

TOPIC A
FOLDER - 3
ITEM 1.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN
IOWA AND MARSHALL COUNTY

THE UNDERGROUND-
RAILROAD in
MARSHALL COUNTY

File number 3
Number /

A n Underground Railroad went through Mormon Ridge from Newton
in Jasper County on their way to Canada.

1. A History of Jasper County, Iowa pages 373 and 374

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.

To the present generation, especially to those who have not read up on the history of the country before the Civil war, as touching the workings of the fugitive slave law, by which all citizens of the United States, whether living South or North, whether believing in the justice of slavery or opposed thereto, were, according to that law of Congress, obliged to help capture and return to their "owners" such negro slaves as might escape from their masters. This was a hard provision for the anti-slavery men to live up to and keep good and clear their consciences. Hence there was organized a secret society of men, and women too, who were ready to thwart the plans of such an unjust law, by assisting in every possible manner a slave who might come through the country, wanting to make his escape to Canada, where he would be looked upon as a free man, black though he was. It will be understood also that this was happening just at a time when steam railroads were first engaging the minds of the masses and hence they very naturally used the term "underground railroad," for the line over which these runaway slaves were sent from one part of the north to the other. Many of the patriotic anti-slave songs also had titles such as "Old Dan Tucker," the "Car of Emancipation," etc. Then it will be understood that "underground railroad" had no real significance, in the light of its being a real highway, as we now speak of railroads and of "underground railroads" in cities, etc., which do exist, in fact, but usually styled as "subways."

During those anti-slavery times there were many in this county who took an active part in helping negroes escape to Canada over this supposed "underground" line, for most of its trains were operated at night-time, in order not to be detected by the slave hunters and their hounds. The following is from the pen of "Old Shady" (Joseph Arnold), who was a "conductor" on this railroad and these lines were not written until after the four years of Civil war had freed the slaves:

"On the 4th day of November, 1857, while returning from Newton in company with Matthew Sparks, they overtook three negroes about one-half mile out from Newton on the road leading to Lynnville. Mr. Arnold spoke to them, assuring them that he and his companion were their friends, and told them to get into the wagon and ride. They seemed glad of the opportunity, and after getting in, asked them where they were going. Their reply was Lynn Grove. The darkies' eyes began to

enlarge and show plenty of white. They then inquired if either of us knew Arnold or Sparks. Upon being informed that the two gentlemen to whom they were talking were the persons asked for, the poor fellows were overjoyed at the announcement. One of them took a ragged and soiled piece of paper from his pocket. On this slip was the names of Arnold and Sparks which they said was furnished them by a certain party who had formerly lived in this neighborhood, but now a resident of the Territory of Kansas. He had instructed the colored gentlemen that Arnold and Sparks were safe conductors on the underground railway. They were taken to C. B. White's house in Lynnville. Soon after a good many local stockholders in the line assembled, a meeting having been called by Arnold and Sparks. About nine o'clock one of the darkies made a speech in which he said: 'I have never saw so many friends in all my life and would not be anything but a "nigger" tonight if I could. God bless you, I am gwine to de norf, sah.' After furnishing the darkies with means and proper passage, they were taken on to Grinnell. Their names were James F. Miller, Henry May and John Ross, and were from the Cherokee nation. The same year, a darkey, his wife and child, the latter about one year old, were brought to Joseph Arnold, who kept them until about daylight, ferried them across the North Skunk river and took them to Jarvis Johnson, where they were secreted until the next night, and sent on to the next station, Grinnell. That station was then superintended by Hon. J. B. Grinnell himself. On one occasion a slave catcher met Arnold, and after having noticed, very particularly, the covered wagon he was then driving, the Missourian, a rough, profane man, stopped the team and in an abrupt manner said: 'You haint seen nuthin' of no niggers along here lately, have you?' Arnold soon saw the defect in this man's grammar, and answered him 'No!' He said his niggers were in here somewhere and that he would catch them as sure as h——. He didn't though."

Other instances include the following narrated in a former history of this section of Iowa:

"John R. Sparks, Esq., employed several fugitives for a short time about his saw-mill. On another occasion he came narrowly out of a 'fix.' During his absence, his father, a good old Kentucky Democrat, entertained several dusky travelers northward bound. These fellows were trailed by pursuers directly to Mr. Sparks' house, and had it not been for the fact that the shelter was given as stated it would have been a certain case. As it was, the pursuers grumbled a good deal toward the old gentleman.

"August 13, 1860, two covered wagons passed through Newton containing fifteen negroes from Missouri and Kansas, making their way toward the

Underground Railway.

JASPER COUNTY, IOWA.

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North star. The wagons were accompanied by some twelve or fifteen white men on horseback, and all were heavily armed, presenting a very warlike appearance. Among the whites was Barclay Coppoc, who had accompanied John Brown on his ill-starred expedition into Virginia, and had barely escaped the fate meted out to his comrades, one of whom was his brother, Edward. His flight was characterized by great nerve and daring. He returned at once to his home in Cedar county, this state. Soon after, the sheriff at Tipton was visited by a Virginia officer with a requisition for Barclay. The sheriff volunteered to serve the papers, visited Coppoc's home, and, not finding him, left a message requesting Coppoc to be at home next day, as he had a warrant for him. Another of the party was Ball, of the Brown invasion, and still another, Doyle, of Kansas note. Coppoc and his company declared they were able to cope with a hundred persons, if attacked. They camped a short distance from town for several hours, and then resumed their journey. A squad of nineteen passed a few miles south of Newton the same day. Three other negroes passed through Newton on their way north in April of the preceding year."

1857
1856

OLD SETTLERS' SOCIETY.

January 8, 1881, an old settlers' organization was perfected. Joseph Arnold drew up the preamble, constitution and by-laws, and they were recorded in book 3, page 382, in the recorder's office at Newton. There had been several annual meetings of the old settlers held in the groves previous to this, but no organization had been effected or any record of the proceedings kept. John R. Sparks was chosen president and Joseph Arnold secretary. In 1884 five acres of land was selected and purchased by the society, which is one-half mile southwest of Lynnville and is called the "Old Settlers' Park." On this ground annual meetings were held and usually attended by the thousands. They are still kept up and at one occasion there was estimated to have been ten thousand people in attendance. They came from Maine to the Pacific coast—friends who had one time lived in Jasper county. These gatherings are held on the third Thursday of each August, and are greatly enjoyed by all. It is the event of all the year in and about Lynnville. The present (1911) officers of the association are: W. J. Adams, president; Charles W. Wildman, secretary; W. P. Robertson, vice-president; C. H. Potter, treasurer.

JASPER COUNTY'S FIRST CELEBRATION.

The first Fourth of July celebration in this county was held at the log cabin home of pioneer B. Aydelotte, in Buena Vista township, and in 1894—

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THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN IOWA -Annals of Iowa P 128-31

"Tabor & Northern" Excursion - Deacon Adam' Own Story

7137 THE IOWA UNDERGROUND RAILROAD- By Curt Harna ck
The Iowan Vol 3-4; June-July 1956, pgs 20-23; 44,47

The Remarkable Masters of a First Station On

7136 The Underground Railroad- The Iowan Vol 22-24

Summer--pages 45-50

7144 - Charles Edward Smith "The Underground Railroad in Iowa.
M. A. Thesis, Northeast mission Univ. - 129 pages - 1971
(didn't locate.)

Tabor & Northern—perhaps the first of many similar ones.

In 1903, Mr. Adams related incidents of his "excursion," saying that he then was the only survivor of the trip taken on July 6, 1854, now one hundred years and more ago, when intense feeling was hourly fomenting in this country over the slavery question, and giant forces later contended in its settlement. One such event was directed by seven men who actively engaged in the plot of befriending five negro slaves by spiriting them to the Nishna river east of Tabor and from there two more taking them to another point further on in the state.

Giving individual names, Deacon Adams said that he and Jesse West were the prime movers in the enterprise. West, who ran a blacksmith shop, was the father of Arthur T. West. Assisting was John Hallam, whose widow later resided in Tabor with her daughter, Mrs. W. H. Wyant; James K. Gafton, a cousin of George B. Gafton, one of the founders of Tabor college, and Henry, a young and enthusiastic Irish lad who was an apprentice in West's blacksmith shop. These comprised the party of five. One of the two men who were to receive the slaves on the east side of the Nishna river was William Clark, a Mills county settler who entered the land where the cemetery was later located, his son, C. W. Clark afterward in business at Randolph. The other was Cephas Case, also an old pioneer of Mills county, who resided near Patrick's mill on Silver creek.

THE STORY OF THE RAIL

Late in the afternoon of July 4, 1854, there arrived in Tabor from the south a small immigrant train. The party consisted of a Mormon elder by the name of Dennis, his wife and daughter, and six negro slaves. They were from Mississippi and were headed for Salt Lake City. They camped just west from where the postoffice afterward stood.

While one of the blacks was at a well getting water,

"Tabor & Northern" Excursion

DEACON ADAMS' OWN STORY

Before the Civil war, lines of travel by the public from the South to Northern states was carefully avoided by the slaves escaping from the master's plantations and seeking freedom in Canada, for they could not linger even in the North. Sympathetic Northerners helped them in any way they could, even to organization of what were termed "underground railways." These were night-hauling accommodations, mostly farm wagons, conveying the blacks under camouflaged light loads of hay or straw, from one friendly home to another upon less frequented highways. Slight publicity attended these operations and numberless blacks thus obtained freedom in remote Northern states or in Canada.

Several such lines traversed Iowa north and south, one through Des Moines, the immediate "stations" being the James Jordan home in Walnut township west on the Commerce road, the Isaac Brandt home at East 12th and Grand avenue, across the street east of the present location of the State Historical building, and the third at Uncle Tommy Mitchell's tavern home at Apple Grove near the east line of Beaver township. These night stopovers on the "underground line" that freighted their black cargo northward, were some times traversed by freedom-loving sympathizers, one often being John Brown from Kansas, who eventually lost his life in the traffic.

Another such "line" in the west section of Iowa was known as "the Tabor and Northern," about which many tales have been written and related. One living actor in an interesting drama relating to this "line" remained a resident of Tabor for many years in the person of Deacon S. H. Adams, the town's pioneer furniture dealer, who told of an early excursion party over the

hospitably cared for by some Quakers and Wesleyan Methodists. In the meantime Case and Clark had returned.

The blacks were next heard of in Peoria, Illinois, where a sister of the Rev. John Dodd wrote of them being at her church over Sunday. Later on they were known to have crossed Lake Erie at Detroit into Canada—the haven of runaway slaves.

GREAT EXCITEMENT AT TABOR

Of course there was something doing in Tabor the next day. Early on the morning of the 5th, Dennis missed his slaves. He aroused the town. As there were many sympathizers in that region, he soon had a crowd of men, boys and dogs, ready to go on a slave hunt. During the day a man arrived in Tabor who had met the fugitives. Dennis and his men set out in that direction, crossing Walnut creek only an hour behind them at the old Hawthorne. But here they lost the trail.

Dennis then went to Chicago, advertising in the papers, offering \$400 reward for the slaves and \$400 more for Case and Clark, dead or alive. He soon returned to Tabor, greatly disgusted with the treatment.

ONLY THE FIRST ONE

This incident was only the first of many exciting ones that followed. After that, many a runaway slave was helped on to Canada by the friendly hands of Tabor people. One day a party of slave catchers who had been up into Iowa and were returning to Missouri with their captives stopped at Tabor for dinner. While the whites were in the hotel eating, a rescuing party stole their blacks and ran them over the Nishna where they were concealed in timber for several days, finally making good their escape. At another time two girls were stolen from Nebraska City and brought across the river near Percival. Soon after, a mob of 60 men armed with hickory clubs came across and ransacked every house they came to in search of the runaways. A few weeks later the owner found the girls in a Chicago hotel, but was not permitted to take them.

he was asked if he knew he was on "free" soil and if they desired to be free. At this time the line separating the slave state of Missouri from the free state of Iowa ran through the center of Fremont county. This was only 12 miles south of Tabor—Sidney and Percival, too, being just north of the line.

The blacks desiring their liberty, a rescuing party was hastily organized that night in Jesse West's blacksmith shop. This historic structure (later partially rebuilt) was used as a portion of S. P. McCormick's barn. At that time it stood on Main street where Walling's clothing store stood later.

It was nearly one o'clock that night before the Mormon elder and family were sound enough asleep so that it would be safe to steal away with his slaves. Only five blacks were taken, a man and his wife, each aged about 40, and their little girl four years old and a nursing babe, also a bright young man about 21 years old. This lad had a splash of white blood in his veins and Dennis had proposed to shine in Salt Lake society with the boy as his colored coachman. A woman aged 50—an old family servant—was left behind as it was feared she could not be trusted with the secret.

The party drove to the Nishna river east of Tabor to a point near Randolph. Here in the dead of the night they crossed on a huge cottonwood tree that had fallen across the river, Deacon Adams carrying the two little children.

PLOTTED BY CASE AND CLARK

On the east side of the river they were met by two men—Cephas Case and Wm. Clark, who had been previously appointed. Stealthily they made their way in a northeasterly direction, staying all night near Lewis in Cass county. Here they took breakfast on the morning of July 6th with a Methodist missionary named Hitchcock who was stationed at a place called "Injun Town."

Arriving at an old crossing point on the Des Moines river not far from Oskaloosa, the fleeing slaves were

With a strong pro-southern element in the state, abolitionists exercised great care in guiding their colored charges along

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pgs 20-23, 44, 47

Topic A-F3-1

THE IOWA UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

by CURT HARNACK

ACROSS the southern half of Iowa a century ago ran a vast network of routes traveled by slaves escaping to freedom. Iowans of New England background were most prominent in helping the slaves, but since the national fugitive slave law made it a crime to aid the runaways, the utmost secrecy prevailed.

"Negroes escape to Canada as easily as if they traveled on a railway which ran beneath the ground!" said a southern slaveowner. In popular imagination this mysterious "underground railroad" was thought to consist of tunnels from house to house or from town to town, where Negroes were hustled to escape bondage. Although few tunnels actually existed, many antislavery Iowans constructed secret chambers in basements, compartments in walls and hiding places under floors. Here Negroes would hide until their white friends could guide them to the next friendly house, usually under the cover of night.

The friends of the slaves were often highly religious and felt it their moral duty to befriend the Negroes. Of the religious sects, Quakers and Congregationalists seem to have been most active. They looked to the Mosaic law to justify their activities: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him."

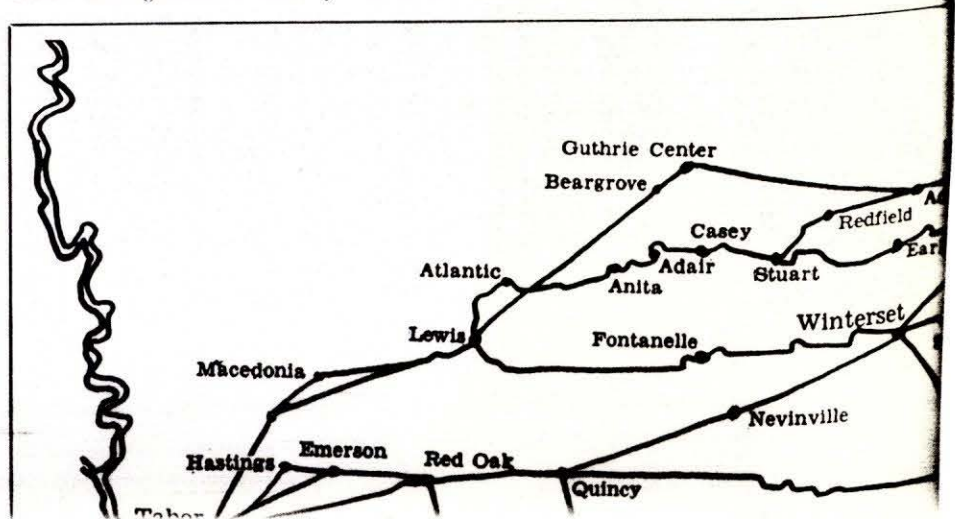
—as elsewhere along Iowa's underground railroad.

But almost everywhere in Iowa, southern sympathizers fought the friends of Negro runaways. The Fort Madison *Plain Dealer* of May 27, 1857, warns the people of Denmark who openly and defiantly helped the slaves:

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 movement across Iowa on the underground railroad was north and east, with most of the slaves coming up from Missouri. A few from the Deep South struck west, then north into Kansas, Nebraska and across Iowa. Although Iowa was a "free state," Negroes who arrived were never safe until they reached Canada and the British flag. Therefore "agents" would run their cargo of slaves at night to the next "station," where a new "conductor" and his crew of "engineers" would take over. Thousands of slaves were thus transported to the Mississippi River towns, then into Illinois to one of the Great Lakes ports, where ship captains busily ferried the slaves to final safety.

Iowa's underground railroad system started in the west and south and worked east to the



It is as impossible to estimate how many slaves escaped through Iowa as it is to tell how many Iowans helped them. But the abolitionists, who believed slavery should be ended, were distinctly in the minority in those years before the Civil War. Prior to 1850 only one New Englander for every six Southerners settled in Iowa. In only a few towns, such as Tabor, Salem, Denmark and Springdale were the abolitionists in a clear majority.

Many Northerners did not believe it their business to interfere with the "peculiar institution" of slavery — a view that Abraham Lincoln shared early in his career. They saw the abolitionists as troublemakers, trying to stir up an issue better left alone. Since no underground railroad activity could be carried on completely in the open, out-of-the-way towns were best for stations; less-traveled roads were safest. Even at the beginning of the Civil War, the Governor of Iowa said in a letter to Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase: "the southern half of our state is strongly pro-slavery . . ."

The underground railroad was never an organized system, and most of the conductors didn't know the whole route. However, some outstanding abolitionists like J. B. Grinnell, Dr. Blanchard of Percival, and Reverend J. Todd of Tabor grasped the extent of operations in Iowa. From letters and recorded anecdotes, historians have been able to reconstruct the principal routes and many of the stations.

Clinton house was famous "station" in underground network for runaway slaves.

Major documentation on Iowa was done by Professor W. H. Siebert of Ohio State University, who began before the turn of the century when many agents and conductors were still alive. Letters from Iowans reveal the exact location of farmhouses, give names and cite incidents. Many of the routes and stations changed frequently as they became well-known and therefore more closely watched by slave-catchers and federal men.

Methods for aiding slaves developed by trial and error, and successful schemes spread by word of mouth. No man was more in authority than anyone else; only the cause was important. Every member of the network was responsible for doing his best when the "call" came — whether it be at two a.m. on a wintry night and Negroes

arrived to be transported, or whether he was asked to risk his life by making a day-run only a few hours ahead of an armed posse of slave-catchers.

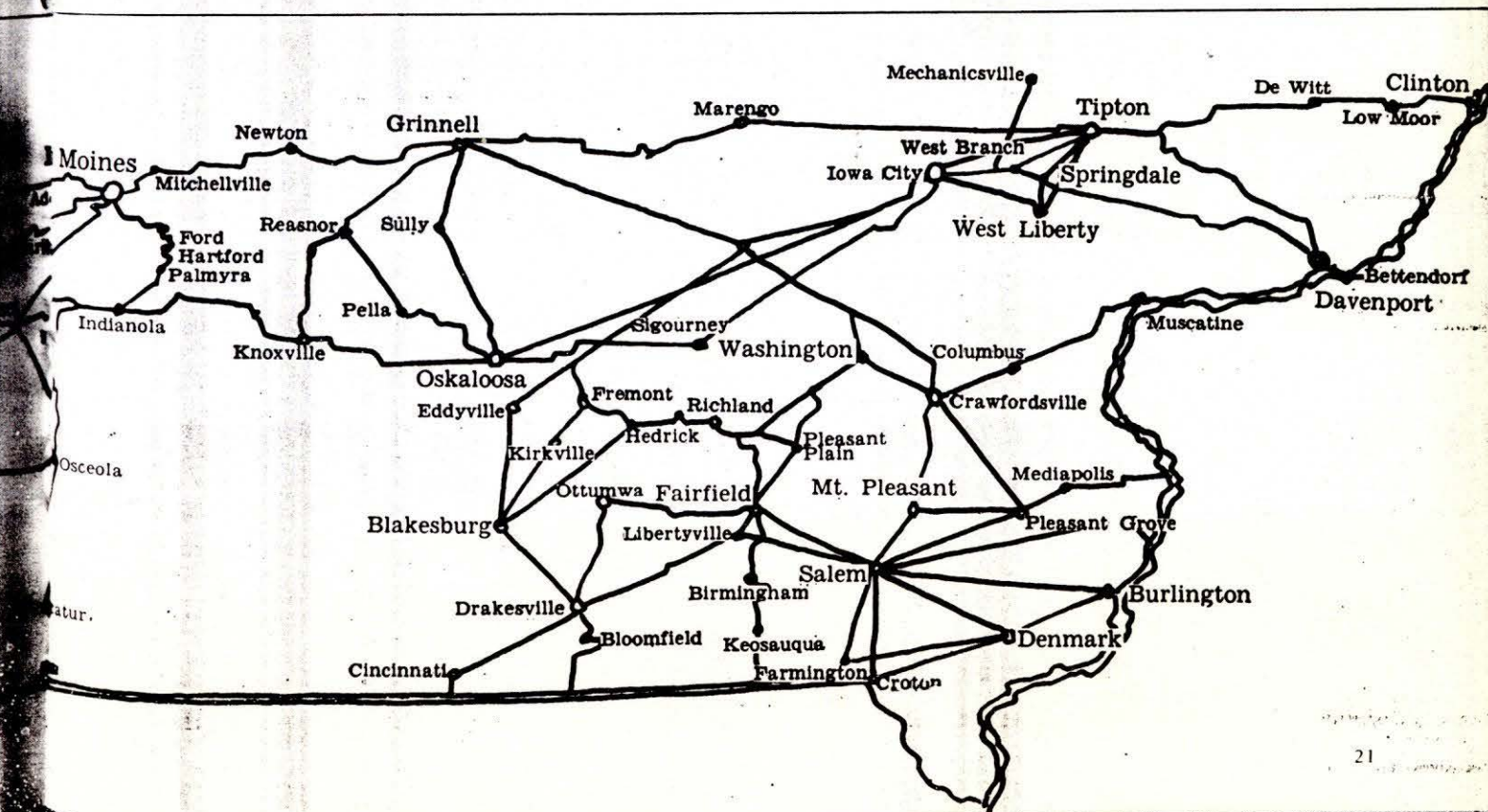
Occasionally a note in code would be sent to notify an advance station agent that slaves were on the way. This one was sent from Low Moor to a man in Clinton:

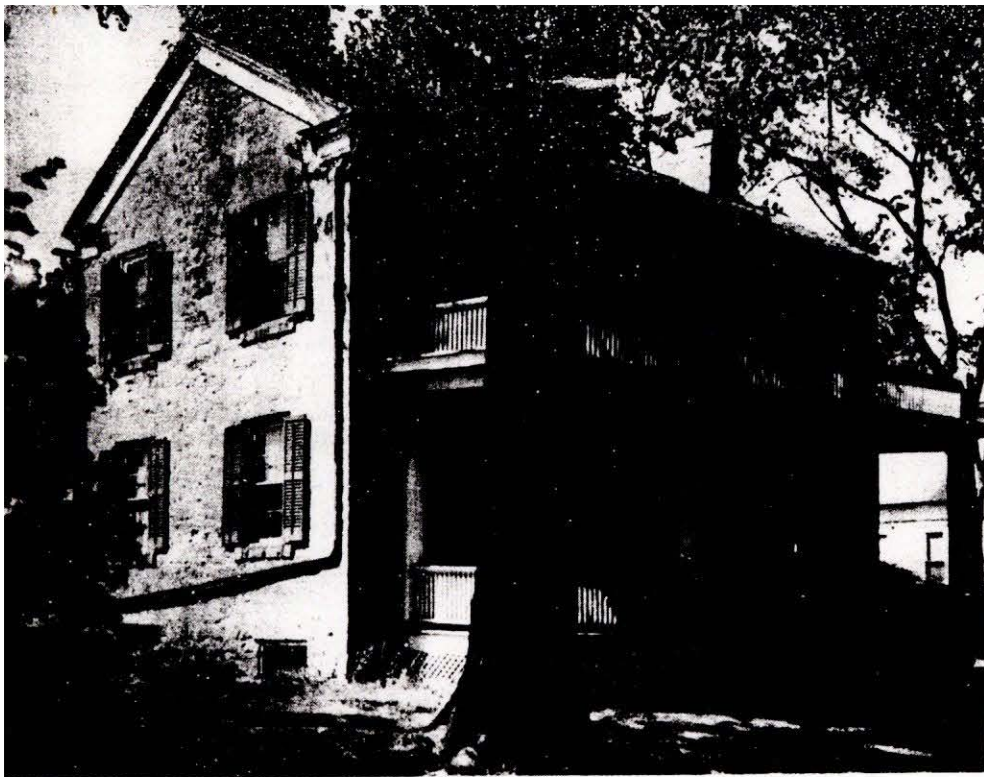
Dear Sir: By tomorrow evening's mail, you will receive two volumes of the "irrepressible Conflict," bound in black. After perusal, please forward, and oblige,
Yours truly, G.W.W.

Thomas Mitchell, founder of Mitchellville, was proprietor of a famous frontier inn and a sympathizer in the Negro cause. He once sent this note to his friend, J. B. Grinnell:

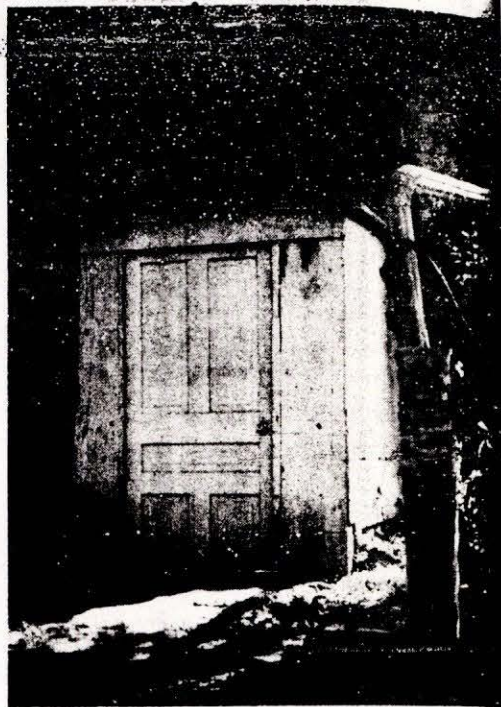
Dear Grinnell: Uncle Tom says

to the Mississippi River. Leading abolitionists centers included: Tabor, Grinnell, Salem, Denmark, Winterset, Tipton, Clinton and Oskaloosa.





Lewellen house, Salem, was scene of famous trial in which case was dismissed after slaveowner, Ruel Daggs, failed to produce warrants for arrest of nine Negroes.



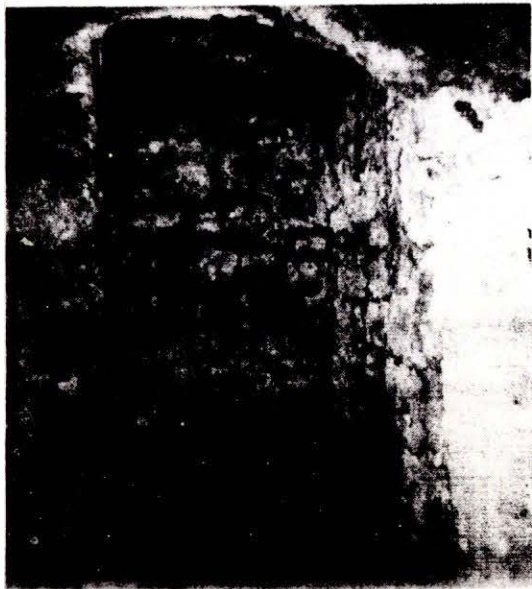
Slave hunters were shown this door to regular basement of the Pearson house.

if the roads are not too bad you can look for those fleeces of wool by tomorrow. Send them on to test the market-price, and no back charges.

Yours, Hub

Several operators developed elaborate code signals to communicate with one another when conditions were not safe. Some historians look upon the hand-signals and cryptic words as an unnecessary elaboration or a kind of

Underground room was discovered when a shed on farm near De Witt was torn down. It is assumed it was used for hiding slaves because of construction, proximity of farm to former Wapipinicon ferry and lack of other use.



game that operators developed. However, Isaac Brandt, an early Des Moines postmaster who was a station agent, told of a visit by John Brown and the signals he used. "Hello" meant "all's well"; the slaves concealed in Brown's wagon were referred to as "fodder," and a hand to the tip of his ear meant he understood.

A letter in the Siebert collection from Reverend E. S. Hill of the Tabor region says, "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."

Tabor had a wide reputation for being a "hotbed" of abolitionism, and any Southerners on their way West who accidentally stopped there overnight with slaves were very likely to find them gone by morning. Once Reverend Todd, upon receiving a slave woman whose would-be captors were in hot pursuit, dressed her up to look like his wife, with veil, cloak and gloves. He drove her in his buggy to Lewis, over fifty miles away, in broad daylight. This same minister kept in his barn one winter 200 rifles which had been sent by the Massachusetts-Kansas State Committee for John Brown's use in Kansas.

From Lewis a route led to Fontanelle. Abner Root, son of a station agent there, once related this about his father's activities:

On one cold midwinter evening, when there was just enough snow

on the ground to make good sledging, John Brown called at the door of my father's house with seven Negroes. He said, "Take these people to ——— at Winterset before light tomorrow morning." With these words he quickly drove away. While father was hitching up the sled my mother took the cold and hungry Negroes into the kitchen and gave them some hot food and coffee. The sled once ready the Negroes were deposited in the bottom in a prone position and then covered with heavy blankets, for fear some one would see them while enroute to our destination. In this manner we drove the thirty-six snow covered miles to Winterset and deposited our human freight at the next station.

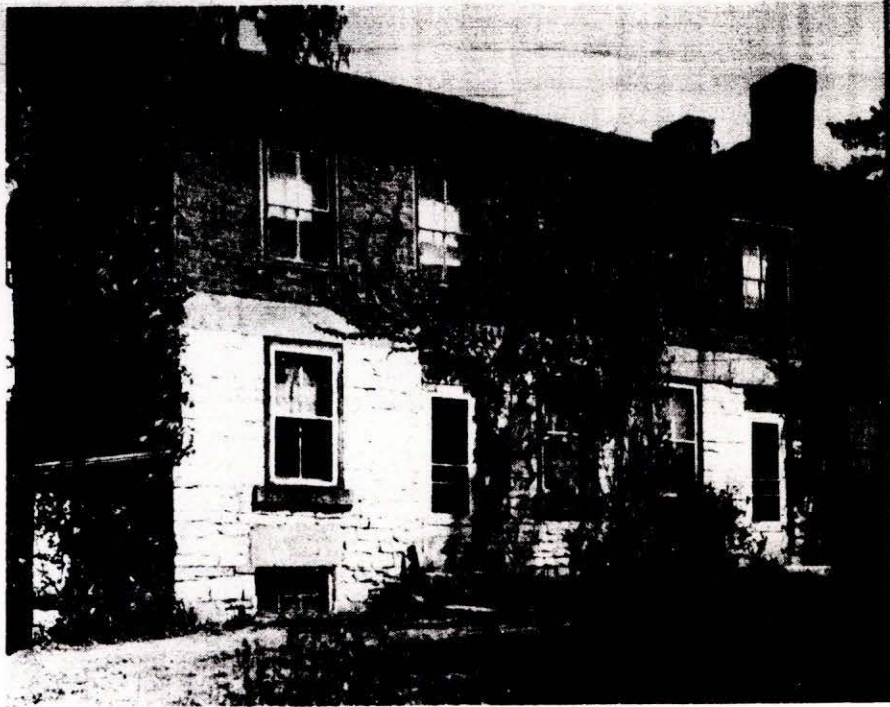
From Winterset a route led straight to Des Moines; one of the underground stations was located where the state historical building now stands. Once in Des Moines the Negroes felt somewhat safer and even more eager to reach final freedom.

Turning east from Des Moines, Mitchell's Tavern offered a haven for the runaways, and there were several hospitable places in the Newton area.

J. B. Grinnell became so notorious as a friend of the slaves that at one time there was an offer of a reward for his life. In February of 1859 John Brown with twelve slaves abducted from Missouri stopped at Grinnell's house. Together the two abolitionists



Access to secret slave-hiding basement was by trap door. Present door was cut years later.



Keosauqua's Pearson house with double basement protected fugitive slaves. Second floor was used for church services during pre-Civil War days.

plotted a way of getting the slaves to freedom. The fugitives slept in the "liberty room," where the guns of Brown and his guards were stacked. Part of the Grinnell house is still standing, although it has been moved from its original site in Grinnell.

Since Missouri authorities had offered \$3,000 for the capture of the Brown party, the Iowa City postmaster, Sam Workman, was busily planning to trap them; the marshal at Davenport farther east had a warrant for Brown's arrest. But Brown by-passed Iowa City and found haven in Springdale, while Grinnell went to Chicago to get a boxcar for the transportation of Brown and his band from Iowa to Chicago. Although the superintendent refused permission for Brown to transport the Negroes on the railroad, he gave Grinnell a draft for \$50.00 to help Brown's cause.

A few days later at West Liberty, Brown managed to have his twelve Missouri slaves put in a freight car attached directly behind the locomotive. As the train started for Davenport and Chicago, a passenger recognized Brown and discovered the slaves. He threatened to reveal to U.S. officials what was going on and have Brown arrested. At this point Brown and his armed men moved in and persuaded the passenger to be quiet. The conductor, an Englishman and sympathizer with the abolitionists, looked the other way.

When the train stopped in Davenport U. S. Marshall Laurel Summers marched on board with a posse. But

they did not examine the freight car and they didn't catch Brown. Later, an underground railroad agent in Davenport wrote: "From a window of the old Burtis Hotel I was greatly relieved to hear the train crossing the bridge to Chicago, where the Negroes landed safely next morning."

Historians often point to two factors in the underground railroad which helped precipitate the Civil War. The slave-catchers hired by the Southerners represented the whole South to many Northerners — and these men were often thugs, whose insensitivity to the suffering of the slaves shocked even the people who were indifferent to the slavery question. Thus an image of the South arose, characterized chiefly by brutal slave-masters and suffering Negroes.

Secondly, the slaves who dared to run away were often the most maltreated; frequently they were plantation field hands who had gotten into trouble with the overseer. Only Negroes who found their situation unbearable would attempt to travel thousands of miles, often on foot, through all seasons, to gain their freedom. Northerners came to know the slavery system through these runaways.

One such desperate slave was Aunt Polka, who arrived near Keosauqua on a snowy, cold night. With a baby in her arms and dragging a little boy, Aunt Polka ran from her would-be rescuers because she thought they were slave-catchers. Finally they convinced her of their friendship and her story

came out. She had started from Mississippi with fourteen children and only a bag of cornpone. Two boys and two girls were left with Negro families along the way. The remaining eight of her children died from hunger, exposure or illness. Aunt Polka traveled no farther than Keosauqua; she stayed there until her death and was popularly referred to as "the wild tom of the woods."

In southeast Iowa the most important underground railroad town was the small Quaker community of Salem. Founding father Isaac Pidgeon believed every Christian should follow the dictates of his conscience. He was so successful in helping runaways that Missouri slave owners finally posted patrols along the Des Moines River bank. Although slave hunters lurked on the roads to Burlington, Salem conductors were skillful in evading them.

Some of the principal houses used for underground stops can still be found in Salem. Writes Mrs. Don Watson, a former Salem resident: "One of these houses is the Herbert Garretson home. In it there was a hole in the kitchen floor where one slave could hide. Another house is owned by my father, Jay Long. It has bars on the basement windows yet and two doors inside that were hiding places."

The Ruel Daggs case, famous in the history of the Iowa underground railroad, took place in Salem. In the summer of 1858 nine slaves owned by Ruel

(Continued on page 44)



WHEN DRIVING TO THE STORE OR ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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Farm Messiah

(Continued from page 43)

economical and excellent cattle feed is available. "With normal pastures the average Iowa farmer could feed from two to three times as many cattle as he has been carrying," Garst has said.

But Garst is not optimistic about immediate widespread acceptance of this cattle feed. "It is generally true that there is a seven years' delay in any new agricultural development between positive proof and general acceptance. That was true of seed corn, combines, rubber-tired tractors, fertilizer, and it will be true of the general widespread use of corn cobs and silage in the place of hay. It won't come with great rapidity, but it will surely come."

Garst's other enthusiasms have ranged from economical farm buildings and storage pits to his current great interest in hybrid sorghums. He believes that the hybrid sorghum is the coming crop in drought-prone areas and planted large acreages of it himself last year with success. There are few fields in agriculture, practical or theoretical, in which Garst and his family are not interested. They adopt new ideas and new methods with a salesman's zeal. Heavy use of nitrogen fertilizer in continuous corn and sorghum programs for better fields is one of their main interests. Conservation-minded, the entire family takes delight in transforming blighted plots of land into pleasant acres of grass and ponds.

As you might suspect there is even a Garst farm plan. The one being expounded in the Southside Cafe of Coon Rapids where Garst holds court is one that calls for a direct subsidy to livestock producers based on 50% of the difference between price and parity. It is pointed out that the livestock producer is a middleman between the feed farmer and the consumer, so that the grant would be spread equally.

Whatever Garst and his family tackle, you may be sure they do so with conviction and enthusiasm. Many observers feel that the publicity Garst has had on his agricultural theories and his success with seed corn could be put under one heading: salesmanship. It is an unfair criticism. Garst is certainly a salesman, as are his sons and many of his associates. But they speak from considered thought, experience and a vast knowledge of farming in many phases. Innovators they certainly are. And sometimes they are inclined to work from premises drawn from their large-scale operation that may not apply so readily to the smaller farmer. But the main objection stems from the

fact that they are just too good in putting their ideas forward.

When asked about his personal philosophy Garst simply says: "Stay happy and alert." His business motto reads: "If it's sound, it'll sell." And sell Garst will — with a gospel fervor. No wonder Garst is the first American businessman to make capital out of modern-day Communism.

Underground Railroad

(Continued from page 23)

Daggs of Missouri escaped to within one mile of Salem. Slave hunters overtook them just as three Quakers from Salem arrived on the scene. The Iowans demanded that the fugitives be allowed to go to Salem, where the slave hunters' claim could be properly presented before a justice of the peace.

Although the Southerners vowed the Iowans would have to "wade in Missouri blood before the Negroes would be taken," the men from Salem insisted on the due process of law. When the men and fugitives arrived in Salem a crowd quickly formed and followed eagerly to Justice Lewellen's home. A few minutes later the case was dismissed, since the plaintiffs couldn't produce warrants for the arrest of the Negroes. There was a moment of stunned silence. A Salemite, Paul Way, called: "If anybody wants to follow me, let him follow." Two of the Negroes did, and the others left later. Soon all of them were on their way to Canada.

But the Missourians promised vengeance against Salem. A few days later an armed band on horseback literally besieged the town. Search parties combed through every "nigger-stealing" house, looking for runaways. Word had traveled along the underground and there was not a Negro in Salem. Many families continued eating their dinners as the Missourians ransacked their houses.

In Denmark, not far from Salem, two New England Congregationalists, Julius Reed and Asa Turner (both ministers) were antislavery leaders. According to Cecil Turton of Ohio State, who studied the Iowa underground activities, Denmark was perhaps the second most important town in southeast Iowa.

One of Reverend Asa Turner's parishioners, Theron Trowbridge, had slaves hiding in his house one Sunday morning. Although slave hunters were reportedly near, Trowbridge wanted to attend church services as usual. Before leaving his house he fixed poisoned

(Continued on page 47)

Underground Railroad

(Continued from page 44)

biscuits for the bloodhounds and told his son to feed the animals if they came near. The custom was adopted by other abolitionists.

Even though all the Mississippi River cities were important in the underground railroad, no single town was predominantly abolitionist, and some historians hold that most of them were pro-slavery — or at least believed in a non-interference policy. Muscatine was largely pro-slavery, according to Turton, and the abolitionist activity was centered solely in the small Congregational Church there, which was frequently referred to sarcastically as Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Davenport was the scene of Dred Scott's claim on liberty, and the ensuing case which finally ended in the historic Supreme Court decision, made Scott the most famous slave of the century. His owner, Dr. John Emerson, lived briefly in Davenport with Dred Scott. Since according to the Missouri Compromise, Iowa was a free state, Dred Scott claimed that having lived here made him free, too. The Supreme Court decision went against him: "Dred Scott is a Negro slave, the lawful property of the defendant."

The Dred Scott decision only fanned the ardor of the Iowa abolitionists. They worked for the day when all slaves would be free, and many finally gave their lives for this cause. The first Iowan to be killed in the conflict that was later to develop into the Civil War was Edwin Coppoc of Springdale. Edwin's Quaker mother apprehensively watched her two sons depart for Harper's Ferry. "I believe you are going with old Brown," she said. "When you get the halters around your necks, will you think of me?"

Later, when her prophecy came true, Edwin Coppoc wrote just before his execution: "Thank God the principle in which we are engaged will not die with me and my brave comrades. By the taking of my life . . . Virginia is but hastening on the glorious day when the slaves will rejoice in their freedom."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks are due Fred DeWitt of Griswold for information on western Iowa, particularly the routes in that section.

Astray in Hawkeyeland

(Continued from page 6)

Science" in Mason City to test completed BunaB's and carry on research

in advanced models. Crowder will say that the "New Improved No. 7 BunaB" is a direct result of such research.

Fun is the key word for Snay's employees. The annual 4th of July picnic starts May 11 and continues until Oct. 15. The annual New Year's eve party is still going on.

Actually, the leg pulling routine has snowballed. Crowder started the gag by giving the BunaB to a few friends in Mason City. They in turn passed them on to other friends and the thing kept going until it spread across the country.

"Why, the BunaB is better known in New York, Dallas or Los Angeles than in Iowa and Mason City," said Al.

The device is even getting in the political ring. A fellow by the name of John Taylor of Salem, Ohio, is running for Lt. Governor of his state on the BunaB ticket.

"We even got an inquiry from Dun and Bradstreet," said Crowder. "We had to write them and admit that all our business is conducted on a cash basis and we weren't interested in credit."

It's hard to believe that so much fun can be bought for a mere 48 cents. Even at two for a dollar, the "New Improved No. 7 BunaB" is a real bargain.

Crowder gets letters, cards and telegrams from every section of the United States concerning his "product." One gentleman wrote recently, "Oppo is poop spelled inside out. What the heck is BunaB?"

One of the Lockheed aircraft plants in California ran the BunaB through its testing laboratory recently. The written report returned to Crowder states, "The New Improved No. 7 BunaB does everything it claims."

Which is nothing.

—Drake Mabry

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 2)

the Police more bouquets and fewer brickbats.

MRS. PAULINE MULFORD
Iowa City

This letter concerns a piece in the Astray in Hawkeyeland column in the last issue. We have also had some correspondence with Mr. Peter Roan, Iowa City city manager, about it.

In fairness, I would like to clear up a few misimpressions here. First, a news story was our source for reporting that the Iowa City fathers were unhappy over missing the funds that

(Continued on next page)

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The IOWAN
Shenandoah, Iowa

The Remarkable Masters of A First Station on The Underground Railroad

THE IOWAN Vol. 22-
24 - Summer - pages 45-50

The abolitionist liberals of pre-Civil War Iowa included some of the most remarkable men ever to live in the state. At a time when Southern sympathizers were in a majority, these righteous individuals struggled for racial equality, plotted with one another, and organized an underground railroad to smuggle slaves through the state on their way to Canada.

The Iowa abolitionists were mainly Quakers or Congregationalists in religion and often reflected a long New England background. Josiah B. Grinnell is one of the best known of these abolitionists, but the

John Todd of Tabor deserves equal recognition. Todd, who founded another Congregational school, Tabor College, in southwestern Iowa near the present town of Percival, was so dedicated to the abolition movement that he kept 200 rifles hidden in his barn for an entire winter. The rifles had been given to him by a Massachusetts Abolitionists Committee for use by the "Free Soil" settlers of Kansas.

Finally, the rifles were turned over to John Todd after he had obtained written permission from the committee.

Todd originally came to Iowa with a group of settlers from the Oberlin, Ohio, region. The formation of this Oberlin band in southwestern Iowa is told in a book, *SOMEDAY — A Tale of Civil Bend by the River*, by Gertrude and

Robert Handy. This Oberlin settlement constituted a major entry station onto the famed underground railroad, as it was close to the Missouri border and to the pro-slavery center of Nebraska City.

The Territory of Iowa was established in 1838 and the first settlers began flowing toward its southwestern section during 1839 and 1840. Among these sturdy people were George Belcher Gaston and his wife Maria who left Oberlin, Ohio, in 1840 on a mission to the Pawnee Indian nation of the Platte River in eastern Nebraska Territory.

The Gastons soon wrote to friends of theirs in Ohio, Lester Ward Platt and his wife Elvira, encouraging them to leave Oberlin for the Indian territory where they could assist with the Pawnee mission. In the spring of 1842 Lester and Elvira began their long trip west. The Platts were so impressed with the beautiful and fertile land of the Missouri River bottoms at Civil Bend, near the present town of Percival, that they erected a cottonwood shanty and cleared twenty acres of land.

Following several years of suffering with the Pawnees in their wars with the Sioux, the Gastons returned to Ohio in 1847 where George farmed two miles north of Oberlin. George's compassion for the Pawnees was again deeply stirred, so he decided to establish a college in the west, near the Indian territory, hoping that the Pawnees would be encouraged to attend his institution. He had seen the blessed influence of Oberlin College and longed to see it repeated on the western frontier.

Sometime during the summer of 1848, in his search for a minister to return to Civil Bend with him, Mr. Gaston visited the Reverend John Todd. This young minister of slender build impressed George. Todd's mind was very

alert and he reflected a complete trust in life and God. Later, John Todd reminisced about this important visit with George Gaston:

George Gaston wanted to secure a minister of the gospel for the settlement at Civil Bend. My wife and I became interested in the project and consented to go, but thought it best that I should first go and see. In early October, 1848, the way was prepared and we set out for southwestern Iowa: G.B. Gaston and family, S.H. Adams and wife, Darius P. Matthews, Deacon Josiah B. Hall and myself.

After weeks of traveling via railroad, steamer, wagon and buggy, the band of pioneers reached the hospitable home of Lester and Elvira Platt. The Oberlin party had been expected and their arrival was a mutually joyous meeting.

The happy group feasted and enjoyed several days of relaxation from the trip. They enjoyed meeting others who lived near the Platts, including Dr. Ira D. Blanchard.



Reverend John Todd

Lester Platt, George Gaston, S.H. Adams, D.P. Matthews, Deacon J.B. Hall, Ira D. Blanchard and the Rev. Todd scoured the country on horseback in search of an eligible site for the settlement and college. They visited the bluffs and crossed back and forth over the valley.

"Doc" Blanchard, a tough and strongly built man with deep brown eyes that radiated love and concern for people, but which could flash deep-rooted rage when debating the slavery issue, respected his new friends and neighbors from Oberlin. He approached the Rev. Todd and

"You are fantastic people," he told them, "and your cause is just. My family and I wish to make a gift to you. Please accept twenty acres of my land on the high ridge near Gaston for your new college."

All agreed that it was the best location and the generous gift was accepted. The commons foundation was laid at the center of the land for the literary institution of Civil Bend College.

During the winter of 1851 Deacon Gaston selected Tabor as the name for his college after Mount Tabor mentioned several times in the Bible, including Jeremiah 46:18. *As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall He come.*

A few years later, the faint pounding of the war drum echoed across the nation like an approaching thunderstorm. The Kansas-Nebraska bill was passed by Congress in May of 1854 and the first company of eastern emigrants settled in Lawrence, Kansas. Hundreds of settlers from Missouri crossed over into Kansas to make land claims as soon as it was opened to settlement. The struggle between freedom and slavery was taking a new form. The people of Civil Bend were suddenly thrust into the furnace of the great Civil War and those events causing its outbreak.

The Missouri river was blockaded to keep emigrants out of Kansas and Nebraska. One large company of emigrants from Illinois was turned back at the Boulware landing near old Fort Kearney. Angered, they headed north to find another route of passage. The Civil Bend landing was a good operation but border guards would not allow John Copeland, to ferry the emigrants across. Dr. Blanchard became involved in the heated dispute and suggested they turn north to Tabor. They arrived there in the summer of 1856 and this marked the beginning of free state men through this area.

Civil Bend became the nearest point to Kansas and Nebraska where people were in agreement with the free state movement, although Tabor was the center for storing guns, ammunition and other war materials in houses, barns and cellars. All of these provisions were available at no charge to the increasing number of free staters arriving each week.

During the summer, General James Lane was repeatedly in and around Tabor. He addressed the public on several occasions concerning Kansas problems and politics. Dr. Blanchard, Lester Platt and Joseph Freeman listened to his words with deep interest. A few well-known abolitionists and shared Lane's rejection of slavery. Lane was invited to speak in Civil Bend by Ira Blanchard and he gladly accepted.

In a few days, Captain John Brown arrived in Tabor from Kansas with his son, who needed medical attention. Brown agreed to accompany Lane to Civil Bend. It was at this meeting that Blanchard, Platt and Freeman agreed to coordinate the underground railroad activities in this area nearest Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. It became the first stop on free soil for escaping slaves. The success or failure of the entire operation in this part of the country depended on these three men. Brown and his sons were

Ira Blanchard took them to his enclosed back porch, moved aside a trunk and rug, and opened a concealed trap door. The four men slipped down the slanted entrance into the rooms below. As they entered the east room Blanchard explained:

This room will be used for preparing and eating food. The chimney stack is the same one my wife uses. No one will know the difference. Now, please step in the next room that will serve as the sleeping quarters.



Dr. Ira Blanchard

You will notice it is about the same size as the east room. We have ample bunks for a dozen slaves and that old stove will keep them warm in winter.

John Brown smiled and said, "It appears you are expecting some slaves for dinner tonight. I will have to send out a few invitations."

Lester Platt had been speaking with Mrs. Blanchard while the others toured the cellar. As they returned, he spoke of his uniquely designed wagon for transporting escaping slaves between stops. It had a double floor. If a crisis arose, the slaves hid between the real and false floors during the search by slave bounty hunters.

Mr. Brown invited Dr. Blanchard to accompany them to Kansas where Ira might appraise the situation and establish contacts with those who would bring the slaves to Nebraska City for crossing the Missouri River near Civil Bend. He liked the idea and rode off for Kansas. An extremely concerned family stayed behind.

Brown and Lane were in combat with border ruffians near Lawrence, Kansas, several times between August and October. After one such battle, John Brown and sons

started east by way of Nebraska City, Civil Bend and Tabor. A large number of emigrants entered the state of Kansas from the east and soldiers were dispatched to arrest them. John Brown, disguised as a surveyor, went with the soldiers. He was never discovered although the captain had a warrant for his arrest.

John Brown arrived in Civil Bend on October 5, 1856. He was sick and was treated by Dr. Blanchard before going on to Tabor the same day. Brown remained there for several weeks regaining his strength to fight again.

Doc Blanchard and Jim Lane met several times in Kansas. Once, they evaluated the step by step process for moving slaves into and out of the Civil Bend area. Lane recommended that he, Brown and Blanchard find an isolated spot to meet near Gaston on the next trip. Blanchard suggested the black forest near the river west of his house. Lane would coordinate getting the slaves across and Doc would take it from there.

Blanchard's trip to Kansas in the fall of 1856 was certainly with the commendation of Tabor friends. They approved his pledge that slaves delivered to his place at Civil Bend would be transported to the next friendly station, where others waited to carry them further on the road to freedom. These people desired their involvement be limited as they generally realized the illegality of their acts, but justified themselves on the grounds that they were delivering an outraged race from cruel servitude. The first slaves brought out of Kansas, three in number, resulting from Dr. Blanchard's visit, were conveyed from Topeka in early February 1857, in a closed wagon with a false floor to be used in case of emergency. This was covered with hay or straw. The trip encountered no difficulty until approaching Nebraska City. Armstrong, the driver, concealed the blacks under the false bottom as a precaution as Nebraska City was not an abolitionist stronghold; its population divided about equal in slavery sentiments.

Border ruffians halted the driver and looked in his wagon but did not discover the hidden cargo. J.H. Kagi (Kagy), one of John Brown's most trusted followers, had been sent on ahead of this party. Kagi, with the aid of his father, escaped the town of Nebraska City with the slaves, and conducted the party several miles up the Nebraska side of the river, to the ferry opposite Civil Bend.

The crossing of the Missouri was a dangerous matter as the ice was running in large pieces and the ferryman at first refused to attempt the passage. However, with the aid of a "Colt Navy" he was persuaded and the ferry boat made the crossing with some difficulty, being carried down stream some distance before a crossing could be made with safety.

The slaves were turned over to Dr. Blanchard at Civil Bend, the first stop where a measure of safety was assured, and this trip delivering the slaves to this station seemed to have been considered to have successfully established the underground.

All other slaves going out were conveyed to the stations and this route was in operation as long as it was necessary for slaves to leave for freedom in Canada. Brown himself left Kansas forever over this route. The number of slaves which were transported over this route into Iowa is 47

unknown. Several historians estimate the figure in the hundreds and others as more than a thousand.

Richard Ricketts came to Civil Bend from Ohio in 1855 driving three double-teams of horses and twenty-five hundred dollars in his pocket. Riding in the only double-seated buggy ever seen here was his family including his brother-in-law, Lester Platt. They lived in a shanty built by the Platts thirteen years earlier in which Richard lived there until a new home could be constructed. McKinney Lambert, the last of the Lambert brothers, hewed the logs into perfect shape. The frame part of the house was erected in 1859 and the log structure was weather-boarded.

Samuel Platt's father was finishing some work on their log cabin as a runaway slave emerged from the nearby timber. He told Mr. Ricketts that he had been hiding in Nebraska City, found his way across the river but was lost and hungry. The man risked exposing himself because he heard that Civil Bend was friendly to blacks. He was taken to the house where Mrs. Ricketts gave him some fresh corn bread, meat and vegetables. However, Richard said he would turn him over to the justice of the peace, then Dr. Blanchard. His fear turned to hope as the nature of Dr. Blanchard was explained.

Samuel, his boyish curiosity aroused, followed his father and the slave. On the way, they thought someone was approaching. The slave dashed into the brush and timber to escape. Samuel did likewise. Discovering no slave owner or officer from the south, the terrified black was persuaded to come forward from hiding. Old Dr. Blanchard greeted the slave with a firm and friendly hand-clasp, housed him overnight, and sent him on the road to freedom with Lester Platt.

The slaves had two places to cross the Missouri River. The principle one was at Nebraska City near the old brickyard, the other at Old Wyoming across from the Copeland landing. These escapees came up past Brownville and Peru, Nebraska, to the home of a man of German descent south of the city. He piloted them into town to the now famous John Brown's Cave. From there they were taken to the Bebout ferry or north to the Copeland ferry. Mr. Bebout's was more convenient and he was the only man who could be totally trusted to put the slaves across at night regardless of weather or ice in the treacherous waters. A slave was safe in Bebout's keeping. If the Bebout landing was being watched by bounty hunters, the slaves were transported to Copeland's landing.

The usual route for the underground railway was to cross with Bebout at Eastport; follow the old river bend around to the present-day Rickett's place; through the farm of Lester Platt, and on to Blanchard's. The following day, they were escorted past Rube Williams' place, a strong abolitionist, the Treats and on to Tabor where a few were captured over the years.

One afternoon shortly before the Civil War broke out, two slaves who had escaped Missouri were traveling along the Civil Bend road happy and confident because free soil chilled their feet. They didn't notice the snow and ice because what was this small inconvenience when compared to their joyful walk to freedom. Their happiness was short lived as a gang of Missouri slave hunters chased

them down in the thicket, placed ropes around their necks, tying the other ends to saddle horns. They pulled and jerked their weary captives back to the Atchison County seat, located in Linden, Missouri, at that time.

As the hunters became drunken from their reward money, the slaves were recovering in the log jail. The puncheon floor of their cell was set upon posts three feet off the ground.

The abolitionists in Civil Bend were indignant and organized a freedom party with Joe Treat leading the surge to Linden. They arrived late, about three o'clock in the morning and found the entire town asleep, including the jailer. The door was knocked down with one carefully aimed blow of an ax. Several questioned the jailer as the others discovered that the slaves were missing. The shaken jailer was allowed to tell his story.

"One of the slaves was havin' a chill. It was so cold, wet and nasty, I wasn't surprised. He asked, 'Say boss, wouldn't you let a feller have a little fire?' I brought him a big kettle of coals out of the fireplace. When I was ready to leave, he said, 'Hey, wouldn't you let us have a drink?' I got him a pail of water. Evidently, they dumped the coals on the floor and allowed the fire to burn a hole large enough to escape."

A furious blizzard struck as the slaves hustled up the Missouri river valley and they became separated. Nearly frozen, one finally reached Tabor where he was given medical aid. He remained there for several weeks. No one knows what happened to the other man. The Treat party had their own problems in the blinding snow but finally found its way to Civil Bend. Joe soon learned one slave was lost and immediately began a search that ended in failure.

Henry Garner, his sister Maria, and John Williamson, black Americans living in Civil Bend, were on their way to Omaha when a carriage approached them. No danger was suspected but three men jumped from the carriage. One struck a stunning blow, breaking the cheek bone of Mr. Garner. All three were bound and hurried away to Missouri. Mr. Williamson managed to escape. He told Dr. Blanchard of this incident as soon as he made his way back to Civil Bend. The doctor dropped everything, rushed to Tabor for Mr. Gaston and both rode to northeastern Missouri where they spent several days in search of the Garners and Williamson.

In St. Joe, they obtained a lead that Henry and Maria were being held in a slave pen in St. Louis awaiting sale at the slave market. Mr. Gaston returned to Tabor but Dr. Blanchard rode horseback to St. Louis determined to effect justice. He located the prison and told the jailer that Henry and Maria were free people seized illegally. The keeper tested the doctor's story by taking him into the pen. Henry was suffering from the blow he had received in Iowa, was in utter despair, and did not look up when the two men approached. However, as soon as she saw Dr. Blanchard, Maria jumped up and threw her arms around him in joy, exclaiming, "Oh, Dr. Blanchard! Where did you come from?"

The testimony was indisputable and satisfied the keeper. Ira signed the necessary legal papers and the kidnappers were arrested, returned to Council Bluffs, and

imprisoned to await trial. The happy threesome returned to Civil Bend.

It was a long time before Henry, John or Maria would venture very far from their homes although even there, racial problems would continue to harass them. The leader of the kidnappers, a man named Hurd, escaped from the Council Bluffs jail, sneaked into Civil Bend and threatened Blanchard. A few weeks later, Hurd was hung from a tree in Kansas for horse stealing.

The people of Civil Bend were convinced. Law and order was needed and Dr. Ira Blanchard was elected justice of the peace, a position he filled with efficiency and trust.

One incident of the underground in Civil Bend exceeds all others. It was lived and talked about all over southwestern Iowa and into Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. Mr. S.F. Nuckolls, merchant in Nebraska City, owned two women slaves. Some of his neighbors disliked him for keeping slaves and told him so.

John Williamson of Civil Bend did some trading in Nebraska City and encouraged the young women to escape. Jim Lane was nearby and waiting with a boat at the crossing near Old Wyoming. The river was running full of ice but he made it across the Civil Bend landing without too much difficulty. The slaves were rushed into Lester Platt's wagon. Mr. Platt slapped the reins against the horses' rears and set out for Tabor, returning the same night.

Nuckolls arose the next morning to find his property missing. He had a brother in Glenwood and two brothers-in-law in Sidney. The message of escape was forwarded to them and detectives were stationed at all points east and north of Tabor. The trap was set but the slaves slipped through and on to Chicago. Since they couldn't be found anywhere near Tabor, Nuckolls decided they were still in Civil Bend and he would get them himself. He went up and down the streets of Nebraska City and into the bars, recruiting volunteers to invade Civil Bend. The angry slave owner was able to muster twenty or thirty men who had a little drinking before leaving with Nuckolls on their mission.

The ice in the river wasn't safe in spots so heavy planks were placed end to end upon the surface for crossing. The bounty hunters rode like mad up along the east river bank, past Rickett's and on to the home of Joseph Gormen, a noted black abolitionist. The bands of thugs entered his house without invitation and searched for the missing slaves. They seized three of Joseph's sons, Joe, Jr., Henry and Marice, threatening their lives if the father didn't tell where the slaves were hidden. Of course, he didn't know because Dr. Blanchard took them to Tabor without telling anyone except Mr. Platt. Gormen's daughters, Betsey, Mary and Emeline, hysterical with fear, were shoved aside. Henry was severely beaten and Joe, Jr. choked and hung up by his neck.

Rather than see his brother die, Marice told a lie. "The slaves are at Rube Williams! The slaves are at the Williams!" he screamed.

Two members of the gang stayed with the Gormens with instructions to kill them if the son had lied. The others galloped away on their horses, stopping to search John

Williamson's place before riding to Uncle Rube's. Rube Williams was working in the field but hastened home when he saw the mob around his house. He protested the search but was struck on the head by Nuckolls for his remarks. The blow left him limp on the ground and caused deafness from which he never recovered.

The slaves couldn't be found so the mob returned to Nebraska City after molesting other black homes including the Averys and Smiths. One yelled a final threat as the band left the area. "We'll be back tomorrow, kill the boys and clean out the Bend!"

Mr. Avery was at Doc Blanchard's where Ira was treating the wounds of Rube Williams and his sons. Said Dr. Blanchard, "The Williams will stay here with me a few days where they are safe. We have signed a complaint and Nuckolls will be arrested and tried for his crime."

The preliminary hearing was set for the next day. Blanchard asked Mr. Avery to ride to Tabor, charging him: "Tell them everything. The mob will be back here tomorrow and we need all the help we can get in Sidney to keep the peace."

Many citizens of Civil Bend were frightened but knew a military company was organized and ready to move in from the militant town to the north, if needed. Jim Lane was assisting Dr. Blanchard with the wounded.

An uncomfortable darkness settled over the community that night.

The people in Tabor were called together and Avery explained the situation. It was agreed that they would go to the aid of Civil Bend. The December wind was cold as Reverend Todd set out on horseback early the next morning in advance of the main party. A load of men armed with guns went directly to the courthouse in Sidney where they met others from the Bend with shotguns, rifles and pistols. Together, they intended to keep the peace. The defendants did not show up and everyone disgruntledly returned home.

As threatened, the ruffians arrived in Civil Bend early the next day. They stopped at Gormen's but found no one. "Let's go to Doc's!" one commanded and away they rode with spurs flying.

Dr. Blanchard and Jim Lane were waiting on the front porch as the loud bunch approached.

The doctor spoke firmly to the mob as Jim Lane leveled his rifle at the leader, "You may not enter my house to search because my wife is very ill and I am leaving this instant to care for a dying patient."

The leader of the band responded, "They're in there and we're going in."

"Wait," said Blanchard, "If the two young women you seek are here they will still be here when I return."

The plan was to delay the bounty hunters as long as possible. The further the slaves were from Tabor the better their chance of reaching Chicago.

"Jim", said Dr. Blanchard, "you stay here and guard the house while I am away. I will return as soon as possible."

"All right," Jim replied, "I will be here when you get back."

He took his stance facing the mob as the doctor rode away. The hungry hunters were defiant and a few began

to dismount. Jim responded, "The first man who comes near this house or makes the wrong move is a dead man."

None did because each knew of Lane's reputation in the Kansas wars. Lane was too quiet and too self-possessed to miss if he shot.

The stand-off lasted until Blanchard returned in due time. He invited the men to search his home even though the Williams were apprehensive. Rube was in very bad shape from the blow of the day before, but Jim Lane was at his side in the bedroom as the mob looked for the slaves. When they found they had been deceived, they rode away in wrath, some returning to Nebraska City, others more determined, raced to the Treat house where they faced new tactics to delay their investigation. Some got as far as Tabor, but hurried back to the protection of Nebraska City after being scared to death by well-armed citizens.

Mr. Nuckolls even went on to Chicago to find his slaves. He succeeded but was arrested and fined for seizing one of the ladies.

The case of Williams vs. Nuckolls lasted several years. It was the first time a black testified against a white in Fremont County. Rube was finally awarded fourteen thousand dollars which Nuckolls paid. It built Uncle Rube a nice new barn and home. Mr. Nuckolls fled to Denver, but returned the same night someone set fire to Rube William's barn. Nuckolls wasn't accused of arson, but no one ever convinced Rube to the contrary —

The Civil War began early in southwest Iowa. The beat of the war drum pierced the ears of Civil Benders and they didn't like it.

Many escaping slaves poured through Civil Bend until 1863, a period of at least eight years. Dr. Blanchard said it seemed like a million. The feared Civil War began in 1861 over this very issue and didn't end for four bloody years.

The Platts, Blanchards, Treats and others, including the Gastons and Todds in Tabor, commanded the greatest respect of those many Americans who wanted slavery ended forever. Certainly, these people were loved by the human beings they assisted. Their cause was just and they knew it. Their reward was the inner joy and satisfaction of helping others cast off the chains of slavery. They believed that man will eliminate evil and didn't just pray in church on Sunday. These dedicated abolitionists got out with the people with problems. Under the tabernacle of heaven, they worked, fought and won for humanity.

John Brown returned to this area three more times. He arrived in Tabor August 7, 1857, visited with friends, and spoke with Dr. Blanchard and General Jim Lane in the woods west of Gaston.

On November 2, 1857, Mr. Brown took the emigrant road to Kansas in a wagon driven by one of his sons. He gathered a company of young men and returned again to Iowa. Captain Brown spent the winter in Tabor with ten men in the study and practice of military tactics. The summer of 1858 found him in southern Kansas, throwing his power into the struggle for freedom over slavery. In February of 1859, he returned from his invasion of Missouri with eleven slaves. The master of one was left dead and everyone was after John Brown. The people of Tabor were upset about the invasion, and Brown asked to speak in his defense. A Missourian was in town and at-

tended the meeting. John Brown would not speak in his presence. As he left Tabor forever, Brown said, "I don't say where I am going, but you'll hear from me. There has been enough said about 'Bleeding Kansas.' I intend to make a bloody spot at another point and carry the way into Africa."

Within two months John Brown was captured and hanged at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Many Civil Benders mourned his death.

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