

# THE ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENT IN IOWA

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## Part II

### IOWA POLITICS SWING ANTISLAVERY: 1855-1860

The six years between James W. Grimes' first election as governor and the outbreak of the Civil War were active and vital ones for Iowa. The old aura of uncertainty and vacillation with regard to the slavery issue had disappeared. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had finally awakened the free-state to the need of facing the controversy head on, and in the flurry of activity of those six years, it appeared that Iowa was trying to make up for lost time.

But the Kansas-Nebraska Act did more than arouse Iowans from the torpor intended upon their former conciliation. The drama which followed the settlement of Kansas also focused and directed Iowa's initial activities in the antislavery crusade. Kansas served as a vast stage upon which a kind of morality play was being acted out for the benefit of her free neighbor. On those tormented plains Iowa saw the worst elements of the slavocracy flaunting violence and injustice openly; and if the free-soilers also had their lawless champions, well, sometimes fire was needed to fight fire. Iowans found Bible-quoting and maniacally sincere John Brown much easier to take than the "Border Ruffians" who represented slavery.

When Grimes campaigned for the governorship, he used Douglas' hated bill as his chief issue. But once elected he found the legal latitude of his capacity to do anything about events rather limited, for his powers did not go beyond the borders of his own State. When Kansas entered that phase of her history which would affix the participle, "Bleeding," before her name, the Iowa governor was hard put to help. Yet James Grimes was not a man easily thwarted.

Once the governor determined to move into the turmoil over Kansas, his public actions at first glance appeared to

be mostly bluster and bluff. He expended a great deal of verbiage but actually seemed to accomplish little. What is important to realize, however, is that the free-soil struggle for mastery in Kansas Territory would largely be dominated by non-political elements. The contest would be won by recruiting large numbers of antislavery settlers and by equipping them with the tools needed to survive, especially guns. What they needed most from politicians like Grimes was official sanction for some of their more dubious enterprises, and, most of all, moral backing to encourage the citizenry to support and facilitate the free-soil migration. It is an indication of Grimes' attitude that he willingly gave all the official help possible, and then quite likely gave an added unofficial and illegal boost to the cause somewhat later.

There was no need for Grimes to try to mold public opinion in his State nor to whip up a spirit of popular outrage. Free-soilers poured across Iowa in 1855 and 1856, and the State's proximity to Kansas made the hostilities there seem like local news. Nevertheless, the governor never played it safe, nor did he retreat into aloofness over the question. He always spoke out in the most vitriolic manner possible.

As tale after tale of conflict and bloodshed rolled out of Kansas, Grimes decided to write Washington and demand action. On Aug. 28, 1856, he sent President Franklin Pierce a highly inflammatory letter, and had a draft published in the local press. Complaining that former Iowans, for whom he claimed to feel a responsibility, were being denied justice and placed in danger by proslavery terrorism, he demanded that Federal troops be deployed in Kansas to protect free-soil settlers. He even went so far as to threaten that "in the event of non-compliance . . . a case will have arisen . . . when it will be the duty of the states 'to interpose to arrest the progress of the evils' in that Territory."<sup>31</sup>

Nothing ever came of this bellicose demand, however. A Presidential secretary wrote back, partly soothing the governor, but also warning him that no State had the right to interfere in a territorial matter. The point is not so much

<sup>31</sup>Salter, *Grimes, op. cit.*, pg. 26.

that Grimes ultimately failed to lead the Iowa militia into Kansas in some quixotic adventure, but that he willingly used his office as a free-soil forum. He practically announced that he was available to succor any phase of antislavery militancy.

The Executive was not the only branch of government in the State anxious to involve itself in the Kansas question. The legislature also had its fire-eaters, and they kept things stirred up in the General Assembly.

On Dec. 6, 1856, Rep. D. C. Cloud of Muscatine, an inner-circle ally of Grimes and one of the State's new Republicans, submitted a joint resolution to the Iowa House on the Kansas situation. After strongly maintaining in the preamble that freedom was the nation's highest priority, the resolution proposed that (1) the General Assembly proclaim its unqualified opposition to the further extension of slavery by Federal acquiescence, and (2) that Iowa's "Senators be instructed and . . . Representatives be requested to exert their influence and vote for the admission of Kansas into the Union as a Free-State," and likewise to reject its admission if it offered any constitution "establishing or tolerating slavery."<sup>32</sup>

Cloud then proceeded to back his resolution with some of the most forthright antislavery oratory heard in Iowa's Assembly for some time. He declared that:

Slavery is wrong in itself; it is morally wrong. And, in all cases the question of expediency should yield to right. . . . I belong to a party that opposes the further extension of slavery. We say, let it remain where it is, but let it extend no further.<sup>33</sup>

Apparently moderation was not one of Cloud's strengths. He even went on to say that he believed "blacks (*sic*) have the rights of men in this country," and he applied the Declaration of Independence's "all men are created equal" to American's Black citizenry.<sup>34</sup>

On the surface it would seem that if the Republicans in the legislature wanted Cloud's resolution passed, it would come as a matter of course. The fledgling party had completely dominated the election of 1856 in Iowa and it held nearly a

<sup>32</sup>*Debates and Speeches in the Legislature of Iowa During the Session of 1856-7* (Iowa City: Iowa City Book and Job Office, 1857), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

two-thirds majority that December—24 to 12 in the State Senate and 47 to 25 in the House. Yet the proposal did not meet with spectacular success, and the reasons for this failure are rather illuminating.

The House actually adopted the resolution after a three-day debate by a vote of only 38 to 26—hardly a ringing endorsement from a party which controlled the lower chamber 47 to 25. In the Senate the proposal never even came to a vote. It was tabled under a welter of amendments from its opponents. These results are perplexing since all the resolution proposed to accomplish was to officially endorse a simple free-soil position.

Kansas was inevitably a partisan issue in Iowa. Any piece of legislation touching upon the Kansas question was assured an almost predictable treatment. The Democrats found themselves so tied to Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act that they had to defend it. The Republicans, on the other hand, had risen as a result of popular outrage over its passage and were necessarily hostile to it. But it is important to remember that for most Democrats in Iowa, only the act itself remained a partisan issue—not the elemental confrontation between slavery and antislavery. For this reason they defended Kansas-Nebraska and opposed Cloud's resolution, but solely on the basis of the virtue of squatter sovereignty.

In essence the Democrats and their spokesman, Rep. J. H. Sullivan, tried to impress upon the Assembly that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was entirely correct in repealing the Missouri Compromise since the earlier law had wrongly given Congress the power to decide on the extension of slavery. Sullivan maintained that slavery existed as a purely local institution and beyond the jurisdiction of the Federal government. The people alone should decide at the local level. Then the Democrats vigorously argued that while they believed in the right of a territorial population to decide the issue of slavery for itself, that belief did not indicate proslavery attitudes on their part.

However, the Democrats' philosophic and legalistic moralizing did not suffice for Iowa's citizenry, as the party's continual defeats at the polls indicate. Kansas was not an ethical abstraction but an all too visible battleground, and

Iowans more and more came to cast their lot with the party which appealed to their inherent antislavery consciences. They had elected a governor in response to their outrage, and as time passed he continued to give expression to the people's hostility. He also channelled these popular feelings into a new political structure for his state. But along the way James W. Grimes also managed to become involved in one of the most unusual crimes in Iowa's history—the robbery of the State arsenal to supply the Kansas free-soilers.

When the struggle to win Kansas turned violent, it quickly became obvious to free-staters in the North that they would have to send tough, battle-ready settlers into the Territory if they were to win it. Thus emerged the State Kansas Committees to organize, equip and arm any footloose antislavery advocates willing to emigrate.

Grimes' political confidant, William Penn Clarke, headed the Iowa Kansas Committee. Though a responsible and respected State legislator, Clarke always seemed to be in the thick of every phase of antislavery militancy. As chairman of the Kansas Committee for his State, he took on the ambitious project of recruiting and sending the free-soil expedition of James H. Lane across the Missouri River into the contested land. Many prominent Iowans took part in the preparations for the venture during the spring and early summer of 1856. But the church groups and other such responsible sources which supplied Lane understandably balked at providing the one item he most crucially needed, guns. Facing this crisis of supply, Lane's people hit upon the simple expedient of robbing the Iowa armory of the weapons they needed.

The robbery itself hardly exhibited the work of master criminals. The free-soil thieves simply took the key to the building, walked in and helped themselves. But the story becomes intriguing when one realizes that the key so casually picked up came from Governor Grimes' desk, and that after the theft there was still a surprisingly sufficient quantity of weapons for the State's needs.

The existing evidence points to the rather startling conclusion that Governor Grimes actually consented to participate in the plot to rob his own arsenal. Exhibit A in the

indictment of the governor is the key. The confessed organizer of the robbery, a Lane lieutenant named Richard J. Hinton, casually recounted his deed as an anecdote in an 1894 biography of John Brown. He merely noted that "at Iowa City, 1500 United States guns were taken from the state arsenal, the key of which was conveniently left accessible to my hands on Governor . . . Grimes' desk."<sup>35</sup>

More provocative than the "convenient accessibility" of the key is a cryptic letter Grimes sent to Clarke in early June just prior to the theft. In it he said, "Your note by Mr. Morris came duly to hand. I made a requisition upon the government for between 1700 and 1800 muskets and 50 Colt's revolvers, and this two months ago." In other words, Grimes had ordered an additional 1700-plus arms in April as Clarke began outfitting Lane's expedition, and in June 1500-plus arms were stolen for Lane's use because a key had been "conveniently" left on the governor's desk. If Grimes was not directly implicated in the theft, then coincidence was abusively stretched in the affair.

Yet, however diverting it may be to speculate upon the possible peccadillos of Iowa's flamboyant antebellum governor, Grimes' documented achievements are more significant—even if not so dramatic. Although elected as a Whig, Grimes had hardly entered the State House when he began working toward a political shift which redefined Iowa's party foundations. The presence of a sizable number of Southern-oriented and old-line conciliationist Whigs made leadership of that party an untenable position. Iowa had been polarized by Kansas-Nebraska into two camps—the antislavery men and what can only be described as "all others." For Grimes, the only logical course was to give the new, already-existing realignment an organizational identity. He did so by heading the formation of the Republican Party in his State.

Grimes' correspondence reveals that his decision was neither rash nor one he had been pressured into. Barely six

<sup>35</sup>Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men* (London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), pp. 55-56.

<sup>36</sup>James W. Grimes, Iowa City, Iowa to William Penn Clarke, Iowa City, Iowa, June, 1856. William Penn Clarke Papers, "Correspondence," Vol. II, No. 42 (Des Moines: Iowa Historical Library).

months after he had taken the oath of office as Governor of Iowa, Grimes began writing to his old mentor, Salmon P. Chase, urging him to run for the Presidency and declaring his belief that the time was ripe for organizing the Republican Party. With old political ties visibly dissolving, the governor enthusiastically formed new ones.

This political preoccupation of the chief executive also worked upon his allies in the State. The newly-ascendent Whig-Free Soil coalition of politicians was no more comfortable with existing structures than its leader was. Men like William Penn Clarke, D. C. Cloud, J. W. Cattell, Benjamin Gue and others were of a militant brand of antislavery. The lines had been drawn in the 1854 election and their side had won. Now they sought a clean ideological break with the old order, and the new Republican Party offered a clear new set of political alternatives and a more meaningful expression of their attitudes. Almost spontaneously Free-Soilers and antislavery Whig metamorphized into Republicans.

On Jan. 14, 1856, the inevitable became official. A call went out in the *Muscatine Journal* for interested citizens to meet and to organize the Republican Party of Iowa. Although not signed, Rev. William Salter's unpublished notes attribute authorship of the announcement to Governor Grimes. The slavery question raised by Kansas-Nebraska served as the proclamation's sole self-confessed justification.

Because the Kansas-Nebraska Act had polarized ideological sentiment on slavery, Iowa experienced no chaos or confusion during that first year of Republican organization. The entire structure already existed. All it needed was the name and political paraphernalia to pull together existing elements. Before the party's first birthday it re-elected Grimes under its banner, captured both houses of the State legislature and delivered Iowa's electoral votes to the Republican presidential standard bearer, John Fremont.

The slavery question had created the Republican Party in Iowa, and it remained the central issue. On Sept. 3, 1857, Grimes began working for appointment to the U.S. Senate by issuing a circular letter in the State calling for the election of Republican candidates—since the General Assembly would

select the new senator. Significantly, the language Grimes used to plead his party's case was not particularly temperate:

It cannot be disguised that the great issue between freedom and slavery is a prominent question in this contest. It has been made so by both political parties. They could not do otherwise. Freedom and slavery are the antagonistic elements in this government. They can not harmonize, and must overshadow every other question until settled upon the principle enunciated by the Republican party.<sup>36</sup>

Grimes succeeded. His party captured the Iowa Assembly again in 1857 and he got his appointment to the Senate. Republicans won most elections they entered in those pre-Civil War years, and this in itself indicates the rising militancy in Iowa regarding slavery in general. Had the population been more moderate one would logically have expected the Democrats to have picked up some strength since the less strident Whigs would refuse to follow Grimes to the new party. The truth was, however, that the old party was in hopeless disrepair, and the new elements it picked up only served to divide and confuse it further.

Perhaps one of the most important questions which the modern student of the antislavery movement can ask at this juncture is, "What did the Republican majority do with its political power in terms of enacting its principles into law, or at least giving them some political expression?" The answer is, "Very little." Part of the reason for this is doubtless that on the State level not much could be done to express hostility to the alien institution of slavery. The only avenue of expression really open was in the area of civil rights legislation, and most Iowans still had an abiding sense of racial bigotry mixed in with their abhorrence of the Southern system. Therefore, it is to the Republicans' credit that they did take certain steps to grant their Negro citizens some vestiges of citizenship in the face of this bigotry.

On Dec. 22, 1856, the Republican dominated legislature adopted a bill to repeal old section 2388 of the *Iowa Code*, thus rescinding the restriction on colored individuals giving testimony in cases where whites were involved. This action had inherent egalitarian overtones and it struck directly at

<sup>36</sup>Salter Papers, *loc. citi*.

native racism. The Republicans had given their opponents an issue — a small one, it is true, but an issue nonetheless.

In those days before opinion polls it is impossible to gauge popular reaction to the Black testimony repeal, but the press of the State may provide some barometer. As might have been expected the new law split the partisan editors right down party lines. Of all surviving papers no Democratic editor favored the action and no Republican editor opposed it. In fact the press carried on a much more contentious debate than had the Assembly. The bill gave the editors an excellent subject upon which to exercise their literary powers. Republicans expressed noble libertarian sentiments, Democrats intoned dire warnings of Black ascendancy and both sides hurled magnificent sarcasm at each other.

Strangely enough, a rebel streak of egalitarianism flourished in Iowa Republicanism. Considering that there once had been a debate on Black suffrage in the 1844 Constitutional Convention, it is hardly surprising that this Republican liberality should surface in another such convention in 1857. The only difference was that this time it would take more than a negative vote in committee to kill it.

Iowa convened the Constitutional Convention of 1857 for a variety of reasons—none of them related to slavery or civil rights. However, the demand for a reappraisal of the whole area of Black citizenship became increasingly unavoidable. The debate began when the convention reaffirmed the right of colored persons to give testimony against whites. With the question of Negro rights then opened, a proposal to allow Black suffrage quickly followed.

The vehicle for the following debate, a motion that the word "white" be stricken from the suffrage article of the old constitution, emerged from a splinter group of Republican delegates. Yet the ideological split in Iowa so clearly defined the nature of partisan politics that even the party's leaders felt they had to support the motion, or at least give it lip service. William Penn Clarke made an impressive speech from the floor during the ensuing three-day debate:

We are making a Constitution here, not alone for the government of the white people of Iowa, but to govern all in our community of all different complexions, climes, and nativities.

We stand here, not to provide protection for the strong alone, but for all alike. Entertaining this view of our duties here, I would appeal to gentlemen to lay aside their prejudices.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these liberal speeches there undoubtedly existed a feeling of apprehension among Clarke and his colleagues of the Republican leadership, for this motion of their idealistic brethren had played right into the hands of their Democratic opponents. Few questioned that most Iowans felt open hostility to the idea of full political citizenship for the Negro. To push this issue in the convention courted disaster at the polls for Republicans. On the other hand, they constantly preened themselves in public on their idealism and humanitarianism. So there they stood, in control of the Convention; they had captured that election, too, and easily possessed the votes necessary to adopt the liberal's motion. But they were damned if they did and damned if they didn't. Passing it would alienate the voters and quashing it would alienate the liberal support they counted on and expose them to the charge of hypocrisy.

The trap was never sprung, however. Men like Clarke undoubtedly had a sincere sense of idealism, but they were shrewd politicians as well. They cleverly extricated themselves from their dilemma by recourse to the most basic of all democratic processes—the referendum. With a vote of 23 to 10 the Republicans pushed through an amendment to have a separate ballot attached when the vote on ratification of the Constitution went before the people. The population of Iowa rather than the Republican delegates would be forced to decide whether to delete the word “white” from Article II—the suffrage article. To make the referendum even more palatable, the convention decreed that, in order to pass, the “yes” vote had to be a majority of the total vote cast on the ratification question. Thus a failure to vote on the issue was tantamount to voting “no.”

With the choice in the hands of the citizenry instead of its most liberal elements, the vote became a foregone conclusion. The final tally read, “yes” 8,489, “no” 49,387. While slavery was probably anathema to most Iowans in 1857, racism

<sup>37</sup>W. Blair Lord (ed.), *The Debates of the Constitutional Convention of Iowa: 1857* (Davenport: Luse, Lane and Company, 1857), Vol. I, p. 196.

was still very much alive. Not until 1868 did the word "white" disappear from Article II of the Iowa Constitution.

So then, where did official Iowa stand on slavery and the Black in those years between the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Civil War? For one thing, it stood solidly against any expansion of slavery whatsoever. The institution might remain where it was, but Iowa's leadership would resist its every effort to break out of the sectional quarantine. As for the place of the Black in Iowa, the men who ran the State were probably more liberal than the white population they represented, but they trod very softly on the whole question. Basically they contented themselves with egalitarian oratory and harmless little legislative acts favorable to the Negro. Yet, compared to Iowa's pre-1854 history, the leadership of the State served an actively militant antislavery constituency.

**IOWA'S CITIZENRY BECOMES MILITANT: 1855-1860**

As the Kansas-Nebraska Act focused and directed anti-slavery hostility in the various strata of Iowa's officialdom, it was to be expected that the same force would be at work in the general population of the State. Interestingly enough, those Iowans who most determinedly expressed their hostility came largely from the most fundamentally respectable, middleclass elements of the citizenry. Moreover, these "pillars of the community" not only willingly vocalized their discontent, they also involved themselves with the more illegal phases of the struggle, notably the Underground Railroad.

This militant middle-class leadership of the antislavery struggle increasingly fell under the influence of the one man who could dominate the scene much as James Grimes did. That man was John Brown. From the bloody plains of Kansas to the gallows in Virginia, Iowans defended him, protected him, and fought beside him. Though he never lived in the State, John Brown is as much a part of Iowa's history as its oldest resident.

When Kansas-Nebraska made the expression of antislavery sentiments popular, or at least acceptable, the previously militant Congregational clergy was naturally in a position to assume the early moral leadership in the ensuing struggle. The General Assembly might debate free-soil Kansas resolutions and Governor Grimes might write onimous letters

to Washington, but the practical work of winning Kansas meant helping send in free-staters to win political control of the Territory. For this task churches occupied an enviable position. Not only could they coordinate collections of supplies for free-soil immigrants passing through Iowa, but they sanctified the whole effort by their very involvement in it.

Although many churches took part in aiding free-soil migrations, the Congregationalists proved most willing. Several of their ministers played leading roles in the supplying of the antislavery pioneers, but two tend to emerge as the most active and certainly the most visible of their brethren, Rev. William Salter of Burlington and Rev. John Todd of Tabor. Standing at opposite ends of the northern route to Kansas, these two typified the rising militancy in Iowa's clergy.

The true free-soil Kansas migration did not begin until 1856, and that became a busy year for Salter and Todd. On July 12, Salter received a woeful letter from an early Kansas settler, Rev. George Lewis, recounting the many atrocities committed against men of his persuasion by the slaveholding element. On August 2, the pastor got a similar letter from another free-soil acquaintance in Kansas, Edward Jones. Such dispatches enabled men like Salter and Todd to rally their congregations and to reinforce the attitude that slavery was generally evil and lawless.

On Sept. 5, 1856, T. W. Higginson of the National Kansas Committee wrote for Salter's help. Higginson openly revealed that he was recruiting and arming between 50 and 100 Iowans to emigrate to the contested territory. He wished Salter's recommendation of ministers and laymen who might wish to join his expedition. The point is that Salter certainly knew he was helping to equip a paramilitary force. On September 15 the parson received a warm letter of thanks from another member of the National Kansas Committee, T. B. Eldridge. The Committeeman also informed him that 100 freestaters were readying themselves at Mount Pleasant, that another 200 were expected, and that Todd was preparing another 150 in Tabor for the border crossing. The feeling pervades this correspondence that men like Salter and Todd considered

themselves members of the inner circle of the militant Kansas Committee, and the organization treated them as such.

There existed, however, a certain basic dilemma in the parsons' activities. The men they helped send to Kansas were a hardy breed of pioneers who knew that they would be fighting from the moment they crossed the border. It was not a prospect designed to draw pious, God-fearing settlers. In many ways the free-soil crusaders truly matched the most degenerate element among their antagonists, the infamous "Border Ruffians." As a result the Iowa clerics were being called upon to abet the progress of a group of shockingly Godless warriors. No honest minister could sustain such an experience without an almost traumatic degree of soul-searching. That they did suffer from this conscience-provoking situation is obvious from a letter Todd sent Salter on Sept. 17, 1856:

It is greatly to be deplored that of the leading men in this matter so few are Christian men. They may be instrumental in securing to Kansas civil liberty, but other men and other influences must be employed before Kansas can be Christianized. They are by no means possessed of the spirit of the Pilgrim fathers. Surely we are fallen upon degenerate times, and I fear for our country, lest a just retribution is about to overwhelm us in an awful destruction.<sup>38</sup>



John Brown

Ironically, just about this time the reputation of John "Ossawatimie" Brown began to spread throughout Iowa. As the free-soilers' most battle-tested leader, and yet as an outspoken Bible-quoting Christian, Brown seemed much more acceptable to uneasy clerics than the men he typically led. In 1856 the old abolitionist made one of his early treks across Iowa, and he introduced himself to Todd. Brown eventually crossed and recrossed the State several times, usually with fugitive slaves from Kansas

in tow. In doing so he cemented, almost unconsciously, the main line of the Underground Railroad. Wherever he trav-

<sup>38</sup>John Todd to William Salter, September 17, 1856, Salter Papers, *op. cit.*

eled in Iowa he found friends and allies, and the very fact that a known abolitionist warrior could move openly in the State goes far to indicate the level of militancy which was emerging.

The 1855-1860 period offered many other evidences of this growing militancy. One example occurred in June of 1855 when the Fugitive Slave Law received its only test in Iowa. On June 24 pursuing Missourians captured a runaway slave in Burlington. He was apprehended in the company of Dr. Edwin James, a known abolitionist and early conductor of the URR. In a near repeat of the Ralph case, antislavery elements had him jailed to keep him from the slave-catchers, and then appealed to halt his extradition.

Burlington was the home of James Grimes, and the governor happened to be there when the slave was arrested. Grimes expressed both his concern and his militancy in a letter he subsequently wrote to his wife:

How it will end no one knows. I shall certainly furnish no aid to the man-stealers, and it has been determined that the negro [sic] shall have able counsel, and a resort to all legal means for release, before any other is resorted to. I am sorry that I am Governor of the State, for although I can and shall prevent the State authorities from interfering in the aid of the marshal, yet, if not in office, I am inclined to think I should be a law-breaker.<sup>38</sup>

In Iowa's two previous fugitive slave cases the legal machinery ground rather slowly. The Ralph decision took about a year to be finally delivered, and the Daggs case lasted nearly two years. It is indicative of the change in Iowa's response to the confrontation with slavery that this latest case was disposed of in three days. The court released the Negro and sent him on his way to Canada amid the cheers of the people of Burlington. On June 27 Grimes again wrote to his wife:

Thus has ended the first case under the fugitive slave law in Iowa. The State, the town and the people are saved from disgrace. How opinions change! Four years ago, Mr. [Salter] and myself, and not to exceed three others in town, were the only men who dared to express an opinion in opposition to the fugitive-slave law, and because we did express such opinions, we were denounced like pick-pockets. Now I am Governor of the State; three-fourths of the reading and reflecting people of the county agree with me in my sentiments

<sup>38</sup>Salter, *Grimes, op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

on the law, and a slave could not be returned from Des Moines County into slavery.<sup>39</sup>

On this question of shifts in slavery attitudes there is one last item in Governor Grimes' correspondence which deserves attention. On Dec. 14, 1856, he wrote his wife from Iowa City concerning a meeting he had attended at the capital conducted by noted abolitionist Wendell Phillips. The governor informed her that Phillips:

Gave us the length and breadth of Garrisonism, and what was unexpected to me, the audience not only listened patiently to what he said, but received his utterances with unbounded applause.<sup>40</sup>

Such an occurrence would probably have been impossible a few years earlier. Iowa was clearly becoming more openly militant.

This open militancy, however, had its greatest expression in the operation of that fascinating institution, the Underground Railroad. The URR is an elusive subject to pursue because the whole thing was administered in great secrecy. No records were kept during the first years of its operation, doubtless because of its obvious illegality. To make the problem even more difficult, it appears quite likely that every conductor along the route knew only two of his colleagues—the one from whom he received his Black passengers and the one to whom he sent them. Yet enough of the functioning of the system is known for several generalizations to be made.

First of all, the URR operated basically as a west-to-east line. The goal of fleeing slaves was not north to Minnesota and Canada, but east toward Chicago and then to Canada. Iowa's passengers came mainly from Kansas and Missouri. If it were the former, then the slaves traveled the entire line; if on the other hand, they fled from Missouri, they would come north until they hit the closest station to them, and the conductors would route them toward Chicago. There is no way of determining how slaves learned where in Iowa they would find that first friendly station, but the system was used enough to suggest that some sort of "Underground Advertizing Agency" existed to publicize the route.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92

A second consideration is that some of the most respectable elements in the State—doctors, lawyers, legislators, ministers, merchants and farmers—served as conductors or stationmasters. This often proved advantageous since the system usually demanded elaborate and expensive paraphernalia, such as hidden rooms, false-bottom wagons and other such devices.

So then, what was this famous, if clandestine, route, and who were the men who ran it? First, it must be admitted that there are probably many stations lost to memory, especially those sub-stations used by Missouri slaves fleeing north to reach the main line. However, the basic west-east route is fairly well-known and has been reproduced on the accompanying map.

Tabor served as the westernmost outpost. That station, like many others, opened in 1854, the year of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Tabor's conductors were Deacon S. H. Adams, Deacon George B. Gaston, and their pastor, Rev. John Todd. Gaston was something more than a deacon in the local Congregational Church, however. He had also founded the town and remained, until his death, its leading citizen.

Leaving Tabor, passengers on the road traveled into Cass County. There they generally stopped at the home of Rev. George B. Hitchcock, a Massachusetts-born Congregational minister at Lewis. This cleric, like Todd, was something of a fire-brand, and he reportedly had lost his son in the Kansas struggle. Another station a few miles away was the Grove City House Hotel in Atlantic, run by D. A. Barnett. This hotel generally housed John Brown during his flights from Kansas, although he also had occasion to use the Lewis accommodation.

After leaving either of the two Cass County stations the route moved to the outskirts of Fontanelle. There the passengers stayed with another ex-Massachusetts pioneer, Azariah Root. This conductor, a prosperous farmer of the area, eventually served Adair County as a judge. Root's charges then made their nocturnal passage to the Winterset area and probably to the farm homes of either James Farris, William McDonald or John Early. Little is known of any of these men, but Farris purportedly had the unique distinction of aiding the flight of a slave belonging to his Missouri son-in-law.

From Winterset the line moved on to Des Moines. Here the fugitive slaves would be taken in charge by one of three men, all of whom were among the most prominent in the city—James C. Jordan, Isaac Brandt and John Teesdale. Jordan was a rising local politician, Brandt a successful merchant and Teesdale the official State Printer. There was also one other conductor in the Des Moines area, the Baptist minister, Rev. Demas Robinson, who operated just outside town.

Once across the Des Moines River and out of town, the route wended eastward to Lynnville in Jasper County. Here were the stations run by Matthew Sparks and Joseph Arnold. Nothing much is known of Sparks, but Arnold was something of a local institution. A restless Quaker given the title of "Preacher" by his neighbors, he eventually became a practicing attorney.



**J. B. Grinnell**

From Lynnville the Underground Railroad "track" led to the home of J. B. Grinnell in the town bearing his name. Grinnell was more than the pre-eminent citizen of a small Iowa community; he was also one of the State's most influential men. Born in Vermont in 1821, and educated in New York, Grinnell claimed that the noted abolitionists of the 1830's and 1840's — Theodore Weld, Joseph Birney and Garritt Smith — became his early heroes. Coming to Iowa in 1853, he began his URR affiliation almost immediately. Like many of his fellow conductors, Grinnell personally knew John Brown and aided him in one of his more notorious exploits.

Grinnell's passengers, after leaving his station, moved on to Iowa City where William Penn Clarke received them. This legislator remained one of the most sincere advocates of the antislavery cause in Iowa. Though a member of the highest political councils of the State, Clarke willingly participated in less socially accepted endeavors, like the Underground Railroad, for moral reasons.

Once out of Iowa City URR conductors had two options: (1) they could swing down to the Quaker settlement of Springdale, or (2) they could take their charges up to Tipton. From this point on names and documented incidents become very scarce. In neither Springdale nor Tipton were any individual names recorded, though the towns were known slave drops. It is also known that John Brown made frequent visits to the houses of the Springdale Quakers in his adventures.

After Springdale and Tipton the next major station was at Clinton. After this last stop in Iowa, the slaves crossed the Mississippi and headed for Chicago. At Clinton, however, great care had to be exercised for it was the logical place for slave-catchers to lie in wait. Complicating the situation further, Clinton was also the home office of the U. S. marshal. For this reason sub-stations operated in DeWitt and Low Moor, small towns a few miles away. In Clinton itself the station-master was C. B. Campbell, of whom little is known beyond the affirmation that he had a large house and the resources to pay a "stiff price" for a skiff across the river.

There was a certain inevitability in John Brown's work linking the major stations of the Underground Railroad into a cohesive whole. So much of the old abolitionist's labor consisted of relieving slaveowners of their human property, and then transporting the escapees across Iowa to freedom. Brown, in fact, was one of the few men who knew the entire route of the URR since his crusade helped to consolidate it.

In 1859, Brown's hectic last year, the old free-soil warrior made his final trip into Iowa. The year before he had begun training a small group of followers for the famous raid on Harper's Ferry, and in 1859 he returned to western Iowa to pick up some needed weapons. The guns, 200 Sharps' rifles, had been stored in the cellar of Rev. Todd at Tabor. As far as the cleric knew at the time, they were supposedly slated for use in Kansas.

By the time of this final visit, however, Brown's obsession about slavery had become all-consuming, and the proximity of Missouri slaveowners offered too great an opportunity to pass up. In February, he and his cohorts plunged south in an unexpected drive and liberated 12 Blacks from their master,

The Missourian, unfortunately, resisted the attack and was killed.

At this point Brown had a discomfiting awakening. In the past year the Kansas situation had stabilized somewhat, and Iowans no longer expected violent conflict on their borders. The killing of the Missourian therefore provoked and aroused the countryside, and Brown no longer felt welcome in the area. Though George Gaston still housed his old associate, the rest of Tabor repudiated the entire action. Consequently, Brown hastily left Tabor and moved rapidly eastward along the route of the Underground Railroad.

His party made a brief recorded stop at the home of Rev. Hitchcock at Lewis. From there the caravan probably followed the line through Fontanelle and Winterset, though no record remains of their passage. The next stop they are known to have made was at the station run by James C. Jordan at Des Moines. The Virginia expatriate hurriedly sought out fellow-conductor, John Teesdale, and the latter paid the ferriage across the Des Moines River for Brown, his men, his arms and the freed Blacks.

There may have been a stop at Lynnville during that bitter February trek, but again there is no record of one. There definitely was a stop at Grinnell, however, and Brown's little band received a warm welcome from both the town and its founder. While there the Kansas warrior was asked to speak at an open town meeting. The whole situation had an aura of unreality, for by this time Brown's Missouri adventure had put a \$3000 price on his head and a federal warrant had been issued for his arrest; yet here he was speaking openly at a town meeting and lodging with the town's leading citizen. Strangely, the speech was, for Brown at least, rather defensive and pacific. Grinnell quoted him as saying that the lives he had taken were in "self-defense," and he maintained that he had "never counseled violence, nor would he stir to insurrection which would involve the innocent and helpless."<sup>41</sup>

Ironically, only eight months later Brown engaged in the insurrection at Harper's Ferry.

<sup>41</sup>Josiah Bushnell Grinnell, *Men and Events of Forty Years: 1850 to 1890* (Boston: D. Lothrop Company, 1891), p. 212.

Meanwhile, word went out that federal authorities and certain private elements in Iowa planned to capture the old abolitionist and his 12 Black fugitives. The leader of the endeavor was Samuel Workman, postmaster at Iowa City. Grinnell went immediately to work trying to line up a box-car which Brown's party could use in their flight to Canada, but for some inexplicable reason he failed to obtain one. At this point Grinnell's adjacent stationmaster on the URR, William Penn Clarke, stepped in and secured the needed rolling stock.

With little difficulty and no great concern about concealment, Brown and his coterie boarded the car in Iowa City and left the State for the last time. Workman's plans to capture him had hopelessly miscarried. Part of the reason no doubt stemmed from the fact that Brown and his men were well-armed, and the old warrior was widely known as a fierce fighter; yet, the group was small, and the implication persists that Workman's failure might also have risen from a general lack of support in Iowa at large.

The whole affair of that February-March hegira across the State is curiously ambiguous. Brown suffered repudiation at Tabor, which indicates that many Iowans were probably shocked by the invasion of Missouri. This supposition finds support in the temperate and apologetic speech at Grinnell. But, on the other hand, some of the best doors in Iowa remained open to Brown during his passage to Canada, and the openness of his movement suggests a more tolerant attitude within Iowa as a whole. Even the argument that Iowans were more concerned with the fate of the Blacks than with their liberator seems insufficient to explain the State's actions. In any event, the Missouri invasion was not the last time John Brown would test the tolerance of the State or the depth of its antislavery convictions for Iowa was to play a major role in the old man's greatest exploit, the ill-fated raid on Harper's Ferry.

It is one of the great ironies of Iowa history that Quakers and Quaker villages are so closely involved with the more violent phases of the State's confrontation with slavery. Just as Salem served as the setting for the Daggs affair, so Springdale linked itself irreversibly with John Brown's Raid. The

Captain trained his small force in the little town, and three of its young men joined him on his hopeless expedition.

Brown and the Springdale Quakers first became acquainted in 1856 when the abolitionist passed through the area fresh from his Kansas activities. In December of 1857 he returned with ten men. The group stayed with the pious household of a rather credulous Quaker farmer named William Maxon, to whom they gave the use of their horses and wagons in exchange for board and room. Brown received a warm welcome from the local citizenry, especially the young, but he remained silent as to his purposes.

However, the presence of such a celebrity focused attention on the Maxon farm, and the party's activities, there, were curious enough to arouse interest. Before long even the pacifistic Quakers realized that some sort of military training was being conducted on their neighbor's lawn. That they were serious maneuvers is attested to by the fact that the drillmaster was a former regular army officer named A. D. Stephens.

When questioned as to the purpose of his training, Brown vaguely announced his intention to strike directly at slavery in the South, and immediately met with expressions of opposition and pessimism from the older elements in the town. However, four young men not only endorsed the plan, but actively joined it. They were Edwin and Barclay Coppoc, Steward Taylor and George Gill. Gill even rose to a position of confidence in the inner circle of Brown's band, being elected Secretary of the Treasury of the envisioned Free Government of Virginia. Yet, paradoxically, Gill was the only one of the four not to be with his commander at the end.

When the small army left Springdale in early 1858, Gill and Taylor went with it, while the Coppocs remained behind. But in early July 1859, a letter arrived at the Coppoc farm and the two young brothers hastily left for the East. The Quakers gave the matter little thought for Brown's dreams all seemed a bit unlikely. The shock, therefore, was all the greater when the attack on Harper's Ferry broke into the news. The most stunning surprise came from the announcement that Steward Taylor had been killed in the October 19 battle, that Edwin Coppoc had been taken prisoner along

with his Captain and that Barclay Coppoc, one of the few survivors, was fleeing across the country with federal marshals in pursuit. Barclay owed his escape to the fact that he and John Brown's son, Owen, had been stationed at the rear to cover the planned retreat. When encircling federal and state forces eradicated all hope of withdrawal, the two slipped into the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Back in Springdale the dismay of the supposedly pacifistic Quaker elders at the lawless behavior of their offspring was voiced in a public repudiation of the raid. On December 7, the town openly declared that it had had no knowledge of the action against Virginia—probably true in the strictest sense—and that it heartily disavowed it.

The repercussions of the Harper's Ferry Raid did not end with the Springdale declaration, nor with the subsequent storm of press reaction as far as Iowa was concerned. The insurrection was like a huge stone dropped into a quiet pool. The ripples it created rocked the State again and again. The first "wave" to shake Iowa, after the initial impact of the raid had died down, was the disclosure that Brown's papers contained some slightly suspect letters from J. B. Grinnell.

In the violent Southern reaction which followed the October uprising, Virginia's Sen. J. M. Mason had called for a full Congressional investigation of the alleged "conspiracy". Grinnell quickly went to Washington to answer charges. However, Iowa's former governor and new senator, James W. Grimes, applied sufficient pressure to get Mason to drop the investigation of his fellow Iowan.

A second aspect of the State's contribution to Brown's adventure could not be so easily dismissed. Steward Taylor's death, Edwin Coppoc's capture at Brown's side and Barclay Coppoc's fugitive status were all a painful reality which could not be ignored. In the matter of Edwin's fate, Iowa's only option was to stand back and witness the inevitable. On Nov. 1, 1859, a bare two weeks after his capture, Edwin Coppoc faced trial in a Virginia court while handcuffed to the wounded Brown. Six weeks later, on December 16, the obvious verdict of the Southern jury was carried out, and the young Springdale Quaker dropped through the trap of a Virginia gallows.



Barclay Coppoc

The fate of Edwin's younger brother, Barclay, had yet to be decided. The youthful fugitive fled desperately for Iowa following his escape. Trusting no one and living off the land, young Coppoc somehow made the arduous trek across an aroused country and arrived at Springdale on December 17, the day after his brother's execution. Though exhausted, emaciated and near collapse, Barclay's ordeal was not over. The embittered Virginians wanted him back. However, despite the repudiation of the village elders, his younger friends were inspired by the Brown expedition and they put Barclay under a protective guard.

Coppoc was obviously fortunate in the loyalty of his friends, but his greatest piece of luck came when Iowa elected Samuel J. Kirkwood to be the new governor of the state. It was with this poised and crafty Republican that Virginia would have to deal if it hoped to bring the second Coppoc to justice and the Governor's Inaugural Address of Jan. 9, 1860, did not afford the outraged slave-state much hope. Kirkwood stoutly refused to repudiate Brown's action unconditionally.

While the great mass of our northern people utterly condemn the act of John Brown, they feel and express admiration and sympathy for the disinterestedness of purpose by which they believe he was governed, and for the unflinching courage and calm cheerfulness with which he met the consequences of his failure.<sup>42</sup>

On Jan. 23, 1860, the newly-elected Governor Letcher of Virginia sent an agent named Camp to Kirkwood with a formal requisition for the return of Barclay Coppoc. Iowa's chief executive read the order carefully and then stunned Camp with a refusal to honor it. As he later reported to the Iowa House, five technicalities prevented him from ordering the young Quaker's arrest, but an examination of those techni-

<sup>42</sup>*The Inaugural Address of Samuel J. Kirkwood, January 9, 1860* (Des Moines: John Teesdale, State Printer, 1860), p. 11.

calities shows them to be flimsy almost to the point of absurdity. Kirkwood maintained that, while the preamble of the order affirmed that Coppoc had abetted John Brown in treason against Virginia, the text of the requisition did not specifically mention just what state the Iowan was a fugitive from. The other four "defects" were equally incomprehensible.

Kirkwood did tell Mr. Camp, however, that if a properly written order reached his desk he would honor it. The implication seems quite clear that the Governor was stalling for time. Such pettifoggery had not prevented Pennsylvania's Governor Packer from returning two Harper's Ferry fugitives from his state pursuant to a requisition identical to the one Kirkwood rejected. In those days of less-than-instantaneous communication, a corrected order would take time to arrive, and time could and ultimately would work in Barclay Coppoc's favor.

It would be interesting to speculate upon what Kirkwood might have done as an individual to warn the young felon of the danger which hung over him had not the lid of secrecy Agent Camp sought to maintain been accidentally blown off. One hint of the governor's attitude may have been revealed when, after the affair had become known to certain interested parties, Kirkwood went out of his way to publicize the entire thing, including the release of Letcher's original order to the press.

Fortunately, the governor was able to stay within the letter of the law. On January 23, at the very moment Kirkwood was refusing Letcher's requisition, the responsibility of saving Barclay Coppoc passed to two known antislavery state legislators, B. F. Gue and Ed Wright, who had propitiously come to see the governor. Gue later recounted the story of Coppoc's rescue.

Gue and Wright arrived at Kirkwood's office that evening on official business. Entering unannounced, they found the governor "in conference with a pompous looking man . . . who was swinging his arms wildly in his wrath."<sup>43</sup> Kirkwood made some quiet remark about supposing that the stranger "did not want his business made public," to which the stranger

<sup>43</sup>B. F. Gue, "John Brown and His Iowa Friends," *The Midland Monthly* (March, 1897), VII, 273-274.

replied, "I don't care a damn who knows it now, since you have refused to honor the requisition."<sup>44</sup>

The two intruders soon realized that they had stumbled into a session concerning the extradition of their notorious young raider. The Virginia agent openly argued that the fugitive might escape before Letcher could repair the "defects" in the requisition, upon which the governor began describing the various possibilities under the Iowa Code by which Coppoc could be held while the repairs were being made. However, before Kirkwood read those laws which might detain Camp's quarry, he shot the two legislators a "significant" look. The intruders quietly withdrew, then hurriedly went into action.

Gue and Wright first sought out fellow Republican legislators, Grinnell, J. W. Cattell, David Hunt, Amos Hoag and a few others Gue left unnamed in his account. This ad hoc committee appointed Isaac Brandt, a known friend of John Brown, to find a courier to ride for Springdale. A wiry ex-cowboy named Williams was selected and given credentials to identify him to stationmasters of the Underground Railroad, thus assuring him a supply of fresh horses along the way. The long ride was quickly made and Springdale's self-appointed young militia—seventy-five strong—formed about their hero. As soon as he could be prepared for travel they put Barclay Coppoc aboard a train for Canada.

On February 10, an elaborate formal requisition arrived at Kirkwood's desk, and he signed an order for Barclay's arrest, but by this time the youthful veteran of Harper's Ferry was far beyond the jurisdiction of either state.

The young Iowan's adventures in the antislavery movement were not over, however, for by summer 1860, with his extradition something of a dead letter, Coppoc popped up in Kansas aiding the escape of Missouri slaves. When the Civil War broke out he received a commission as a lieutenant in the 4th Kansas Volunteers, despite his still being in his early twenties. Barclay's war record was lamentably short, unfortunately, for in August 1861, he died at the hands of Missouri guerrillas when the troop train he was riding plunged off a sabotaged bridge into the Platte River.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 274.

With Barclay Coppoc passed Iowa's last living link to its final peace-time involvement in the antislavery struggle. Harper's Ferry was soon to be followed by the natural climax of the crusade Brown had championed and Iowans, to one degree or another, had endorsed. The Civil War brought John Brown's battle to the entire nation.

#### ANTISLAVERY IN IOWA: A NEW VIEW

The events following Harper's Ferry were probably the final proof that Iowa's basic hostility to slavery had grown too militant for compromise, and that the conflict between the two life-styles was in fact "irrepressible." While some political figures in those eleventh hour years — men like Kirkwood — might still mouth assurances that free-states such as his own would not interfere with slavery where it already existed, such oratory seemed rather flat when a local abolitionist could marshal on his behalf every element in Iowa from the chief executive to a retired cowboy.

By 1854, the State had turned the corner. From that time on Iowa was locked in earnest combat with slavery. It might claim only to be battling against the system's expansion, but no part of the institution received any real succor from the free-state. Even the highly legal demand of the South that Iowa return its fugitive slaves met with implacable resistance. Then the Kansas struggle added militaristic stridency to the battle Iowa had decided to accept. When the Civil War erupted, it merely nationalized a confrontation which Iowa had faced up to six years before.

Of course, unanimity never existed in the State. Even after Ft. Sumter, Iowa had its share of Copperheads and Peace Democrats. However, they were not only a minority, they were a persecuted minority. For example, the most influential of the Peace Democrats, Henry Clay Dean, once faced the threat of a Keokuk lynch mob because of his convictions.

While some historians have also observed that 1854 marked the beginning of a new era of antislavery militancy for Iowa, they have maintained that the new era merely replaced a transition period, which in turn had replaced a pro-slavery epoch. They have tied their thesis neatly together with the explanation that the evolution in popular attitudes resulted

from a gradual change in population make-up. An early, dominant Southern majority, they contend, imbued Iowa with its proslavery sentiments; but then this element was slowly displaced by a swelling tide of Eastern, abolitionist-minded immigrants.

In the last analysis, however, this entire thesis is demonstrably untenable. First, these deductive proofs do not conclusively demonstrate the existence of an early Southern majority, nor do the census compilations prove definitely a rising influence of abolitionist settlers. Secondly, even among the Southern minority there were many during those years of the State's infancy who openly avowed antislavery biases.

Contrary to the commonly accepted thesis then, Iowa's entire antebellum history exhibited but one consistent attitude on the question of slavery — the majority of Iowans opposed it. It is true that several events occurred which seem inconsistent with this hostility to slavery, but the answer to that lies in the fact that Iowa was not always a free agent. Many times it failed to voice its antislavery sentiments simply because it was trapped between conflicting desires and motivations.

During the years prior to 1854, Iowa's population primarily wanted an escape from the disturbing demands of its antislavery conscience. Therefore, Iowans hoped that as immigrants to a free frontier State they might avoid all contact with the Black and with the system oppressing him. In such an atmosphere the intense sectional conflicts of the time would be less immediate and, subsequently, less bothersome. It might even be possible to express latent libertarian views and yet not be forced to accept the consequences of living by those views.

This kind of thinking produced, quite logically, the paradox of egalitarian sentiments found in the suffrage debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1844, and, concurrently, the repressive Black Code. It was a perfect combination — a law to ensure that few Negroes would live in the Territory, followed a few years later by sanctimonious speeches commiserating with Blacks over their degraded condition. Yet early Iowans did not really intend hypocrisy. They seriously felt themselves to be in the antislavery camp. The Supreme

Court of Iowa probably truly expressed the people's sentiments when it ruled in favor of Ralph, the Black miner. But most of all Iowans wanted to avoid paying the price of their convictions.

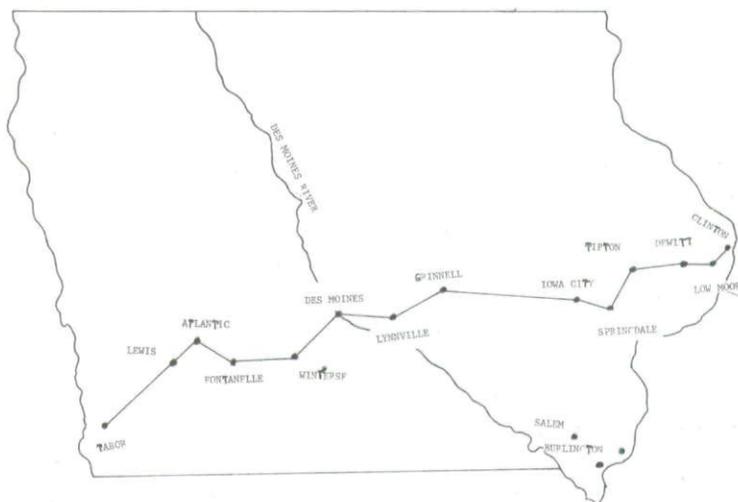
As time went by and Iowa passed into Statehood, the desire to avoid the slavery controversy remained strong. But political maturity brought responsibility, and the new State was forced to become involved. The ingrained antislavery attitudes still gnawed at the popular conscience, yet to yield to them now would aggravate the South and inflame the very passions Iowans wanted desperately to keep cool.

As a territory, Iowa's blind, unreasoning desire for escape had conflicted with and cancelled out libertarian expressions of hostility to the South's hated system. Now as a State, Iowans felt a responsibility to abide by the Constitution and preserve the Union through conciliation and compromise, and thus were forced to still once more their antislavery stirrings. Not surprisingly, these later years witnessed a Burlington jury soberly reimbursing a Missouri slaveowner who had lost his human chattels at the hand of Iowans, as well as two antislavery senators voting favorably on an even more stringent fugitive slave law.

Then came 1854. The conciliation and compromise which Iowans had felt it their duty to endorse had finally come home to haunt them. Stephen A. Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the door to human bondage on Iowa's western border, and her studied pose of conciliation for the national good collapsed immediately. Although Iowa had willingly allowed squatter sovereignty in Utah and New Mexico, she found it intolerable in Kansas and Nebraska. Long-suppressed and long-overdue expressions of antislavery hostility finally exploded. Conciliation, itself a more active form of escapism, passed quietly into oblivion. The slavery controversy had come to Iowa. Escape was impossible. The crusade had begun.

From that time on the free-state remained consistent in its response to the system. Though it was unwilling to make any overt threat to slavery in the South, Iowa readily attacked the institution at any point where it entered into the state's jurisdiction. A runaway Black in Iowa was tantamount to

a free Black. Any politician who refused to resist adamantly the expansion of slavery faced trouble at the polls. Negroes in the state were given vestigial rights, such as the right to testify against whites. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Iowans contributed food, supplies and guns to the free-soil cause in Kansas, thus giving themselves an introduction to John Brown and a role in the adventure at Harper's Ferry.



Map of Underground  
Railroad through Iowa

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## A NIGHT OF TERROR

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Cedar Rapids, Iowa, August 29, 1926

### TATTOO OF HOOFS HEARD IN STREET

Grant Wood, local artist, looking back over the early years of his life in Cedar Rapids recalls an incident which as a revelation of the supernatural had a great many bizarre details attributed to such happenings by the old New England housewives, the fraus of the Germany of another century, and various imaginative authors.

To a large number, even today, the night is made mysterious by the activities of invisible beings and spirits. Every cemetery is a rendezvous for spectres, and in desolate places ghouls assemble for council.

### A Trying Period

When Grant was a boy of about 14 years, his grandmother became dangerously ill, and her death was expected almost any moment. The immediate family, which included Grant, his mother, an aunt, his brother and wife, were in a state of nervous exhaustion for days.

A re-arrangement of sleeping quarters to accommodate a visiting relative, placed Grant's mother in his room. One night while the grandmother was in a critical condition, Grant was awakened by his mother speaking his name.

"Listen," she whispered.

He did so, and heard sounds which he thought were hoof-beats in the street in front of the house. Grant conjured the vision of a strange and terrifying horseman galloping up and down the street. He heard the horseman approach the house, pause for a moment, and ride

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