, were across the Des Moines river, a distance of forty miles.

As soon as they were missed, a party started to track them and had very little trouble in finding that they had come to Drakesville. The pursuers thought they had found the slaves, and the Elliott barns, fields, and house were searched and guarded for days. The idea was held that the slaves were in Drakesville until they were Canada.<sup>2</sup>

When correspondence was necessary, it was usually carried on in a plain note with a hidden meaning for the man who understood. A few illustrations are extant. The following is typical:

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., In a short time a letter, printed in pen came to the Elliotts, telling them of the escape and expressing thanks to God.

"Mr. C. B. C.

Dear Sir:--By to-morrow evening mail, you will receive two volumes of the "irrepressible conflict" bound in black. After perusal, please forward, and oblige."<sup>3</sup>

By the peculiar wording of the correspondence, the receiver, of the same obtained a pretty fair idea not only of the number of fugitives coming on the line, but also frequently, the age, sex and complexion of the same.

It is said that some of the hunted race who passed through Iowa were so white as to require but little or no secrecy or concealment. These were easily cared for and sent on their journey. In one instance a man and his wife were being secreted in the garret of the Bather's house, in Clinton, when word came that the slavehunters were in hot pursuit. The garret being a place much suspected by the United States marshal, it was thought advisable to have a "flitting" as soon as possible. Mr. Bather soon secured the loan of a covered family carriage, belonging to a Mr. Stanly and conveyed the negroes to Lyons, preceded by Mr. Campbell, who hired a skiff and took them across the river. This was on a Sunday afternoon. The woman had such a fair complexion that she could and did, with perfect impunity, represent herself as a free person and the owner of her own husband.

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<sup>3</sup>History of Cedar and Clinton Counties.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., A kind of cellar in the garden belonging to J. R. and A. Bather was used as a hiding place.

Just before the War broke out, a party of nine negroes, a man and his wife and their four children together with three other men, passed through Clinton. Twice before had the husband attempted to free his wife but had been unsuccessful. His third attempt was successful and, judging from his looks and the fact that he was well armed, officials of the Underground Railroad considered it would have been dangerous for anyone to try to stop the party. They were ferried over the Mississippi and reached Canada.<sup>5</sup>

On one occasion three negroes from Clarksburg, Virginia, passed through Iowa. They had worked to get money to go to a show, but the master refused his permission. They escaped and went west. Once they were surrounded by nine men, but on a hillside they engaged in a pitched battle with rocks, escaped, and by an Iowa line moved on to freedom.<sup>6</sup>

The home of William Maxon, of Springdale, was used to hide fugitives. He had a cellar, a portion of which was very dark. In order that the slaves might be comfortable Mr. Maxon had a fire-place built in the basement. Here, sometimes for days, small bands of black men were kept until conditions permitted their moving in safety.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Letter of Arthur Corner, Jan. 1, 1896.

<sup>7</sup>Irving B. Richman, John Brown Among the Quakers and Other Sketches, p. 32.

One Sunday morning a negro woman came to the home of Mr. Fox, in Denmark. The report was soon spread that a number of "hunters" were watching to catch her. Contacts were made with Mr. Brown, who hitched up his buggy as if to take his wife to church, dressed the negro woman in his wife's clothes, got in the buggy and drove through the crowd and on to the next station.<sup>8</sup> This was a common method among the Quakers. As they would not lie, they had to be clever enough to get the negro safely along the line without questioning. Thus the dress of the Quaker women was a very helpful disguise.

On one occasion a man came to the ~~Corney~~ home, in Jasper County. Thinking to take a shorter route, he left Pella to the south and took a trail to save six or eight miles. The negro and ~~Corney~~ took turns riding and walking. It was a dark night and the two lost their way and had to pay an old Hollander to put them on the road to Pella. The short cut had lost them some two hours, and daylight caught them ten miles short of their Quaker destination in Oskaloosa. The negro was hidden in a cornfield until the farmer came to feed. Then ~~Corney~~ called the latter to the gate and asked him if he had seen any stray "niggers". The farmer looked at ~~Corney~~ and said he was afraid this was bad business. When told that the law gave him the right to capture negroes, the old farmer quoted the golden rule. ~~Corney~~ then proceeded to tell him of the negro in the field. Both were fed and the negro was sent safely on his way.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Letter of H. B. Armstrong, Dec. 12, 1895.

<sup>9</sup>Letter from W. E. ~~Corney~~, undated.

So it was that often the negro was forced to hide in fields by day and move on at night. While those going over the Iowa routes were in most cases well cared for, some often went hungry and cold for several days.

In the fall of 1865 seven negroes came to the home of W. Merritt, in Red Oak, escorted by a congregational minister from Amity. A young negro of the party fled from Kentucky to Canada. He had returned and plucked his sister <sup>from</sup> slavery, and now on his second trip he had with him his mother and other brothers and sisters. They were well provided for and sent on their way. Soon a group of horsemen appeared, with revolvers, ready for action. They separated and rode up and down looking at every bush and into the timber. The whites helped in the search, leading them on wild chases until the negroes were thirty miles on their way "toward the North Star."<sup>10</sup>

A colored man from Missouri came to the home of Dr. Van Pelt, in Muscatine. He was kept in the cornfield for six weeks and food carried to him by a free negro. The master was soon on the track and traced the negro to Van Pelt's. He asked Mrs. Van Pelt if she had seen such a negro, to which she replied that if she had she would not tell him. The man posted a \$1500-reward notice on the gate and moved on. In time the slave was taken by night to Rock Island, where he was put on the train and safely landed in Canada.<sup>11</sup> The transportation by train was not a common method in Iowa. Trains were expensive and closely watched,

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<sup>10</sup>Letter of W. Merritt, Dec. 22, 1895.

<sup>11</sup>Letter of J. A. Jelly, April 8, 1896.

but at times this method was used. It seems that the keepers in West Liberty used steam transportation more often than any other, but this is thought to be not the general rule.<sup>12</sup>

The following episode occurred at Grinell in 1860: Four "boys," ages 18 to 26, had been in the school learning to read. Some of the pro-slavery people tried to exclude negroes but were voted down. The next day two men appeared at the school to take the negroes. The "boys" talked of using their guns, but bloodshed was averted. An old sea-captain, unfriendly to all slaves, published a description of the slaves in a St. Louis paper. The boys and a colored girl then disappeared. These negroes had stayed in houses, barns and cellars.<sup>13</sup>

One morning a little after dawn there came to the home of Seth B. Stanton, then living in southern Iowa near the Missouri line, a slave family, a man, wife and three children, begging to be taken in as their master, with an officer, was in hot pursuit. Mr. and Mr. Stanton rushed the negroes to the garret and hid them in a dark corner. Just at that time there was a halloo at the front gate. There the master and sheriff wanted to know if any "niggers" had been seen that morning. None had, of course. Then Stanton invited the men in for breakfast. As there was another road a half-mile east, it was suggested that they had probably taken that road. With an oath the master was on his way. The

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<sup>12</sup>Letter of J. P. Walton, undated.

<sup>13</sup>Letter of L. F. Parker's reply to Circular, ~~5-14~~.

going to Tabor to-morrow? I have a passenger for you, can you take him? He is a young mulatto who says he left his master as an anti-slave holder, as he was the last to escape." It was the voice of the station agent, Dr. Ira Blanchard, and arrangements for the transfer ~~were~~ soon made. Platt was a manufacturer of shingles and was going to Tabor the next day. Mrs. Platt was to drive one wagon. Two were loaded, one receiving its full capacity while the other had shingles on one side and a comfortable bed of straw on the other, all being covered with a wagon sheet. Very quietly the remainder of the load was taken in half a mile away at that "mysterious station-door where so many colored people, it was said, had been seen to enter but never reappear though<sup>y</sup> carefully watched for." So certain of underground passages were the pursuers that at one time in their search they demanded the removal of a cupboard which sat against the brick wall of Dr. Blanchard's home. Not finding the supposed secret passage behind the cupboard, they sounded the rest of the walls.

After gaining the unsettled territory,<sup>Mrs.</sup> Platt suggested that the negro sit up a while. He could turn as though conversing and thus keep watch of the road in both directions. Soon a man mounted on a mule galloped up behind the wagons. The rider eyed them closely. He then rode on and was next seen in Plum Hollow. This was a pro-slavery settlement, and no mention was made of negroes. Mr. Platt stopped in the store while Mrs. Platt drove on. Soon the rider reappeared. He seemed always to keep at a distance but eyed her wagon with suspicion. Taking the loaded blacksnake whip, Mrs. Platt prepared to defend herself. The man soon rode on.



Reaching Tabor, the slave was taken to the loft of one Smith's barn, where he was cared for and passed on toward Canada. The rider proved to be a friend to the cause but secretly so and had merely ridden out to test the skill of the Platts.<sup>16</sup>

A certain Mr. Nuckolls brought two slave girls to Nebraska City as house servants in the early winter of 1856. They were soon missing and Mr. Nuckolls was very angry. He proceeded to raise a mob of thirty or forty men, mounted and armed with guns and clubs, and started for Iowa to clean out the suspected abolitionists. They arrived at the William's home and dealt severely with Mr. Williams. Word was at once sent to Tabor friends, who came down that night, and the next day arrested Nuckolls. He was tried before a justice of the peace and bound over to the court. The episode cost Nuckolls \$12,000 but he never found the girls. He followed them across the state and at one time slept in the same house with them. They safely reached Canada.<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes the distance between stations was longer than could be made in a single night. This was true of the trip from Tabor to Lewis, Iowa, a distance of more than fifty miles. The vehicle was often a covered wagon with an "emigrant air". That there were secret signs between some of the operators seems certain, yet this does not seem a definite part of the system as many of the operators report there was no special sign or means of communication.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Letter of Mrs. E. G. Platt, answer to circular.

<sup>17</sup>Letter of Sturgis Williams, 1894.

<sup>18</sup>Letter of E. S. Hill, Oct. 30, 1894.

Two fugitives from slavery were arrested and lodged in the Lindon jail for safekeeping. It was a bitter cold day and they begged for a pan of live coals to keep them from freezing. When the place was warm other use for the coals was found. The slaves managed to burn a hole through the floor large enough to enable them to escape. On the way up the Missouri River a blinding blizzard overtook them and they became separated, nearly perishing in the cold. One of them found his way to Tabor and stayed at George B. Gaston's house several weeks, waiting for his companion. The negro asked for work and was put at cutting wood. For weeks he went every day to the woods. After some time the lost companion came along and the two<sup>19</sup> proceeded on to freedom.

The calm of the Quaker community of Salem was broken by the attempted recovery of nine slaves belonging to Ruel Daggs from Clark County, Missouri. In the early part of June, 1848, this band of fugitives headed for Salem and managed to evade Missouri patrols until about a mile from town. While hiding in the bushes, they were soon discovered by two slave hunters. Without losing any time, the two started for Missouri. They were soon met by Elihu Frazier, T. Clarkson Frazier, and W. Johnson, three stalwart Quakers from Salem. The three demanded that they return to Salem, where the claim could be presented before a justice of the peace. This was not to the liking of the slave hunters, but the three persisted, one saying he would "wade in Missouri blood before the negroes should be taken". So the two agreed to trust to the "due process of the law" for their claims.

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<sup>19</sup>Rev. John Todd, "Fugitives from the Indian Territory."

Excitement was high in Salem. Every person joined the procession to Justice Lewelling's home. The case was dismissed after the hearing, because the plaintiffs were unable to produce warrants for the arrest of the captives. For a moment everyone was still, knowing not what to do. Then Paul Way called out: "If anybody wants to follow me, let him follow." Two of the negroes took the opportunity. They were soon on their way to freedom. The other negroes were received by friends, while the manhunters, McClure and Slaughter, left in great danger, promising to return for vengeance.

Some days later a well-armed band of Missourians visited Salem. They besieged the town and sent searching parties to every "nigger-stealing house." The Frazier home was singled out for a detailed investigation. It was true that three negroes had been in his care, but the Underground had again afforded its service in anticipation of the coming of the mob and had taken them to the timber. The Fraziers sat quietly dining when the Missourians arrived. With curse and threat, they demanded a search and were told to make it. It was fruitless. Other homes were visited, with like results.<sup>20</sup>

One station-keeper had his basement fitted up, the only entrance to it being a trap-door in the kitchen, kept covered by a rug and the dining table. Through this trap-door many a black was hurried to hiding from pursuers. Most of the blacks were armed with weapons from cleavers to guns. Pursuers came often to this home in Salem, but none, if they discovered the trap-door, ever ventured down

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<sup>20</sup>Van Ek, The Underground Railroad in Iowa, pp. 141-142.  
(for record of trial, see appendix).

the dark stairs.<sup>21</sup>

A story is told of William Maxon, an operator near Springdale. He conceived the idea of helping some of the fugitives to Canada by putting them in sacks and shipping them as potatoes. The station-agent, supposed to be in opposition to the Underground Railroad, was present when the "potatoes" were loaded on the steam cars. In the loading a sneeze issued from one of the sacks, much to the consternation of Mr. Maxon, but the station-agent took no notice of it, and the "potatoes" were duly shipped.<sup>22</sup>

On one occasion Mr. Tatum started with a load of negroes in a wagon for Mechanicsville. To reach that town it was necessary to cross the Cedar River at Gray's Ford, where beds of quicksand must be avoided. Unfortunately the load stuck, and Mr. Tatum resorted to the nearest house, a stranger's, and secured help. The stranger suggested that it would be necessary to unload before the wagon could be released. Mr. Tatum, fearing the consequence if the kind of load he had should be discovered, replied that he did not think so. When asked what he had in the wagon, he looked the stranger squarely in the eye and said "meat and wool". A fence rail was secured and, after much effort, the wagon was raised to firmer ground and the 'meat and wool' moved on to safety.<sup>23</sup>

One quiet Sunday afternoon there came a tap on the door of the Varney home, two miles west of Springdale. A negro woman and two children, one white and one black, were admitted. All were in great

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<sup>21</sup>The Palimpsest, Vol. 9 (1928); p. 245.

<sup>22</sup>Richman, John Brown among the Quakers and Other Sketches, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup>The Palimpsest, Vol. 9 (1928), pp. 246-247.

distress and fear. The mother was taking her two sons from the master and father, who was not far behind, beating the bushes, thinking the slaves might be hidden there. The negro mother, seemingly more intelligent than most, said that she feared detection because the white boy made them so conspicuous. Mrs. Varney made some very strong tea and stained all the visible parts of the white boy with the solution, turning him a walnut brown. After a good lunch the three went on their way. About three months later a letter came to Mrs. Varney telling of their safe arrival in Canada.<sup>24</sup>

Two slavesisters had arrived at A. W. Lewis's, at Summit Grove. The following Monday one of the girls came running in from the yard yelling that her master was coming. Martin Cook, at whose home the girls were staying, took his cane and went out into the yard where he sat calmly awaiting the approaching riders. One of the men asked him if he had seen any slaves. He replied that slaves were not known in Iowa. The master said that he had been informed the old Quaker kept blacks who were running away to Canada. The old man informed him that he never turned anyone who wanted lodging away, but never kept slaves. The master then said he would search the place. A spirited argument followed over the lack of a search warrant. Finally, Mrs. Cook appeared and permitted the search. After satisfying himself, the master apologized and went his way. When the girl had rushed in and said "the master is coming" Grandmother Cook had snatched off a large featherbed, and hid the girls under it and remade it. Hence they were not to be found.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>The Palimpsest, Vol. 9 (1928).

<sup>25</sup>Letter of A. B. Cook, Earlham, Iowa, Aug. 21, 1934.

Many homes had secret hiding-places. Mr. Hoag, an ardent worker for liberty, when he built his house, put in a secret closet beneath the stairway that led to the second floor. The stairway began about the middle of the north wall of the living-room and went west, rising to about two-thirds of the height of the room, where there was a landing. It then turned south at right angles. Beneath the landing of the stairway was a cupboard facing the south, at the back of which was a considerable space with no apparent entrance. On the landing of the stairway was a neatly fitted trap-door opening into the rear space. There Mr. Hoag kept many negroes.<sup>26</sup>

In the house of James J. Gaston, in Tabor, which still stands, were two cleverly devised small hiding-places, each large enough for two standing fugitives. These hiding-places flanked the large fireplace at one end of the sitting-room. The entrance to them was through a sliding panel in the hall, at the back of the fireplace. The panel was partly concealed by a coatrack. Slaves were often in hiding in those secret closets while the house was being searched, but were never discovered.<sup>27</sup>

An amusing incident is related concerning O. W. Basworth, of Denmark. His father kept slaves hidden in the barn and the child did not know it. One day while playing there, one of the secreted slaves happened to look down at the boy. After seeing the black man, the boy went to the house and told his parents that the black colt was up in the loft. Once when Henry Morgan was conveying a load of fugitives from Clay to Washington in a covered wagon, and was about to drive on the ferry-boat to cross Skunk

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<sup>26</sup>Garretson, op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>27</sup>Communicated by Harold V. Foster, April 24, 1935.

River, some slave owners rode up to look in the wagon, but wheeled and left in haste when Mr. Morgan yelled, "We've got small pox in there."<sup>28</sup>

Now and then the Iowa Underground Railroad had a mishap. About the year 1860, as three negroes, John Williams, Henry Garner and his sister Maria were journeying from Percival to Omaha, a carriage with two or three men came up behind, the men jumped out, and one of them with a stick or club struck Henry on the cheek, not only stunning him but breaking his cheek-bone. All three were taken and hurried into Missouri. However, Williams managed to escape in a short time, but Henry and Maria were lodged in a slave pen in St. Louis, waiting the day of the sale. News soon reached Dr. Blanchard at Civil Bend. He dropped all else and, with Mr. Gaston, of Tabor, Iowa, spent several days searching for the negroes in northwestern Missouri. Learning that the slaves were in St. Louis, Dr. Blanchard started for that place while Mr. Gaston returned to Tabor. He found them in the prison. When the keeper admitted Dr. Blanchard to their quarters, Maria ran and threw her arms around him exclaiming, "Oh! Dr. Blanchard, where did you come from?" After proper legal steps the negroes were set free, while the kidnappers were taken by officers to Council Bluffs to await trial. They soon broke jail and escaped.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Garrison, op. cit.  
ibid., p. 451.

<sup>29</sup> J. Todd--"Fugitives from the Indian Territory"--Ch. XXII., S. C. Hurd, one of the kidnappers, went to Kansas and two years later was hanged for horse-stealing.

Many more incidents might be related of flight to freedom on the Underground Railroad. But enough have been told to illustrate the methods used in passing the slaves along, and to show something of the adroitness and courage of the abolitionists engaged in the work and of the yearning for freedom of the "passengers" who traveled the length of Iowa from station to station, generally at night and at great risk, to secure freedom in Canada.



### CHAPTER III

#### ROUTES OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

#### IN KANSAS AND NEBRASKA

In as much as the Underground system of Iowa drew many of its passengers from Missouri by way of routes through the eastern counties of Kansas and Nebraska, it is necessary to tell of these routes.

It is a curious fact that the Underground Railroad was definitely mentioned in a Kansas newspaper as a threat to Missouri slaveholders in case they again participated in another Kansas election after that of November 30, 1854. On the following day the writer of the article warned them that another attempt to elect pro-slavery men to office might result in the carrying off of their slaves by the Underground, and that if it did they could blame no one but themselves.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the writer assumed that the Missourians were already familiar with the work of the Underground, as they certainly were along the Illinois border. Of course, the Underground did not originate in Kansas from the free-state men's desire for political revenge, but rather, as in the case of all the other Northern states, from the hatred of slavery and the willingness of many persons to help enslaved negroes to gain their freedom by flight.

The so-called southern division of the Underground Railroad in Kansas started at Barnesville and Mound City. Some of the slaves reaching Barnesville were sent north to Trading Post, then northwest to Osawatimie, where from 1855 Elbridge

<sup>1</sup>Transactions, Kansas State Hist. Soc., X, 129.

G. Blount was an operator. He is said to have stood guard through many a long night over some humble cabin where fugitives were concealed. Near Osawatomie three slavehunters learned of the hiding-place of the runaway Washington and confided their mission to a Missouri friend living there. The Underground men of the neighborhood also heard of it and accompanied Washington to the Missourian's house when the master and his fellows were there. They forced the master to exchange his garments with his slave and give him \$300 from his pocketbook. A silk hat was taken from one of the slavehunters for the fugitive, who was then sent out to the barn for a horse, saddle and bridle. Thus fitted out, Washington started again on his way to freedom.<sup>2</sup>

From Osawatomie the route extended northwest to Lawrence, which was a very active centre, with John E. Stewart and Dr. John Doy as the principal traffic managers. These men were helped by numerous assistants and contributors of money.<sup>3</sup> In a letter of April 4, 1859, to Frank B. Sanborn, of Concord, Massachusetts, J. Bowles writes that from the first settlement of Kansas Lawrence had been cursed by slaveholders as an abolition town and had thus attained great notoriety among the negroes of Missouri. Some of the "emigrating" blacks had told him that they would have never known of a land of freedom, or that they had a friend in the world, had it not been for their masters' continual abuse of the Lawrence abolitionists. One old negro said that his master had

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<sup>2</sup>Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., XV, 565.

<sup>3</sup>Chicago Times-Herald, Sept. 24, 1896.

declared the people of that town to be all devils, which satisfied him that if he could get there his master would be afraid to come after him. A few slaves had been taken back to Missouri after leaving Lawrence for Iowa, but many in their escape had brought others with them. One who had been twice captured and shot each time, killing one of his captors, claimed to have aided at least twenty-five of his fellows to get away, besides giving information that would cause a hundred more to flee.

Bowles knew personally that during the past four years nearly three hundred fugitives had passed through Lawrence and received substantial aid from the abolitionists there. He had himself helped to collect the money and heard complaints from many zealous men that the ever increasing drain so interfered with their business that they must be relieved from a part of the burden. Such was the situation at Christmas, 1858, when twenty-four more fugitives arrived, five or six of whom had means enough to be sent on. The others had to be kept until \$150 could be raised to forward them.

Of the numerous persons from whom the money was collected, one had betrayed the fact that Dr. John Doy and his son escorted the party of fugitives, and they were captured. After they should be bailed out of prison, the traitor would be dealt with. Many zealous anti-slavery men were discouraged by the capture and by the hard times. The Doy trial would cost nearly \$300, which would be principally met by the local society. Bowles asked Mr. Sanborn to plead the cause of the Kansas abolitionists with those Eastern friends who were inclined to censure them. Eight or ten fugitives could not be sent on

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until more money was available. Some Easterners were delaying their contributions to aid John Brown, but his plan was to take enough portable property from slaveholders, along with their slaves, to pay the latter's way to Canada. Hence there need be no fear of a large demand from that quarter.

The constant resort of fugitives to Lawrence induced twenty-two pro-slavery men known as the Shannon Guards to camp in a ravine at the edge of the Sauk and Fox Indian Reservation, and near the Underground Railroad entering the town, in order to capture fugitives. This band did not survive long, for in the autumn of 1856 Charles W. Leonhardt marched at midnight from Lawrence with thirty free-state men to the camp, and exterminated the Shannon Guards.

One of the stations in Lawrence was the log cabin of Joseph Gardner, who took a claim in March, 1857, adjoining the land that became the campus of the State University of Kansas. Among the fugitives harbored by the Gardners was Napoleon Simpson, who first came on his way north in the autumn of 1859. In the following May he returned, and accompanied by a neighbor, in a covered wagon drove into Missouri to bring his wife out of bondage. In as much as they found her too sick to travel, they went back to wait a fortnight before making another attempt. Hence when slavehunters visited the Gardner place, early in June, 1860, Napoleon was there, along with another fugitive.<sup>4</sup>

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Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., VI, 350.

By that time the border was so quiet that Mr. Gardner thought it safe to employ the two runaways at quarrying stone to fence his claim. They were from Jackson County, Missouri, and had been seen by pro-slavery neighbors, who had passed the word along to others of their kind.

At half-past one o'clock on the morning of June 9, 1860, the two dogs of the Gardners aroused the household, and Mr. Gardner saw two men pass a window. He snatched his revolver and sprang to the door just as the men demanded that he open it. He did so, found them with cocked weapons in their hands, shot one of them, and closed it. Meantime his son Theodore had shot several times at figures moving in the yard from an upstairs window, and called his father up to join in the attack. Just as Mr. Gardner reached the first floor, he was almost hit by a load of buckshot. Napoleon then went out and fired from the front step. While reloading, he was riddled by a charge of buckshot fired by a man hiding behind the well.<sup>5</sup>

The capture of Dr. Doy and the party of fugitives he was conducting northward from Lawrence has been referred to above. He had joined a company of emigrants at Rochester, New York, in 1854, and settled in Lawrence. In the winter of 1858 a considerable group of fugitives had arrived in the town, and Dr. Doy was chosen to guide them up to Holton in two covered wagons, after provisions and blankets had been bought for them. He started with his "caravan" on the morning of January 25, 1859. A citizen who had contributed a dollar informed Jake Hurd and his gang of ruffians of the departure, and they captured the

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<sup>5</sup>Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., XV, 550-552.

party twelve miles north of Lawrence. At St. Joseph, Missouri, Doy was surrendered to the authorities on the charge of abducting the slaves. A trial and conviction followed, Doy being sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. He appealed to the Missouri supreme court, and was confined in the jail at St. Joseph pending its decision.

This affair aroused the free-state men of Kansas, especially in Lawrence, where a committee of ten men was appointed to release the prisoner. The members of this committee were: James B. Abbott, Charles Doy (the son of Dr. Doy), Joseph Gardner, George Hay, Joshua A. Pike, Jacob Senix, Thomas Simmons, John E. Stewart, Silas Soule, and S. M. Willis. They chose Major Adams as their leader and drove in a covered wagon to Elwood, a small village opposite St. Joseph, where they left their wagon and crossed the ferry. They entered St. Joseph in various rôles and acquainted themselves with "the lay of the land." At the town pump in front of the jail Gardner took off his shoes, sat astride the horse trough, and bathed his feet while signaling to Dr. Doy, who stood at a grated window only a few yards distant.

Late one evening a young man, with a valise and in an evident hurry to catch a train, called at the jail, and got permission to speak with the prisoner. When the jailor's attention was attracted elsewhere, the young man passed a note to Doy telling him to be ready at midnight. At one o'clock the jailor was aroused by a pounding on the outside door and asked to lodge a horse thief. After the "posse" had entered, two of them menaced him with a big knife and a revolver, ordered him to stay in for half an hour if he valued his life, and the "posse" left in a downpour of rain

with Dr. Doy for the river. They crossed back to Elwood in hired boats and drove away for Lawrence. A few days later the betrayer of the party of fugitives and its leader was called before a meeting of citizens, which banished him from the town, and S. J. Willis escorted him beyond its limits.<sup>6</sup>

One branch of the Underground ran north to Oskaloosa, thence northwest to Holton, northeast to Horton, northwest again to Albany (Sabetha), northeast a few miles to Plymouth, across the Nebraska boundary to Falls City, then north to Nemaha City, along the Missouri River to Peru, and on up to Nebraska City. There a ferry conveyed the fugitives into Iowa. The other branch out of Lawrence extended a little north and west to Topeka, whence there was a direct connection with Holton and the other towns along this route. It has been asserted that there was no Underground traffic between Lawrence and Topeka because Leocompton, a pro-slavery community, lay mid-way between them. Doubtless that fact reduced the traffic over the branch mentioned, but it did not stop it.

We must now go back to Mound City, Kansas, from which an Underground line ran northwest to Topeka, with intermediate stations, no doubt. The managers of this division were Col. James Montgomery, Col. C. R. Jennison, and old John Brown. In the summer of 1854 Montgomery had bought up a claim to some land lying five miles west of Mound City. He had come originally from Ashtabula County, Ohio, and was soon recognized

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<sup>6</sup>Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., XVI, 56, XVII, 851-855.

as a leader by the free-state men of Linn County. In 1857 he organized a Self-protective Association and ordered the pro-slavery men to leave, which they did. He also became an energetic Underground operator, as revealed in letters written to George L. Stearns, of Boston, late in the year 1860. In a letter of October 6 he said: "We have several fugitives on hand, and more are expected. Some of them are from Missouri and some from Arkansas. When a keen, shrewd fellow comes to us, we send him back for more. As yet they have not been followed by anything like a force." On November 20 he wrote that "the boys" had made a drive against some kidnapers in the northern part of Linn County, and he might have added that they had hanged one of them by the name of Russell Hinds after a trial by a vigilance committee. By that time more fugitives had arrived, whom Montgomery considered as safe in Mound City and vicinity as if they were in Canada. He and his friends held that if any state wished to keep slaves it must keep them at home. If it allowed them to come there they must be free.

Just then one Harney and a force of troops were trying to put down Montgomery and his associates and recover runaways from them, but he wrote on December 12 that the United States government could not enforce the Fugitive Slave Law out there. He reported Major Whitsett as having declared that the troops had been brought out because there was "a nigger in the woodpile." Montgomery admitted that there was, but insisted that "Uncle Sam" could not get him. Nothing short of stationing a regiment in every county in Kansas would prevent the anti-slavery people



from keeping him, and when the regiments had been placed they would pass the negro on somewhere else. Late in July, 1861, Montgomery was commissioned colonel of the Third Regiment of Kansas Volunteers under Brigadier General James H. Lane.<sup>7</sup>

The activities of the Underground workers in Topeka, so far as they have been recorded, were during the later 1850's and on to the Civil War. John E. Rastall thinks that the fugitive he helped to run from Topeka up to Nebraska City and thence eastward about two-thirds the length of Iowa, in September, 1856, was the first one conducted out of Kansas. His trip terminated at Oskaloosa, where the slave was delivered to a Congregational minister. While Mr. Rastall's claim of priority is hardly tenable, his journey was probably the longest out of Kansas made by any Underground conductor, except those of John Brown when he took slaves through.<sup>8</sup>

Like other anti-slavery communities in eastern Kansas, Topeka was subjected to hunts for slaves. In November, 1857, Deputy United States Marshal Butcher conducted one there and at mid-December another. This time he led a file of soldiers to the home of John Ritchie at the edge of town, broke open the door, and would have entered but for the click of weapons within. He was only able to make the search by sending for additional men. He was looking for the slaves of one Mills, but failed to find them. At the Garvey House he met with no better results. His brutal methods were denounced by the Topeka Tribune.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Collections, Kan. State Hist., Soc., XIII, 258-260, 263-265.

<sup>8</sup>Proceedings and Collections, Neb. State Hist. Soc., V, 323.

<sup>9</sup>Anti-Slavery Tracts, No. 15. New Series (New York, 1861), p. 89.

A Mr. Howard and others in and about Topeka secreted for several weeks Ann Clarke, a slave women, who had fled from near Lecompton, Kansas. Friends of her master discovered her at last and took her back to him, but she soon escaped again, this time to Chicago if not to Canada.<sup>10</sup>

At Holton, Kansas, which had a number of Underground operators, one of them was Asa Reynard, of Quaker stock, who was an incorporator of the town in 1857 and lived west of it on Groomer Creek.<sup>11</sup>

John Brown found occasional opportunities to help slaves escape from Missouri, and some writers assert that he aided a large number of them. At any rate, he was so concerned about their getting to a land of freedom that he traversed an Underground route through eastern Kansas, with a single fugitive in his wagon, in the autumn of 1855, crossed the Nemaha near the falls, and stopped at Falls City, Nebraska. He was on his way to New England to seek friends for the anti-slavery cause. The old hotel in Falls City was the headquarters of Brown, James H. Lane, and other abolitionists. In the four or five visits which Brown made to the town he brought slaves with him each time. It was on his first trip that he established the reputation of the Jim Lane Trail as a through route of the

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<sup>10</sup>Transactions, Kan. State Hist. Soc., VII, 240.

### Underground Railroad.

It was Brown's custom to drive a mile or two beyond Falls City before encamping. At nightfall he sent his fugitives back to town for concealment in Squire Dorrington's barn or in William Burchanan's cabin in order that they might not be taken in case the camp should be raided. The abducting trips made by Brown and other liberators into Missouri greatly stimulated flights among the slaves along the border, who took the road to freedom either singly or in groups.<sup>11</sup> Many of these fugitives remained in Nebraska, doubtless scattering among various communities in the interior.

In January, 1859, Brown, with his followers J. H. Kagi and Charles Whipple, brought to Holton in a covered wagon twelve negroes (one a baby born on the road) whom Brown and his men had taken from the farms of the Missourians, Hicklan, La Rue and Cruise, Cruise having been killed in the raid. The weather was cold, and the negroes had suffered in their thin clothing until they had reached Topeka, where heavier garments had been bought for them with money collected by John Ritchie, Daniel Sheridan, and others. After getting a meal at the hotel in Holton, the party moved northeast some six miles to the log house of Albert Fuller, on Straight Creek, arriving on January 29. They were pursued by Deputy United States Marshal John P. Wood and his posse of about thirty men.

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<sup>11</sup>Transactions and Reports, Neb. State Hist. Soc., II, 96.

Meantime the negroes had been made comfortable in Fuller's cabin, and Whipple was watering his horse down stream, when two of Wood's men approached and asked him if he had seen any "niggers" around. His answer was that there were some up in the cabin and that he would go up with them. At the house he warned the one in advance that he would be a dead man if he moved farther. The other put spurs to his horse and disappeared. Wood increased his force by constraining some of the neighbors to join him, while Brown dispatched another Underground agent of those parts back to Topeka for help. When the word reached John Ritchie and John Armstrong, they left Sunday morning service and gathered a dozen men, some on horseback. At Holton they were joined by a few others and reached Fuller's cabin on January 31, just as Brown was seeing the refugees enter the wagon and his men hitch up. Heavy rains had raised the creek and the ford was unsafe, but Brown would not consent to leave the Jim Lane Trail, even though Wood and his forty-five men occupied their rifle pits across the stream. As Brown and his party of twenty-one whites crossed, only four of the marshal's posse stood their ground, and they threw down their arms. They were made prisoners and their horses taken, while the others mounted and fled as best they could. The men of Brown's party who were on horseback accompanied him as far as Seneca, and then turned back. This episode has gone into the history of Kansas as "the battle of the Spurs."<sup>12</sup>

We have seen that at Mound City Montgomery and his Under-

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<sup>12</sup>Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., VIII, 443-449, XV, 398.

ground associates were in the habit of sending back into Missouri the shrewdest fugitives who came to them to bring out other slaves, and that John Brown made liberating raids. At Lawrence John E. Stewart followed Brown's example, though in a much more secretive way. He had pre-empted a claim and gone into cattle raising. This supplied him with a valid reason for taking frequent trips by way of the Kansas River into Missouri to buy young cattle. On these trips he spread the gospel of freedom among likely slaves, and brought some of them out with him. The Kansas State Historical Society has a letter, written in 1860, which speaks of Mr. Stewart's having "brought up three head the other night," making sixty-eight since he commenced.

Pardee, in Atchison County, which borders the Missouri River, was one of the centres from which liberating raids were attempted, the participants being Charles Ball, Chalkley T. Lipsey, Edwin S. Morrison, and Albert Southwick. All of these young men were of Quaker parentage. In the summer of 1860 they visited Atchison, Paola, and other places for the purpose of choosing favorable points for entering Missouri. In preparation for their first raid they went to Lawrence, and started from Pardee in September. They brought back twelve negroes, five children with their parents and five other slaves. These they took to Springdale, Cedar County, Iowa, and distributed them among the homes of the village and vicinity.

On their return to Lawrence they made the acquaintance of Quantrill, a treacherous adventurer, and included him in the plans for their second raid, Ransom L. Harris was also in-

cluded. Their headquarters at Pardee was a deserted log cabin, twelve by fourteen feet in dimensions, of which Harris was the custodian as the first station of their Underground route into eastern Iowa. This raid was undertaken in December, 1860, against the plantation of Morgan Walker, six miles southeast of Independence, Missouri, where the slaves numbered twenty-six. After crossing the Kansas boundary in a two-horse wagon, the party drove a score of miles through slave territory, camped one night in the timber near the ford of Indian Creek, proceeded next day to the vicinity of Walker's place, and hid in the woods a mile<sup>s</sup> west of the plantation. There Southwick remained with the team. Quantrill slipped away and warned Walker of impending danger, obtaining from <sup>him</sup> the promise of a horse and gun for full particulars, which he then gave. Walker prepared for the visit that evening of the abductors by secreting in his house his nearest neighbors and the white men on his place, all armed.

In the evening Quantrill brought Ball, Lipsey, and Morrison to the door. They were admitted, and Morrison explained to Walker the object of their visit. They had come to lead the slaves to freedom, and would cause no trouble if no resistance was made. As they withdrew to the porch Quantrill stepped out of range, and a volley came from within. Morrison fell dead, and Lipsey was badly wounded in the hip. He called for help, and was carried to a thicket some rods away by Ball. Next morning they were discovered, surrounded, and shot to death. Presumably Quantrill was duly rewarded for his treachery.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Transactions Kan. State Hist. Soc., VIII, 324-327, 330.

As a pro-slavery town just across from Missouri soil, Leavenworth was avoided by the Underground Railroad. However, the free-state men there rescued the fugitive slave, Charlie Fisher, from the United States commissioner's room. Charlie was from Mississippi and had been caught by his master. The free-state men entered and told Charlie to leave. Passing from the building, he was directed by Col. D. R. Anthony to drive off with the team of Jim Brown, with which he made a speedy trip to Lawrence. The prominent men among those who prevented pursuers from following him were indicted by a grand jury of border ruffians. One night the indictments mysteriously disappeared from the court room and were burned in a secluded spot outside of town. Judge John Pettit, of the United States court, threatened to punish severely those guilty of the act. In answer to an appeal from Colonel Anthony, General James Montgomery brought fifty of his men to Leavenworth in time for the next session of the court. They and a hundred or more citizens were present when it convened, the soldiers being under Montgomery's orders to shoot the judge and the United States marshal if the cases were called for trial. The judge realized his danger and dismissed the cases as they were called.<sup>14</sup>

So far as known, the westernmost Underground route of Kansas ran part way in the fourth tier of counties from the Missouri boundary. Only two towns on this route where considerable numbers of slaves were aided have been identified, namely, Mission Creek and Wabaunsee.<sup>15</sup> These fugitives may have entered Nebraska up through the valley of the Big Blue River, or by turning northeast to Holton and then north by that route.

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<sup>14</sup> Transactions, Kan. State Hist. Soc., VIII, 221-222.

<sup>15</sup> Collections, Kan. State Hist. Soc., XI, 609.

The recovery of escaped slaves was stimulated by the offer of money rewards, the amount designated varying with the number and value of the human chattels lost. At length, the western Missourians offered a standing reward of \$200 for every one returned.<sup>16</sup> This collective action would indicate that escapes had become more general and widespread, and it certainly encouraged gangs of slavehunters to vigorous search and acts of violence. Such a gang overtook three fugitives north of Nemaha City, in Nebraska, in 1857, shot one of them in the arm, and captured him. The other two returned the fire, killed one of the gang named William Myers, and got away with two horses. The wounded negro was first confined in the county jail and then transferred to Otoe County for trial, but was returned to his master about January, 1858, without the case being heard.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the two slaves with their stolen horses were fortunate enough to reach the station kept by a Mr. Mayhew, in the valley north of the cemetery at Nebraska City. This station was a cave, sixteen feet deep, at the base of a steep bank, with a door partly hidden and a hollow log reaching to the surface of the ground for ventilating purposes. Mr. Mayhew's wife was the sister of Kagi, one of John Brown's men.<sup>18</sup>

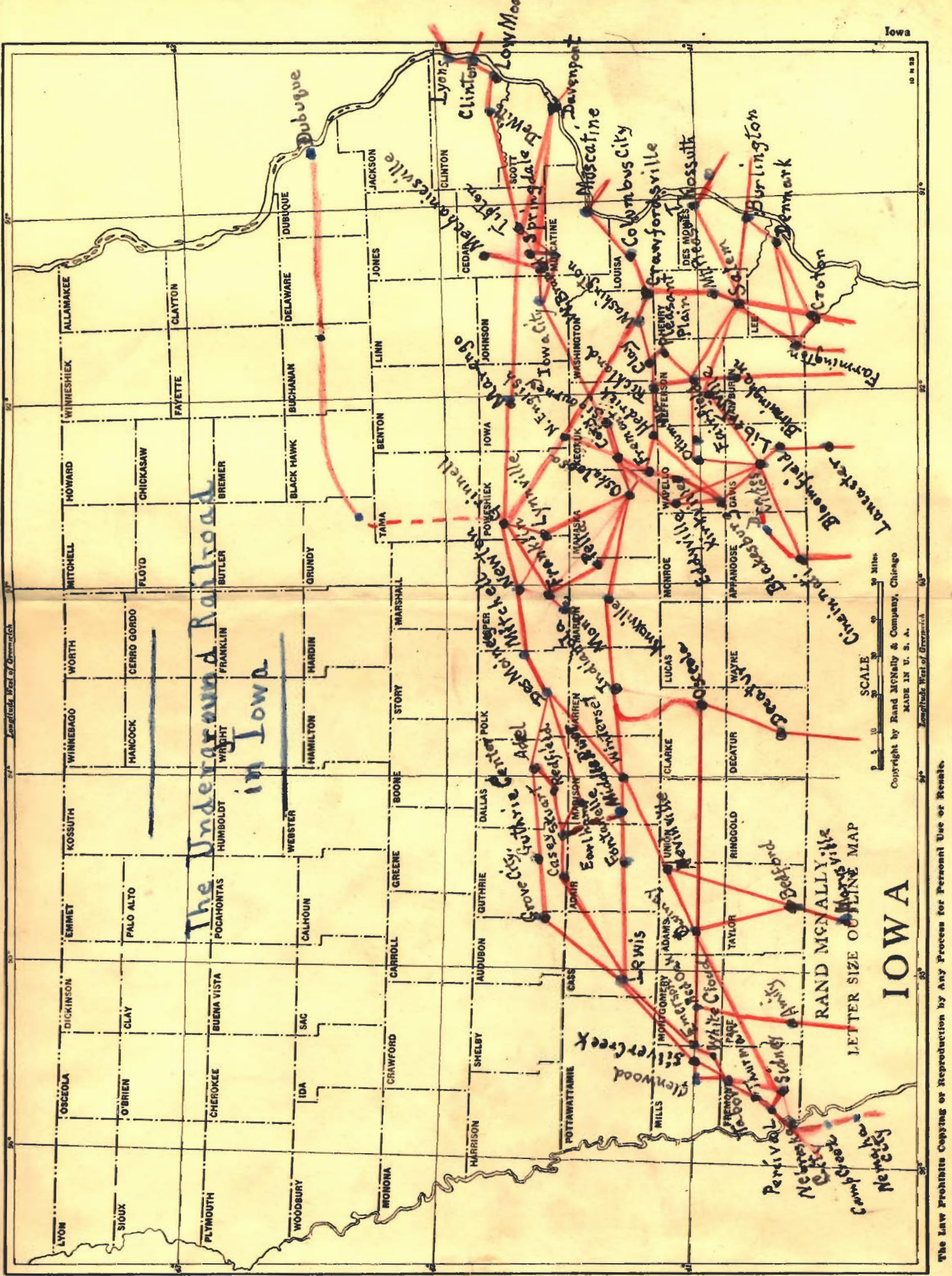
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<sup>16</sup>Kansas City Star (Mo.), July 2, 1905.

<sup>17</sup>Nemaha City Journal, Jan., 1858; Anti-Slavery Tracts, No. 15. New Series. (New York, 1861), p. 93.

<sup>18</sup>Transactions and Reports, Neb. State Hist. Soc., V, 72.





The Underground Railroad  
in Iowa

IOWA  
LETTER SIZE OUTLINE MAP  
RAND MCNALLY

Iowa

SCALE  
0 10 20 30 Miles  
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## CHAPTER IV

## UNDERGROUND ROUTES IN IOWA

Routes to Tabor and Incidents There and Thereabouts

At Nebraska City there was a ferry by which the fugitives usually crossed the Missouri River into Iowa. Thence they could take one of three routes to Tabor, with its numerous Underground agents among the Oberling graduates and Congregationalists. They could move north to Civil Bend (later Percival), where Dr. Ira D. Blanchard was the most zealous operator and was ably assisted by others. From Civil Bend the route led northeast to Tabor. A second route passed from Percival through Thurman to Tabor, while the third one ran from the ferry northeast to Sidney, and from there directly north to Tabor. At this famous junction the more prominent aiders of fugitives were Mr. and Mrs. George B. Gaston, Mr. and Mrs. James K. Gaston, the Rev. and Mrs. John Todd, President and Mrs. William M. Brooks, Origin Cummings, Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Platt and Dr. J. F. Sanborn. Regular hiding places were maintained in the Sanborn, Todd, Jones, and George B. Gaston homes, all of which still stand in their original or altered conditions, and doubtless in other houses or barns of the village.

The Rev. ~~Mr.~~ Todd gives July 4, 1854, as the date of the beginning of Underground activities in Tabor. The occasion was the arrival in the quiet village of a Mormon family and their six slaves in three covered wagons on their way from Mississippi to Salt Lake City. After encamping for the night, the Mormons sent two of the blacks to get water from a well near a hotel, then under construction. The builders talked with these blacks and found that five of the

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six in their party wished to escape from slavery. By arrangement the five met their guides--S. H. Adams, John Hallam, James K. Gaston, and Irish Henry--at the hotel corner that night and were taken across the Mishnabotna River and hidden in the bushes. Meanwhile George B. Gaston drove out to the house of C. W. Tolles, on Silver Creek, and arranged for their reception.

The owner of the slaves found sympathizers a few miles south of Tabor, who helped him hunt for his runaways on both sides of the Mishnabotna. One of the searching party was kindly disposed to the hunted creatures and avoided looking for them in the place where he knew them to be. Hence they were not found.

After the fruitless hunt the fugitives were taken in charge by Cephas Case and William L. Clark. After they had gone some distance they inquired the way to Quincy of a stranger on horseback. This stranger reported what he had seen to the master, who hastened to Quincy and posted handbills describing his slaves, but got no clue of them because Clark and Case, fearing trouble, had gone northeast to Lewis. They traveled on over one hundred miles farther and finally handed over their passengers to some station-keeper in a Quaker settlement near the Des Moines River.<sup>1</sup>

One could fill a book with the instances of aid afforded to fugitives at Tabor. Hence only a few of the later and more notable ones will be narrated. Two slave girls owned by Mr. Nuckolls, a prominent merchant of Nebraska City, were taken across the river by John Williamson, who bought small produce from the farmers on

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<sup>1</sup>Rev. John Todd, Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa, 134-137.



the Nebraska side and sold them cheap jewelry and other trinkets. In December, 1858, these girls were accompanied from Civil Bend to Tabor by Dr. Blanchard, and hidden in the house of B. F. Ladd for the day, the plan being to send them on that night. Muckolls had his relatives on the Iowa side station watchers at the bridges across Silver Creek and the Wishnabotna River, but the party crossed the creek near its mouth and the river at White Cloud, being led by Deacon Origin Cummings with a lantern, for it was a moonless misty night.

Meantime Muckolls and his friends searched the houses and premises of Percival without authority. Against this Reuben Williams remonstrated in strong terms, and was assaulted over the head by Muckolls. The assailant was arrested but allowed to go home, the following day <sup>being</sup> set for his trial. In order to be prepared for an influx of Muckolls' friends, the people of Percival summoned help from Tabor. In the morning a wagon filled with the military company of that village appeared, being preceded by Mr. Todd on horseback. However the running ice in the Missouri River prevented the crossing of Muckolls and his crowd. For several terms the case of Williams versus Muckolls continued in the county court until, finally, the plaintiff obtained damages to the extent of several thousand dollars. This enabled him to build a good house and barn.<sup>2</sup>

At Civil Bend Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Platt belonged to the group of Underground workers. One night they were called from bed and asked by Dr. Ira D. Blanchard if they were going to Tabor next day,

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<sup>2</sup>Rev. John Todd, op. cit., 139-142.

as he had a young mulatto who by his escape had rendered his master slaveless. As they intended to take two loads of shingles to the town, they readily consented to carry the mulatto with them. Accordingly place was provided for him on a bed of straw under a canvas sheet in the wagon driven by Mrs. Platt. After passing through a small settlement two miles out from Civil Bend, the track lay near the Missouri River, the region being uninhabited for several miles until a hamlet called "Plum Hollow" was reached.

While traveling through this region, the mulatto was allowed to sit up so as to watch the road in both directions. But the approach of a rider from the rear caused him to drop back. The rider soon came alongside and kept pace for some distance, watching keenly but saying nothing. Then he urged his mule ahead, and when the Platts arrived in "Plum Hollow" the mule was hitched in front of the only store in the place. Mr. Platt, having some business to transact, told his wife to drive on slowly. Soon the stranger caught up with her, but again remained silent and doubtless saw that she had a determined look on her face and a black-snake whip in her hand. However, she had no occasion to use it in her defense, for the rider did not tarry long.

At Tabor Mrs. Platt turned into the yard of J. L. Smith's hay barn, and her passenger ascended into the loft. After being fed and cared for, he was taken on that night to Lewis by one of Tabor's conductors.

Two years later the merchant at "Plum Hollow" asked Mrs. Platt if she did not travel sometimes in the interest of the Underground Railroad. From him she learned that the rider on the mule was a secret friend of escaping slaves, that he had been aware that the mulatto was on the road, and felt sure that he was in Mrs. Platt's lumber

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wagon, and had ridden up to test her courage as a conductor. Mrs. Platt lived in Civil Bend from 1847 to 1861, during which period she aided many refugees.<sup>3</sup>

Among the many slaves who crossed from Missouri into Iowa to find the protection of friends, were two men on horseback who belonged to Jo Parks, an Indian, who lived about ten miles from Westport, Missouri, and had many slaves. Jo procured a warrant, not good in Iowa, and went in quest of his runaways. They were so ignorant as to have taken work in a harvest field not far from the Missouri line, where Jo found them and whence he meant to take them back, but his plan was upset by the abolitionists of the neighborhood, who threatened to arrest him for kidnapping. Hence he left in haste for his home, without either his slaves or his horses.<sup>4</sup>

Early in April, 1857, a slave woman arrived in Tabor, having been directed there by John H. Byrd, the pastor of a little Congregational Church at Atchison, Kansas. This woman was disguised in a veil, cloak, and gloves to look like Mrs. Todd and taken by the latter's husband in his buggy up to Lewis.<sup>5</sup> This was evidently a daylight trip, which was sometimes resorted to when haste was considered essential.

An unusual episode began early in March, 1860, with the arrival in Tabor of four fugitives from Indian Territory. These negroes were conveyed in a covered wagon by Edward T. Sheldon and Newton Woodford across Silver and Mud Creeks. At the latter place they were

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<sup>3</sup>Letter from Mrs. Platt, Nov. 6, 1894.

<sup>4</sup>Collections, Kansas State Hist. Soc., VIII, 254.

<sup>5</sup>Rev. John Todd, op. cit., 138.

discovered to be running off slaves, and a warrant was obtained from Squire Cramer, with which a posse overtook and arrested the conductors for trial before the squire. The slaves were taken to Glenwood to be lodged in the jail of Mills County, but Mr. Samson, the jailor, was an anti-slavery man and would not receive them. Consequently they were placed temporarily in the barn of George Linville, a couple of miles southeast of Glenwood, and the next day removed to the house of Joe Foster, on Silver Creek.

Word of the capture was brought to Tabor, and a number of the men of the village attended the trial of Woodford and Sheldon, who were defended by Jason Mason and James Vincent. Towards the end of the trial, which resulted in clearing the defendants, the Taborites were quietly informed that there was "game" for them at Joe Foster's, two miles away. To see what the "game" might be, E. S. Hill and George Hunter went thither and hid in the bushes near the house. In the full of the moon they saw the slaves loaded into a wagon drawn by four horses, and, after noting the direction taken by the vehicle, they returned to the squire's just as the trial ended. The Taborites crowded into two sleds and started in pursuit. They found the trail ere long, made speed down the west side of the West Nishnabotna to White Cloud, crossed the river, and passed down the bottom until they finally discerned the wagon on a distant rise of ground. In the early dawn they overtook it east of Tabor. They brought it into the village under heavy guard and permitted the pro-slavery men to eat their breakfast in the hotel, while they spirited the fugitives away. The outwitted whites were sent to their homes, and the fugitives were halted at L. E. Webb's, two miles east of Tabor, for breakfast and to remain through the day. At sundown they proceeded in a sled, escorted by Origin Cummings, L. B. Hills, Paul Mason, D. E. Woods,

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and others on horseback. At Deacon L. B. Hill's place the blacks were transferred to a wagon and driven thence to the divide between Walnut Creek and the East Nishnabotna, which was followed up to Lewis. At Oliver Mills' station the party stopped for <sup>lunch</sup> ~~breakfast~~ and reached Lewis on March 10, after being out three days and four nights on a trip usually occupying twenty-four hours. Having delivered the refugees to other conductors in Lewis, the Taborites returned home.<sup>6</sup>

The ruffians, who seized and restored fugitives to their masters, were sometimes able to kidnap free negroes. In such cases Underground men of the neighborhood considered it a part of their duty to free the captives and return them to their homes. Dr. Blanchard, of Civil Bend, and Deacon George B. Gaston, of Tabor, figured in an incident of this sort. John Williamson, Henry Garner and his sister Maria were free negroes who lived at Civil Bend and were well known to Dr. Blanchard. The notorious shavehunter Hurd spent several weeks there and planned their seizure. In a closed carriage he and two of his gang overtook them while traveling from Percival, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska. They felled Garner with a club, and hurried all of the little party into Missouri. After some days Williamson escaped, but the Garners were lodged in a slave pen at St. Louis, evidently for the purpose of being sold.

When Dr. Blanchard learned of this kidnapping, he got Deacon Gaston to accompany him in search of the Garners, and at length traced them to their place of confinement. The doctor told their keeper how they had been seized and that they were free negroes. By legal action they were set at liberty. The kidnappers were apprehended and imprisoned at Council Bluffs to await trial, but broke jail and escaped before their hearing.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Rev. John Todd, op. cit., 144-150.

<sup>7</sup>Rev. John Todd, op. cit., 152-153.



The only negro of Tabor, who long resided in that vicinity, died about the end of the third week in June, 1835. His name was William Bankston and he had come from New Orleans to Tabor by way of the Underground Railroad. He long worked for men in the neighborhood and in later years owned small tracts of land for truck gardening, living alone on east Vine Street. In March, 1881, he joined the Congregational church and contributed sums of money to both the church and Tabor College.<sup>8</sup>

#### Underground Routes North and Northeast out of Tabor

As Tabor was the Junction of three Underground branches which sprang from Nebraska City, so also it was the starting point of four diverging routes. One of these ran a dozen miles north to Glenwood, which had a station from the early 1850's when Daniel H. Wheeler located there. From Glenwood the outlet seems to have been eastward about five miles to the Silver Creek neighborhood, a little west of Halvern, where the operators were Daniel Briggs, G. W. Tolles, and a Mr. Wing. This neighborhood also had a direct connection with Tabor and another with Lewis, thirty-five miles to the northeast. On the route from Tabor to Lewis there was a station at the Morris place, on Indian Creek, between Emerson and Hastings, another at the farm of Calvin Bradway, in the northeast corner of Pettawattamie County, and still another at Bradshaw's, near Lewis. At least on one occasion Mr. Bradway drove south a dozen or fifteen miles to Frankfort, with a slave family, and stopped overnight with J. B. Packard, who had become a permanent resident there in July, 1856. The next morning Mr. Bradway drove on east with his load. Mr. Bradshaw had a reputation for rendering efficient service in handling fugitives and for being ready to use weapons in their defense. In the town of Lewis itself

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<sup>8</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, June 25, 1935.

there was a considerable group of Underground Railroaders. Those remembered were J. N. Coe, Amos Gridley, the Rev. George B. Hitchcock, and Oliver Mills. Sometimes several wagons loaded with refugees would arrive in Lewis at the same time, usually at night, and keep all hands busy. In December, 1858, two slave girls of Colonel Nuckolls were brought into the town and secreted in an unsuspected place. By good strategy they were removed through the midst of their pursuers.<sup>9</sup> On the road out of Lewis east of Winterset lived the Hedges family, who were hospitable to escaping slaves.

The Rev. E. S. Hills, who was himself often a conductor on the route from Tabor to Lewis from 1856, tells us that the drive was fifty-nine miles and could not always be made in one night. In that case a covered wagon and an "emigrant air" served to allay the suspicions of the persons one met on the road. The Underground traffic was active, he says, from 1835 until the Civil War broke up the business, which was heaviest out of Tabor from 1852 to 1862. His brother, L. B. Hill, piloted one hundred and three fugitives during the year following their father's death, which occurred in 1851; but it must be remembered that Tabor's other conductors were not idle during that brief period or the years following. One may not hope to give an exhaustive list of them, but one can name the following: Origin Cummings, S. D. Dea, S. H. Adams, E. Avery, A. C. Gaston, Charles F. Lawrence, a Mr. Mason, Edward T. Sheldon, James L. Smith, and Newton Woodford.<sup>10</sup>

From Tabor fugitives were sometimes directed through to the old

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Daniel H. Wheeler, May 29, 1900; letter from Sturgis Williams, no date; letter from J. B. Packard, Dec. 12, 1895; letter from S. H. Adams, Oct. 31, 1894; letter from Oliver Mills, Oct. 18, 1894; letter from Mrs. E. G. Platt, Nov. 6, 1895; Daily Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Ia., Aug. 22, 1920.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Rev. E. S. Hills, Oct. 30, 1894; letter from J. E. Todd, no date.

town of Frankfort, which in 1858 numbered seventeen buildings and had three physicians. It was ~~was~~ little west of Red Oak and no longer exists. In the outskirts of Frankfort lived the Rev. William W. Merritt. According to his description of the route with which he was connected, it ran from Tabor close to the southern boundaries of Mills and Montgomery counties until it reached Tarkio Creek, then along that creek to Pilot Grove Township, Montgomery County, and so across the divide and up Seven Mile Creek into Cass County, where there was a station. At this point the route doubtless turned east to Winterset.

In Frankfort Dr. Amasa Bond, Solomon Stout, and others administered the Underground mysteries. Dr. Bond was a settler from Indiana and a zealous friend of the slave. From Frankfort the fugitives were often taken to Mount Pisgah as the next stop. Being in Frankfort one day, Mr. Merritt was in the store talking with an acquaintance, when Sheriff L. C. Clark loudly charged him with harboring "niggers" out at his place and warned him against committing any "criminalities" in the county. Then, taking Mr. Merritt out to the hitching rack, he told him in low tones that the United States marshal had ordered him to search his premises, and that he would be there about nine o'clock that night with a posse.<sup>11</sup>

Ten minutes later Mr. Merritt was back at his cabin on Tarkio and found there the Rev. John Todd from Tabor, sitting in the house and reading a Bible, while the slaves he had brought were huddled in the "lean-to". He told Mr. Todd that officers were on their trail, and that the negroes must be moved before nine o'clock. Two men, three women, and three small children were brought in, and Mr. Merritt got breakfast for them. An hour later Mr. Todd was on his way back

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<sup>11</sup>Letter from J. B. Packard, Dec. 12, 1895; Des Moines Capital, May 7, 1924; letter from W. Merritt, Dec. 22, 1895.

to Tabor, and Mr. Merritt was driving, with the fugitives in the bottom of a canvas-covered wagon, to the station in Cass County, where he delivered them on the morning of the third day.

In accordance with his warning, Sheriff Cook visited Mr. Merritt's place and stood at a distance, with his back to the scene of action, talking with some of his men while his chief deputy, Dr. Bond, conducted the search. When he learned that no incriminating evidence had been found, the sheriff swore that he would give two dollars out of his own pocket "to catch anyone running niggers through his county," after which the searchers went home and to bed.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes refugees were conveyed to Mr. Merritt's place from Amity (or College Springs), a settlement formed by Massachusetts people in 1848 a little north of the Missouri boundary in Page County. For example, in the autumn of 1861 or later seven were brought him by the Congregational minister of that place. This party was headed by a runaway who had gone back to Missouri and abducted his mother, sisters, and brothers. They were amply supplied with provisions, etc., by Mr. Merritt and his neighbors and passed on. The next day a body of armed men on horseback scoured the neighborhood, but the slaves for whom they were looking were already thirty miles away.<sup>13</sup>

Another route out of Lewis ran northeast near Turkey Creek to the south line of Guthrie County, where the village of Casey now stands,-- a distance say of thirty miles,--then ten miles to Summit Grove (now Stuart), there turned northeast and crossed Raccoon River near Redfield, and passed on through Adel to Des Moines. From Summit Grove

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<sup>12</sup>Des Moines Capital, May 7, 1924.

<sup>13</sup>Letter from W. W. Merritt, Dec. 22, 1895.

issued another branch, which passed somewhat northeastwardly along Quaker Divide (often called Bear Creek from its Quaker meeting), the divide being five miles northwest of Earlham. This branch followed along the south side of the upward curve of the South Raccoon to Des Moines. It was at Bear Creek that John Brown established one of his reliable stations, where he stopped on his journeys to Kansas and on the way back East, when he brought fugitives with him.<sup>14</sup>

Samuel B. Chantry kept a station near the site of Casey; Alistair W. Lewis at Summit Grove, to which colored men and women many times crossed the prairies sixteen miles northwest from the village of Middle River, which lies six miles west of Winterset; and the Cook family at Quaker Divide (Bear Creek). This family consisted of Grandfather John Cook and his wife, their son Martin and his family, and Martin's two nephews, John R. and Harmon Cook. These nephews and their uncle were the conductors.

One Friday evening in the winter of 1859-60, while Harmon was attending school, he drove a carriage to Bear Creek containing two slave sisters who had run away from their father and master in Missouri because they had heard him planning to sell them down South. They had been on the road seven weeks when they arrived at Summit Grove. Before daylight Saturday morning they were safely at home with the Cook family.

On the following Monday afternoon one of the sisters ran in from the yard and said their master was coming. He was accompanied by other men and told Grandfather Cook that he had reason to believe his girls were there. The old man started a parley by demanding his warrant, during which Grandmother Cook appeared and urged that the master

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<sup>14</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, II, 446.

be permitted to search the house. He looked through all the rooms, but found no trace of his slave daughters because they had been carefully hidden under a large feather bed, over which the covers had been smoothly spread and the pillows neatly set up at the head of the bed. Grandmother Cook had correctly informed the slaveholder that he would not find the persons for whom he was looking.<sup>15</sup>

D. B. Cook, a son of Martin Cook, says that the first negroes he ever saw was one morning when he and his brother were sent upstairs on an errand and were so scared by coming upon four big, black men that they ran down in a hurry. All that day the negroes were employed in the field southwest of the house cutting corn and were therefore not discovered by the men who came and searched the house. That night Martin Cook put the negroes in his wagon, covered them with a sheet, drove north, and crossed the ferry.<sup>16</sup> This trip seems to have been made to Adel.

From Adel the route was twenty-three miles east to Des Moines. On this route J. J. Jordan lived in a two and a half story frame house a few miles west of the city, and there he entertained John Brown and his fugitives. He often concealed runaways out in the thick undergrowth of the timber on his farm.

One time a carriage load of escaping slaves was moving down the south side of Raccoon River and had reached the woods on the bluffs near Des Moines, when about three o'clock in the morning distant hoof beats were heard in the rear. At once the carriage turned off into a narrow road, down which it passed a few rods and stopped. After the sounds of the horses were lost in the distance, the carriage turned and sped for the station in Des Moines, where the passengers were

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<sup>15</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, II, 447-9, X, 383.

<sup>16</sup>Letter from D. B. Cook, Aug. 21, 1934.

landed before daylight.<sup>17</sup>

Seven miles southwest of Earlham and thirteen miles northwest of Winterset lived John Early. His station was undoubtedly a connecting link between the operators in and near Winterset and those of Quaker Divide (Bear Creek).<sup>18</sup>

While Mr. Merritt piloted fugitives from Frankfort (or Red Oak) up to the station on Seven Mile Creek, east of Lewis, whence they doubtless passed eastward to Fontanelle and Winterset, some of them were moved directly east to Quincy before striking northeastward for Nevinville and Winterset. J. E. Todd, the son of the Rev. John Todd of Tabor, has said that the stations usually visited after Lewis was reached were Fontanelle and Winterset. These towns are in the third tier of counties north of the Missouri boundary, but he adds that sometimes the route was through Quincy, thus intimating that there was an alternative route (or routes) which passed through Mills and Montgomery counties, which are in the second tier.

G. W. Grant, who settled at Nevinville in the spring of 1859, when southwestern Iowa was still sparsely settled and stations were some distance apart, speaks of a route issuing from Maryville, Missouri, running north to Bedford and so to Quincy, whence it passed northeast to Nevinville and on to Winterset, in the third tier, and to Des Moines, in the 4th tier. Half-way between Quincy and Nevinville lived Samuel Moore, whose house was a station. The section of this road below Quincy, Mr. Grant thinks, began operations as late as the spring of 1861 and continued until the Emancipation Proclamation. The little village of Nevinville, he adds, had no lack of helpers because it had been settled by New England abolitionists. It contained only one Democrat, Deacon P. R. Chamberlain, from Ashtabula, Ohio, and he was also an abolitionist. The deacon not only took fugitives into his

<sup>17</sup>Letter from D. B. Cook, Aug. 21, 1934.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

house, but he also gave them employment and built a house for them on his farm. Several families of escaped slaves lived comfortably in the village during most of the Civil War and sent their children to both day and Sunday school. Toward the end of the conflict they removed to Des Moines.<sup>19</sup>

At Winterset, which was platted in 1849, three incoming routes converged. One of these was from Lewis and intermediate stations to the west, another was from Quincy and Levinville, and the third was from the southeast. A mile west of Winterset B. F. Roberts maintained a station in a three-story stone house he had built, the basement of which was often full of refugees. His usual trip was made at night in a covered wagon to Indianola, twenty-six miles east, where he delivered his passengers to some co-worker. Near Mr. Roberts lived Dr. Leonard, who also befriended fugitives and sent his son, S. R. Leonard, to pilot them on. In Winterset itself Dr. Scott was the manager of a station. H. A. Mueller reports that the Underground traffic in the Winterset neighborhood continued during the 1850's and until 1862.<sup>20</sup>

A few miles southeast of Winterset there was a station kept by John S. Tullis, who probably received his consignments of negroes from Osceola, about eighteen miles farther in that direction, and conveyed them part or all of the way to Des Moines, thirty miles or more to the northeast.<sup>21</sup>

Besides the outbound route from Winterset to Indianola and beyond, there was one northeast to Des Moines, with intermediate stations seven and eight miles out kept by James Ferris and William McDonald,

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<sup>19</sup>Letter from G. W. Grant, Jan. 24, 1896.

<sup>20</sup>Letter from Henry J. B. Cummings, Nov. 24, 1895; letter from H. A. Mueller, Aug. 13, 1934.

<sup>21</sup>Letter from H. A. Mueller, Aug. 13, 1934.



respectively. Mr. Ferris is said to have aided the escape of a slave belonging to his son-in-law, who lived in Missouri. The master came to the Ferris house in pursuit and slept in the chamber just below the attic room in which his chattel was concealed.<sup>22</sup>

### The Jim Lane Trail as an Underground Route

A route from Sidney, the seat of Fremont County in the southwest corner of Iowa, then northeast to Quincy, Adams County, and east across Union to Osceola, the seat of Clark County, then northward through the western part of Warren to Indianola, then east again by way of Knoxville and Oskaloosa to Sigourney, in Keokuk County, then northeast to Iowa City, John County,--this route was the trail laid out in 1856 by James H. Lane, when the Missouri River was closed to free-state immigration into Kansas. The establishment of the trail was announced in a circular by the Iowa State Central Committee on July 4 of that year, the towns along it being named in reverse order, except that Sidney was mentioned before Quincy. The trail was marked by cairns or piles of stones built on the elevations. These became known as "Lane's Chimneys."

In the autumn of 1856, after Lane's army of the North had entered Kansas over this trail, Dr. Ira D. Blanchard was convinced that it was the most practicable route for slaves escaping to Canada and went to Kansas to recommend it to the anti-slavery people there. John Brown readily agreed with Blanchard and accompanied him to Topeka to improve the arrangements/ of that Underground centre.<sup>23</sup>

As we have seen a part of the Jim Lane trail stretched east from Indianola to Knoxville and Oskaloosa. Who attended to the refugees

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from H. A. Mueller, Aug. 13, 1924.

<sup>23</sup> Collections, Kansas State Historical Society, XLII, 288-290.

at Knoxville is not yet known, and only one of the men operating at Oskaloosa has been discovered. He was James Boyd, who, in 1852, removed from near New Concord, Guernsey County, Ohio, to that town and, true to his Covenanter principles, engaged in running off slaves. At times they came through in bands. For Example, in 1856, Mr. Boyd's eldest son William took a load of ten in a big covered wagon to some station eastward, probably in Sigourney.<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes the anti-slavery people of Iowa were angered by advertisements in the newspapers, offering rewards for runaway slaves. One such appeared in the Keokuk Argus of May 31, 1846, which described a slave woman, Lucy, thirty-six years of age, very stout and black, who had escaped from Waterloo, Clark County, Missouri. It was believed that she would be conducted to Iowa Territory in the direction of Keosauqua, the seat of Van Buren County, or beyond that place to a settlement of negroes who had been freed some years before by one Meirs, of Tully, Lewis County, Missouri. A liberal reward and the payment of reasonable expenses were offered for Lucy's return, or her detention until her owner could get her.<sup>25</sup> In many neighborhoods notices of this sort would produce the opposite effect from that intended.

Not infrequently fugitives were conveyed down from the Des Moines route through the southwest corner of Jasper County, where the Corner family cared for them and took them through Oskaloosa to the vicinity of Fremont, a dozen miles southeast of Oskaloosa. There they were entrusted to abolition friends, including Isaac Hockett,

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<sup>24</sup>Letter from Rev. P. P. Boyd, no date.

<sup>25</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XV, 329.

Matthew McCormick, and William Montgomery. In 1853 or '4 a man brought a slave mother and child to the Corners. Mr. Corner, the head of the family, piloted them to the Fremont neighborhood, whence Mr. Montgomery conveyed them thirteen miles east to Richland. From there they were taken nine miles northeast to Washington and so, by a more or less zigzag course some seventy miles to Davenport. At this point they were ferried across the Mississippi. Other slaves who arrived at the home of the Corners were forwarded by the same route, while still others were conducted thirty miles northeast to Grinnell, then east through the fourth tier of counties to Davenport.

It was probably in 1856 that Mr. Corner attempted to take a male passenger to Fremont by a shorter route than his usual one, but it was a very dark night and he lost his way. He applied to an old Hollander, paid him twenty-five cents, and was put on the road to Pella. There he struck the stage road to Oskaloosa, but east of that town had to stop at a Quaker settlement because day was breaking. Mr. Corner hid his passenger in a cornfield and so reported to its owner, who displayed considerable timidity. However, the farmer's wife possessed the requisite courage, got breakfast for their visitors, and persuaded her husband to permit the slave to remain until Mr. Corner could ride down to Fremont and arrange with Isaac Hockett to call for him that night. The explanation was that the farmer's wife was Mr. Hockett's sister. That night Isaac drove with the fugitive to Richland.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Letter from W. E. Corner, no date.

## CHAPTER V

## UNDERGROUND ROUTES IN IOWA (continued)

The Network of Underground Trails in the Southeastern  
Counties of Iowa

The four easternmost counties of the first tier, the four of the second, and the three of the third are netted over with interlacing Underground trails, which would doubtless be more numerous if all of them were known. The patrols maintained along the Missouri boundary were not alert enough to prevent slaves from crossing into Iowa at many points. The greatest obstacle in their way was the stretch of thirty miles of the Des Moines River which formed the southwestern boundary of Lee County. As the slaves usually entered the state without guides, their places of ingress have in general gone unrecorded, but a few are known.

In the southwestern angle of Lee County Croton was a favorite place for entrance, because the runaways had heard that they had numerous friends in the county among the Quakers and the Congregationalists. H. B. Armstrong lived from 1839 to 1862 a few miles northeast of Croton, where he operated a mill. Incidentally, he escorted fugitives to Denmark, then northwest eighteen miles to Salem. Benjamin Carey and L. Holbrook were other conductors on this route. From some of the slaves he had helped Mr. Armstrong received letters telling of their safe arrival in Canada. Missourians sometimes visited Mr. Armstrong's mill, with the poorly concealed purpose of discovering where the Underground Railroad started. Some of them were frank enough to tell him, however, that a large reward was offered to any one who would induce him to cross the Missouri line.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from J. H. Armstrong, Dec. 10, 1895.

Six miles northeast of Groton lived the Cary and Holbrook families, who received and aided fugitives. The next Underground headquarters in that direction was Denmark, which was first settled in June, 1836, by a few New Englanders. About fifteen months later the Rev. Julius Reed and the Rev. Asa Turner arrived to organize the Congregational Church in a place having only three dwellings and a meeting-house. In May, 1838, the new congregation consisted of thirty-two persons, but it rapidly grew under the pastorate of Mr. Turner, which lasted thirty years. Among the newcomers in 1839 was Dr. George Shedd, a graduate of Dartmouth College and student of medicine at Cincinnati, Ohio, who, like Mr. Turner, both talked and practiced abolition. Other members of the Underground contingent were Brown H. Adamson and Messrs. Doeskid and Fox. In fact, Denmark became widely known as a hotbed of anti-slavery and an important Underground centre. Once when a slave woman was in hiding there and a gang of fellows were hunting for her, Mr. Adamson hitched up his buggy as if to take his wife to church, but instead drove off with the woman disguised in her clothes right through the crowd. Theron Trowbridge, a parishoner of Mr. Turner's, was no less bold in helping fugitives to elude their pursuers. One Sunday morning he had several in his house and knew they were being hunted by men with bloodhounds. Nevertheless, he meant to attend service as usual, but before leaving home he prepared some poisoned biscuits for the dogs and instructed his son, J. B. Trowbridge, to feed them to the animals in case they appeared. The dogs ate the biscuits and were never used afterwards to hunt runaways.<sup>2</sup>

The Underground activities continued at Denmark through the summer of 1862 as is shown by two editorials in the Plain Dealer, a

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<sup>2</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 422-3, 446.

Democratic newspaper published at Fort Madison. The first of these appeared on May 27, 1857, and declared that, "To the disgrace of the County and State, Denmark has the name of being a rendezvous of men, who occasionally engage in negro-stealing, at the same time professing the religion of the gospel. Men of less shrewdness have been hanged--have received their just deserts--for engaging in practices of which respectable citizens of Denmark have been accused." The other, which was printed on July 11, 1862, treated of the celebration of Independence Day in Denmark, devoting most of its space in a sarcastic vein to the presence of "an intelligent colored gentleman, late of Virginia, but now sojourning in Denmark, who was introduced to the multitude of white ladies and gentlemen by Parson Turner."<sup>3</sup>

Between Denmark and Salem was the Quaker community of New Garden, which had its way-stations. One of these was the barn of Nathan Bond, where on one occasion a fugitive was awaiting the opportunity of conveyance to Denmark. However, he had the misfortune to be captured by two brothers named Berry, who received a reward of \$200 for him.<sup>4</sup> Another hiding-place in New Garden was in the house of Joseph D. Hoag, for many years a minister of the Society of Friends there. In building his house Mr. Hoag had a secret closet constructed beneath the stairway leading to the upper floor, the entrance to it being through a trap-door on the landing. The closet still bears the significant name of "the nigger hold."

Across the road and a little to the west of Mr. Hoag lived Joel C. Garretson, who also secreted fugitives. He happened to be away from home at the time a certain negro appeared at his door in the even-

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<sup>3</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XLIV, 114, 110; Proceedings and Collections, Nebraska Hist. Society, XV, 168; letter from J. H. Armstrong, Dec. 10, 12, 1895.

<sup>4</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 427-8.

ing, but the children and a neighbor woman were there with Mrs. Garretson, who thought it wiser not to admit the black man. Instead she sent him to hide in the peach orchard. There he took cover in the tall grass and weeds at the foot of a tree with low hanging branches. Scarcely had he laid down when his pursuers came and peered into the windows of the house and then walked up and down through the aisles of the orchard. Failing to discover their man, they took their departure. On the return of Mr. Garretson he piloted the fugitive to a hazel thicket on a ridge in the centre of Mr Hoag's farm and kept him there until his wife and child could be brought to him from their place of concealment. Then Nathan Kellum of New Garden took the reunited family to a ravine, from which they were conveyed to Denmark the following night. Once Mr. Kellum found it necessary to make a daylight trip along the highway from Salem to Denmark, with a surry full of refugees. As they were all fully garbed as Quaker women they were not detected.<sup>5</sup>

The reason for conveying fugitives from Salem to Denmark was that they might be taken from there eastward to Burlington to cross the Mississippi for their overland trip to Chicago and their lake trip to Canada West. The road to Burlington was sometimes beset by slavehunters. Hence the descendants of the Puritans at Denmark often sent a body of armed guides with their proteges. In the absence of such protection some subterfuge had often to be resorted to in order to get the refugees across the river. In one instance two negroes were placed in the bottom of a wagon and covered with farm produce. Thus they were enabled to cross on the same ferry with their pursuers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 424, 442.

<sup>6</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXIV, 114, 119; Proceedings and Collections, Nebraska Historical Society, XV, 168; letter from J. H. Armstrong, Dec. 10, 12, 1895.

One of the Underground operators at Burlington was Edward James, who had served as a surgeon in the regular army. In June, 1855, Dr. James drove into Burlington, with a negro beside him, crossed the ferry, and was stopped on the Illinois side by two slavehunters. They alleged that the negro was Dick, a fugitive slave from Clark County, Missouri, whose owner was one Rutherford and in whose name they claimed the negro. They were armed with bowie knives and revolvers, and accompanied Dr. James and the slave back to Burlington for court action in the case.

The anti-slavery men of the town decided to rescue the slave if the court did not set him free. Governor Grimes, who lived in Burlington, interested himself in the affair by asking his brother and eleven friends of the fugitive to be present at the trial and render whatever help the prisoner might need. But when the day of the hearing came, Rutherford's son swore that the prisoner was not Dick. He was therefore liberated, given the horse pistol that had been taken from him, escorted by a throng of jubilant people to the ferry and across the river by guard, where he was put on the railway train to continue his interrupted journey to freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Salem is a Quaker village situated in the southeastern part of Henry County, about twenty-eight miles from Burlington. Among its Underground operators were John Comer, the Dorlands, Elihu Frazier, Thomas Clarkson Frazier, John Garretson, D. W. Henderson, Peter Hobson, William Johnson, the Mendenhalls, Paul Way, and others. While the village received some of its refugees from Denmark, it also sent some there, as shown above. Croton was another source of its supply as was also Cincinnati, Iowa. Cincinnati is a village seventy miles directly southwest, being near the Missouri boundary in Appanoose County. In

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<sup>7</sup>Henry Sabin and Edwin L. Sabin, The Making of Iowa, 246-247.



1852, when H. B. Armstrong settled at Cincinnati, a great many slaves were escaping from across the line and being aided by him and others. Among these were John Fulcher, Josiah Gilbert, Joel Green, Luther K. Holbrook, D. McDonald, George Moses Robinson, a Mr. Root, Nathaniel Stanton, and Seth B. Stanton.

From Cincinnati the route ran to the homes of William Hedgecock and Wesley Martin, in the northern part of Appanoose County, thence southeast to Drakeville, in Davis County, where some of the Underground "agents" were Arthur Corner, George and John Elliott, James Hardy, William Klinger, and Hiram Paggett. The Elliotts were Wesleyan Methodists and ardent friends of the slave who had emigrated from Washington County, Pennsylvania. Sometimes the fugitives were hauled twenty-eight miles a little west of north to Eddyville, where the Des Moines River could be crossed by means of a toll bridge so as to continue the journey forty miles northeast to North English. From there it was twenty-nine miles to Iowa City, the next Underground centre. By concealing the fugitives under hay in a covered wagon, many could be conveyed in daylight when not closely pressed.<sup>8</sup>

About March 1, 1850, two men called at George Elliott's place, in Drakeville, under pretense of buying some fruit trees. They soon revealed that they were from Lancaster, Missouri, and need<sup>ed</sup> the orchardist's aid for a family of slaves who wished to escape to Canada. It was agreed that on a certain night his callers would be at a designated place a few miles north of the Missouri boundary. George Elliott, Jr. Albert Corner, and David Hardy drove down from Drakeville and met the family, consisting of a father, mother, and their four children, who were the chattels of a planter named McQuitty. With them they drove back, arriving on the night of March 8. The whole

<sup>8</sup>Letter from George Elliott, Jr., Nov. 18, 1895.

party was given supper and rest and then started for Eddyville. In due time the Des Moines was crossed, and the Sandridge road was followed north of Kirkville to Alpha English's, where the negroes were handed over to other conductors. These conductors were Mr. English and Alexander Pickens and resorted to the strategy of driving southwest to Blakeburg, only thirteen miles northwest of Drakeville. There they changed horses and passed on to the next station. Again they took a fresh team and arrived that night at the house of Mr. Durfus, near where the town of Hedrick now stands. Mr. Durfus could not leave his threshing and sent them on three miles to an elderly preacher, who conducted the negroes by way of Richland up to Washington. Thence they were taken on to Davenport and across the Mississippi for the journey by the steam cars to Chicago.

When George Elliott, Jr. and his two companions got back from their night's trip across the Des Moines River, they found Drakeville infested by slavehunters, who distributed handbills offering a reward of \$1,400 for information that would lead to the recovery of the runaways. For days the strangers searched fields and barns and watched the crossings of the river up and down for a distance of forty miles, but all to no purpose.<sup>9</sup>

James Milton and his half-brother, Arthur Corner, settled near Drakeville with their families and are known to have helped fugitives. They came from Morgan County, Ohio, where much Underground work was done. In 1855 or thereabouts a negro was brought from Cincinnati, Iowa, to Arthur Corner's place by John Calver. Mr. Corner delivered him to Jacob Lam, near Libertyville, a distance of twenty-six miles northeast. From there the slave was taken to Salem. The last fugitives known to have been passed through by this route came in March, 1860.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from W. E. Corner, Jan. 1, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Erastus Milton, March 16, 1896.

It is more than likely that some fugitive slaves were sent from Salem direct to Burlington. Others however were transported northeast to Kossuth, then southeast five miles to the Mississippi to cross to Oquawka for the journey to Galesburgh, Illinois, and onward. Still others were conveyed by a more northerly course to Pleasant Grove, thence a little westwardly to Crawfordville, and northeastward to Muscatine or Davenport. So far as known the route through Kossuth to Oquawka was seldom used. Early in the 1840's a slave was escorted from Salem to Kossuth, where he spend<sup>d</sup> a week in the barn of Frederick Heizer. He was then guided by Mr. Heizer and John McClure by way of Oquawka to Galesburg. After reporting to the Rev. George Gale, the conductors delivered their charge to men going to Chicago. Several later deliveries were effected in the same way.<sup>11</sup>

Groups of fugitives were brought into Salem from time to time in a closed carriage and fed in an open lot in the rear of the Congregational Church and John Garretson's home, on the south side of the square. Then they entered the carriage again, which belonged to Mr. Garretson, and were driven away.<sup>12</sup>

It is said that Elim Frazier, of Salem, went to Missouri on a mission in the interest of some slaves, was seized by patrols, and was strung up to make him confess the nature of his errand. As nothing pertinent could be got from him, he was released and allowed to return home.

At least one fugitive was concealed in the hotel at Salem kept by D. W. Henderson. Peter Hobson undertook the delicate task of spiriting him away. Evidently to that end Peter's wife Rachel was in

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<sup>11</sup>Letter from Morris W. Blair, Jan. 22, 1896; Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 424, 428.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 440.

the hotel on a Sunday morning and was called for by her husband, with his buggy, to go to meeting. Instead, the slave in the outfit of a Quakeress entered the vehicle and was driven to the woods on Fish Creek, four miles northeast of Salem, and detained there until he could be moved to another station, probably Mount Pleasant.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Release of the Slaves of Ruel Daggs at Salem

In the summer of 1848 some of the men of Salem became involved in a rescue of fugitive slaves for which they were prosecuted. Nine of the sixteen human chattels of Ruel Daggs fled from his farm in Clarke County, Missouri, on account of his reported intention to sell them South. Early in June they escaped to the lonely dwelling of Dick Leggens and a free negro, Sam Webster, which was located in a dense woods south of the Des Moines River. A heavy rain compelled them to stay there an extra day and part of that night. Leggens then conducted them to the flooded river, helped them to build a raft, and after some delay landed them on its north bank not far from Farmington. Thence they passed on to the vicinity of Salem, only to be captured in the bushes a mile or south of the village by two slavehunters.

They were being led away by their captors, when Elisha Frazier, Thomas Clarkson Frazier, and William Johnson came up and insisted that the whole party go to Salem for a hearing before Justice Gibbs. Upon objection being offered by the slavehunters, one of the Quakers momentarily discarded his principles of non-resistance and declared that "he would wade in Missouri blood before the negroes should be taken." At the edge of the town the citizens joined the procession to the justice's office in the "great house" of Henderson Lewelling. The size of the crowd compelled the adjournment of the court to the meet-

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<sup>13</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 424.

ing-house, where the case was dismissed when the captors admitted that they had no warrant.

Apparently some of the freed negroes were hidden in Salem, but two of them took advantage of Paul Way's invitation to follow him and were put astride horses for the purpose. The slavehunters also left the village, their mood expressing itself in threats of vengeance. A few days later a body of armed Missourians appeared and searched the houses, beginning with that of Thomas Frazier. Warned ahead, Mr. Frazier was able to empty his house of the fugitives it contained and conceal them in a nearby woods. The Missourians found the family at dinner and received permission to conduct their search. Neither here nor in the other homes visited were any negroes discovered.<sup>14</sup>

In June, 1850, Mr. Daggs brought suit against a number of the Salem men for damages amounting to nearly \$3,000 in the federal court at Burlington, the charges being harboring his slaves and preventing their capture in violation of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. The case dragged on from term to term. Judge J. J. Dyer instructed the jury to investigate the case with unbiased minds and a sincere desire to render their verdict in accordance with the law and the evidence submitted to them. He also reminded them that they were to deal with the law and the Constitution as they were and not as they thought they ought to be. After being out an hour or two, they returned the verdict of guilty and awarded the plaintiff damages in the sum of \$2,900.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Palimpsest, II, No. 5 (May, 1921), 121.

<sup>15</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXII, 430-2, 437, 439, 440, II, 477.

### The Underground Traffic to Muscatine

The northeast route out of Salem ran eleven miles to the home of Professor L. L. Howe, three and a half miles east of Mount Pleasant. Professor Howe was a graduate of Ohio University, at Athens, and had conducted an academy at Lancaster, Ohio, in which William T. and John Sherman had been pupils. In the autumn of 1841 he removed to Iowa and settled near Mount Pleasant. He was an ardent abolitionist and helped hundreds of slaves to freedom, furnishing teams, provisions, and sometimes generous contributions of money to carry on the work. Time and again his life was in peril, and some of his property was destroyed by pro-slavery men. Once in Mount Pleasant a mob attacked and injured him to such an extent that his life was despaired of. In 1849 he became a stockholder in and the editor of the only Free Soil paper published west of the Mississippi River, namely, the Iowa Freeman. In the following year he became its sole proprietor and so remained until 1858, during which time its name was the Free Democrat. In 1856 two of his sons fought in Kansas under John Brown, and during the Civil War three of them and two sons-in-law served in the Union Army.<sup>16</sup>

Professor Howe's place was on the direct route north to Crawfordville, which also received passengers from Washington, at which two routes from the southwest converged. One of these routes came from Richland and Clay and the other from Birmingham by way of Fairfield and Pleasant Plain. Hence the traffic from Crawfordville northeastward by way of Columbus City to Muscatine was very heavy. Some of the fugitives arriving at Crawfordville were afforded refuge in the top story of Samuel Rankin's large, three-story, frame house

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<sup>16</sup>Letter from Prof. W. R. Howe, March 16, 1896.

at the southeast corner of the square. Samuel Rankin was assisted by Walker Rankin in caring for them, their largest number at one time being seven. Allen Stalker was conductor from Fairfield to Richland or to Pleasant Plain, as the case might be, the journey from those places to ~~Calhoun~~ and on to Washington being under the guidance of Manning Mills and Henry Morgan. From Washington to Crawfordsville John and Martin C. Kilgore were in charge.<sup>17</sup>

On a trip with a load of refugees in a covered wagon from Clay to Washington Henry Morgan was about to drive on the ferry boat to cross Skunk River when a slave owner rode up to look into the wagon. The quick wit of Mr. Morgan saved the day. He yelled, "We've got smallpox in there," which so dampened the curiosity of the rider that he wheeled and sped away.<sup>18</sup>

Out of Crawfordsville nine miles fugitives were delivered to Colonel Bailey, at Columbus City, who the following night took them on twenty-one miles to Muscatine. There Colonel Rankin was in charge and saw that the runaways were, as a rule, hidden in the loft of "the House of All Nations," which at one time accommodated as many as thirteen.<sup>19</sup> Another operator at Muscatine was Dr. Van Pelt. In 1855 a negro came to his place and was kept in a cornfield for six weeks. The master came and put up an advertisement on the gate post offering \$1,500 for his capture, but got no response. One night the slave was conveyed to Davenport and across the Mississippi to Rock Island. There he was provided with passage on the cars to Chicago.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, II, 450; letter from William E. Walker, March 24, 1896.

<sup>18</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, II, 451.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 452.

<sup>20</sup>Letter from J. A. Jelly, April 8, 1896.

In 1843 Muscatine had a population of about seven hundred, with a considerable pro-slavery element. Most of the abolitionists seem to have belonged to the Congregational church, whose membership then numbered only twenty-four. The pastor of this church was Alden B. Robbins, a young man who had graduated from Amherst College and the Andover Theological Seminary, both in western Massachusetts. He and his flock first occupied their new brick church on December 8, 1844, the wooden belfry of which was at the rear of the structure, inciting the ungodly to speak of it as "the Stearn-Wheel church." As Mr. Robbins sometimes preached anti-slavery sermons, the pro-slaveryites called it either "the damned Yankee Church" or expressed their opinion of its convictions and activities unmistakably by the title, "Uncle Tom's Cabin."<sup>21</sup>

About fifteen miles west of Croton fugitives entered Van Buren County and passed twelve miles up to the negro settlement at or near Mount Zion, a little above Keosauqua, the seat of the county, and thence eight or nine miles to Birmingham, where there were stations in communication with four abolitionists living near Baker, eighteen miles farther north, in the northern part of Jefferson County. These abolitionists were Samuel Gould and his son Ebenezer, Peter Goosebeck, and David Lindsay, all of whom had removed from Reynoldsburg, Ohio, to their new location in the 1840's. The most notable exploit of the Goulds, so far as known, was a trip they made into Missouri, from which after staying three days they brought a slave family.<sup>22</sup> As the Goulds and their fellow-Ohioans lived only three miles southeast of Clay, and six miles west of Pleasant Plain, all Underground centres, they could easily pass their fugitives through one or another of those places to Washington, whence they would be transported to Muscatine or Davenport.

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<sup>21</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXI, 349.

<sup>22</sup>Interview with A. W. Livingston, Columbus, O., in 1895.



The county just west of Van Buren is Davis, where, in 1850, H. B. Wagers was living close to the Missouri border. Making frequent business trips into the slave state, he became known among the slaves and often they knocked at his door. He admitted them, gave them a couple of days' rest, and drove them thirty miles in his wagon to Mr. Wilson's, near Ottumwa. Thence they were forwarded north. In the early light of morning a husband, wife, and three children arrived at Mr. Wager's house, with word that their master was in pursuit. Scarcely had they been hidden in a corner of the attic when their statement was verified by his arrival at the gate, with the sheriff. The men asked the family whether they had seen any "niggers" pass that morning. They answered "No" and invited the riders in for breakfast, at the same time telling them that the negroes must have taken the road a half-mile farther east. Needless to say, the slavehunters did not come in, but galloped on.<sup>23</sup>

In Ottumwa itself Josiah H. Myers, Joseph Wagg, and Dr. C. C. Warden were Underground operators. Nine miles east of there is Agency, where J. W. Millisack kept a station, and fourteen miles farther east is Fairfield, which had Underground connections south, southwest, and north.<sup>24</sup>

#### Routes of the Fourth Tier of Counties, East of Des Moines

Thirteen miles northeast of Des Moines lies Mitchelville, which is named after its founder, the Hon. Thomas Mitchell, who superintended the Underground work there and sent fugitives thirty-four miles farther on to the town of Grinnell. In conducting this traffic messages were sometimes passed to J. B. Grinnell, of which the following is a sample:

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<sup>23</sup>Letter from H. B. Wagers, April 11, 1896.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

"Dear Grinnell:--Uncle Tom says if the roads are not too bad you can look for those fleeces of wool by to-morrow. Send them on to test the market-price, and no back charges.

Yours, Hub."<sup>25</sup>

Fifteen miles beyond Mitchelville is Newton, the seat of Jasper County. Many persons of that county aided in the escape of fugitives. Newton, was, of course, on the main route to Grinnell, Iowa City, Springdale, De Witt, and Clinton. Joseph Arnold, an Underground conductor, tells that while Matthew Sparks and he were returning from Newton on November 4, 1857, they picked up three fugitives who had escaped from the Cherokee Nation and had the names of Sparks and Arnold on a piece of soiled paper. These fugitives said they were headed for Lynn Grove and were taken fourteen miles southeast to Lynnvile. Two miles northeast of that village is the Kenworthy Quaker settlement, which participated in Underground operations. At Lynnvile, C. B. White sheltered the three fugitives in his house and forwarded them eleven miles northeast to Grinnell.<sup>26</sup>

In the same year a negro father, mother, and small child were brought to Mr. Arnold, who kept them until daylight, conveyed them a few miles east to North Skunk River, ferried them across, and delivered them to Jarvis Johnson. The next night they were sent to Grinnell.

In April, 1859, three fugitives passed through Newton on their way to freedom. However, as time passed, they came in bands. For example, on August 13, 1860, fifteen slaves who had escaped from Missouri and Kansas and filled two wagons were escorted by about the same

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<sup>25</sup>J. B. Grinnell, Men and Events of Forty Years, 217; W. H. Siebert, Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom, 58.

<sup>26</sup>Palimpsest, II, No. 5, p. 129.

number of armed white men on horseback through Newton. One of the whites was Barclay Coppoc, who had been with John Brown at Harpers Ferry and barely escaped the fate suffered by his comrades, one of whom was his Brother Edward. For several hours they encamped a short distance from town and then resumed their journey. On the same day another party of negroes, numbering nineteen, passed a few miles south of Newton.<sup>27</sup>

One night in 1862 Sylvia Hutchins and four other slaves--two men, a young woman, and a child--escaped from Ray County, Missouri, to join a party of thirty seekers for freedom. They reached Kingston, Decatur County, where there was a recruiting station for Union soldiers. There all of the men but two elderly ones enlisted, and the women found work. On August 1, 1862, Sylvia and three of the other women went into Indianola, Warren County. They had been thrown into jail twice, but each time had been secretly released by the soldiers.

As a boy of thirteen years, M. A. McCord drove wagons of merchandise between Iowa City and Newton before the Rock Island Railroad reached the latter place. Many a night he hauled fugitive slaves from one station to another in their search for employment. Mr. McCord relates that twenty-eight of these refugees were in Newton during the first years of the Civil War, that some of them enlisted and the others went on farms near Wittenburg. At the same time some colored people settled in the northern part of Newton, where they had comfortable homes and a church.<sup>28</sup>

Grinnell lies thirteen miles east of Newton and is included in the eastern section of Iowa which was opened to the occupancy of white people in 1843. Grinnell is close to the western boundary of Poweshiek

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<sup>27</sup>History of Jasper County, Iowa, reprinted from the Jasper County Record, July 1, 1926.

<sup>28</sup>Newton Daily News, Dec. 18, 1926.

contained five hundred white residents. When Grinnell was settled, in 1854, central and western Iowa was merely dotted by a few hamlets of white men and seamed by winding paths along prairie ridges and through bridgeless streams. From the beginning Grinnell was an anti-slavery centre which became well known to and eagerly sought by runaway slaves. Its most active Underground workers were Josiah B. Grinnell, the founder of the town, Amos<sup>29</sup> Bixby, Harvey Bliss, Elter T. Brande, Colonel S. F. Cooper, Philo Parks, the Baileys, and the Harrises. Usually the slaves were sheltered in Mr. Grinnell's house and barn, the house being provided with a "liberty room" for that purpose, and in Colonel Cooper's house and cellar. Several fugitives were also cared for by Homer Hamlin. Mr. Grinnell's notoriety as a friend of the slaves led to the offer of a reward for his head. That fact however did not dampen his enthusiasm in the work as is shown by the following note, which he sent on August 15, 1860, to William Penn Clarke, at Iowa City:

"Tomorrow or next day there will be a company of 20 odd persons well armed passing on to Springdale.

"If they are to be troubled I trust they may have a fair warning."<sup>29</sup>

In March, 1860, four slave "boys" from Missouri were attending the public school at Grinnell. At the annual meeting of the school district a motion was made to exclude colored pupils, but was voted down. Next morning two angry men appeared at the school room, only to be told by the teacher, L. F. Parker, that he would defend every pupil rightfully there. The intruders hastened away to keep the "boys" from reaching the school yard, but found themselves surrounded by an excited crowd when they met the "boys," who threatened to defend themselves with pistols. This was the nearest Grinnell came to an outbreak

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<sup>29</sup>Letter from Prof. L. F. Parker, Aug. 30, 1894; Iowa Journal of History and Politics, X, 380. XXV, 44; Palimpsest, II, No. 5, 129.

of violence. After the term closed a sea-captain, who had objected to the presence of the "boys" in the school, published in a Saint Louis paper a description of the fugitives in Grinnell, after which the "boys" and a colored girl disappeared.<sup>30</sup>

The Shipment of John Brown and His Abducted Negroes  
to Chicago as Freight

When John Brown and some of his men were driving east, in February, 1859, with twelve slaves they had abducted from Missouri, they stopped with Mr. Grinnell. The fugitives slept in the "liberty room" and the arms of Brown and his guard were stacked there. The authorities of Missouri had offered a reward of \$3,000 for the apprehension of the party, and this offer stimulated Samuel Workman, the postmaster of Iowa City, to make plans for their capture. Already the United States marshal at Davenport had a warrant for Brown's arrest. From Grinnell the old Liberator and his party had moved on to Pedee, near Springdale, and were there when Mr. Grinnell took steps to prevent their getting into trouble, his purpose being to remove them from Iowa to Chicago. Hence he went to Chicago to secure the use of a box car, but was unable to obtain permission from the superintendent for the transportation of the negroes over his line. However, the superintendent gave Mr. Grinnell a draft for \$50 to assist Brown and his party.

As soon as Brown learned the outcome of Mr. Grinnell's efforts, he went to Iowa City and told William Penn Clarke, who proceeded to Davenport to try his hand. He was accompanied by L. A. Duncan, of the Iowa City Republican, and these two induced Colonel S. C. Trowbridge

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<sup>30</sup>Letter from Prof. L. F. Parker, as above.

to promote Brown's escape from Dr. Bowen's house and from Iowa City, so that Brown could return to Pedee. Colonel Trowbridge outwitted the guards of Postmaster Workman, who were to seize Brown in the morning, and accompanied the old Abolitionist back to the Pedee settlement.

Early that morning Mr. Clarke took the train for Davenport and obtained from Hiram Price, the secretary of the railroad, a letter of introduction to its assistant superintendent. Already Mr. Grinnell had sent Mr. Clarke the draft for \$50. With these two documents, he came to West Liberty, a village fifteen miles east of Iowa City and a reliable Underground centre, where Brown and his party were now hiding in Keith's old grist mill, and showed them to the local agent of the railroad, who supplied the box car. Thus Brown, his men, and the negroes were all shipped as freight to Chicago, the charges being paid out of the superintendent's draft.<sup>31</sup>

Nine miles east of Iowa City is West Branch, which was settled in the early 1850's by Eli Hoover, David and Laurie Tatum, James Townsend, and other Quakers on the west branch of Wapsiononoc Creek. This settlement became at once a convenient stopping place for fugitives on their way east via Springdale, which is but three miles farther on. One time Laurie Tatum set out with a load of runaways for Mechanicsville, eighteen miles north. At Gray's Ford across the Cedar River his wagon stuck in a bed of quicksand, making it necessary for him to ask help at the nearest house. The man who responded suggested that they unload, but Mr. Tatum objected. Then the man asked what he had in his wagon, and Mr. Tatum, looking him straight in the eye, replied with a double meaning, "meat and wool." Without further discussion, they got a fence rail, raised the wagon to firmer ground, and the journey was continued.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXV, 42-44.

<sup>32</sup>Palimpsest, Vol. 9, 247.

Mrs. Varney, also of West Branch, admitted to her house one Sunday afternoon a negress and her two children, one white and one black, who were the sons of her master. He was following them on horseback not far behind, beating down the tall grass of the swamp with his whip in search of them. The mother remarked that they were rendered conspicuous by her white boy, whereupon Mrs. Varney brewed a pot of very strong tea and stained the boy's visible parts a brown color. They were then given a hearty meal and sent on their way as soon as it was safe.<sup>33</sup>

We have already seen that Springdale was a centre of Underground activity. One of its active workers was John Painter. A little to the west of Springdale was Pedee, which had been settled by Presbyterians in the 1840's. Then the Quakers came and formed a settlement nearby, which received a post office in 1851 under the name of Springdale. Three miles northwest of this village William Maxon built a house, which still stands. Mr. Maxon was not a Quaker by birth, but had been reared under the influence of the Society of Friends and certainly shared in his neighbors' antipathy to slavery. He made a practice of keeping slaves in his basement, which had a fire-place to keep it comfortable in the winter. There fugitives often remained until enough money could be collected to send them on. Many negroes found refuge in and near Springdale.<sup>34</sup>

One one occasion Mr. Maxon decided to put some proteges in sacks and ship them by rail as potatoes. The freight agent had not been admitted to the secret, being supposed to be of hostile sentiments, but was present when the sacks were loaded into the box<sup>car</sup> and heard a sneeze issue from one of them. Mr. Maxon held his peace with difficulty, but the agent seemed to take no notice and the sacks were shipped.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>34</sup>Irving B. Richman, John Brown Among the Quakers and Other Sketches, 21, 23, 32; letter from T. W. Maxon, May 4, 1896; Palimpsest, Vol. 9, 223; letter from J. R. Walton, Nov. 4, 1896.

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Six miles south of Springdale is West Liberty, which was another headquarters of the Underground Railroad. Being on the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad, fugitives were often put on board the cars there for quick transit to Davenport and diagonally across Illinois to Lake Michigan.<sup>36</sup>

#### The Routes to the Terminal at Clinton

At Iowa City the most prominent helpers of fugitives were William Penn Clarke and Dr. Jesse Bowen. The house of the latter was on Iowa Avenue between Governor and Summit streets.

Eastward from the city there were two lines of traffic, one extending ten miles to West Branch and three miles farther to Springdale, a Quaker settlement, whence there was a stretch of nearly forty miles to De Witt, followed by one of ten to Low Moor and another of the same length to Clinton. A few miles north of Clinton is Lyons, which seems to have served as a terminal in cases of emergency.<sup>37</sup>

The other line out of Iowa City ran twenty-three miles northeast to Tipton, where there was a station in the outskirts of the village. Tipton was also connected with Springdale and West Liberty to the south, its nearest station in that direction--the Humphrey home--being two and a half miles out. There whole families or groups frequently remained over night. Next morning Grandfather Humphrey would drive them fifteen miles northeast to Posten's Grove, where they would be transferred to other conductors for the trip to DeWitt, twenty-odd miles east. Prominent agents at DeWitt were Captain Burdette, Judge Graham, and Mrs. J. D. Stillman.

At Low Moor the traffic was handled by Abel A. Gleason, J. B. Jones, Lawrence Mix, Nelson Olin, B. R. Palmer, G. W. Weston, and

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<sup>36</sup>Letter from J. R. Walton, Nov. 4, 1896.

<sup>37</sup>Palimpsest, II, No. 5, 135.



others. Among these Mr. Weston, a New Hampshire man, seems to have been general manager in placing the runaways, gathering needed provisions and funds, and regulating the departure of passengers. One occasion it was necessary to notify the men at Clinton of their being forwarded so that proper arrangements could be made for them to cross the Mississippi. The following communication from G. W. Weston, of Low Moor, to C. B. Campbell, at Clinton, is typical:

" Low Moor, May 6, 1859.

"Mr. C. B. C.:

Dear Sir--By to-morrow evening's mail, you will receive two volumes of the 'Irrepressible Conflict,' bound in Black. After perusal, please forward, and oblige,

G. W. W."<sup>38</sup>

Trusted friends of the station-keepers were occasionally invited to the house of one or another of them to hear the thrilling stories of the escape and unaided travel of the fugitives on the premises before they had reached the Underground Railroad, and perhaps of the adroit methods used by their abolition friends in evading their pursuers. Such recitals served to stimulate the zeal of the listeners.

Among the last fugitives who passed through Clinton County was a party of nine who came just before the beginning of the Civil War. This party comprised three men, besides a husband, wife, and their four children. Twice before the husband had attempted to free his family and now was determined to go through, being fully armed. After a short stay in Clinton the party was ferried across the river.

Despite the good work being accomplished in the town of Clinton, very few people in the county at large were disposed to <sup>co</sup>operate on their way. Even in the town the anti-slavery cause met with disfavor in some quarters. A. T. Foss, an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-

<sup>38</sup>J. B. Grinnell, Men and Events of Forty Years, 207; W. H. Siebert, Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom, 108; letter from Orland Eaton, April 8, 1896.

Slavery Society, is said to have lectured there several times "under discouraging circumstances." Nevertheless his local friends induced him to lecture in the flourishing little town of Comanche. After the Baptist church had been engaged and handbills posted, Mr. Foss and a friend made their appearance, but found that the sexton had no intention of opening the church. Going to the hotel, they were threatened with violence and thought it wise to leave the place.

Other operators in Clinton were G. W. Brindell, H. Leslie, T. Savane, and W. B. Star.

Mr. Campbell appears to have usually had the responsibility of placing the fugitives on their arrival in Clinton. Frequently he kept them in the attic of his small, frame house, which stood near the corner of Sixth Avenue and Second Street, within a stone's throw of the United States marshal's residence. At other times they were put in the garret of the house occupied by Andrew and J. R. Bather, or in a cave, used as a cellar, in their garden. A fugitive and his wife were hiding in their garret, when a message was received from De Witt that slavehunters were hot on their trail. Andrew Bather lost no time in borrowing a carriage from H. P. Stanley and taking them up to Lyons. Thither they had been preceded by Mr. Campbell, who had a skiff ready for the couple and ferried them across the Mississippi despite the floating ice.<sup>39</sup>

In the eastern section of Iowa, which was more thickly settled than the central and western parts, the Underground station-keepers and conductors were under the necessity of exercising great care to avoid detection. Sometimes passengers remained at a station for days until a convenient opportunity offered for them to be forwarded.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Palimpsest, II, No. 5, 136.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

A Route to Dubuque in the Sixth Tier of Counties

Thirty-four miles north of Grinnell, in the southern part of Grundy County, the house of C. F. Clarkson was a haven for escaping slaves where many of them were cared for. Among them was one who had crawled into a haystack and been found early one morning by the Clarkson boys because his boots stuck out. He was taken on his way, but in what direction or to what stations we are not informed.<sup>41</sup>

Probably it ran northeast and then east through Black Hawk, Buchanan, Delaware, and Dubuque counties to the city of Dubuque, on the Mississippi River. It would seem from an article in the Midland Monthly<sup>42</sup> that in Buchanan County an Underground agent called Charley lived in a town (not named), to the south and west of which are Quaker settlements. From the settlement to the west of it a Quaker brought a fugitive one night and asked Charley to take him on to Dubuque. Sickness in the house prevented compliance with the request, but the Quaker was directed to a reliable agent living on the right hand side of the road just across a stream four and half miles farther on. Nearly a fortnight later a rough fellow, who lived on the left side of the road at that point, called at Charley's store and told him of the visit of the Quaker whom had been sent and of his surprise at the mission he was asked to undertake. However, he had invited his callers in, fed them and their horses, and kept the big negro, who was as "black as tar," in a side room till the following night. Then he hitched up and drove with the negro to Dubuque and delivered him to the man to whom he had been directed. He told Charley that he was a Democrat, had never engaged in Underground work before, and explained that he could not withstand the "pleading look" in the negro's eyes.

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<sup>41</sup>Midland Monthly, II, 264.

<sup>42</sup>Vol. 3, pp. 479-80.

CHAPTER VI  
JOHN BROWN AND HIS MEN IN IOWA,  
OCTOBER, 1856, AND LATER

One day in October, 1856, there rode into the village of West Branch, Iowa, an elderly man weary and travel-stained. He made his way to the only tavern, over the entrance to which hung the sign, "The Travelers' Rest," kept by the Quaker, James Townsend. On dismounting the old man asked his host, "Have you ever heard of John Brown of Kansas?" The tavern-keeper, "without replying, took from his vest pocket a piece of chalk and, removing Brown's hat, marked it with a large X; he then replaced the hat and solemnly decorated the back of Brown's coat with two large X marks; lastly, he placed an X on the back of the mule." This pantomime was an indication that Brown and his animal were on the free list of the tavern.<sup>1</sup>

It is certain that during Brown's brief stay in west Branch he heard of Springdale and of the strong anti-slavery sentiment of its shrewd, thrifty Quaker population, for thereafter this village became one of his places of frequent resort. On January 7, 1857, Brown visited Buxton, Canada west, where he was made the agent of the Massachusetts-Kansas State Committee to receive two hundred Sharp's rifles, then stored in Tabor, Iowa. These rifles had been shipped west by that committee in August to be used by the free-state settlers. They had got as far as Tabor, but for reasons unknown to the committee had got no farther.

<sup>1</sup> O. G. Villard, John Brown Fifty Years After, 312

Captain Brown bought pikes and on April 1 met Hugh Forbes, an Italian-Anglican swordsman and drillmaster, whom he hired to go to Tabor and drill the squad of men he proposed to assemble there on his return to the West. Forbes was to receive \$100 a month, and at the time of their meeting Brown handed him \$600 to bind the bargain. Forbes had served under Garibaldi in 1848-9 and since coming to America had eked out an existence by acting as a translator for the New York Tribune and by giving fencing lessons. On April 13, 1857, Brown left for the West, but did not reach Tabor until August. Tabor's importance lay in its intense anti-slavery sentiment and its proximity to the Kansas Territory. In 1856 the Missourians had closed the route for Northern immigrants into Kansas by way of Saint Louis and the Missouri River, whereupon James M. Lane, with the aid of certain Massachusetts men, had opened a new route through Iowa and Nebraska, with Tabor and Nebraska City as its Western termini. One of the parties of free-state settlers which followed this route in the year mentioned was led by Colonel Eldridge. They had started without arms--some of them from as far away as Maine--having been promised weapons when they should reach Albany, then Buffalo, next Cleveland, and finally Chicago. On arriving at Tabor they were still defenseless and were about to mutiny. With difficulty, they were persuaded to go forward. It was doubtless the experience of this party which influenced the Massachusetts-Kansas State Committee to send to the West the two hundred Sharp's rifles. On their arrival in Tabor these rifles were stored in the

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barn of the Rev. John Todd, the Congregational Minister of the place, to await a favorable opportunity to be smuggled into Kansas. Such an opportunity had presented itself when, in August, 1857, Brown came with an order for the arms from the Massachusetts committee. They were promptly given into his care by Mr. Todd, and on August 13 Brown wrote to Frank B. Sanborn, at Concord, Massachusetts: "I find the arms and ammunition voted me by the Massachusetts State Committee nearly all here and in middling order--some a little rusted. Have overhauled and cleaned up the worst of them."

On August 9 Hugh Forbes arrived after having spent all the \$600 given him by John Brown. He brought with him the manual of tactics he had prepared and began to give military instruction to Brown's men. At first Brown thought Forbes "a very capable leader," but later changed his mind and Forbes left for the East on November 2. This compelled Brown to give up his school of military tactics, and he went to Kansas to assemble more men, who went to Tabor. Toward the last of November Brown and his party left for Ashtabula, Ohio, but not until he had told Jonas Jones, of Tabor, to whose care his letters had come and in whose house the military lessons had been given, "We've had enough talk about 'bleeding Kansas.' I will make a bloody spot at another point to be talked about." This was his only reference to his Martin's Ferry expedition.<sup>2</sup>

It was on the long, wintry journey to Springdale, with two wagons laden with the Sharp's rifles and ammunition that the details of the Virginia venture were gradually discussed. The caravan

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<sup>2</sup>Richman, John Brown Among the Quakers, 11-22.

left the friendly village of Tabor on December 4, according to the diary of Owen Brown, on the way to "Iowa City, Springdale and Ohio." Progress was slow for all of the men walked, and the weather was bitter cold. They camped by the wayside, avoiding towns as much as possible, and made up in warmth of debate for the heat they otherwise lacked. Their discussions ranged over a wide field, including the Bible and war, the probable effects of the abolition of slavery upon the Northern and Southern states, upon commerce and manufactures, and upon the British provinces and the civilized world, the origin of our civilization, the prejudice against color, and which was the greater general, Washington or Napoleon. On Christmas Day they reached Marengo, a town about thirty miles from Iowa City, and reached Springdale about December 28.<sup>3</sup>

Among the early residents of Springdale, a Quaker village, were John M. Painter, who came in 1849, Dr. H. C. Gill, who came in 1850, and Ann Coppoc. During the next few years many settlers arrived, most of them Quakers, so that when the place was visited by Brown and his band in 1857 it was a thriving settlement. It was not Brown's intention to stop long at Springdale, but the panic of that year had made money scarce, and he was nearly out of funds and unable to raise any. Under these circumstances he decided to spend the winter there, being more than welcome. His men were given quarters in the house of William Maxon, three

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<sup>3</sup>

O. G. Villard, op. cit., 311-12.

miles northeast of the village. As Maxon was not a Quaker, the responsibility for housing armed men was avoided by the Quaker community. However Brown was received into the house of the good Quaker, John H. Painter, who became one of his most staunch and confidential friends. The time spent in Springdale was one of genuine pleasure to Brown's men.

Aaron D. Stephens (C. Whipple) was appointed drill master, and a daily routine of drill and military study was insisted upon. Tuesday and Friday evenings were reserved for the proceedings of a mock legislature. One of the sons of Mr. Maxon served in this body as a member from Cedar County. In a letter of June 1, 1892, Dr. H. C. Gill wrote that sometime toward spring Brown came to his house and told his plans for the future. He had not then decided to attack the armory at Harpers Ferry, but intended to take from fifty to a hundred men to the hills near the ferry and remain there until he could collect a large number of slaves and then take what conveyances were needed to transport the negroes and their families to Canada. In a short time after the excitement had abated he would make a strike in some other Southern state. Dr. Gill did his best to convince Brown that the probabilities were that all would be killed. The old emancipator replied that for himself he was willing to give his life for the slaves. He told Dr. Gill repeatedly that he believed himself an instrument in the hands of God for the abolition of slavery. The doctor insisted that Brown and his handful of men could not cope with the whole South, but he declared that it would be the beginning of the end of slavery.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Richman, op. cit., 28-30.



While Brown and his men were staying in Springdale, Barclay and Edwin Coppes, two young men of strong character were living there with their mother. Barclay, the younger, had previously made the acquaintance of Brown in Kansas, and the two brothers were strongly anti-slavery, and although as Quakers they had been taught that it was wrong to carry firearms they entered Brown's party.<sup>5</sup>

Brown himself did not spend the winter in Springdale. He went east, but returned on April 27, 1858, with some funds in hand and more promised and gave orders for the expedition to march. Its immediate destination proved to be Chatham, Canada West. The Coppes did not accompany it, but joined later. The only new men who went with Brown were George B. Will and Stewart Taylor, a young Canadian. On reaching Chatham, plans were made for a constitutional convention and a stay of ten days or two weeks. Letters were at once written to Gerrit Smith, Wendell Phillips, and other men of like kin to meet Brown and his little force there on May 8 for the adoption of the constitution, to decide a few other matters, and say good bye. The signals and mode of writing had all been arranged.

At the convention on May 8 Brown was made commander-in-chief, Eli secretary of war, and George B. Will secretary of the treasury. Meantime Hugh Forbes had written many letters to Frank B. Sanborn, Dr. Samuel C. Howe, and Theodore Parker threatening to tell all he knew of Brown's plans. Brown was

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<sup>5</sup>

Palimpsest, Vol. 9, 385-7.

summoned to New York by his friends and arrived there on May 22. On the 24th at a conference in Boston he was told to go back to Kansas <sup>and</sup> was given money for that purpose. Hence he could not go on with his plan to invade Virginia, and his men separated. Realf went to New York to stop the mouth of Forbes; Gill returned to Iowa; and Cook went to Harpers Ferry and took note of everything. On May 6 Cook had written from Chatham that he fancied he could always see the dawning light of freedom, but ere that day should arrive he feared the crash of the battle shock and the gleam of the cannon's lightning.

Funds were not forthcoming from Brown's friends in the East. He wrote to his men and cautioned them against revealing themselves, their plans, or their arms. He said that he was negotiating and would keep them posted. In February, 1859, Brown and a few of his followers were again in Springdale, this time with twelve abducted negroes, preparatory to taking them through to Canada. The account of this incident has been given in Chapter V of this thesis.

By July 3 of this year Brown and his sons Oliver and Owen were at Harpers Ferry, where they found Cook. On the 15th Brown wrote to Edwin and Barclay Coppoc at Springdale to join him at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Ten days later Barclay told his mother that they were going to start for Ohio that day, but she said they were "going with old Brown" and would think of her when they had halters round their necks.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>

Richman, op cit., 48-50.

Moses Varney, a Quaker of Springdale, had heard that Brown was meditating an attack on Harpers ferry and was much distraught. A friend of Varney, A. L. Smith of Buffalo, New York, was then visiting his cousins, Benjamin R. and David J. Gue, on Rock Creek, and the three drove over to Springdale to call on friend Varney. They talked about John Brown and his Springdale followers, of whom the Coppoc brothers had recently gone to join Brown at the ferry. After the Gues and Smith returned to Rock Creek, they decided anonymously to warn the secretary of war, John B. Floyd, of the impending affair. Smith wrote one letter, dated at Philadelphia on August 18, which was sent to the postmaster there to be mailed, and David Gue wrote the other, which was sent for mailing to the postmaster at Cincinnati. Of the Smith letter nothing was ever heard. The other stated that its writer had discovered the existence of a secret organization to liberate the slaves by a general insurrection. Its leader was old John Brown, late of Kansas. They would pass down through Pennsylvania and Maryland and enter Virginia at Harpers ferry. The writer said that he dare not sign his name, but hoped his warning would not be disregarded on that account. Secretary Floyd received this letter, but failed to be stirred by it.<sup>7</sup>

On Sunday night, October 16, 1859, Brown's men proceeded to the ferry. Of the twenty-two the Coppocs, Jeremiah C. Ander-

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Richman, loway to Iowa, 334-5.

son, George B. Gill, George W. Moffatt, and Stewart Taylor were Iowans. On October 17 Springdale was horror-stricken by a telegraphic dispatch stating that a crazy, old man and some twenty followers had seized the United States Arsenal at Harpers Ferry and were holding the Virginia chivalry and United States marines at bay. At the close of the 18th Brown and four of his men were prisoners of Virginia, namely, Edwin Coppoc, Aaron D. Stevens, and two negroes, Copeland and Green. On December 2 Brown was hanged, the execution being witnessed by Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and John Wilkes Booth. Two weeks later the other four suffered the same fate. Among those who escaped was Barclay Coppoc, who arrived in Springdale on December 17, "worn almost to a skeleton by starvation and exposure."

When the Civil War began Barclay Coppoc went to Kansas and on July 24, 1861, was commissioned a lieutenant in the Third Kansas Volunteer Infantry. He returned to Springdale for recruits and secured eleven men. While returning to Kansas, his life was brought to a tragic close. As the train was crossing the Platte River near St. Joseph, Missouri, the bridge which had been partly burned by rebel guerrillas, gave way, precipitating the cars into the river. Coppoc died the next day. He was buried with military honors in Pilot Knob Cemetery, at Leavenworth, Kansas. In Rip-ton, Iowa, stands a monument bearing his name along with those of Iowa's other valiant heroes.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Richman, Ioway to Iowa, 335; Thomas Reakle, Rendition Foiled, 431, 433; Palimpsest, Vol. 9, p. 416.

## CONCLUSION

In 1846, when Iowa became a state, it had a population of 102,388, many of its early settlers having come from Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee and greater numbers from Missouri and Illinois. Already in the 1830's the Quakers were beginning to form settlements in southeastern Iowa and during the next decade they were followed by groups of anti-slavery men from New England, who formed little communities at various places from Muscatine to Tabor and organized Congregational churches. Here and there Wesleyan Methodists and Covenanters were to be found. Abolitionists from Ohio and other states of the Mid-West immigrated into southern Iowa, and if they came from the same neighborhood they usually settled on neighboring farms.

The Quakers, Congregationalists, and other religious elements named above, including, of course, those abolitionists whose religious connections we do not know, were the people who operated the Underground Railroad. In the early 1830's slaves were already being run off through the tiers of Iowa counties which were near to the boundary of Missouri. As the agitation against slavery grew and new settlements were formed in which there was a smaller or great proportion of anti-slavery men, the number of Underground stations and routes rapidly increased to keep pace with the increasing traffic which came across the border, chiefly from the northern counties of Missouri and to a lesser extent from the western counties up through Kansas and the southeastern corner of Nebraska into southwestern Iowa.

One of the important aspects of the agitation against slavery in that section was the struggle of the free-state men for Kansas during

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the early 1850's. The echoes of this struggle were heard throughout Missouri and caused a restiveness among the slaves which resulted in larger numbers seeking freedom through flight and in a few abductions of slaves from Missouri by white men who went from Kansas for that purpose. Already by the end of 1854 the slaveholders of Missouri were losing their human chattels in such numbers that the Intelligencer of Saint Louis stated that the evil had become immense and was "daily getting to be more aggravated." It was threatening to subvert the institution of slavery in Missouri entirely and unless effectually checked would certainly do so. The newspaper went on to say that there was no doubt that ten slaves were then being stolen for every one that had been spirited off before the Douglass bill.<sup>1</sup> While the fugitives usually came singly or in small groups, large bands were not unknown. For example, one Sunday morning in March, 1859, a "drove" of seventy-five passed through Burlington on the way to Canada.<sup>2</sup>

It has been well said that Missouri was "a slave-holding peninsula jutting up into a sea of free soil." This enabled the Underground Railroad to draw its traffic from three borders of the state. Missourians were aggravated by "the spectre of a 'horde of negro-stealing Abolitionists' permanently settled in Kansas with the avowed purpose of strangling the 'peculiar institution' and were subjected to heavy losses from that quarter." On the other side of Missouri "the great interstate shipping along the Mississippi" made it easy for plucky slaves to get jobs as boat hands or to secret themselves on board, with the aid of one or more of the crew, until they reached a free port. The efforts of the General Assembly of Missouri from

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in the Independent of Jan. 18, 1855.

<sup>2</sup>Vermont Journal, Apr. 2, 1859.

1804 down to the Civil War to prevent the harboring of runaways or to recover them proved unavailing. The Daily Evening Gazette (Saint Louis) of August 18, 1841, declared that recent events had demonstrated the fact that the employment of free negroes, mulattoes, and slaves who hired their own time on board of steamboats on the western waters was "a cause of serious loss and danger to the slave states and slave owners. Such colored people had the opportunity of constant communication with slaves of Missouri, Kentucky, and other Southern states and with the free negroes and abolitionists of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. This communication rendered the slaves restless, induced them to run away, and furnished them a means of escape. Negro hands on board the steamboats could frequently conceal runaway negroes, without the captain's consent.

The construction of the Pacific Railroad rendered the people of western Missouri apprehensive lest their slaves should escape into Kansas by that means. In fact, the inhabitants of Franklin complained, in May, 1857, that their negroes absconded in that way, although a law of 1855 attempted to make railroad officials who aided fugitives liable for double the value of the escaped slave and for common law action as well. While the newspapers of the day do not contain many notices of escape by steam railroads, a few members of the House of Representatives were willing to vote for a resolution of March 1, 1860, requiring the General Assembly to "vote for no bill knowingly granting state aid to railroads whose Board of Directors" was "composed of a majority of Black Republicans."<sup>3</sup>

In 1857 two bills for amending the laws for patrolling the borders of Missouri received strong support in the General Assembly of that state, but not enough to pass them. As they point to the efforts made to prevent the escape of slaves, they should be summarized. A special

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<sup>3</sup>H. A. Traxler, Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865, pp. 173-8.

tax was to be levied on the slave property of Missouri to maintain patrols along the Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois borders. The patrols were to examine all ferries and other river craft, cut loose unlicensed boats, and note any that were not chained and locked. Owners of such boats were to be fined \$1,000 each. It is clear that the authors of these bills considered unlocked boats available for fugitives looking for means to cross the rivers to free soil, that they regarded owners of unlicensed boats as irresponsible and suspicious characters, and that they provided for the inspection of ferries and other river craft with a view to discovering stowaways thereon.<sup>4</sup>

In 1857 also the Missouri representatives in Congress were instructed by a joint resolution of the two houses of the General Assembly to demand of the Federal Government security of their slave property as guaranteed by the Constitution. The joint resolution also protested against the Underground activities of certain citizens of Chicago and their obstruction and mistreatment of Missourians who went there to search for their runaways. It is said that Philo Carpenter, of Chicago, assisted two hundred slaves from Missouri to get to Canada, and that Dr. Doy and the Rev. John E. Stewart shipped a hundred of an average value of \$1,500<sup>00</sup>, for each of whom a reward of \$200 had been offered.<sup>5</sup>

The last barriers to escape into Kansas, Iowa, and probably Illinois began to crumble when the Civil War began. According to the United States census, there were 114,931 slaves in Missouri in 1860. Of these only 73,811 remained in the state three years later.

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<sup>4</sup>H. A. Trexler, op. cit., 206.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



Thus more than 41,000 slaves disappeared from Missouri during that period, many of them enlisting in the Union Army. In the winter and spring of 1865 slaves were still fleeing from Missouri into Kansas. An item in the Annals of Platte County for February 1 of that year tells of many of them crossing the frozen river and enlisting. Another item of April 1 speaks of their escaping daily, being enticed away by Union soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Other slaves passed through Iowa over the Underground Railroad by wagon loads of fifteen or more during the early years of the war, and some of them found employment on farms or settled temporarily in towns where the anti-slavery sentiment was strong.<sup>7</sup>

George W. S. Lucas, who tells of having been in Kansas with John Brown from 1855 until late in 1857, says that Brown and his men liberated five hundred and sixty slaves at Humboldt, Allen County, Kansas, in the rich valley of Neosho River, who went down to Oswego, Labette County. Mr. Lucas was a colored man, who lived at Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio, after his return from Kansas and cooperated with several white men in aiding escaping slaves.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>H. A. Trexler, op. cit., 206.

<sup>7</sup>See ante, pp.

<sup>8</sup>W. H. Siebert's interview with G. W. S. Lucas.

## APPENDIX A

Operators of the Underground RailroadIn IowaFremont County

## At Civil Bend (Percival)

Avery, Egbert  
 Blanchard, Dr. Ira  
 Bottsford, Rev. Mr.  
 Hall, J. B.  
 Horton, H. B.  
 Lane, William  
 Platt, E. S.  
 Platt, L.  
 Platt, Rev. M. F.  
 Williams, R.  
 Williams, S.

## At Tabor

Adams, S. H.  
 Case, Cephas  
 Clark, W. L.  
 Cummings, H. S.  
 Cummings, Deacon O.  
 Gaston, George B.  
 Gaston, James K.  
 Hallam, J.  
 Henry, Irish  
 Hunter G.  
 Ladd, Dr.  
 Pearce, M.  
 Scott, Rev. J.  
 Smith, J. L.  
 Sheldon, Edward  
 Todd, Rev. John  
 Webb, L. E.  
 Woodford, N.  
 Hill, Rev. E. S.  
 Hill, L. B.  
 Jones, Jonas

## On Silver Creek

Bradshaw (Bradburgh), \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nashe, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tolles, C. W.

Mills County

## At Emerson

Coe, J. N.  
 Gridley, Amos  
 Hitchcock, Rev. G.  
 Lewis, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mills, Oliver  
 Norse, \_\_\_\_\_

Montgomery County

## At. Red Oak.

Merritt, W. W.

Adams County

## At Nevinville

Chamberlain, Deacon  
 Moore, S.

Mahaska County

## At Fremont

Hockett, I.  
 McCormick, William  
 Montgomery, William

Keokuk County

## In the Richland Region

Mills, M.  
 Mitchell, T.  
 Morgan, H.

## At Hedrick

Durfrees, \_\_\_\_\_

Washington County

At Crawfordsville

Ranking, Colonel S.

At Washington

Kilgore, J.

Kilgore, M.

Louisa County

At Columbus City

Baily, Colonel \_\_\_\_\_

Guthrie County

At Stuart and The

Quaker Divide

Cook, Anna

Cook, H.

Cook, J.

Cook, M.

Lewis, Alv

Murray, \_\_\_\_\_

Polk County

At Des Moines

Brandt, Isaac

Davis, Joel P.

Jordan, J.

Teesdale, J.

Robinson, Rev. D.

Poweshiek County

At Grinnell

Baily, \_\_\_\_\_

Bixby, A.

Brande, Elder T.

Bliss, Harry

Cooper, Colonel S. F.

Grinnell, Josiah B.

Poweshiek County (cont.)

At Grinnel (cont.)

Hamlin, H.

Harris, \_\_\_\_\_

Parker, L. F.

Parks, Philo

Johnson County

At Iowa City

Bowen, Jesse

Clarke, William Penn

Cedar County

At West Branch

Townshend, James

At Springdale

Gill, Dr. H. S.

Humphrey, A.

Masson, T. W.

Maxson, William

Tatum, Laurie

Varney, Mr.

Varney, Mrs.

At Tipton

Maynard, Dr. J.

Wolf, William P.

Clinton County

At De Witt

Burdette, Captain \_\_\_\_\_

Graham, Judge

Stillman, Mrs. J. F.

Clinton County (cont.)

## At Low Moor

Gleason, Abel  
 Jones, J. B.  
 Mix, Clarence  
 Olin, W.  
 Palmer, B. R.  
 Weston, G. W.

## At Clinton

Bather, A.  
 Bather, J. F.  
 Brindell, G. W.  
 Cambell, O. B.  
 Leslie, H.  
 Stanley, H. P.  
 Savage, T.  
 Star, W. B.

Muscatine County

## At Muscatine

Lee, J. B.  
 Van Pelt, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Wapello County

## At Kirkville

English, Alpha

Jefferson County

## At Fairfield

Hyrkit, C.  
 Stalker, A.

Henry County

## At Mt. Pleasant

Howe, S. I.

## At Salem

Comer, J.  
 Dorland, J.  
 Frazier, E.  
 Frazier, T. C.  
 Garretson, J.  
 Henderson, D. W.  
 Hoag, J.  
 Hobson, P.  
 Jessup, Eli  
 Johnson, William  
 Lewelling, H.  
 Pickering, J.  
 Shriner, Dr. T.  
 Way, Paul  
 Garrison family  
 Mendenhall family

Des Moines County

## At Kossuth

Heizer, F.  
 McClure, J.

## At Burlington

James, Dr. Edward

Appanoose County

## At Cincinnati

Fulcher, Jf.  
 Hedgecock, William  
 Martin, W.  
 Robertson, M.

Appanoose County (cont.)

## Others in the County

Adamson family  
 Clavert family  
 Gilbert, J.  
 Green, J.  
 Holbrook, L.  
 McDonald, D.  
 Root, G.  
 Stanton, H.  
 Stanton, S.  
 Tudikes, J.

Davis County

## At Drakesville

Armstrong, J. H. B.  
 Colner, Al  
 Cenner, W. E.  
 Corner, A.  
 Elliott, G.  
 Elliott, J.  
 Elliott, G., Jr.  
 Hardy, D.  
 Hardy, D.  
 Klinger, William  
 Paggett, H.  
 Truitt, Ab  
 Wonn, Horatio

Lee County

## At Denmark

Adamson, H.  
 Brown, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fox, \_\_\_\_\_  
 James, P.  
 Shedd, Dr. G.  
 Turner, Rev. Asa  
 Turner, Ed.  
 Trowbridge, S. C.  
 Trowbridge, T.

Lee County (cont.)

## Others in the County

Bond, N.  
 Corey, B.  
 Holbrake, J.  
 Kellum, N.  
 Leggens, D.

County, etc., unknown

Painter, J. H.  
 Price, J.  
 Randall, R. H.

## APPENDIX B.

I. Communications between Iowa agents of the U. G. R. R.

(a) From Josiah B. Grinnell to William Clarke, Aug. 15, 1860.

Tomorrow or next day there will be a company of 20 odd persons well armed passing on to Springdale.

If they are to be troubled I trust they may have a fair warning." (In the Correspondence of William Penn Clarke, Alrich Collection. Quoted by Erik Eriksson in "William Penn Clarke", Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XXV, 44.)

(b) Received by Josiah Grinnell.

"Dear Grinnell: Uncle Tom says if the roads are not too bad you can look for those fleeces of wool by to-morrow. Send them on to test the market-price, and no back charges.

Yours, Hub"

(Grinnell, Josiah B., Men and Events of Forty Years, 217.)

(c) G. B. Weston, Low Moor, to C. B. Campbell, Clinton,

Low Moor, May 6, 1859.

"Mr. C. B. C.:

Dear Sir-By tomorrow evening's mail, you will receive two volumes of the "Irrepressible Conflict," bound in black, After perusal, please forward, and oblige

C. W. W."

(Quoted by Jacobin Van Eck, "The Underground Railroad in Iowa", Palimpsest, II, 135.)

II. Advertisement for fugitive slave, appearing in  
the Keokuk Argus.

"Run away on Sunday the thirty first of May 1846 from the subscriber, living in Waterloo, Clark Co., Mo., a negro woman named Lucy about 36 years old, very stout and heavy made, very black, very large feet and hands, had on when she left a blue calico dress and a sunbonnet, no other clothing. It is believed that she will be conducted to the territory of Iowa in the direction of Keosauqua or beyond that place to a settlement of free negroes, that was set free by Meirs living in Tully, Lewis County, Missouri some years ago. Any person apprehending said slave and returning her to me, or securing her so that I can get her again I will pay a liberal reward and pay all reasonable expenses. Give information to Daniel Hines, Keokuk, or James T. Death, Farmington, Iowa.

John T. Deadman

(Richman, Ioway to Iowa, 330.)

APPENDIX C.

III. John Brown Documents.

(1) Letter from John Brown to New York Tribune, January, 1859.

".....On Sunday, Dec. 19, a negro man called Jim came over to the Osage settlement, from Missouri, and stated that he, together with his wife, two children, and another negro man was to be sold within a day or two, and begged for help to get away. On Monday (the following) night, two small companies were made up to go to Missouri and forcibly liberate the five slaves, together with other slaves. One of these companies I assumed to direct. We proceeded to the place, surrounded the buildings, liberated the slaves, and also took certain property supposed to belong to the estate. We, however, learned before leaving that a portion of the articles

we had taken belonged to a man living on the plantation as a tenant, and who was supposed to have no interest in the estate. We promptly returned to him all we had taken. We then went to another plantation, where we found five more slaves, took some property and two white men. We moved all slowly away into the territory for some distance, and then sent the white men back, telling them to follow us as soon as they chose to do so. The other company freed one female slave, took some property, and as I am informed, killed one white man (the master) who fought against the liberation....." (Sanborn, F. B., Life and Letters of John Brown, 182.)

(2) Tabor resolution of February 7, 1859.

Resolved, that while we sympathize with the oppressed, and will do all that we conscientiously can to help them in their efforts for freedom, nevertheless we have no sympathy with those who go to a slave State to entice away slaves and take property or life when necessary to attain that end.

J. S. Smith, Sec. (Sanborn, op. cit., 488n.)

(3) Reception of Brown and Party at Grinnell, Iowa, Compared with Proceedings at Tabor (by John Brown.)

Springdale, Iowa, Feb. 25, 1859  
1859

1. Whole party and teams kept for two days free of cost.
2. Sundry articles of clothing given to the captives.
3. Bread, meat, cakes, pies, etc., prepared for our journey.



4. Full houses for two nights in succession, at which meeting Brown and Kagi spoke, and were loudly cheered and fully endorsed. Three Congregational Clergymen attended the meeting on Sabbath evening (notice of which was given out from the pulpit). All of them took part in justifying our courts and in urging contributions in our behalf. There was no dissenting speaker present at either meeting. Mr. Grinnell spoke at length; and has since labored to procure us a free and safe conveyance to Chicago, and effect it.
5. Contributions in cash amounting to \$26.50.
6. Last, but not least, public thanksgiving to Almighty God offered up by Mr. Grinnell in the behalf of the whole company for His great mercy and protecting care, with prayers for a continuance of these blessings.

As the action of Tabor friends has been published in the newspapers by some of her people (as I suppose), would not friend Gaston or some other friend give publicity to all the above?

Respectfully your friend,

John Brown.

P. S. Our reception among the Quaker friends here has been most Cordial.

## APPENDIX D.

An Iowa Fugitive Slave Case--1850.

Reported by George Frazee.

A Brief (From the Annals of Iowa, Vol. VI, 1903-05.)

District Court of the United States. Southern Division of Iowa. Burlington, Iowa, June Term, 1850. Hon. D. D. Dyer. Ruel Daggs, plaintiff vs. Elihu Frazier, Et Al, defendants. Trespass on the case.

D. Rorer, Esq., Counsel for the plaintiff. J. C. Hall and J. T. Morton, Esqs., for defendants.

This was an action of trespass in the case, instituted in September, 1848, by Ruel Daggs, of Clark County, Mo., plaintiff, against Elihu Frazier, Thomas Clarkson Frazier, John Comer, Paul way, John Pickering, Wm. Johnson and others of Henry County, Iowa, defendants, for the purpose of recovering compensation for the services of nine slaves who escaped into Iowa from Missouri, and were afterwards assisted to elude the control and custody of plaintiff's agents, by the defendants or some of them.

The declaration contained six counts. The first two allege that the slaves were rescued from the plaintiff, or his agents. The third and fourth, that they were harbored and concealed, so that they afterwards escaped from and were entirely lost to the plaintiff; and the fifth and sixth, that the plaintiff was hindered and prevented from recovering his slaves by the acts of defendants; and the amount of damages, claimed was \$10,000. Plea, Not Guilty.

The suit had been continued from term to term, for causes

shown, and at this term, after a motion by defendants' counsel to exclude all the plaintiff's depositions for irregularity, had been sustained by the Court, plaintiff filed his affidavit, and moved the Court for a continuance. The motion was opposed by Mr. Hall, and after arguments was overruled.

Plaintiff then entered a Nolle Prosequi as to several of the defendants and immediately subpoenaed them as witnesses to supply as far as they were able the want of evidence occasioned by the exclusion of his depositions.

A jury was then impannelled and sworn, the declaration read, and the witnesses for plaintiff introduced. The following is the substance of

#### The Evidence

By George Daggs, son of Ruel Daggs. The latter has resided in Clark County, Mo., for the last 12 to 14 years and has been and still is the owner of slaves. About June 2, 1848, nine of them made their escape--men, women and children. The men worth \$900 or \$1000 each, the three women \$600 or \$700 each, a girl \$250 or \$300, a small boy \$200, two other children not estimated. The services of the men valued at about \$100 a year; of the women \$45 or \$50; the girl's, her victuals and clothes. One of the women, a girl of 18 and the two children returned after a week's absence.

Cross examination by Mr. Hall...Lives 15 miles distant.. Did not see the negroes escape and was not there at the time. Immediately went in search for them. . . . Rorer, for plaintiff, gave no notice that he should contend that the possession in Missouri and finding in Iowa was evidence of an escape.

Albert Button sworn. In June, 1848, resided in Salem, Henry County, Iowa. In early part of that month saw a negro man and boy there. There was a crowd at the stone house which afterwards went to the Friends' meeting house. The negroes went along--and he went also. . . The claimants were required to prove the existence of slavery in Missouri and that the negroes were slaves, by the justice and himself. Said they had no evidence there, but were told they might have time to procure it. The agents admitted they were not legally agents. Button heard how the negroes got away from Salem. Didn't know who brought them there. . . Street acted as counsel for the negroes. . . .

Jonathan Pickering sworn. Resides about one and a half miles from Salem. Has never seen the blacks. Has heard whose wagon went to Des Moines River for the negroes. Don't know how the negroes got to Salem, or where they stayed the night before. . . . Heard John Pickering say there were men from Missouri in the vicinity looking for negroes, . . John Comer had told Jonathan Pickering they (the negroes) were not in the county, and that he did not assist in their escape. Jesse Cook had denied having anything to do with the matter. . . .

Samuel Slaughter sworn. Saw Wm. Daggs, the son of Ruel Daggs, on Saturday and was requested to assisted him and McClure in finding some slaves he was looking for. They had been traced to the Des Moines River, near Farmington. On the way to Salem next morning, notice a fresh wagon track, and followed it for several miles and came in sight of the wagon. . . It was driven very fast and had a top on it. It stopped in the bushes about

half a mile from Salem. He found three young men in the wagon and rode into town with them. Next morning he and others went to the place where he had overtaken the wagon and nearby found a black man, a yellow man, three women and four children. Took possession of them. Left McClure with the negroes, and went into Salem for Mr. Brown and Mr. Cook. Found Elihu Frazier, Clarkson Frazier, Wm. Johnson and other men, who objected to taking the negroes. One of the Fraziers said the claimants must prove they were slaves. One of the objectors said he would wade in Missouri blood before the negroes should be taken. . . . Clarkson Frazier said he would not allow Slaughter to take the negroes. The crowd seemed to act unitedly, and understood Slaughter could not take the negroes unless he went before the magistrate. . . . The justice refused to take cognizance of the case, said the negroes were not properly before him. . . Slaughter gave up the matter because he did not wish to embroil himself and was tired of the business. . . .

Horace B. Hunting sworn. Was in Salem on a Monday in June, 1848. Saw a black man and child there near the stone house. There was a crowd present and (he) understood the negroes were to be tried before a justice. . . . Saw John Pickering at the west-end of the meeting house after the trial talking to a negro. . . . The negro walked a short distance; Gilcherson handed him the child, and the negro started off with him along. . . . Immediately after, saw Paul Way riding in advance of the negro. . . .

The meeting house is called the Abolition or Anti-Slavery meeting house. It is used for public worship. . . .

J. B. Rose sworn. . . . Gibbs (the justice of the peace) had been asked to discharge the negroes and declare them free. He had said he had no jurisdiction and they were free as he himself for all he knew. The crowd began to run out. . . . Saw no violence, and heard no threats. . . . Saw the negro go out and go to the horse. . . . Gilcherson unhitched him. . . and lifted up the child. Was not near enough to hear what was said.

Mr. Dorland sworn. . . . .

Francis Frazier sworn. Lived south of Salem in June, 1848. First saw the negroes at the south-west corner of the graveyard, one-fourth of a mile from Salem, standing in the road. . . . It appeared to be by consent or the parties that they went up to the stone house. . . .

Lewis Taylor sworn. . . . .

F. A. McElroy sworn. . . . .

Jonathan Frazier sworn. Was overtaken by Slaughter in the wagon; two men, Hamilton and ----- were with him. No negroes were in the wagon. Was about two miles from Salem. . . . Had been to Farmington. Drove down with the same men. . . . Cant's say what their business was.

. . . . . Mr. Rorer opened the argument on the part of the plaintiff and was followed by Mr. Morton for the defendant. They occupied the whole afternoon. The concluding argument on the part of the defendants was then made by Mr. Hall. . . .

Speech of Mr. Hall.

Jurors--This suit and this trial possess an interest which has rarely occurred in the judicial history of our young State. It is truly novel--the first suit of the kind ever brought west of our mighty river.

The Court, too, is novel. It is not a Court that derives its powers from this State, but the United States; and the subject matter sued for--the right demanded by the plaintiff--the wrong complained of against the defendants, is based alone upon an act of Congress and the Constitution of the United States.

The Federal Constitution has recognized the institution of Slavery and provided for the return of persons held to labor when they shall escape from the State where they are so held, to another State. The Act of Congress has made it penal in any person to hinder or prevent the owner, his agent or attorney, in arresting such fugitives, or to rescue them from the owner, his agent or attorney, or to conceal and harbor such fugitives.

. . . Negroes are property and slaves in Missouri because the laws of that State positively declare and recognize them as such. In Iowa slavery is prohibited by the Constitution. . . .

This being the case, Missouri, as a State, feels an interest, . . ., to have this species of property protected, and the right to the recapture and return of their slaves when they escape to another State, without interruption or hindrance.

In this case the plaintiff must establish by evidence and you, jurors, must find,

1st. That the plaintiff resided in the State of Missouri and owned the negroes described in his declaration.

2nd. That those negroes, being his slaves, escaped, without his consent, came to the State of Iowa, and into Henry County.

3rd. That the plaintiff, by himself, his agents or attorneys, pursued said slaves into the State of Iowa.

4th. That the defendants, having notice that said negroes were slaves and fugitives from labor, hindered and prevented the plaintiff, his agents or attorneys; or that they rescued said slaves from said plaintiff, his agents or attorneys, after they had captured them.

A review of the evidence given in this case, will, I think, satisfy you that these facts have not been proved.

Mr. Hall admitted as established that the plaintiff resides in Missouri and is the owner of the slaves; but he said it was not proved that these slaves escaped from his custody, without his consent and came to Iowa. The only witness to this point is the plaintiff's son, who swears that he was at his father's about May 1, 1848, and saw these slaves, . . . and that about June 3rd or 4th following, he was there again and these slaves were missing. He has no personal knowledge of where they were, when they left, or how they came to be absent. That a few days afterwards several of them were returned, but how he does not know. Some of them he has never since seen. . . . .



I now come to the third question. Did the plaintiff by himself, his agent or attorney, pursue said slaves into the State of Iowa? It is not pretended that the plaintiff, personally, ever followed them, and there is not a word of evidence that he ever had an agent or attorney, in relation to these slaves. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, if these slaves were not pursued by the plaintiff, his agents or attorney, there could be no rescue. . . .

The first act that Daggs ever did was to bring this suit, and he has scarcely followed this up with a scintilla of evidence. . . .

The fourth question is, Did the defendants, after having notice that said negroes were slaves, do any of the acts forbidden to be done by the Act of Congress? It is true that about the 5th of June, 1848, several negroes were found near Salem in Henry County. They were by themselves in the woods, a mile or more from Salem. No white persons were with them. Mr. Slaughter and Mr. McClure found them. But were they the plaintiff's slaves? They suspected but did not know, or pretend to know. . . .

There is no syllable of evidence to show that any one of these defendants ever moved a finger, said a word, or, in the remotest manner, interfered, up to the time the arrest was made. . . The evidence shows that the negroes were seized about a half mile from the road. When they were brought to the road, the defendants, Thomas and Elihu Frazier, came up. . . and in-

sisted that it should be taken before a Justice of the Peace, and identified, and the power of McClure and Slaughter shown. One of the Fraziers said that he was willing that they should take them even if they did not make the requisite proof.

This conversation induced Slaughter and McClure to take the negroes before a Justice of the Peace, and they proceeded to Salem. On the road a considerable crowd had collected. No violence was used or threatened, only on one occasion when Slaughter had hold of the yellow man's arm, a man called Johnson pulled him away, and told him to knock down Slaughter if he took hold of him again, and he should be protected. Before they got to Salem, one old woman and child got tired and were left. . . . Before they got to the town the yellow fellow left them. . . Thus they proceeded with the old black man and child, till they came to the town, at the stone house. Here there was a temporary stop. Much confusion and excitement prevailed. (They went on.) and, finding the Justice's office too small, it was agreed to go to the Abolition Meeting House. Hither.....they proceeded. The persons claiming the negroes could not prove their agency or authority, or identify the negroes. They ascertain that they were not agents and gave the matter up. The negroes went out of the house. . . .When the negro had turned the corner he had some conversation with several persons, and, amongst others, with the defendant, John Pickering. The negro very soon went to the fence, unhitched a horse, mounted

and his child was handed to him by Gilcherson, then he made off, starting upon a gallop. A short time before the negro started, Paul Way was seen on his horse and started up the road, the negro being eighty or one hundred feet behind him... This constitutes the evidence of the Rescue. No man lifted a finger. . . no man prevented the claimants from holding to the negroes. . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

..... My clients ask but fair and impartial justice. . . . .

Concluding Argument by Mr. Rorer.

Gentlemen of the jury--- . . . This is, as the opposite counsel have said, an important trial. . .

. . . A reward was offered for the returning of the negroes. Will not this sustain the idea of McClure and Slaughter being agents? . . .

. . . I gave it (the Abolition Meeting House.) its usual and well known appellation---. . . Here are men who have established a law of their own. . . They affirm that they may aid in the escape of persons held to service under the Constitution of other States, though by so doing they violate the laws of the Union. If you find fugitives from service secreted among such a people (you infer) that they aided and assisted in their escape.....

Mr. Rorer compared the Abolition Meeting House to a place which shall be nameless when the house was desecrated by the intrusion of abolition sentiments "when converted into the Committee Room of the under-ground railroad company, when their schemes of robbery and wrong were deliberately

concocted." . . . .

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. . . We owned them (the slaves) in Missouri. The escape is proved by finding them in Iowa. . . These blacks were strange negroes, and were skulking in the bushes and endeavoring to conceal themselves, and did not deny the ownership when claimed. . . They are claimed by Slaughter as the slaves of Daggs. and. with McClure, he takes possession of them. He goes to Salem and procures two men to assist him in returning them to Missouri. . . . When he returns to the vicinity of the spot where he first discovered them, the citizens of Salem were already there. . . Some of the negroes were willing to return with Slaughter; the yellow man resisted. . . . The defendants were excited--angry. One said the negroes should not be taken away in any event. Another, that they must be proven to be slaves before a magistrate, and Johnson told the mulatto that if Slaughter touched him again to knock him down. These men were all in company, aiding, supporting and encouraging each other. . . Still we are told no violence was used. . . . we learn that John Comer, one of the defendants, told one of the witnesses that there were run-away negroes in the neighborhood--that certain persons were there in search of such negroes and "he sniggered in his sleeve and seemed to know where they were." They were found concealed in the bushes near Salem, and almost at the moment of their discovery, the Fraziers and their associates were found upon the spot, acting in such a manner as to deter the agents of the plaintiff from asserting their undoubted right to convey them back to Missouri, . .

They go toward Salem, the crowd increasing until they arrive at the Stone House. . . . They then go to the justice's office; the crowd still increasing, the office is too small to hold them and they proceed to the Abolition Meeting House---. . . There were two parties---one wished the negroes to go free the other wished them to return to Missouri. . . .

. . . The negroes escape on Friday night. On Sunday morning the wagon goes to Salem under most mysterious circumstances. On Monday morning the negroes are found in the vicinity, concealed in the very bushes in which the wagon had stopped. The agents are forced into Salem against their will, when they might have taken the negroes off. . . .

. . . The first two counts are for a rescue--the next two for harboring and concealing so that we lose the negroes, and the last two for hindering and preventing us from regaining possession of them.

The value of the negroes must fix the amount of damage sustained by the plaintiff. . . .

. . . Upon the conclusion of Mr. Rorrer's argument, (Judge) J. J. Dyer delivered to the Jury the following: Charge (not copied).

The jury retired and after an absence of between one and two hours, brought in a verdict finding the defendants, Elihu Frazier, Thomas Clarkson Frazier, John Comer, Paul Way, John Pickering and Wm. Johnson guilty upon the 1st, 2d, 3d, and 4th counts of the declaration and assessed the damage at \$2900. As to the rest of the defendants the verdict was Not Guilty.

Defendants' counsel moved the Court to grant a new trial on the following grounds:

1st. Because the jury was improperly impaneled in violation of the statute of Iowa, . . and this fact was unknown to the defendants and their counsel, until after the rendition of the verdict.

2nd. Because the verdict was against the evidence as to some of the defendants, and upon no evidence as to others.

The motion was argued at considerable length. . . . after which the plaintiff entered a nolle prosequi as to Wm. Johnson; whereupon the Court decided that although the verdict was bad upon the 1st, 2d and 3rd counts, it was good upon the 4th, the motion was therefore overruled, a new trial denied, and judgment entered upon the verdict.

Defendants then asked time to file their bill of exceptions, for the purpose of taking the case to the Supreme Court, by writ of error, which, no objection being made, was granted.

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