

The Underground Railroad • Iowa's Antislavery Movement • Freedom Seekers • John Brown

Summer 2009 • \$7

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers,

I keep bumping into John Brown.

The name of the abolitionist pops up in biographies of some of my favorite writers—Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson. A few of Brown's staunchest supporters visited Iowa City, where I live. And a few blocks from my home, there was a house where Brown hid out for a few hours, and then was whisked out of town after midnight.

The house of Brown's ally Jesse Bowen (*above*) is no longer there. Too bad. There are precious few structures remaining in Iowa that are associated with antislavery activities in the 1840s and 1850s. The Bowen house was replaced by a two-story house perhaps 120 years ago. But Ralston Creek still runs behind that property, and Brown would have had to cross it on the way out of town.

So this is when one's imagination kicks in. What was Iowa City like back then? How many houses were on Jesse Bowen's street? Were his neighbors or colleagues antislavery like he was? Were any as ardent abolitionists as Brown? How did they feel about Iowans harboring runaway slaves?

This is the critical question: If I had lived back then, would I have given refuge to fugitives? Would I have knowingly broken the law? Would I have had the conviction and the guts?

Would you?

I hope that this issue, on antislavery and the underground railroad, guides us to an answer. It's a hypothetical question today, but in the mid-19th century many Iowans had to confront it.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

From a reader

I just finished reading the spring issue of *Iowa Heritage*—a wonderful blend of the human condition in "Putting Up the Stove" to the



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

inspiring article about Father Edward Catich. What an inspiration he was to the people fortunate enough to know him. I plan to share the article about Father Catich with my parish priest.

I also enjoyed reading about "Mrs. Horton." How many women were there before women's liberation who were not cut out to be housewives, but did it because there were so few other choices? How trapped they must have felt knowing there was very little they could do about it except what Iva Horton did, such as writing for special occasions and quilting. I also found it interesting how the family wasn't welcomed into the neighborhood because they weren't born there.

—Marilyn Setzler
e-mail correspondence

Correction

Whoops! In the last issue's photo essay, "Rarely Seen: Cool Stuff from the Museum," I neglected to give credit to volunteer Karen Barker and museum staff members Sarah Macht and Sheila Hanke. All three helped with "Rarely Seen." As with most everything, it takes a village to create a museum exhibit.

—The Editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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Subscriptions, Back Issues

\$24.95 (1 year, 4 issues)
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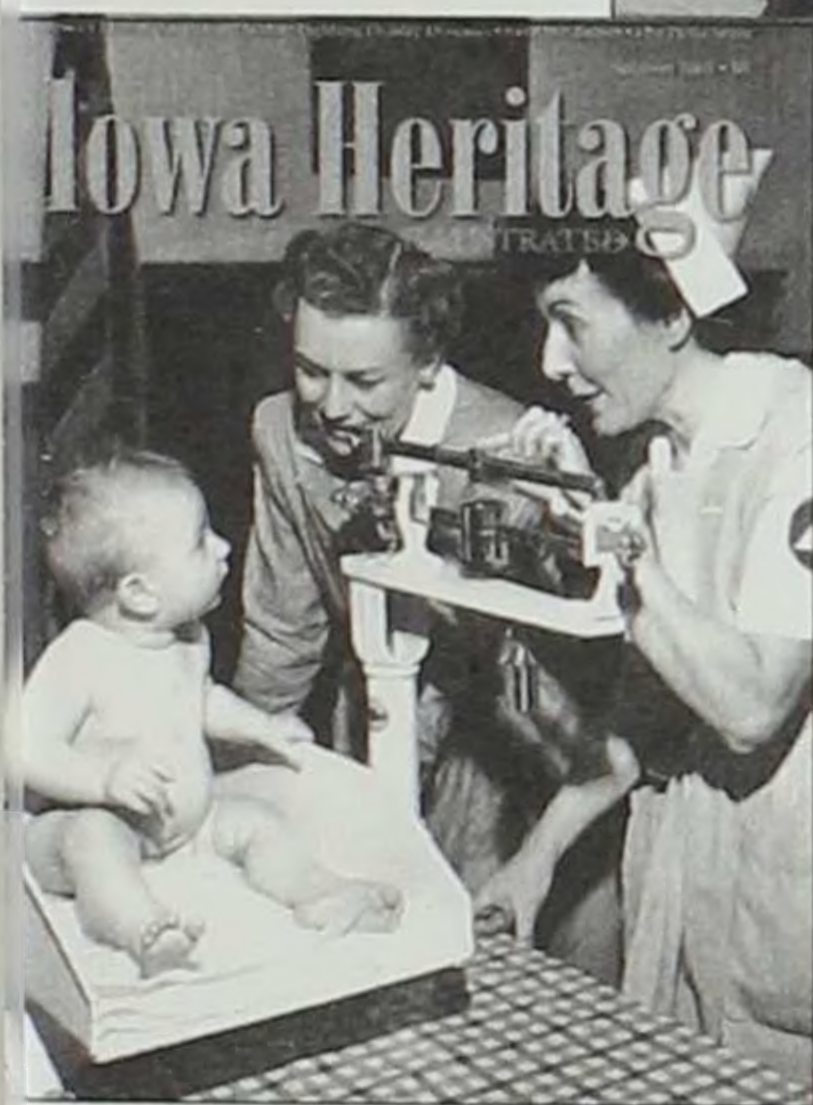
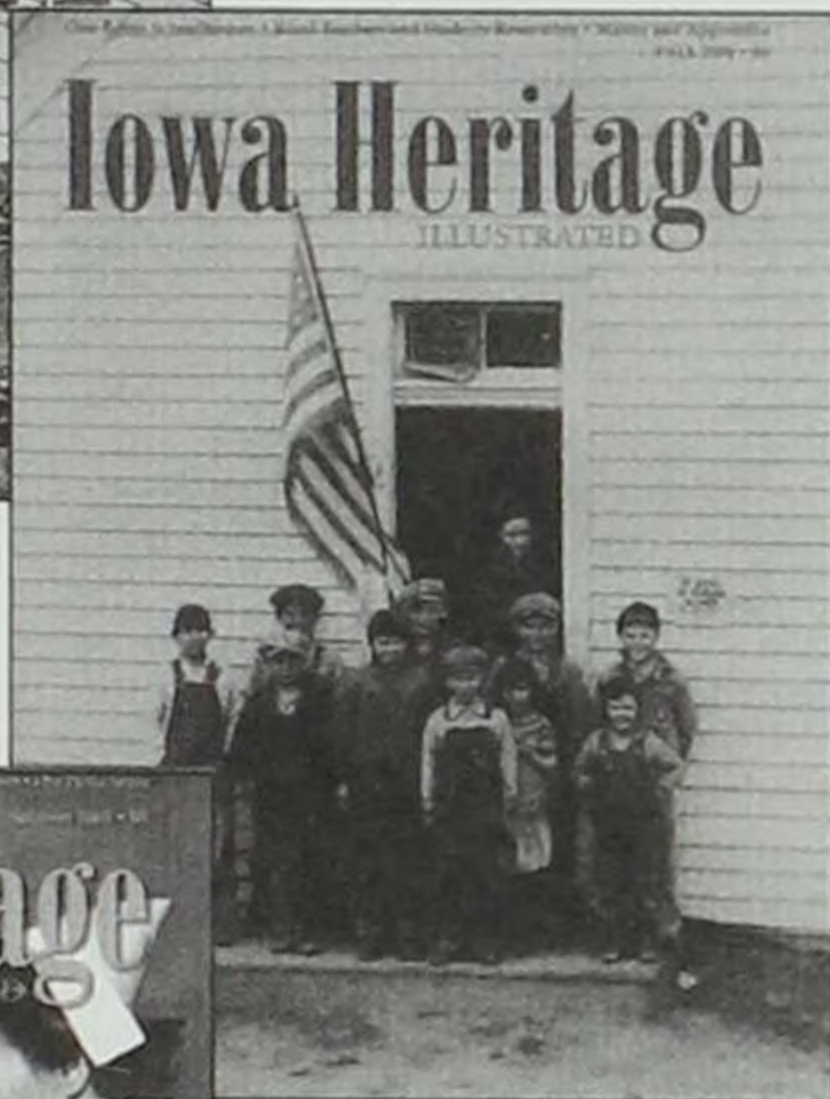
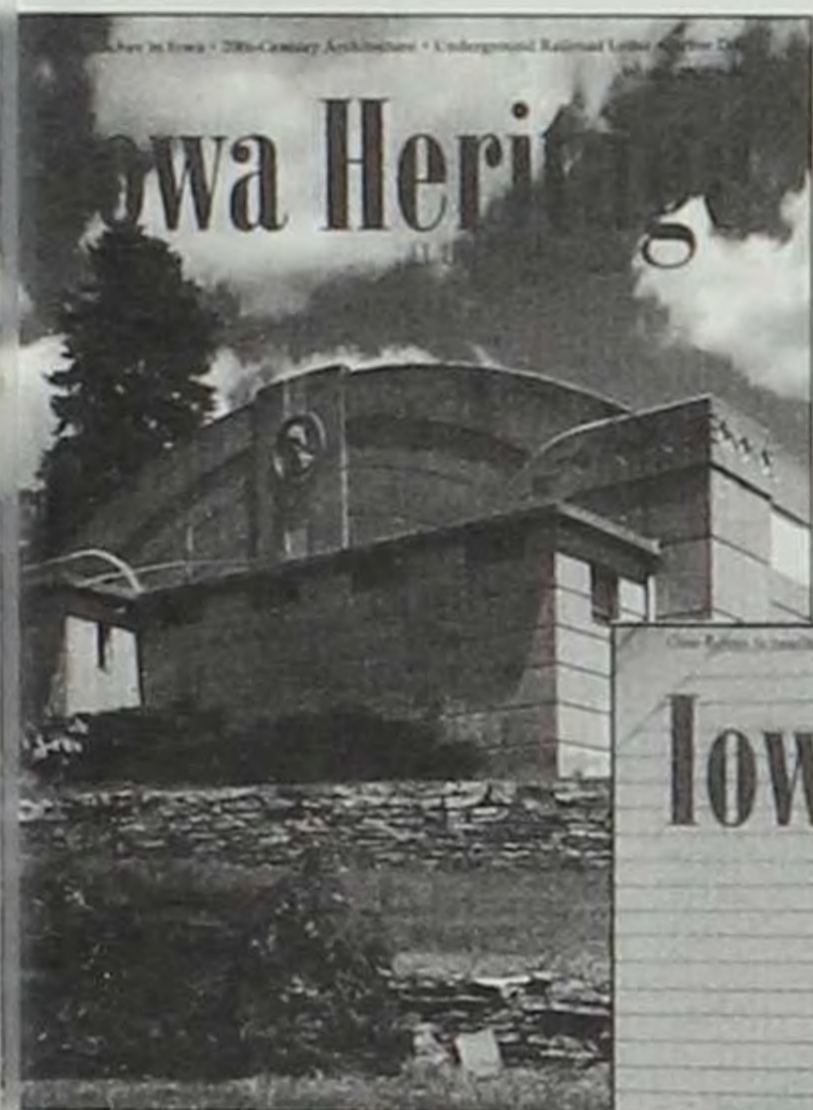
Contact the editor (see top of column). Submission guidelines: www.iowaHistory.org.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY of IOWA

Iowa Heritage Illustrated (ISSN 1088-5943) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, State of Iowa. © 2009 State Historical Society of Iowa. The State Historical Society of Iowa and the editor are not responsible for contributors' statements of opinion. Printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper.

Our two locations for collections and programs are in Des Moines (515-281-8741) and Iowa City (319-335-3916), with historic sites throughout Iowa.

Periodical postage paid at Iowa City, IA. Postmaster: Send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240-1806.



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On the Cover

Jane and Samuel Harper lived in a comfortable cottage in Windsor, Ontario, in the 1890s. Every year the Harpers visited John Brown Jr. at his home in Put-in-Bay, Ohio. Samuel once said, "I wish I was in a position to pay John Brown, Junior, one half what I owe his father, for what he did for us." The Harpers fled slavery decades earlier. With ten other runaways, they crossed Iowa with abolitionist John Brown and his men.



Naming the Enslaved

Frost had killed off the gardens. Firewood was stacked. And as subscribers of the *Page County Herald* glanced through the paper that late October day in 1859, no doubt some of them read this brief article:

"Wednesday of last week, a bright, intelligent looking mulatto, about 18 years of age, passed through Clarinda, inquiring the way to Hawleyville; and as soon as he had got beyond the limits of our town he was pursued and over-taken by a citizen, who, by friend-

ly promises induced him to accompany him home. Shortly after dark the services of three other citizens and a team were obtained and about 10 o'clock at night he was tied, hand and foot—against his appeals to their humanity—against his cries and entreaties."

It's chilling to read this.

Did such indignity and cruelty ever fall upon the fine couple on this issue's front cover? Perhaps. We don't know much about them when they were the "property" of a Missouri slave-

holder. We do know that they escaped and traveled across Iowa with abolitionist John Brown (whom some might call a terrorist).

Years later, in the 1890s, the Harpers posed in a photographer's studio for this portrait.

We are fortunate to have the names of this couple: Jane and Samuel Harper. Rarely can historians uncover the full names of enslaved people, a point made by Galin Berrier in this issue. Sometimes only a first name is discovered, and perhaps a subjective physical description.

In 1846, for example, we know of an enslaved woman named Lucy who was "about 36 years old, very stout and heavy made, very black, very large feet and hands." We know this about Lucy because either her owner or a slave catcher advertised a reward for her return. The ad appear in the *Keokuk Argus* in June 1846.

The story of the "bright, intelligent looking mulatto" who was seized in Clarinda was discovered by Eric Lana a few years back; he found a reprint of the article in the *Albia Weekly Republican*. He and John Zeller diligently looked through every extant Iowa newspaper between the 1830s and 1862, searching for any and all articles related to antislavery and underground railroad activities in Iowa.

This topic has been the subject of an intensive, multi-year project funded with a federal grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation and led by historian Lowell Soike in the historic preservation office of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Zeller also searched through census records, and Doug Jones worked with volunteers and professionals in archaeological efforts to uncover any evidence of structures and sites associated with the underground railroad. Presentations in communities across the state drew

large audiences. Historic markers trace the last trip by John Brown across Iowa.

Many of the articles in this issue are the fruits of those labors. Others are written by historians Galin Berrier and James Patrick Morgans and preservationists Leah Rogers and Clare Kernek.

I've learned a lot from working with all these individuals. For instance, among American antislavery proponents, abolitionists were the radical subset. Most who were antislavery in Northern states took a "not in my backyard" approach: "Yes, of course, slavery should be ended," they said, "but that doesn't mean I will tolerate freed blacks in my state." Others believed that colonization was the only solution: send blacks to Haiti or Africa. Some were an-

ti-slavery for political reasons; some for moral or religious reasons. Few believed that slaves were entitled to equal rights.

I also learned that run-aways seldom hid in tunnels and secret rooms—more likely in outbuildings or off in the timber or on the tallgrass prairies.

Legally assisting fugitives could result in six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine (about two years' salary for a school principal), but no Iowans ever received jail sentences. Underground railroad "conductors," as they were sometimes called, were farmers and sawmill operators, attorneys and pol-

iticians. We can assume that women also participated, but hardly ever were their names or their deeds recorded or acknowledged.

Although the front cover of this magazine seldom features non-Iowans, for this issue, Jane and Samuel Harper deserve the spotlight. During the volatile and uncertain 1850s, they were sojourners in our state.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor





Iowa's Antislavery

Imagine that you farm in southern Iowa when, one night in 1851, you hear a tap at your door. Opening it, three weary escaped slaves stand before you. They ask for food and shelter as they tell of their flight from Missouri.

You must decide what to do. From which way had they arrived at your place, you ask, wondering if your neighbors to the west had spotted them and alerted others. One of the fugitives replies that they had crossed the creek from the south and came here because they heard you were antislavery and might help.

You realize that any aid for them is illegal, that

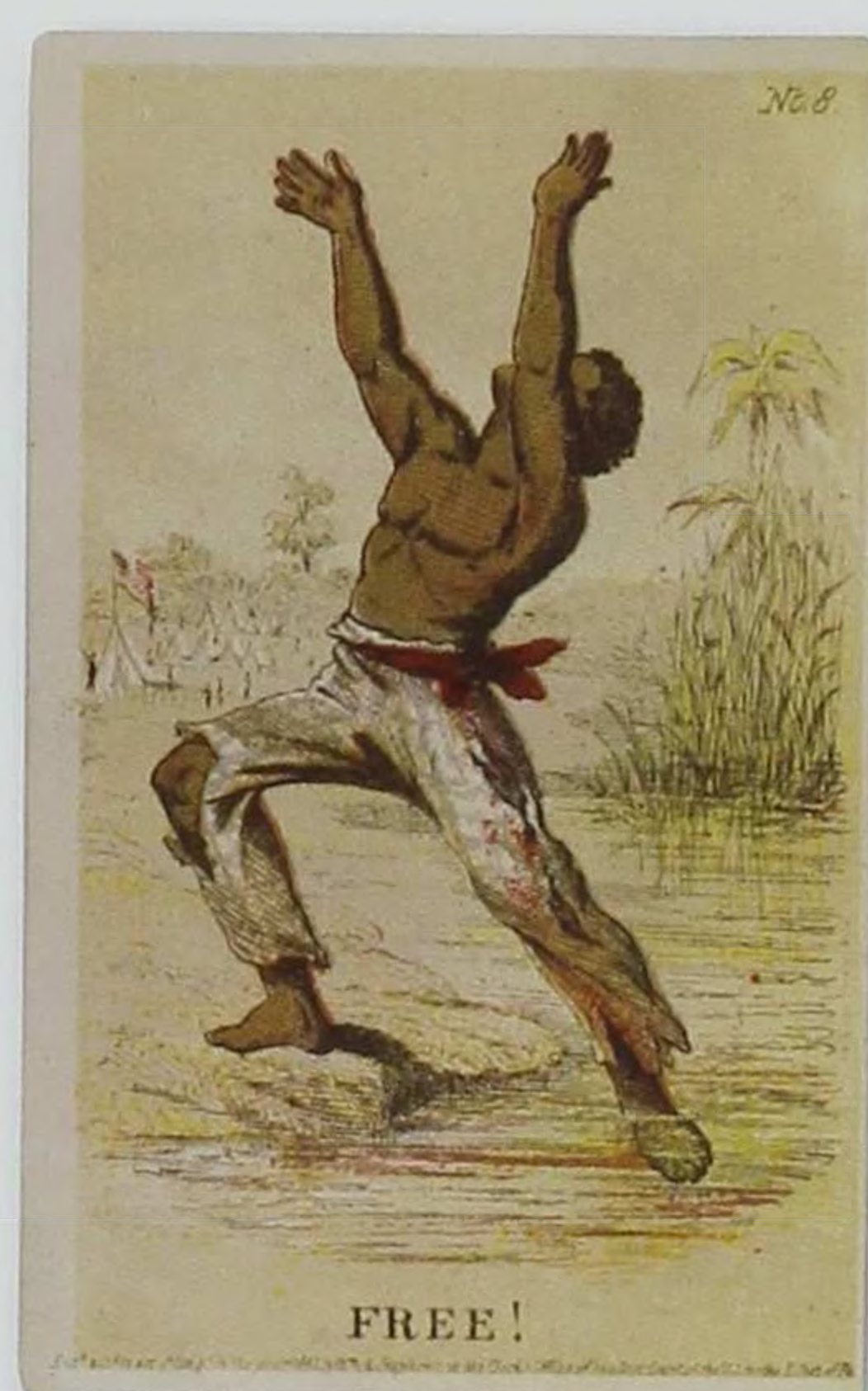
most Iowans are highly unfriendly to abolitionists, and that the Fugitive Slave Act, enacted a year ago, imposes stiff criminal penalties on those who harbor fugitives or hinder their capture. Having never before engaged in underground railroad efforts, you fear what might happen if you're caught.

You and your wife nervously feed and hide the fugitives for the night and send them on their way the next morning with directions to someone two miles distant who reputedly helps escaped slaves.

The fugitives' prospects for successful escape across Iowa would then depend on their ingenuity, on others who befriended them, and on whether eventually they found direct help from fearless individuals who stood committed to a "higher law" of duty.

Of course, much of the story of the fugitives' escape

Above: Cards depict the journeys of African Americans from slavery to freedom. Six more exist in the 1863 series, ending with a black soldier dying for the Union.



Movement

by Lowell Soike

and dangerous flight toward freedom had already taken place before they even arrived at an Iowan's doorstep. It was the fugitives who in fact devised a plan of escape and showed the courage to carry it out, adjusting things in transit and appealing to others as needed.

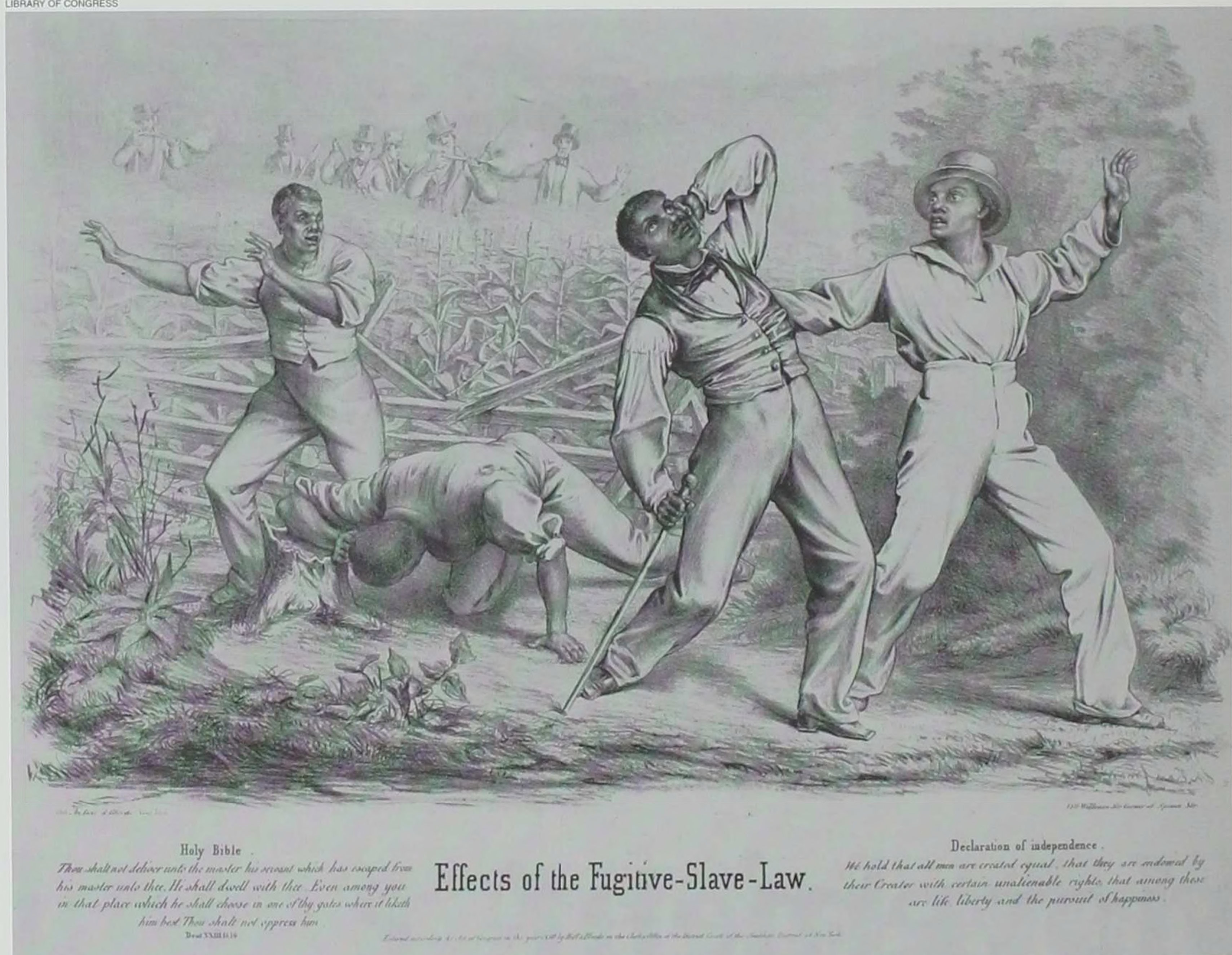
Whether running away north to freedom from a border state, which might bring the fugitive into contact with underground railroad operations, or running away to escape plantation circumstances elsewhere in the South, a slave's flight expressed a broad and constant pattern of defiance that continually bedeviled slaveholders.

Fugitives along the way often sought help from members of their own race, whom they naturally judged to have more sympathy for their plight. One Missouri slaveholder admitted as much in his adver-

tisement for the return of Lucy, a fugitive slave, in an 1846 issue of the *Keokuk Argus*. His reward notice stated: "It is believed that she will be conducted to the territory of Iowa in the direction of Keosauqua or beyond that place to a settlement of free negroes that was set free by Meirs living in Tully, Lewis Co., Missouri some years ago."

Typically fugitives took things a step at a time, having only the name of a person to inquire after, based on directions from another person met along the way. Perhaps, if lucky, they would run into someone belonging to the loosely organized underground railroad network.

When Iowa residents helped runaways from the slave state of Missouri, they knew they were taking the biggest risk of their lives. Criminal charges, threats,



Condemning the Fugitive Slave Act, this lithograph from 1850 portrays a posse of six ambushing four blacks, possibly freedmen. Quotations from the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible and from the Declaration of Independence appear below the image.

and physical harm could befall them. Adopting direct action might mean the loss of friends who, though antislavery in opinion, were unwilling to go this far. Neighbors might be either unfriendly to blacks entering their midst or wary about violating the Fugitive Slave Law, which had been the cost of gaining Southern support for the Compromise of 1850. Although free-state residents had a hard time swallowing the law, most wanted to avoid the issue.

This strong desire to accommodate and conciliate the South produced actions in Iowa that were, in effect, pro-slavery. State legislation during the 1840s and on into the mid-1850s limited or restricted black settlement in Iowa. Opinion leaders viewed assistance to runaway slaves as hostile and judged "abolitionists" to be subversive threats to a Union thought to be easily broken.

Avoiding the Issue

THE WORLD KNOWN to Iowa settlers during these years was quite unlike our own. In 1850, Iowa had been a state for just four years, and settlement was only into its second decade. Southern and eastern Iowa counties contained most of the thinly settled population, while the northeastern counties were seeing a beginning influx of arrivals from New England and mid-Atlantic states and immigrants from northern Europe. Northwestern Iowa would not be largely settled until the decades following the Civil War.

For a time, the early stream of migrants from slaveholding states into southern Iowa townships and counties gave several localities a Southern and politically

Democratic cast. Having come from a slaveholding state, however, did not necessarily mean the settler was proslavery in attitude. Most had no desire to see slavery extended and did not wish to encourage its growth elsewhere. Rather, the effects of one's slave state background showed in anti-black attitudes. This translated into antagonism toward black migration into Iowa and an attitude favoring severely limited political and civil rights for black residents.

Not surprisingly, slave catchers from Missouri could find some sympathetic help among numerous southern Iowa residents for returning fugitives to their master's home. They saw little reason to do otherwise, believing that instances of runaway slaves and slave hunting in Iowa only made visible the issues of slavery that everyone wanted to avoid.

This attitude predominated during the pre-1855 years, although events sometimes frustrated those wishing to keep the issue silent. A fugitive slave court case in 1839 was one such instance. It arose out of the 1838 capture of a slave named Ralph. A Missouri slaveholder had allowed Ralph to gradually purchase his freedom by going to work in the lead mines of Dubuque. But Ralph failed to make the payments and was taken by two slave catchers for return to the slave holder. A man who witnessed Ralph being handcuffed and loaded in a wagon obtained a writ of habeas corpus from a judge, which forced a hearing to be held. Ultimately, the Iowa Supreme Court decided that once Ralph had been permitted by his owner to reside on Iowa soil in order to become free, he could not again be reduced to slavery for failing to make his payments.

Twenty years later an opposite decision would be rendered by the United States Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case.

As to numbers of slaves who escaped northward, the United States Census reported that between 1850 and 1860 about 500 slaves escaped from the border slaveholding states into the free states. Of the border states, the greatest reported increase in escapes occurred from Missouri. This made Iowa and Illinois significant receiving states for fugitive slaves.

Among the enslaved who ran away rather than endure the circumstances of their bondage, most were caught. But these acts of defiance also unnerved the slaveholder. A constant fear of losing runaways bred an exaggerated defensiveness and resentment toward all who stood opposed to their peculiar institution. Their exasperation helped bring about the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. It required the United States government to aid in returning escaped slaves and punish those who hindered it. The law made visible the

slaveholder's sense of weakness as well as deepening the divide between North and South, thus helping set the stage for the Civil War.

Interfering Abolitionists

IOWA PASSED THROUGH TWO ERAS of antislavery feeling and underground railroad activity. A general public attitude, noted above, of anti-abolitionism and noninterference with slavery, disturbed occasionally by scattered incidents and court cases, marked the first. The second period showed growing resistance to slavery's demands while the term "abolitionist" began to lose its stigma, all of which was underscored by the increasingly open support shown in Iowa for John Brown and others working on behalf of the free-state movement in Kansas.

During the first period, lasting until about 1854, tensions over antislavery revealed themselves in southeastern and south-central Iowa when fugitive slaves escaped from north-central and northeastern Missouri. Public opinion in these years—being indifferent to slavery and accommodating to the South—disparaged abolitionists and decried antislavery agitation as hostile and inflammatory. True enough, Iowans agreed, slavery was an abomination, but it was somewhere else and should be left alone to avoid inflaming passions.

Consequently, antislavery advocates had only a minor voice in public affairs and kept a low profile locally. Those who spoke out openly for emancipation were rejected or worse. When, for instance, a lecturer from the Massachusetts Antislavery Society visited the Iowa towns of Clinton and Camanche for a series of talks, he found the scheduled church closed to his lecture. At another stopping place "threats of personal violence were freely made," leaving the lecturer "glad to escape with a whole skin and unbroken bones."

To be openly an abolitionist in Iowa during the 1840s and early 1850s meant living a public life where one was shunned and ostracized. We should leave in silence the emotional issue of slavery, went the prevailing opinion, for to do otherwise by tolerating abolitionist talk would only tear away at the scab covering the Union's fragile peace. As one Clinton County abolitionist later put it, "The boasted free press of the North avoided the antislavery question and the underground railroad as unclean things, and branded their advocates and adherents as wild fanatics and dangerous agitators."

Abolitionism brought dread to North and South alike, moreover, because it implied black equality. Leaders of opinion readily connected abolitionists to public fears of free black migration into Iowa. Building on this fear, they further charged that abolitionists interfered with and harassed people of Southern states in their lawful pursuits. And they justified the "peculiar institution" as "a blessing to the bondsman" because it provided paternalistic care.

Only a Temporary Refuge

EVEN ANTISLAVERY ADVOCATES did not see Iowa as a permanent place of refuge for slaves to come and live. Rather, they saw themselves as providing a temporary refuge to the fleeing slave, not a place for them to be welcomed as full residents. Feelings were mixed even in the staunchly antislavery Congregationalist town of Tabor in Fremont County. When the pastor tried to place in school the children of a recently settled free black family, some would have none of it and burned down the school.

Similarly in Grinnell, when in March 1860 members of the strongly antislavery Congregationalist town tried to enroll four fugitive slaves in school, opponents provoked a riot that effectively denied the youths entry. Given these attitudes in largely antislavery places, it was hardly surprising to see that during this era Iowa passed laws and proposed measures to discourage black migration into Iowa, limit blacks' rights in the state, and pursue policies to conciliate the South.

This prevailing attitude of "non-involvement" ultimately collapsed into a new mood of "resentment" after 1854. Mainly responsible was passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It not only brought the slavery issue back to center stage; it also forced Iowans to see that slavery might expand northward. Now thrown on the defensive were those in the dominant Democratic Party who were used to holding together its Northern and Southern wings by arguing to avoid sectional conflict and leave slavery and the South alone.

In Iowa, the politically astute antislavery radical Whig James Grimes eagerly capitalized on the opportunity to marshal a successful coalition based on the antislavery issue. True, Iowa Democrats suffered as well by party infighting, lack of purpose, and failure to win national party support for federal railroad grants and internal improvements. But it was the Kansas-Nebraska Act and "bleeding Kansas," with a little help

from the Dred Scott decision, that drove the Democrats from power as a new era of rising antislavery militancy now convinced Iowans that there was no appeasing the South.

Iowa residents had originally pressed their Democratic congressmen to work for organizing the Nebraska Territory in order to obtain westward railroad growth, settlement, and economic development. When Iowa Senator Augustus C. Dodge introduced such a bill, Southern leaders in Congress feared that accepting it would effectively surround the state of Missouri with free territory. Stephen Douglas, Democratic congressman from Illinois who chaired the Committee on Territories, knew that he would need to gain several Southern votes to pass the bill. Though knowing that certain of his changes would "raise a hell of a storm" among Northerners, Douglas revised the bill to divide the Nebraska Territory into two territories and leave the slavery issue to be decided by "the people residing therein." Dividing one territory into two left the impression that one would be slave and the other free, while leaving the slavery question to those who settled the territories would allow slavery to expand north of the 36°30' line and effectively end the Missouri Compromise.

To Iowans, this opened the fearsome prospect that slavery might not only expand but could fix itself on Iowa's western border. Once that happened, James Grimes shrewdly argued, "bounded on two sides by slave states, we shall be intersected with underground railroads, and continually distracted by slave-hunts."

After bitter debate, Congress passed the bill. Both of Iowa's Democratic senators, who were locked into their state development schemes and railroad mania, voted for it. The unrelenting pounding by antislavery leaders that followed spelled the beginning of the end for Democratic rule in Iowa. The coalition that helped James Grimes become governor in 1854 developed by 1856 into the Republican Party, which won all contested state offices, gained both House seats in Congress, and gave Frémont a solid margin over Buchanan in the presidential contest.

Joyous Shouts

THE PUBLIC MOOD SHIFTED, turning more militant and antagonistic towards those who formerly held sway in both apologizing for slavery and demonizing its detractors. In the process, underground railroad

operators increasingly found less to fear from enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. When in June 1855 two slave catchers near Burlington stopped the wagon of avowed abolitionist Dr. Edwin James and his black passenger named Dick, the difficulty of enforcing the stringent Fugitive Slave Law in Iowa became clear.

Alleging that the black man was Dick Rutherford who had escaped from service to Thomas Rutherford, of Clark County, Missouri, the two slave hunters asked for an arrest warrant from the commissioner in Burlington who had been appointed by the federal circuit court to dispose of fugitive slave cases. Meanwhile the gathering commotion around the wagon outside the commissioner's office drew his eye. As he gazed out his window at the throng's reactions, he later recalled, "Every man in the crowd who was himself a native of the slave-region, or the son of such a native—and there were many such in Burlington—seemed to be very zealous in his manifestations of sympathy with the slave claimants. . . . Most of them were of the class in the South that never owned a slave, and who had migrated . . . because they had become certain that if they remained in their original locality they would never be able to own one. They came here to better their condition. But unfortunately they brought with them all their local prejudices and habits, and especially their imbibed hatred of the negro. . . . Such a pretense [to personal liberty] on the part of the black bondsman was outrageous insolence, requiring at the hands of all white Southerners not merely admonition but prompt and decisive punishment. It disputed the white man's supremacy, and as to the non-slaveholder, deprived him of the coveted privilege of looking down upon a class inferior to his own.

"And then the sympathy of the northern people in the crowd was scarcely less pronounced. They were probably very few, if any openly acknowledged 'abolitionists' among them. But the system to the respectable people of the North seemed inhuman, and was also obnoxious because of its political influence. The sight of a victim of the system, seized by a couple of voluntary bloodhounds while seeking to escape from bondage, stirred the blood of those who thought that liberty was rightly purchased at any price. These men had no desire to interfere with the system where it existed. They were not responsible for it, and could do nothing under the Constitution to destroy it. But when it obtruded itself upon them and proposed to exert its power in their own streets, they were roused to action, and resolved that the authority should be exerted under the strictest construction of the law."

The commissioner, upon learning that the two

slave pursuers lacked the official transcript of escape and service due under seal of a Missouri court of record, held the case over for a hearing to confirm the facts of Dick's alleged identity. When at the hearing the slaveholder's son failed to identify the detained black man as his father's slave, the judge dismissed the matter and the man was released to the "joyous shout" of onlookers. From there "more than a thousand exulting people escorted Dick to the ferry-boat. Dr. James, Dick and plenty of guards" then accompanied him across the river, and "this time Dick was started by rail towards Chicago without detention." The trend of public temper indeed was changing.

Abolitionist demands to end slavery were hardly opinions shared by most living before the Civil War, however. The most committed among abolitionists were found mainly among two branches of religious adherents: Quakers and Congregationalists. Although members of both faiths disagreed among themselves over whether they should actively seek out or encourage slaves to escape, both shared disrespect for laws that supported the right of one person to hold another in bondage. For as they saw it, all persons were equal in the sight of God, and both believed that a higher law of conscience applied. Where a fugitive slave found a community of Quakers or Congregationalists, the chances improved for receiving direct and unconditional aid. Antislavery views were also strong among Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, plus other evangelical Protestant groups, and individuals among them did participate in the underground railroad activities. Generally, however, they were less directly involved in active underground railway operations.

But no matter what one's religious convictions, the underground railroad was not for the ordinary anti-slavery advocate. ♦

Lowell Soike is a long-time historian with the historic preservation office of the State Historical Society of Iowa. In recent years he has directed a federal grant-assisted project on antislavery and underground railroad activity in Iowa.

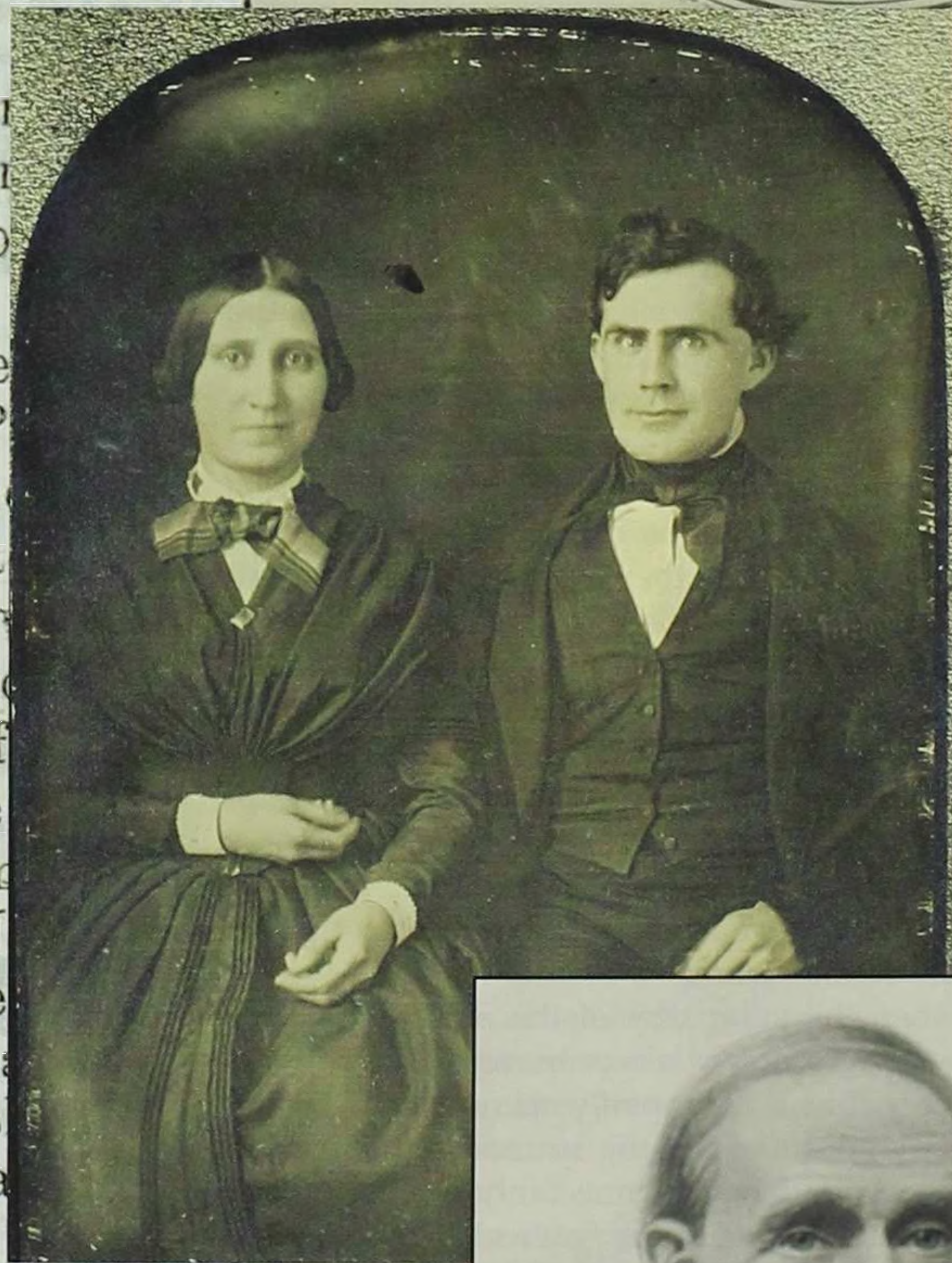
A substantial collection of materials has been compiled for public use; two National Historic Landmark nominations are in progress; and digitizing of some 4,000 Iowa newspaper articles on the slavery issue and some archaeological work at sites have been completed. Historic markers have been placed on a John Brown Freedom Trail relating to his 1859 journey across Iowa with twelve liberated slaves.

Soike is currently writing a book on antislavery and underground railroad activity in Iowa.

cultivated by slaves. There are planters in South Carolina who are owners of more than a thousand slaves. Children are raised in Virginia, and without so much as the expenditure of a dime for a primer, are sold for two, three, four, five and six hundred dollars. The last census reported one hundred and forty-six thousand, five hundred and fourteen such children in Virginia, under ten years of age, more than half of them girls. The yearly crop of human beings raised by the State of Virginia is valued at ten million

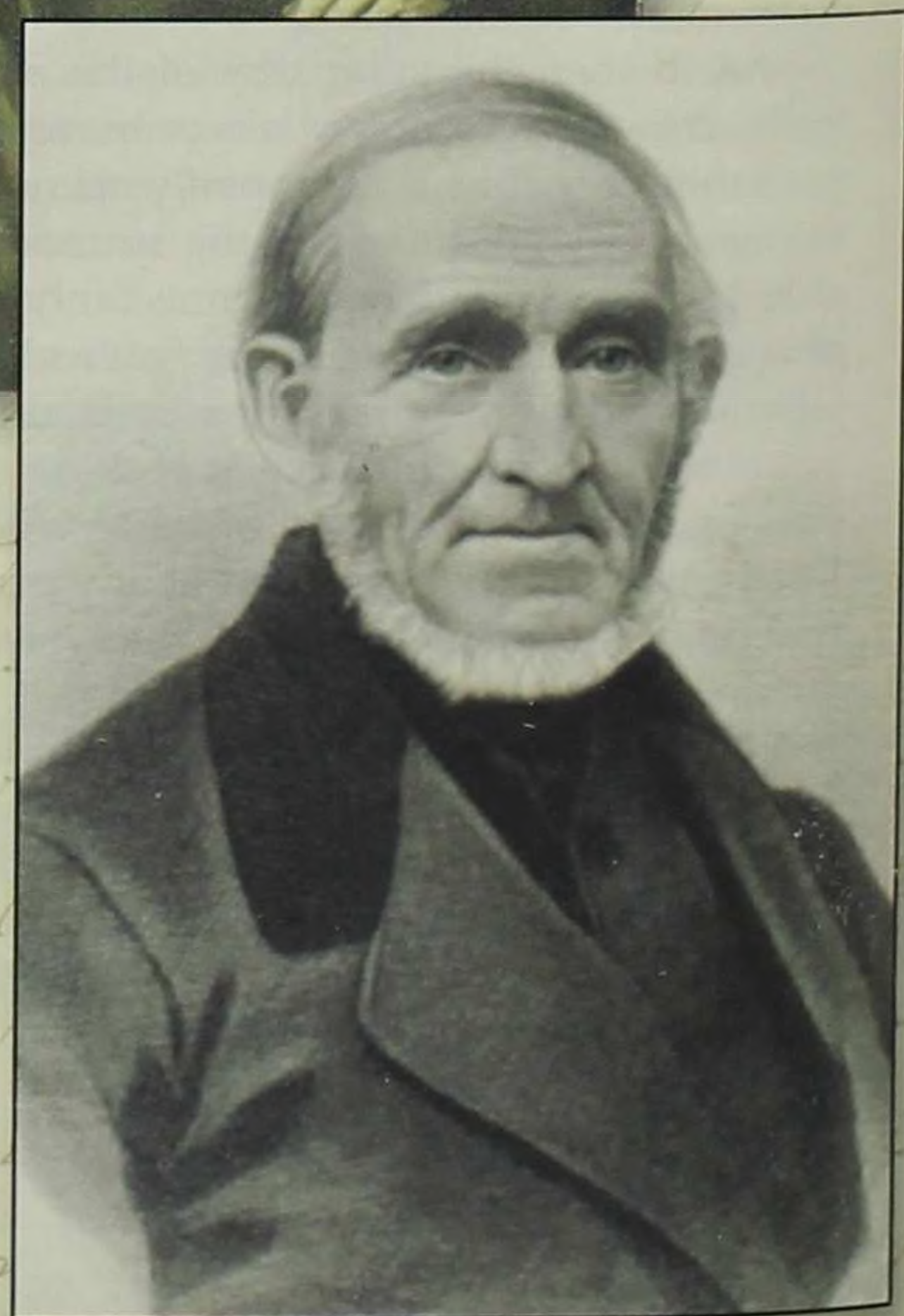


Here is the horrible explanation of this horrible anarchy. It is a question of dollars and cents, in one word, of property of productive, valuable property. This bulwark, churches, ecclesiastical bodies, benevolent societies, the President of the United States, the Supreme Court, and every politician and penny-a-liner, in the interest of the slave power, have taken shelter, as if by the throne of God, under the alleged rights of property,—of the right of property,—are held to be more counterpoise for the rights of man than the eternal laws of God. "No right of property," says a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, "is placed by the Constitution upon the high ground, nor shielded by a guaranty."⁵



We are thus brought to notice those recent events which have made these things realities to us, and which have startled the nation and the world, and in view of which it becomes us to inquire for our own lessons of duty.

First, Was the Fugitive Slave law, in 1850, the enactment of which with all its inhumanity and wickedness, and the enforcement of it in a number of cases, encouraged the slave power to further ag-



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FIGHTING SLAVERY

ASA TURNER'S IOWA BAND

by Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernek

While in their final year of seminary in the East, a handful of determined young men decided that upon graduation in 1829, they would travel to what was then the far reaches of the frontier—Jacksonville, Illinois.

These idealistic graduates of mostly eastern seminaries such as Yale recognized that they were in a position to influence the moral and intellectual character of fledgling communities in the West. Known as the Yale Band, they began to organize churches and Sabbath schools and to found colleges and seminaries. In this way they sought to transplant the values of eastern Congregationalism. These values, including an ardent opposition to slavery, were grounded in religious conviction and communicated with missionary zeal.

The American Home Missionary Society played a primary role in this movement. Many of its missionaries belonged to a religious and intellectual tradition—eastern Presbyterianism and Congregationalism—that was inextricably tied to abolitionism. Although individual missionaries varied in their degree of militancy, abolitionists saw them as instruments of their cause and financially backed the Home Missionary Society.

Upon arrival in Jacksonville, the missionaries helped found Illinois College. It became known for

the abolitionist views espoused there. Indeed, “so pronounced were [its] antislavery sentiments that a proslavery man like the father of William H. Herndon, Abraham Lincoln’s law partner, took his son out of the college before his course was completed, but not soon enough to prevent him from becoming an outspoken abolitionist.”

The Yale Band was part of a network of abolitionist activities that allowed swift political organization. Churches, schools, and associations provided platforms from which to condemn slavery and provide protection for proselytizing on such a volatile issue.

The missionaries as a whole were outspoken in their denunciation of slavery, even when their lives were in danger. During the 1830s, Illinois was the setting of frequent, dramatic, and sometimes violent clashes between Congregationalist clergy and proslavery forces, especially near the Illinois-Missouri border.

In 1837, when antislavery editor Rev. Elijah Lovejoy was attacked by proslavery mobs and his press dumped in the Mississippi, Congregationalist minister Edward Beecher defended Lovejoy. (Edward was the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, and the first president of Illinois College.) In the dark of a November night, he helped Lovejoy store a new press in a warehouse at Alton. The next night Lovejoy was shot dead. It was noted that Lovejoy “accomplished more by his death than he could have done by years of labor. The Congregationalists of Illinois were Abolitionists from that hour and so were the mass of intelligent and moral men.”

Upriver, Rev. David Nelson also was threatened by a mob. He “hid in the Mississippi Bottom, watching for an opportunity to cross a ford which his enemies were also watching, armed with rifles and whiskey

Opposite: In 1843, Asa Turner (bottom) called for Congregationalist missionaries to start colleges and churches in Iowa that denounced slavery.

Center: Mary Ann and William Salter were among those who answered the call; one of William’s most powerful sermons, “Slavery and Recent Events” in December 1859, was reprinted in a Burlington newspaper.

Top: Abolitionist letterhead bears a popular symbol of the antislavery movement.

IMAGE OF ASA TURNER: SHSI (DES MOINES). REMAINING THREE: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

canteens." Nelson was rescued by two members of the Quincy church. The escape averted a potentially violent mob situation.

Not long after, proslavery forces in Quincy attempted to drive out another member of the Yale Band, Asa Turner. Even so, he organized 13 churches in the years 1830–1837.

Across the Mississippi in Iowa, Asa Turner and Julius Reed set out to continue the work of planting religious and educational institutions. Turner soon became the pastor of the first permanent Congregationalist church in Iowa, in Denmark.

The village had been founded in 1835 by a band of pioneers of apparently strong antislavery belief. Shortly after their arrival, they began working with the nearby Salem settlement of Quakers. Denmark functioned as the next stop on the underground railroad after Salem.

According to historian Scott Grau, in 1840, "Turner and two-thirds of his congregation in Denmark launched the Iowa Territory's first abolitionist organization, the Denmark Anti-Slavery Society." Turner, along with many in his denomination, "urged Congregationalists to withhold fellowship from professing Christians who held slaves. He endorsed the doctrine of immediate emancipation of slaves with no compensation for slaveholders."

By 1843, Turner had persuaded 11 young missionaries to join him in Iowa. They became known as the Iowa Band. Of the many institutions that the Iowa Band helped found, the most well known is Iowa College. Founded in Davenport in 1847, Iowa College was moved to Grinnell in 1859, a hotbed of abolitionism. (It was renamed Grinnell College in 1909.)

Organizing colleges and churches was one of the attractions of the frontier because of the opportunity to shape the character of a newly settled region. It is interesting to note that several of these missionaries' posts would subsequently become stations on the underground railroad.

According to Julius Reed, all of the Congregationalist ministers in Iowa at that time were "a unit politically from the first. Two subjects dominated and threw all others into the shade; they were the overthrow of the saloon and of slavery." He continued, "Frequently temperance and slavery were the subjects of sermons, and a religious service was rarely held in which one or both of these subjects were not mentioned."

Another in the Iowa Band was Ephraim Adams, born in New Hampshire. According to biographer Scott Grau, "Adams attended Phillips Andover Academy to prepare for college, but was one of 50 students who walked out of Phillips because the school's principal forbade them to join an antislavery society." In Iowa, Grau continues, Adams "preached at Mount Pleasant for a year, then settled in Davenport, where he would remain until 1855. His sermons frequently targeted the evils of slavery and alcohol, sometimes alienating the German immigrants and Southern-born settlers moving into the rapidly growing Mississippi River town, but he continued to push these themes despite some opposition."

Those in the Iowa Band were among the Iowans who protested laws that had been pushed through the territorial legislature by proslavery forces in 1839. Known as Black Laws, they restricted the freedom of movement of blacks and mulattoes.

Asa Turner saw political action as an effective means of furthering his deeply held moral and religious principles. Believing that "questions of political reform properly fell within the sphere of activity of the Christian minister," he became directly involved in the 1854 gubernatorial election on behalf of James W. Grimes, an outspoken opponent of slavery and its extension into new territories.

Grau notes that "in 1854 Turner, along with two other Congregational clergy, worked to bring about a fusion of free-soil Democrats, Liberty Party abolitionists, and Conscience Whigs by supporting the Whig nomination of James W. Grimes for governor of Iowa. After an assembly of free-soil and antislavery forces at Crawfordville, in March 1854, the fusion forces endorsed Grimes, and in August he was elected governor on an antislavery and prohibitionist platform, signaling the end of nearly a decade of Democratic rule in the state."

In Iowa, perhaps more than anywhere, Congregationalism and abolitionism went hand in hand. ♦

This article is a portion of the National Historic Landmark Nomination for the Reverend George B. Hitchcock House, which was written by Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernec of Tallgrass Historians, L.C.

No Questions Asked

Editor's note: Devoted to historical research, journalist August Richter preserved early accounts of antislavery activities in Davenport. Richter credits the following account to "that sturdy, honest philanthropist" William H. Holmes. The story begins with the arrival of Erastus Ripley, one of the Iowa Band.

Sometime in 1852, I was awakened at daylight by Professor E. Ripley (of Iowa College) who asked the loan of a peddling wagon, the box of which, back of the front seat, made it easy to conceal a few persons in the rear by adding a canvass flap from the top of the back of the driver's seat. Mr. Ripley said he was in charge of a family—man, wife and three children—who had been brought here by their owner, who designed crossing Iowa to Northwestern Missouri!

While [the party] was stopping over at the LeClaire House [Hotel], some waiters of the same hue told the man that his family were lawfully free, because [they were] brought by their master to a free State, but that he could not trust to that, because the people would stand by the master. . . . Being one of the exceptional slaves who would leave his master if he could, he trusted to his black brethren. . . .

The professor relied on John L. Davies for a pair of horses, and Mr. Tade, a young student of Theology, was willing to practice his theory of helping humanity, by [crossing the Mississippi and] driving to Galesburg, [Illinois,] the nearest known station on the "underground station," an organization whose chief actors did not parade their names and official titles. . . . Mrs. Holmes hastily prepared a day's rations for the travelers, while I was adding an extra curtain to the wagon. Believing in a proper use of . . . weapons, I inquired of the man if he was armed, and found his LeClaire House brethren had furnished him a pistol and a small amount of money.

Before these arrangements could be completed, the negroes were missed; handbills were circulated over the city describing the property lost and offering a liberal reward, and we had grave fears about getting

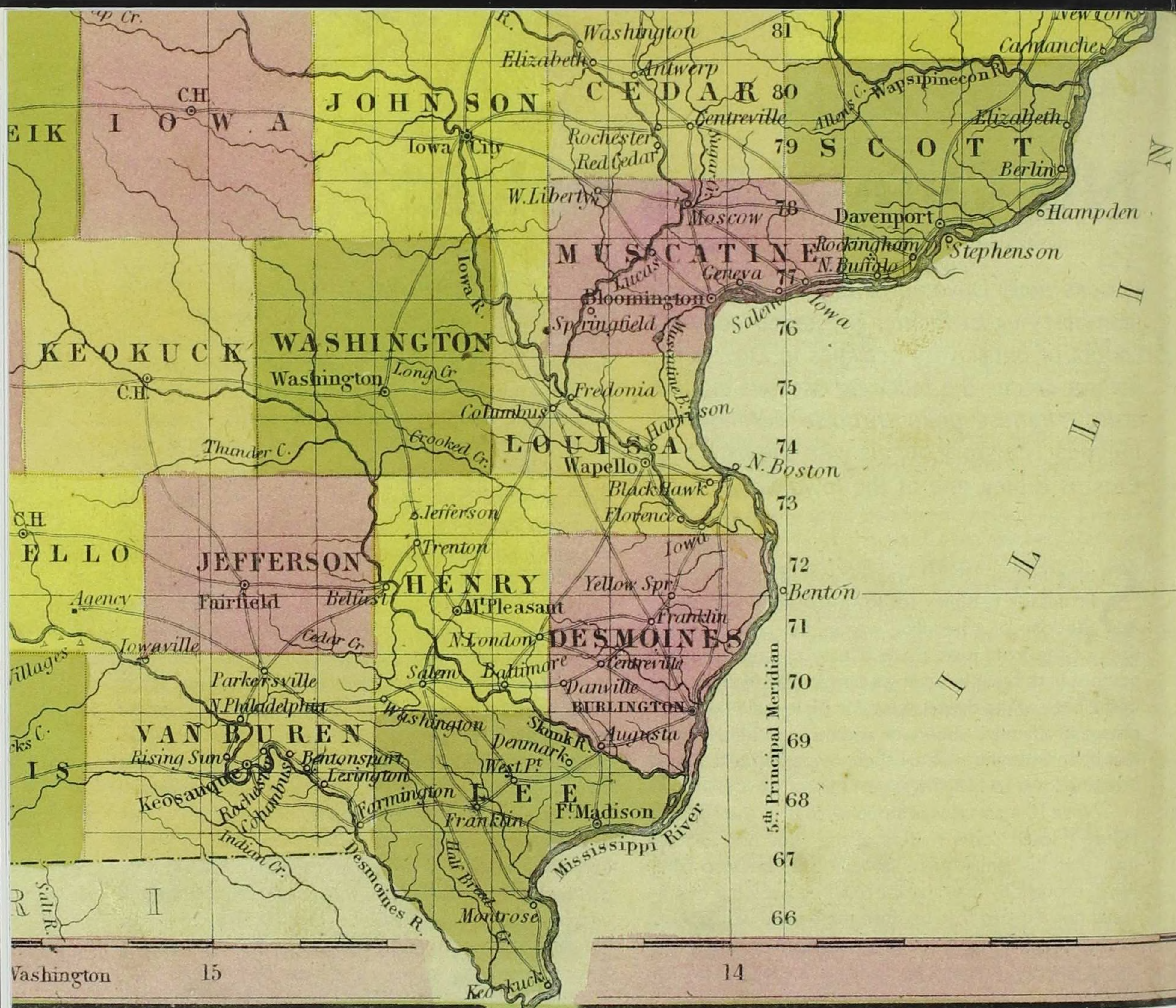
over on the ferry-boat. But my wagon had crossed frequently, and its appearance excited no suspicion. Unfortunately the boat had just left the dock, and the half hour standing in the street seemed a long time. During the delay it occurred to me that more money might be needed, and I had but two dollars with me. I was passing by Mr. Thomas [Gilbrath?], whom I knew to be safe. He had just two dollars with him, but said he would borrow more if necessary, and volunteered to stand on Front street, near the wagon, to keep off possible intruders, and probably no one man could or would have kept off more than he, had occasion required.

The next passer-by was Hiram Price, then an honored leader in a party prompt to prove its pro-slavery zeal, but I knew him to have a humane heart beneath the surface garb of a partisan, and that he did not suffer his sympathies to evaporate in words alone. I accosted him, saying, "I want some money for a benevolent purpose, and no questions asked." He promptly took out his pocket-book, lifted the top note—five dollars—without a word as to the object, only asking, "is that enough for my share?" but with a look that suggested he knew the general direction it would take, and if he had seen the handbill I presume he inferred the specific use; but it is probable he does not till this day know he was a contributor to the flight of this family from a State too weak to interpose in favor of freedom.

Soon afterwards Mr. Ripley called to say he had heard from Galesburg that, under the banner of a Queen our fugitives had found in Canada what the boasted "Flag of the Free" would not give—personal liberty!

. . . I listened to many speculations as to who hid them and where, as also to countless curses on the fanatics who would seriously damage business here, because the LeClaire House would not be filled with summer boarders from St. Louis. The majority of the talkers, at least, sympathized with . . . the slave owner—who supposed that every man in Iowa belonged to the bodyguard of slavery. No day of my not unhappy life has given higher satisfaction than that in which I heard of the safe exodus of this humble family. ❖

Source: August Richter Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). The text has been broken into additional paragraphs for ease of reading.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

by Lowell Soike

Above: Salem lies in Henry County (yellow on this 1849 map). In the 1840s, runaways from the slave state of Missouri entered southeastern Iowa, seeking refuge in antislavery communities.

Salem's Radical Quakers

SALEM, IOWA, lay only 20 or so miles from the slave state of Missouri, and in the 1840s, fugitives were escaping into southern Iowa, as well into Illinois.

In response, northeastern Missourians formed local anti-abolition societies and stepped up patrols of the Des Moines River near the border with Iowa. Reportedly, once when Salem Quaker Elihu Frazier traveled to Missouri, he was captured by the patrol. Tortured to reveal his plans, Frazier said nothing and eventually was released and sent on his way home. Another time, \$500 rewards were offered for the capture of Salem area residents Ely Jessup and Joel Garretson.

Missouri slaveholders felt themselves in an especially precarious position when their slave "property" lit out for Iowa and Illinois, and by the 1840s, lawmakers from Missouri and other Southern border states were calling for tighter, stricter measures by the federal government to ensure the return of slaveholders' "human property."

Salem was becoming especially notorious to fearful Missouri slaveholders as a hotbed of radicalism. And to many Iowans—wary of interfering with Missouri slavery—Salem and the surrounding Henry County were home to fanatics.

Salem was an antislavery community like others of the Society of Friends (Quakers), but it was something more as well. It numbered among the minority of Friends settlements where numerous members (though not all) were willing to take direct action against the institution of slavery.

This was not coincidental. A core of settlers had come from the strongly abolitionist and underground railroad area of Indiana, the Cherry Grove Monthly Meeting in Randolph and northern Wayne counties. This Quaker section of eastern Indiana was also home to radical Quaker abolitionists, among them Levi Coffin—a famed underground railroad leader whose sister lived near Salem. The large Orthodox Indiana Yearly Meeting embraced settlements from Ohio to Iowa.

As Northern sentiment against slavery increased, the issue especially strained relations between conservative and all-out abolitionist Quakers in Indiana. In the minds of the conservative majority, Quaker members should not go outside the Society of Friends in their antislavery work by joining "public" abolition and colonization societies; such direct political action contrasted with the more typical quiet work of pacifism uncontaminated by evangelical zeal. Orthodox Quakers tended toward written appeals against slavery and gradual colonization of African Americans.

A strong minority, however, argued that moral sua-

sion was not enough; one could be true to one's principles only by joining such outside organizations. These radical Quakers spoke out for immediate abolition and against "black laws" passed by midwestern states to prevent black migration into their area. They engaged in aiding fugitive slaves, and even joined work to rescue enslaved persons from captivity.

In eastern states Quakers had commonly avoided political activity other than voting, but on the frontier they became active in politics as Whigs serving in state legislatures and constitutional conventions. With western Quakers participating in political life, internal strains split Quakers in states represented by the Orthodox Indiana Yearly Meeting over how directly to engage in broader antislavery controversy.

Finally, in 1842, the Indiana majority had had enough. The executive committee of the Orthodox Indiana Yearly Meeting purged eight leading abolitionist troublemakers, including Thomas Frazier in Salem, Iowa.

In turn, the purged leaders and other abolitionist Quakers formed 12 antislavery bodies of the church. Ultimately the schism cost the parent body about 2,000 members out of some 25,000 Orthodox Friends in the Indiana Meeting.

One of the antislavery bodies was in Salem, called the Society of Anti-Slavery Friends. Salem's breakaway body comprised at least 50 members. They bought a five-acre plot for their own burying ground separate from the other Friends cemetery in Salem, and had a separate meeting house, near the home of the society's chairman, Henderson Lewelling.

This radical contingent in Salem was willing to take personal risks for racial justice. They were determined that black arrivals receive a due process hearing, which would declare them to be free blacks unless proven to be slaves. This commitment would be tested in 1848.

A HALF-CENTURY EARLIER, Congress had passed the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. Intending to give teeth to provisions of the Constitution that protected slavery, Congress made it a federal crime to assist an escaping slave. The law set forth a procedure for seizing the slave, bringing the slave before a magistrate, and returning the slave to its owner.

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 affirmed the slaveholder's right to capture runaway slaves across state lines, and it fined persons who knowingly concealed a fugitive, obstructed a runaway's arrest, or aided in the

fugitive's rescue. It left the task of interstate capture to the slaveholder, controlled only by the slave hunter convincing a magistrate to certify that his captive was in fact a runaway.

In the following decades, shortcomings in the law became apparent for both sides of the slavery issue. Slaveholders argued that there was no mechanism to enforce the law in places where people were hostile to a ruling favorable to a slaveholder; the law could not protect a slaveholder who wanted to retrieve his property or be compensated for the loss.

On the other hand, the law did not protect free blacks from being kidnapped and sold as slaves.

In response to these shortcomings, two informal extralegal systems came into being to balance personal property rights and personal liberty: slave catchers and the underground railroad.

BY 1848, SLAVEHOLDER Ruel Daggs and his wife, Nancy, were in their mid-70s. They had moved from Virginia 13 years earlier, and now farmed in Clark County, Missouri, in the extreme northeastern corner of the state. Daggs was getting older and the difficulty in keeping slaves was likely wearing on him. His slaves had heard rumors that he was considering selling them south.

Late on Thursday, June 1, 1848, John Walker and eight other of Daggs's slaves slipped away and began their trek north. Walker knew where he was headed. In April he had fled Daggs's farm and taken refuge some 30 miles northwest, in or near Salem, Iowa. In late May, Walker had returned to Daggs's farm to gather up his family and friends.

Besides John Walker (age 22 or 23), the group included his wife, Mary; Julia (18); Sam Fulcher (40-45) and his wife, Dorcas; and four children under 10—Martha, William, an infant, and another child (whose name has gone unrecorded).

On the night of June 1, in heavy rain, the nine fugitives reached the home of Richard Leggen in Iowa. Leggen had sympathy for runaways, and his household included several free blacks brought with him from Kentucky.

The following night, the runaways rafted across the swollen Des Moines River near Farmington. There they apparently hid for the day and then continued towards Salem on Saturday night.

Ruel Daggs had realized that his slaves were missing on Friday morning. His son George searched the immediate vicinity. His older son, William, and neighbor James McClure traced the runaways north to a river crossing

near Farmington. They met up with Samuel Slaughter, who farmed nearby; apparently William offered him a reward for helping to capture the slaves.

William Daggs returned to Missouri, while McClure and Slaughter continued north towards Salem, following fresh wagon tracks. When they spotted the wagon, Slaughter sped up to investigate. A half-mile south of Salem, it pulled off the road into the brush. Slaughter found three young men with the wagon who claimed to be returning from a fishing trip. Seeing no blacks in the wagon or nearby, Slaughter accompanied it into Salem. McClure arrived later.

The slave catchers were joined by two local men, Henry Brown and Jesse Cook, but they had no luck searching for the fugitives about town. The next day Slaughter and McClure searched the brush near where the wagon had pulled off the road. They found nine blacks (two men, three women, and four children). While McClure guarded them—only John Walker showed any resistance—Slaughter rode into Salem to get Cook and Brown. Returning, he found a number of Salem men gathered around.

One yelled out that he would "wade in Missouri blood before the Negroes should be taken." Another said that Slaughter had to appear before a justice of the peace to prove that the nine were actually fugitives. Outnumbered, Slaughter agreed.

Sometime upon arriving at Salem, John Walker disappeared into the crowd, as did his wife, Mary, and the infant. Dorcas, Julia, and two of the children stopped to rest south of Salem, with Slaughter's permission. This left only Sam Fulcher and his son, William, proceeding into town with Slaughter and the crowd. The crowd had grown to 50 or 100, "with a good deal of confusion. A great deal of sympathy [was] expressed, principally by the women present." On the edge of Salem stood a stone house where Justice of the Peace Nelson Gibbs kept his office. The hearing started there, but because the crowd was growing, the proceedings were moved to the antislavery meeting house a block away. Aaron Street Jr. and Albert Button stepped forward to act as the blacks' defense lawyers.

Justice of the Peace Gibbs first inquired whether the slave catchers had "a certificate from the clerk of the court in Missouri with his seal to prove the property."

Slaughter answered no, but that he could prove their identity through the testimony of McClure, who was staying in the background and soon left the hearing.

Gibbs then asked if the slave catchers had written authority to pursue the slaves. Slaughter said no, only verbal authority.



COURTESY OF LEWELLING QUAKER MUSEUM, INC., SALEM

The Henderson and Elizabeth Lewelling House represents both antislavery events and horticulture. This is where the crowd first gathered for the hearing. In addition, Henderson Lewelling sold fruit trees from his Salem nursery until 1847, when the family moved to Oregon with 700 saplings. He sold the first grafted fruit stock on the West Coast. The house is now a history museum.

The justice of the peace concluded to release the fugitives. "He said he had no jurisdiction, and they were free as himself, for all he knew."

The crowd moved out of the meeting house, including the two accused fugitives. Thomas Clarkson Frazier reportedly told Slaughter that he could leave Salem unharmed, but without the fugitive slaves. McClure had already left town, likely picking up the four blacks left on the road south of Salem, for they were returned to Daggs about a week after their disappearance.

Sam Fulcher and young William hid near the Quaker settlement of New Garden, and then in the little Congregational village of Denmark; both were stops on the underground railroad. Allegedly they traveled east through Yellow Springs near the Mississippi, on to Chicago, and then to Canada—as did John, Mary, and the infant.

MORE WAS IN STORE for Salem. Stories of the incident had angered and excited the people in Daggs's county in Missouri. With blank warrants from a justice of the peace, a heavily armed mob appeared in Salem, numbering between 60 to 100, according to various accounts. The mob sealed off roads out of town and proceeded to search every house for the fugitive slaves.

By evening, they had arrested 19 Salem men and held them overnight at the hotel. Meanwhile, two

Quakers slipped through the roadblock, one headed to Mount Pleasant, ten miles away, for the sheriff; the other, twice the distance to Denmark for reinforcements.

Accounts vary over the next day's chain of events. The sheriff arrived and concluded that the Missourians had no legal authority for their action. He ordered them to release the 19 prisoners and disperse. Reportedly, the mob went to nearby Washington, got drunk, threatened to burn down Salem—and then quietly returned to Missouri. By this time about 40 men from Denmark had arrived in Salem.

The events in Salem signaled a turning point in northeastern Missouri. As the editor of the *Hannibal Journal* ranted: "These enthusiasts, these Fanatics, as they are called by some, but who deserve no softer ap-

pellation than Thieves, have commenced their operations in a new quarter. Heretofore our only danger has been from Illinois, in which direction we had some safeguard in the fact that the Mississippi river intervened. Now a more dangerous outlet is opened in the north in the facilities of getting to Salem in Iowa, which is said to be the headquarters of these depredators and in which direction there is no similar barrier, the River Desmoin almost at all times being easily crossed by an individual without assistance from others."

In Iowa, the *Keokuk Register* commented that surely the stories about the events were exaggerated, for Salem was known for its morality and obedience to law. Other papers agreed that it was a scandalous, criminal affair, of which Iowans should be ashamed. A *Burlington Hawk-Eye* story remarked that people may be ignorant of the guarantee of slaveholders to recover escaped slaves through the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

On August 3, 1848, Ruel Daggs filed suit against 19 Salem men. He claimed \$10,000 in damages for the wrongful taking of personal property and compensations for lost services of his nine escaped slaves. He valued John Walker and Sam Fulcher at \$900–\$1,000 each; Mary, Dorcas, and Julia at \$600–\$700 each; Martha at \$250–\$300; William at \$200. No value was placed on the infant and smallest child. For lost services he claimed \$100 per year for the men and \$50 per year for the women.

In January 1849, U.S. District Court Judge John J. Dyer heard the case in the state capitol in Iowa City. The case lingered on into June; pleas were amended, lawyers replaced, demurrers filed, and more depositions taken. On the morning of June 6, the case went to trial.

At the conclusion of the proceedings, the judge turned the case over to the jury. He cautioned the jurors, "It is a case well calculated, at this time, to create some degree of interest in this community. For, while our whole country is agitated upon the subject of Slavery—while towns, counties and States, have been and are arrayed against each other in an almost warlike attitude, . . . and the fears of citizens in various portions of the Union are exciting and inflaming their minds, and driving them to acts, which, it is feared, will have soon, if they have not already, brought us to the very verge of Destruction—I repeat, it is not strange that there should be some interest manifested in the result of this case."

The judge explained that the jury's role was to decide whether the 19 defendants "had notice" that the blacks owed "service or labor, according to the laws of the State from which they fled, to the person" who claimed them. Were the slave catchers actually agents of Daggs's, and did the defendants know this at the time? And did the slave catchers' statements amount to sufficient notice for Salem residents to know not to take steps that "defeat the means of the claimant to secure the fugitives"?

With evidence in the case being largely circumstantial, it took the jury but an hour or two to return with a verdict, finding six of the defendants guilty and assessing the damages at a total of \$2,900. The jury concluded that the other 13 defendants were not guilty.

For most state editors, the verdict spoke for itself, underscoring the consequences Iowans could face for defying the federal law. As the *Keokuk Valley Whig and Register* noted, "The verdict will be a warning to meddlers."

The *Burlington Hawk-Eye* presented the case factually and noted, "The court room [was] fully occupied with anxious listeners until its termination, perhaps owing as much to the discussions and excitement now existing in Congress upon this identical subject. . . . The jury was an excellent one, and, we cannot doubt did full and impartial justice to the parties."

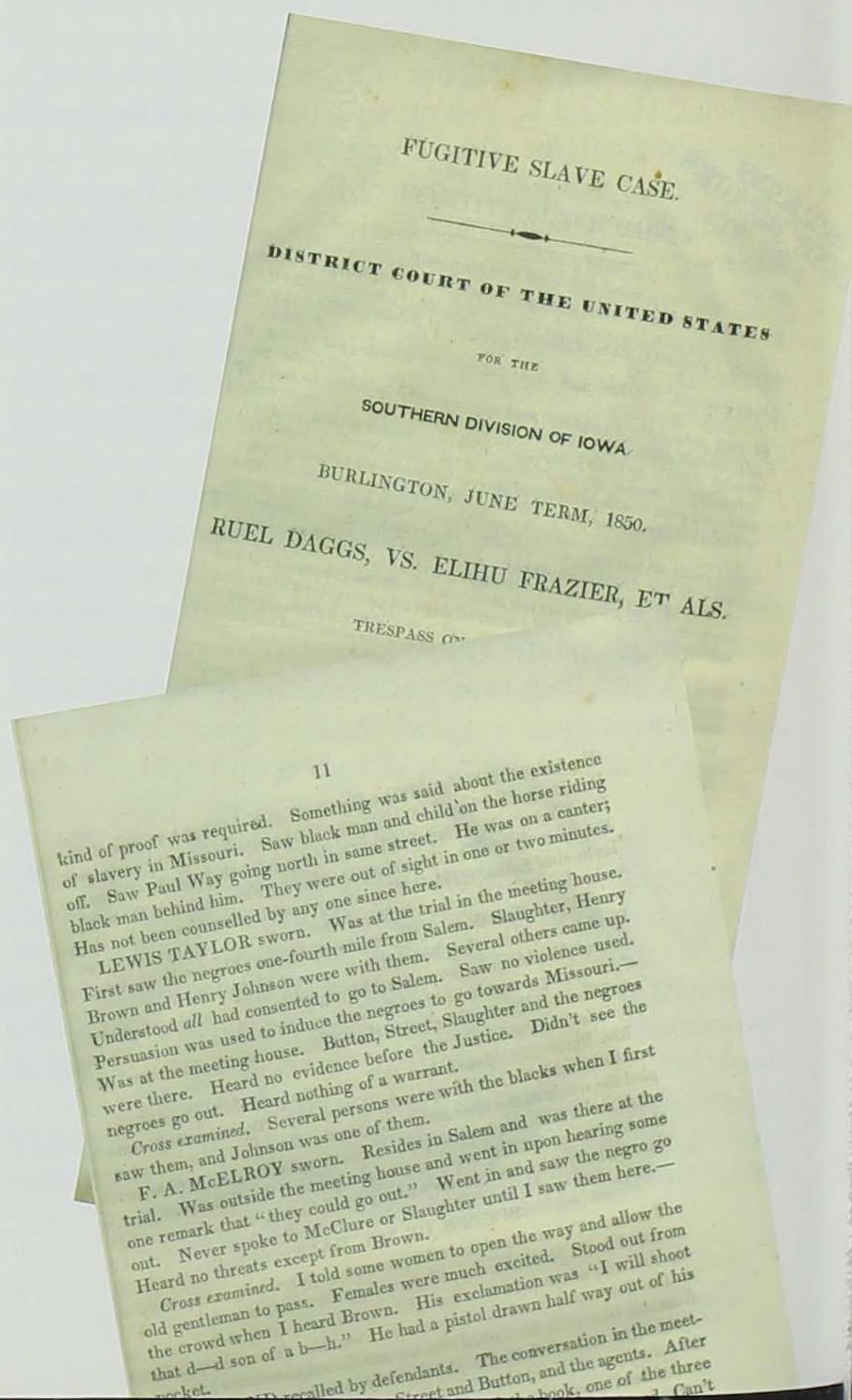
Another article in the *Hawk-Eye*, however, commented that the verdict "certainly shows a disposition to give to the South all they can possibly claim; and all this clamor about the necessity of more stringent laws to catch runaway slaves, as far as Iowa is concerned, is all a humbug."

THOUGH THE COURT found that Ruel Daggs was entitled to \$2,900, he never collected even a portion of it. The defendants in Salem had earlier taken steps to transfer or sell off property that might be attached.

The federal court case surrounding the events at Salem, Iowa, became one of the last major cases tried under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, and perhaps the only one west of the Mississippi.

The case revealed the final inability of this 55-year-old law to cope with changing realities. Sectional conflict was gaining power in what was then the frontier West. Border slave states increasingly urged a new fugitive slave law upon Congress—a law that would bring greater federal protection for recovering escaped slaves. ♦

Historian Lowell Soike is currently writing a book on antislavery and underground railroad activities in Iowa.



John & Archie

by Galin Berrier

After the freedom seekers had accomplished the most difficult part of their escape unaided, they were often assisted by abolitionists, whose names have survived in the historical record. We know the names of over 100 white “agents” and “conductors”—but not the names of the runaways they helped.

Typical is the story told later in life by Christian S. Byrkit, a Quaker who as a teenager aided a fugitive slave near Fairfield in Jefferson County. Byrkit described an incident, meant to be amusing, in which his shotgun fell from his saddle to the ground and discharged, causing his horse to rear and throwing the freedom seeker he was transporting unceremoniously to the ground. We never learn the freedom seeker’s name, or even if he successfully eluded capture by the slave catchers who were pursuing him.

We also know the names of several white abolitionists in Clinton County like G. W. Weston, who sent the following note from Low Moor on May 6, 1859, to C. B. Campbell in Clinton:

“Dear Sir—By to-morrow evening’s mail, you will receive two volumes of the ‘Irrepressible Conflict,’ bound in black. After perusal, please forward.” But we know nothing more about the two freedom seekers so “forwarded.”

One exception to the rule of anonymity are two escaped slaves from Missouri named John and Archie, who made their way some 200 miles from central Missouri to the home of J. H. B. Armstrong, an Ohio abolitionist who settled at Cincinnati in southern Appanoose County in 1852, just a few miles from the Missouri state line. A neighbor who disapproved of helping fugitive slaves escape was being entertained at the time in Armstrong’s parlor, so Archie was hustled into a bedroom off the kitchen.

After the unsuspecting neighbor departed, Archie and John, who was camped in the woods nearby, were given some food and sent on to another neighbor, John Shephard, where they were given supper and stayed the night. The next day they were sent on, eventually making it to Canada. Archie

is said to have written to Armstrong to say that he and John were working there for a dollar a day and adding: “I hope the good Lord will bless you for your kindness toward us, and I hope the day will soon come when we will be a free people.”

In the 1850s there may have been as many as 15,000 freedom seekers from the United States living in Canada West (today’s Ontario), especially in and near such towns as Windsor and Chatham.

Rumors circulated in the States that many were in dire straits, living in abject poverty. Perhaps it was important, then, to let their abolitionist benefactors know that this was not in fact their condition. Otherwise, such rumors might have discouraged other freedom seekers from following in their footsteps. ♦

Galín Berrier’s interest in the underground railroad grew from his volunteer work with the State Historical Society of Iowa helping students research topics for National History Day. He was the first individual member of the National Park Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.

Sometimes the reward is the journey itself, not the destination. That was true for historian Tom Morain when he tried to connect the dots between two events in early Ringgold County. The arrival of a strongly antislavery family coincided with a confrontation with a slave owner on Iowa territory.

Were the incidents connected? Morain uncovered a fascinating drama unfolding on the prairies of southern Iowa, but not necessarily the plot that he had hoped to document.

In this case, how the project progressed is a worthy story in itself. —The Editor

A History Mystery in Ringgold County

by Tom Morain

Ramsey Farm is a living history attraction at Lesanville in Ringgold County, about five miles east of Mt. Ayr on Highway 2. The farm used to be the home of George and Jennie Vance. Their nephew, Paul Ramsey, has fond memories of the childhood summers he spent there, and today he wants to provide children some of the same rural experiences. He acquired the farm with its historic barn and added a country schoolhouse, church, and general store. Lamon, home of Graceland University, is some 15 miles south and east. Wondering if there would be internship opportunities for my Graceland students, I visited Ramsey Farm.

That meeting turned out to be Chapter 1 of a history mystery. Out of curiosity, I began to explore the history of Lesanville, a stop on the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q) railroad line with a post office and a few stores. The town was named after numerous Lesan families who settled the area.

At this point in the adventure, I had not discovered how many Lesans and Lesan in-laws and Lesan in-laws-in-laws I was dealing with. That deficiency was soon rectified. With the help of Paul Ramsey, now 87 and living in Newport Beach, California, I came to a new appreciation for the vital importance of family ties on the frontier—and of the incredible potential of the internet to uncover those connections.

When I started my internet search, luck was with



Settlement was sparse in Ringgold County in 1857. The county lies on the border with Missouri.

me. I quickly located a very complete Lesan family tree (Paul's mother was a Lesan) dating back to 1702 in Maine with occasional anecdotes about individual family members. I learned, for example, that the silver bell in the spire of their church had been cast in Paul Revere's workshop in the 1790s. And in 1825, Paul's great-great-something-grandfather "was crossing near the upper bridge in Belfast Harbor, Maine, in a boat laden with wood." The boat capsized in the winter water and Edmund "became so chilled by exposure that he survived but a few moments after being rescued."

To identify the first Lesans to settle in southern Iowa, I started with Paul Ramsey's generation and worked backward through the family tree. Paul's mother, Madge Adelia Lesan, had married Theodore Ramsey. She and her eight siblings were the children of Burritt and Molly (McLaren) Lesan. Burritt's father (Paul's great-grandfather) was George W. Lesan, the first Lesan in Ringgold County, or so I thought at the time.

George had ridden out from Illinois in December 1854 to locate farmland. He stopped back at the land office in Chariton to enter tracts for his own family, his brother David's, and sister Harriet's. The three families and some unmarried younger brothers moved together to Ringgold County the following spring, in 1855.

There were lots of Lesans, and keeping track of the various family lines presented its challenges. Brothers George and David Lesan married two sisters, Me-

lissa and Sybil. The sisters were also named Lesan as they were the brothers' first cousins. Including sister Harriet Lesan Lee and her husband, Carlos, the three families lived together while they helped build each other's houses and get in a first crop. The Lesans were not frontier loners; they formed a closely knit family unit. I was just beginning to learn how extensive and cohesive that family network really was.

Scanning the various lists of Lesan children, I spotted a name that brought me up short. Owen Lovejoy Lesan was born in Ringgold County in 1859, the son of David and Sybil. Bells went off in my mind. Was the Lovejoy name significant? You bet!

The original Owen Lovejoy was a fiery abolitionist congressman from Illinois. Owen was the brother of martyred newspaper editor Elijah Lovejoy, killed by a mob in 1837 in Alton, Illinois, for his outspoken antislavery views. I wondered: Why did Sybil and David name their infant son in Iowa after an outspoken abolitionist in Illinois?

What does the name say about parents living only four miles north of the border with slave state Missouri in 1859, when sectional tensions were about to pull the nation apart? Today, that would be like naming a baby Nancy Pelosi in Montgomery, Alabama, or Sarah Palin in Berkeley, California. Just who were these Yankee Lesans on the Missouri border?

Returning to other Lesan sources, I made two quick discoveries that confirmed my suspicions about Lesan family politics. The family had migrated to southern Iowa from Stark County in northwest Illinois, part of the district from which Rep. Owen Lovejoy was first elected to Congress in 1856. They certainly must have known who Lovejoy was and what he stood for.

I found another piece of evidence on the genealogy sheets. George and David Lesan's father had verifiable antislavery credentials. Several sources mentioned that a mob in Elmira, Illinois, broke into his home on a June night in 1860 and "threatened to lynch him because he was operating a station on the Underground Railroad." Probably fearing for his safety, John cleared out of Illinois shortly after the attack to join the growing Lesan clan in Ringgold County.

Now here is where the story begins to get complicated. At the same time I was researching Ramsey Farm material, I was reading an excellent new book on Iowa history, Leslie Schwalm's *Emancipation Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper*

Midwest. The author explores the impact of former slaves migrating to Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota during and after the Civil War. In a chapter leading up to the outbreak of the hostilities, Schwalm touches very briefly on an incident in Ringgold County.

Ringgold County? My radar went up. The Littleton P. ("Tune") Allen family from North Carolina purchased land just north of the Missouri border and brought two teenage slaves, a brother and sister, with them onto Iowa "free soil." Schwalm writes: "Local residents persuaded Allen to sell the two slaves to a Missouri buyer in 1853."

That is about all she wrote, but the timing connected with my Ramsey Farm research and raised more questions. Who were those "local residents" in Ringgold County? How did they "persuade" Allen to sell his slaves? Could the antislavery Lesans have in some way been part of this effort?

Although I was compiling a convincing case for the antislavery persuasion of these New England transplants, I had as yet nothing to connect them to the confrontation with the slaveholding Allen family. Tune Allen sold his slaves in 1853, but I had no evidence of any Lesans in the county before 1855. Was there a link? I was hooked.

Another Google search for George W. Lesan took me to a page on a Ringgold County history Web site. Lesan was briefly mentioned in a short biography of Civil War veteran Andrew J. Imus, but there was nothing very substantial. It related that Imus had been working as a teenager on the Lesan farm before he enlisted at age 22 in 1862 in Company G, 29th Iowa Infantry.

The biography also reported that tragedy struck Andrew's family on the way out to Ringgold County. His father, Horatio Imus, drowned when he was thrown from a wagon and became entangled with the horses while crossing a swollen creek in Marion County. The current swept Horatio's wife, Mary, and a younger son downstream for a quarter-mile before they were rescued. The family also lost their team in the accident, a frontier tragedy indeed. Mary Imus, now a widow, continued on and settled on the tract that Horatio had purchased. Eventually, seven of her sons and a daughter would settle in Ringgold County.

"Imus" is not a common last name, and I thought I had seen it somewhere before. I returned to the Lesan genealogy site. Thanks to the wonders of the computer, with a click of the "Find" button, the word "Imus" instantly appeared highlighted. Martha Imus, the daughter of the ill-fated Horatio, was married to John A. Lesan, the older brother of George and David. John A. Lesan had come out from Illinois with his wife's family in 1854, the year

before his two younger brothers and sister. That meant that I could document that there was at least one Lesan in Ringgold County within only one year after the 1853 sale of Allen's slaves. Maybe I could yet find that link that connected the Lesans to the Allen incident.

To my great fortune, I discovered online a remarkably detailed Imus family tree with some intriguing new leads. Horatio's younger brother Hiram was helping with the move when the drowning occurred. Single at the time, he would marry the next year and settle on his own farm. Another brother also set up a household in the neighborhood close to his mother, brother Hiram, and niece Martha Imus Lesan and her husband's relatives.

WARNING! Every family has that one great aunt known to launch, for no apparent reason, into extended soliloquies on the family tree recited in remorseless detail. If memory of her from your childhood days is too painful, you may skip the next two paragraphs. They merely document this assertion: Family connections remained strong and influenced eastern Ringgold County settlement patterns.

I discovered still another Imus connection. Early records show that a close neighbor to these families was Levi Terwilliger. With the help of the family tree, I discerned that the Terwilligers were yet another branch of the Lesan-Imus clan. Levi's wife was Lucy Minerva Imus, a sister of the late Horatio. I had thus reconstructed a rural neighborhood of (at least) four Imus households and three Lesan families. Those family trees explain a lot about the settlement of eastern Ringgold County. George Lesan's selection of his land was not random. When he rode out in 1854 to locate land for Lesan families, he was moving into a supportive family web.

Within the next few years, a second wave of Lesans and Imuses arrived. Charles Lesan, the widowed father of Sybil and Melissa, came with more of his children. In 1860, as noted earlier, Charles's brother John, also widowed, left the Illinois mob behind as he came to Ringgold County with yet more of his children. The Imus clan grew as well and they all settled near each other. Family history was proving to be perhaps the key factor in the settlement of eastern Ringgold County.

Family history also explains early legal decisions. In the summer of 1855 a local government was formed for Ringgold County. The first case of the Ringgold County court was to probate the estate of Horatio Imus and to assign a guardian for the children. George Lesan was appointed executor and guardian for the minor Imus children. George, the brother of Horatio's son-

in-law, was apparently sufficiently "family" to take responsibility for the children's legal affairs, including Andrew Imus, whom we met earlier as a farm hand working for George. Without the benefit of the family data, we would not have known that Andrew was not just a hired hand alone on the Iowa frontier. He was living with his guardian surrounded by several families of relatives.

Still hoping to find some connection between the Lesan-Imus network and the intruding slaveholder, my heart beat faster when I discovered a political angle. In the first election for county offices in the summer of 1855, Hiram Imus was elected sheriff. (Why not run for office if you're related at least once, sometimes twice, to every voter in your precinct?) Had his victory come a few years earlier, Hiram would have been the natural spokesperson to inform the Allens that Iowa law did not recognize slavery. But alas, the incident happened two years before the election.

"Credulous." Definition: "Ready to believe, especially on slight or uncertain evidence."

I confess: I had grown credulous when I finally came across a local account that identified one "Milton Trullinger" as the man who confronted Allen and "persuaded" him to give up his Iowa slaves. Well, everyone knows how casual people were about spelling back then, even with family names. Of course, wasn't it obvious? Wasn't "Trullinger" just a loose spelling of "Terwilliger," and that this Milton Trullinger/Terwilliger must have been an early-arrived brother of Lucy Minerva Imus Terwilliger? Eureka! I had reached my goal of connecting the extended Lesan family with the Allen incident.

Alas! That hope went down in flames. Milton Trullinger proved to be a real person with his own distinct pedigree. The Trullinger/Terwilliger connection was a dead end. It seemed that the trail had ended: Neither Lesan nor Imus nor Terwilliger had played a part in the confrontation with Allen. Like many a history venture, my quest did not confirm my hypothesis. To the best of my data, the ancestors of Ramsey Farm played no part in the Allen slave controversy.

And then it happened—"amazing grace, how sweet the sound"—a new angle that "saved a dead-end historian like me." Gentle reader, if you have persevered to this point, please push on a short while more, that you may yet be rewarded for your long-suffering.

From some accounts of pre-Civil War incidents in Ringgold County, I had jotted down a note about four early settlers who were believed to have been connected with the underground railroad. One was Mil-

ton Trullinger, the settler who had confronted Allen. (I had still not forgiven him for *not* being an orthographically challenged Terwilliger.) G. K. Grimes and Charles Grimes were cited as two more. The fourth was one Stanberry Wright, who lived just north of the Lesan-Imus neighborhood and whose house was designated as the polling place in early elections.

To make a connection between the underground railroad and the Lesan family, we need to step back and look at some developments at the national level. In the Compromise of 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law that made assisting runaways a federal crime with stiff penalties. In Ringgold County, as in other frontier locations of the time, that statute depended for its enforcement primarily on the locally elected law enforcement officials.

In 1855, the sheriff was Hiram Imus—whose extended family included a baby named after a fiery abolitionist and a man attacked by an Illinois mob for his antislavery views. I think it is safe to assume that the underground railroad in Ringgold County could safely operate without fear of interference from Sheriff Hiram Imus.

However, while I had successfully documented the antislavery perspectives of the Lesans of Ringgold County, I had discovered no concrete steps by the family on behalf of African Americans. John Lesan Sr. had been attacked by a mob in Illinois for alleged support of the underground railroad, but there was no mention of any connection to it in Iowa.

But then I found it. It was not the Allen incident; it was better. Not only did the Lesans oppose slavery on a philosophical level, but they were willing to become personally involved in the welfare of African Americans, a radical position in that era.

A local history relates that toward the end of the Civil War, five blacks came north into eastern Ringgold County from Albany, Missouri, and were given their freedom, a wagon, and an old team of horses by one Mrs. Murphy. They were Sam and Sarah, their two children, Tom and Martha, and another man named George.

While we know almost nothing about them, what we do know sheds light on their new neighbors, the Lesans. The account states that the five blacks lived in a log cabin "near the Lesan school" where "the children attended school while the adults worked for families in the neighborhood." Many white farmers were willing to hire black workers during the war years when

labor was in short supply, but integrating a school in that era denotes racial attitudes far in advance of the norms of the times. In many Iowa communities, black children were shut out of public schools or segregated into inferior classrooms. In Lesanville, black and white children learned together.

Something tragic seems to have happened to the black men; the account does not explain. Whatever it was, a frightened Sarah turned to David Lesan for protection. "After Sam and George's deaths, Sarah and the children were afraid to spend the night in the cabin. They slipped into David Lesan's barn where they slept in the haymow. Upon discovering the situation, David gave them permission to live in a cabin near his home. Eventually Sarah and her children moved to Mt. Ayr." The family of Owen Lovejoy Lesan was not only philosophically antislavery but also personally committed to the welfare of African American neighbors.

The research had been a long and convoluted path. I had wanted to know more about the background of Ramsey Farm and Lesanville, but I was lured away by the siren call of a Lesan baby named Owen Lovejoy and an incident (unrelated, as it turned out) of a family who had crossed the line into Iowa with slaves. On the journey, however, I discovered a fascinating saga of an extended family migrating together to new Iowa homes and shaping an early settlement with their antislavery views.

In the process, I also strengthened my appreciation for the value of family in history. Putting the facts together would have been impossible without charts of family connections of a brother's brother marrying a sister's sister, of cousins marrying cousins, and of family resources stretching to nurture children in times of tragedy. Family history greatly enriches the study of local and even national events. Thanks to the miracle of the internet, now we historians and genealogists often have access to the "who-married-who's" without hours of driving, charges for photocopies, and motel bills for trips to distant archives and libraries.

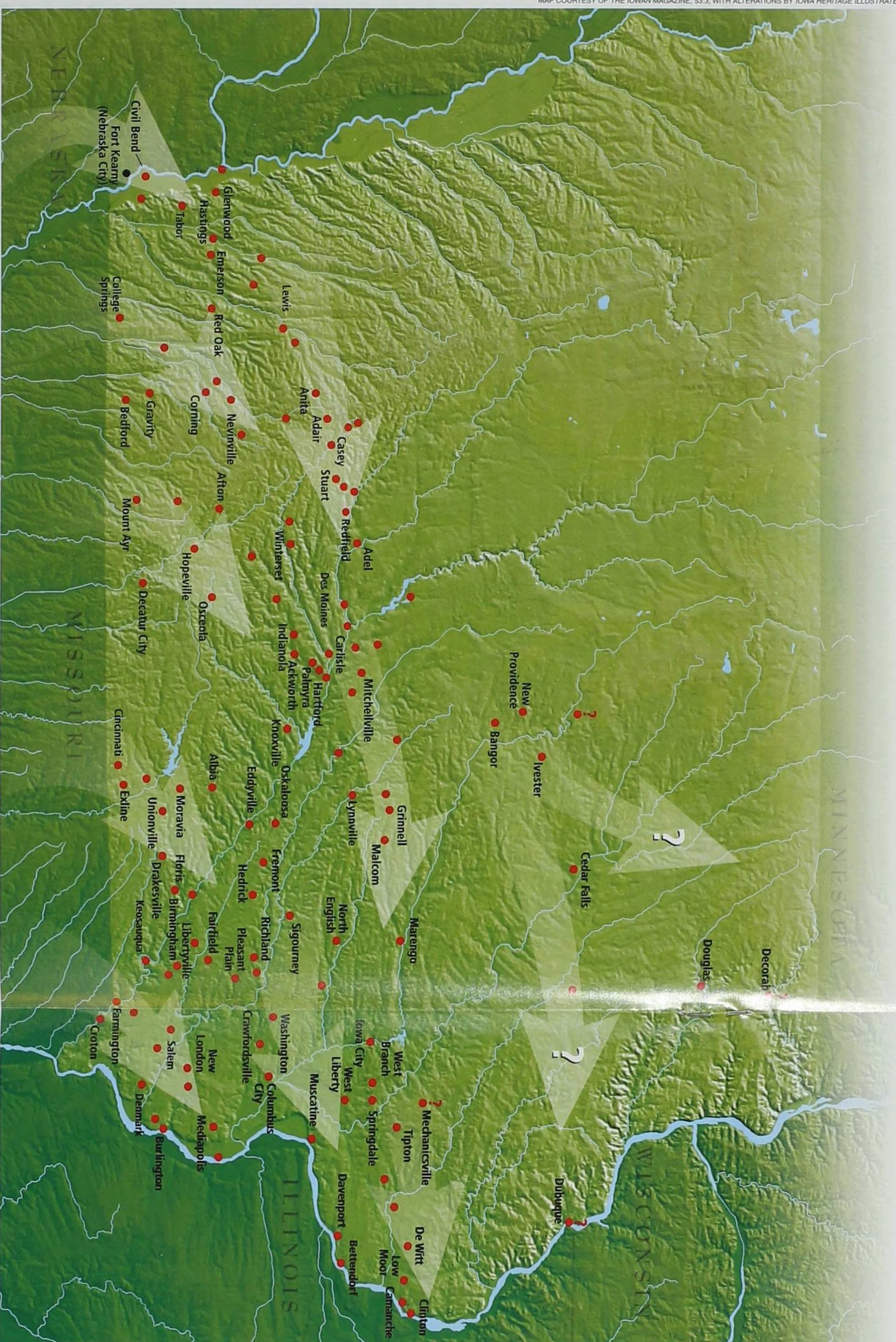
It takes patience to map those relationships, but their value is clear. And it gives us a new appreciation for those great aunts who chanted by memory the sacred sagas when we were only pretending to listen. It is in those family narratives that so much history is rooted. ♦

Author Tom Morain is director of government relations at Graceland University in Lamoni. In 2008 he received the Petersen-Harlan Award for his contributions to Iowa history.



Tracking Down the Underground Railroad

The underground railroad was spread across southern Iowa. The large white arrows suggest the general direction. Fugitives usually tried to reach Chicago; from there, some went on to Canada. Red dots indicate "stations." The system was loosely organized and often functioned based on connections between individuals in a locale. Most local conductors probably knew of the next two or three stations; few would have known the stations in all parts of the state.



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Aunt Polka

by Galin Berrier

Keosauqua, seat of Van Buren County in southeastern Iowa, has about 1,000 residents today. In 1873, it had a population of 772, of whom 102 were African Americans, down from a high of 211 in 1870. No black people live in Keosauqua now, but in the 1870s the African American community supported three or four churches, as well as an active Masonic organization.

Most of Keosauqua's blacks probably came from Missouri during or after the Civil War, but a few may have come earlier, as fugitive slaves. One such was “Aunt Polka,” found hiding in a cornfield by five elders from Keosauqua's African American churches who had searched for and found her in the snow. Thinking at first that her rescuers were slave catchers, she was said to have leaped on a tree stump, pulled a long knife, and threatened the deacons with it. She had her baby in her arms and a toddler at her side.

Aunt Polka told a remarkable tale of having fled from Mississippi with her 14 children. She said the two oldest boys and two oldest girls had been left with a black family along the way. Eight others had died from lack of food, sickness, or exposure, only the baby girl and the toddler having survived to reach Iowa.

I told this story once at a meeting of a county historical society and expressed more than a little doubt that it could be true. It seemed improbable to me that

the two youngest and most vulnerable children were the ones who survived. A woman in the back spoke up, saying, “I can tell you've never been a mother,” and I couldn't deny that! She argued that Aunt Polka would have been especially protective of her youngest children.

That may be, and there are a few documented cases of such long escapes from slavery succeeding. William and Ellen Craft traveled 1,000 miles to freedom from Macon, Georgia, to Philadelphia in four days in December 1848. Josiah Henson (said to be the model for Harriet Beecher Stowe's “Uncle Tom”) escaped from Kentucky with his wife and children in 1830 and eventually reached Canada. But such well-publicized escapes were very unusual.

We now know that the great majority of runaways—about 75 or 80 percent—were young men, healthy and strong, either unmarried or at least without any children. Young slave women were less likely to run away because by their late teens or early twenties they had often begun to raise a family. Running away as a family, especially with children, was very risky and usually unsuccessful. ❖

Galín Berrier is an adjunct instructor in history at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny. He wrote the underground railroad chapter in *Outside In: African American History in Iowa, 1838–2000*. He volunteers with Iowa History Day, serves on the Humanities Iowa Speakers Bureau, and conducts interactive sessions for school classes for Iowa Public Television.

NOTICE.—CASH FOR SLAVES.

Those who wish to sell slaves in Buckingham and the adjacent counties in Virginia, by application to ANDERSON D. ABRAHAM, Sr., or his son, ANDERSON D. ABRAHAM, Jr., they will find sale, at the highest cash prices, for one hundred and fifty to two hundred slaves. One or the other of the above parties will be found, for the next eight months, at their residence in the aforesaid county and state. Address ANDERSON D. ABRAHAM, Sr., Maysville Post Office, White Oak Grove, Buckingham County, Va.

Winchester Republican, June 29, 1852:

NEGROES WANTED.

The subscriber having located himself in Winchester, Va., wishes to purchase a large number of SLAVES of both sexes, for which he will give the highest price in cash. Persons wishing to dispose of Slaves will find it to their advantage to give him a call before selling.

All communications addressed to him at the Taylor Hotel, Winchester, Va., will meet with prompt attention.

ELIJAH McDOWEL,
Agent for B. M. & Wm. L. Campbell,
Dec. 27, 1851.—ly of Baltimore.

FOR MARYLAND:

Port Tobacco Times, Oct., '52:

SLAVES WANTED.

The subscriber is permanently located at Middleville, Charles County (immediately on the road from Port Tobacco to Allen's Fresh), where he will be pleased to buy any SLAVES that are for sale. The extreme value will be given at all times, and liberal commissions paid for information leading to a purchase. Apply personally, or by letter addressed to Allen's Fresh, Charles County.

JOHN G. CAMPBELL.

Middleville, April 14, 1852.

Cambridge (Md.) Democrat, October 27, 1852:

NEGROES WANTED.

I wish to inform the slave-holders of Dorchester and the adjacent counties that I am again in the market. Persons having negroes that are slaves for life to dispose of will find it to their interest to see me before they sell, as I am determined to pay the highest prices in cash that the Southern market will justify. I can be found at A. Hall's Hotel, in Easton, where I will remain until the first day of July next. Communications addressed to me at Easton, or information given to Wm. Bell, in Cambridge, will meet with prompt attention.

I will be at John Bradshaw's Hotel, in Cambridge, every Monday.
WM. HARKER.
Oct. 6, 1852.—3m

The Westminster Carroltonian, Oct. 22, 1852:

25 NEGROES WANTED.

The undersigned wishes to purchase 25 LIKELY YOUNG NEGROES, for which the highest cash

10

prices will be paid. All communications addressed to me in Baltimore will be punctually attended to.
LEWIS WINTERS.
Jan. 2.—1f.

For TENNESSEE the following:

Nashville True Whig, Oct. 20th, '52:

FOR SALE.

21 likely Negroes, of different ages.
Oct. 6. A. A. McLEAN, Gen. Agent.

WANTED.

I want to purchase, immediately, a Negro man, Carpenter, and will give a good price.
Oct. 6. A. A. McLEAN, Gen. Agent.

Nashville Gazette, October 22:

FOR SALE.

SEVERAL likely girls from 10 to 18 years old, a woman 24, a very valuable woman 25 years old, with three very likely children.

WILLIAMS & GLOVER.
Oct. 16th, 1852. A. B. U.

WANTED.

I want to purchase Twenty-five LIKELY NEGROES, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, male and female, for which I will pay the highest price in cash.
Oct. 20. A. A. McLEAN.
Cherry Street.

The Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer:

500 NEGROES WANTED.

We will pay the highest cash price for all good negroes offered. We invite all those having negroes for sale to call on us at our mart, opposite the lower steamboat landing. We will also have a large lot of Virginia negroes for sale in the Fall. We have as safe a jail as any in the country, where we can keep negroes safe for those that wish them kept.
BOLTON, DICKINS & Co.
js 13—d & w

LAND AND NEGROES FOR SALE.

A good bargain will be given in about 400 acres of Land; 200 acres are in a fine state of cultivation, fronting the Railroad about ten miles from Memphis. Together with 18 or 20 likely negroes, consisting of men, women, boys and girls. Good time will be given on a portion of the purchase money.
J. M. PROVINE.

Oct. 17.—1m.

Clarksville Chronicle, Dec. 3, 1852:

NEGROES WANTED.

We wish to hire 25 good Steam Boat hands for the New Orleans and Louisville trade. We will pay very full prices for the Season, commencing about the 15th November.

McCLURE & CROZIER, Agents
Sept. 10th, 1852.—1m S. B. Bellpoe.

Uncle Tom's Cabin in Iowa

by Ginalie Swaim

180

KEY TO UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

Coely, of Pulaski County, Georgia. The owner has notice to prove property and take him away.
L. W. McCANTS, Sheriff Colleton Dist.
Walterboro, So. Ca., Sept. 7, 1852.

The following are selected by the Commonwealth mostly from New Orleans papers. The characteristics of the slaves are interesting.

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD

Will be paid by the undersigned for the apprehension and delivery to any Jail in this city of the negro woman MARIAH, who ran away from the Phoenix House about the 15th of October last. She is about 45 years old, 5 feet 4 inches high, stout built, speaks French and English. Was purchased from Chas. Deblanc.
H. BIDWELL & Co., 16 Front Levee.

FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD.

Ran away about the 25th ult., ALLEN, a bright mulatto, aged about 22 years, 6 feet high, very well dressed, has an extremely careless gait, of slender build, and wore a moustache when he left; the property of J. P. Harrison, Esq., of this city. The above reward will be paid for his safe delivery at any safe place in the city. For further particulars apply at 10 Bank Place.

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD.

We will give the above reward for the apprehension of the light mulatto boy SEABOURN, aged 20 years, about 5 feet 4 inches high; is stout, well made, and remarkably active. He is somewhat of a circus actor, by which he may easily be detected, as he is always showing his gymnastic qualifications. The said boy absented himself on the 3d inst. Besides the above reward, all reasonable expenses will be paid.
W. & H. STACKHOUSE, 70 Tchoupitoulas.

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.

The above reward will be paid for the apprehension of the mulatto boy SEVERIN, aged 25 years, 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high; most of his front teeth are out, and the letters C. V. are marked on either of his arms with India Ink. He speaks French, English and Spanish, and was formerly owned by Mr. Courcell, in the Third District. I will pay, in addition to the above reward, \$50 for such information as will lead to the conviction of any person harboring said slave.
JOHN ERMON, corner Camp and Race sts.

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.

Ran away from the Chain Gang in New Orleans, First Municipality, in February last, a negro boy named STEPHEN. He is about 5 feet 7 inches in height, a very light mulatto, with blue eyes and brownish hair, stoops a little in the shoulders, has a cast-down look, and is very strongly built and muscular. He will not acknowledge his name or owner, is an habitual runaway, and was shot somewhere in the ankle while endeavoring to escape from Baton Rouge Jail. The above reward, with all

attendant expenses, will be paid on his delivery to me, or for his apprehension and commitment to any Jail from which I can get him.
A. L. BINGAMAN.

TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.

The above reward will be given to the person who will lodge in one of the Jails of this city the slave SARAH, belonging to Mr. Guissonnet, corner St. John Baptiste and Race streets; said slave is aged about 28 years, 5 feet high, benevolent face, fine teeth, and speaking French and English. Captains of vessels and steamboats are hereby cautioned not to receive her on board, under penalty of the law.
AVET BROTHERS,
Corner Bienville and Old Levee streets.

Lynchburg Virginian, Nov. 6th:

TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD.

Ranaway from the subscriber on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, in the county of Wythe, on the 20th of June, 1852, a negro man named CHARLES, 6 feet high, copper color, with several teeth out in front, about 35 years of age, rather slow to reply, but pleasing appearance when spoken to. He wore, when he left, a cloth cap and a blue cloth sack coat; he was purchased in Tennessee, 14 months ago, by Mr. M. Connell, of Lynchburg, and carried to that place, where he remained until I purchased him 4 months ago. It is more than probable that he will make his way to Tennessee, as he has a wife now living there; or he may perhaps return to Lynchburg, and lurk about there, as he has acquaintances there. The above reward will be paid if he is taken in the State and confined so that I get him again; or I will pay a reward of \$40, if taken out of the State and confined in Jail.
GEORGE W. KYLE.
July 1.—dnc2twts

Winchester Republican (Va.), Nov. 26:

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD.

Ranaway from the subscriber, near Culpepper Ct. House, Va., about the 1st of October, a negro man named ALFRED, about five feet seven inches in height, about twenty-five years of age, uncommonly muscular and active, complexion dark but not black, countenance mild and rather pleasant. He had a boil last winter on the middle joint of the middle or second finger of the right hand, which left the finger stiff in that joint, more visible in opening his hand than in shutting it. He has a wife at Mr. Thomas G. Marshall's, near Farrowsville, in Fauquier County, and may be in that neighborhood, where he wishes to be sold, and where I am willing to sell him.

I will give the above reward if he is taken out of the State and secured, so that I get him again; or \$50 if taken in the State, and secured in like manner.
W. B. SLAUGHTER.

October 29, 1852.

From the Louisville Daily Journal,
Oct. 23, 1852:

\$100 REWARD.

Ran away from the subscriber, in this city, on Friday, May 23th, a negro boy named WYATT.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN CO.



GRAND TRANSFORMATION SCENES
HYPERION THEATRE
MONDAY, MARCH 26
THE POLI PLAYERS
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN
COLORED SINGERS AND DANCERS

Stark examples of the actual selling and capturing of human beings were the basis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To reply to readers' disbelief of her depiction of slavery, she wrote *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; the Original Facts and Documents upon which the Story is Founded, together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work* (1853). Both pages are from the book.

Left: Playbill from 1923.

In 1928, as Joanna Harris Haines looked back upon her childhood, she recalled a "bright memory that does not fade" from the early 1850s. "I looked forward to each issue of the paper with an intense interest that surpassed any I have experienced since. I was so eager to get the paper from the carrier that I would go down the road to meet him as he brought the mail. If I was lucky in getting the longed-for chapter I would go off in the woods near the old home to read [it] before anyone could interrupt. If I was not forehanded, I was alert to get it when it was laid down and I would hie myself to the loft to read it undisturbed."

The young girl from Lee County was among thousands of Americans (some estimates say 50,000) who were reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* serialized in the antislavery newspaper *National Era*. Biographer Milton Rugoff notes that Stowe wrote "at white heat to meet a weekly deadline" for 41 installments in 1851 and 1852.

John P. Jewett published the novel as a book in March 1852. Within the next few months, 300,000 copies were sold. Jewett marketed it relentlessly. He hyped the novel in a white heat, encouraging commercialization of Stowe's characters through sheet music, statuettes, card games, and decorative plates and scarves. "The American reader of 1852 would have had to live as a hermit not to be aware of Stowe's antislavery work," observes scholar Clare Parfait.

Marketing savvy aside, Stowe's book drew legions of readers. "The novel exploded the legend of happy, thoughtless, insensitive darkies—a legend long circulated by slaveholders and accepted by most Northerners," writes Rugoff.

California gold miners passed around scarce copies, and even in the South the book was quietly circulated among curious readers. Stowe did not want to put Southern planters on the defensive, so rather than portraying the slaveholding South as evil, she created evil individual characters, such as Simon Legree. Still, the book enraged the South. It was burned in Athens, Georgia. In Mobile, Alabama, a bookseller was run out of town. Rugoff notes that Stowe received "hate-filled and obscene letters from the South, including one from which, as [her husband] Calvin opened it, fell a blackish ear, obviously of a slave."

As soon as the book came out, dozens of theatrical companies dramatized the novel for audiences in Boston, New York, London—and Davenport, Iowa. In September 1856, an acting company performed the play in the Iowa river town. Years later a local chronicler commented that the melodrama was a great hit because it

depicted "the cruelties and barbarous hideousness of slavery in a manner that struck the popular heartstring at a psychical time when the public mind was much agitated by the question of slavery. . . . Pathos and the sharp crack of the auctioneer's whip, and the shrill screams of the poor victim were the main requirements for a successful production."

Melodrama and sensationalism prevailed on stage. One dramatist added a panorama with a steamboat on the moonlit Mississippi. Minstrel songs and dark face were inserted. Scholar John Frick writes that even one of America's better popular playwrights tempered objectionable and crude aspects of Stowe's searing work, creating "a compromise between anti-slavery politics and established entertainment conventions."

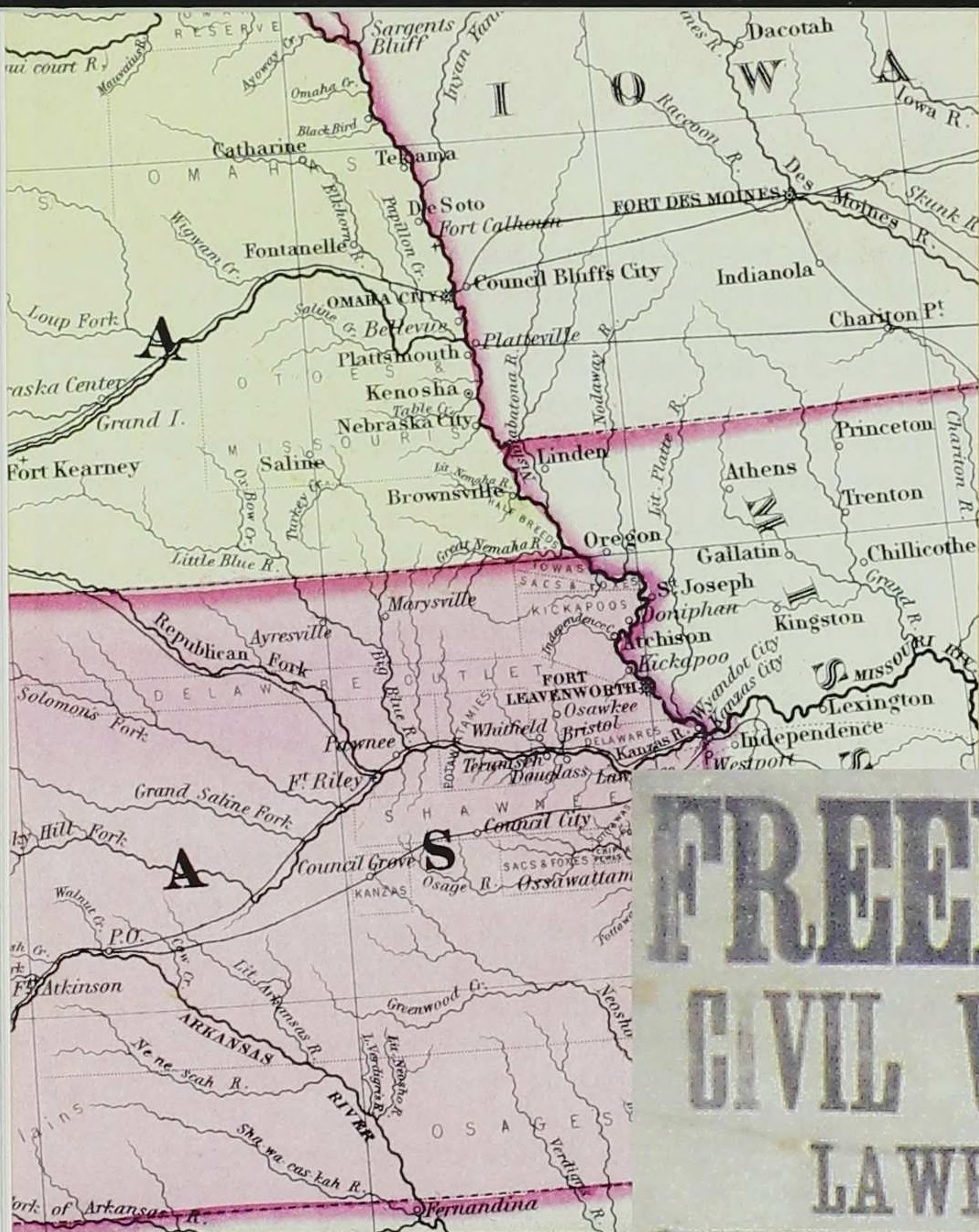
"By the 1890s," according to Rugoff, "four hundred to five hundred troupes were performing the play." In 1920, the play was still touring in Davenport.

It was equally staple fare in small towns like Springdale, Iowa, the Quaker community that had sheltered John Brown and his men. "When I was in seventh grade, a wandering troupe of players came to town and gave a parade about recess time," Jeanette Mather Lord reminisced. "All I can remember was the beautiful, blonde lady in a red velvet riding costume and plume, who rode a white horse with gold trappings which waltzed when the band played. As a result, the school children were wild to go in the evening to see the play, given in a tent in the small pasture across the road from the Quaker meeting-house. Since the play was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, many sedate parents felt they could countenance it, as the Springdale Quaker boys had gone with John Brown on the way to Harper's Ferry. They either let their children go or took them themselves. . . .

"The players, I suppose, were the cheapest sort, and the performance was probably awful. But we were blissfully satisfied with everything, and especially with Eliza and the bloodhounds."

Modern critics and readers generally dismiss the novel as sentimental; its characters, overdrawn. For decades, paternalistic whites fondly called elderly black men in their community "Uncle Tom," assuming a familiarity that did not always denote respect and equality. By the 1950s, African Americans viewed "Uncle Tom" as a symbol of "abject servility."

But in the 1850s, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* struck like lightning on the American scene. As Rugoff concludes, Harriet Beecher Stowe was "the first American realist of any consequence and the first to use fiction for a profound criticism of American society, especially its failure to live up to the promises of democracy." ♦



Crossing

FREEMEN ATTEND CIVIL WAR IN KANSAS! LAWRENCE IN ASHES!

By late reliable accounts from KANSAS, we learn that the FREE STATE MEN have been attacked by

BORDER RUFFIANS!

from Missouri, under Gen. WHITEFIELD, and that Gen. SELLERSON supplied the invaders with U. S. Muskets and Ammunition, with which armed men have been shot down in the streets of Lawrence, and innocent women and children driven from the town; their husbands and parents murdered and their houses destroyed. The U. S. Troops not permitted by the authorities to interfere. While these outrageous tragedies are being perpetrated in Kansas, by authority of the U. S., a UNITED STATES SENATOR is brutally attacked and beaten (if almost dead) by a

Slave Bully of South Carolina,

in the United States Senate. Such outrages unparalleled in the history of our Government, call upon all who love their country better than the chains of bondage, to speak in tones of thunder, that shall cause the SLAVE OLIGARCHY to tremble. The North should arouse! The South should be silent! Shall the bloody tyrant "subdue us?"

THE CRY IS FOR BLOOD!

News of this sad state of affairs, there will be a Meeting of the Citizens of Iowa City, at the
STATE HOUSE, ON SATURDAY, MAY 31, 1856,

At half past Seven o'clock, P. M.

COME ONE! COME ALL!!

S. N. WOOD, Esq., whom Sheriff Jones failed to arrest at the time he was shot, has just arrived from Kansas, and will address the meeting.

SEATS RESERVED FOR LADIES.

Presented by J. S. T. & Co.

MANY CITIZENS.



Iowa for Freedom

The Underground Railroad, Free State Settlers, and John Brown

by Lowell Soike

Jonas Jones was busy making bricks on a September day in 1854 when he stopped to write a friend: "You have doubtless been informed by Br. Todd of the escape of five 'human chattels' from their master on the 4th of July. We expect they are safe now."

Jones was referring to the first incident in which the residents of Tabor, Iowa, assisted fugitive slaves. In early July, a Mormon family traveling from Mississippi to Salt Lake City had stopped to camp overnight at Tabor, in extreme southwestern Iowa. Jesse West's hotel was under construction, and two of the Mormons' slaves talked with the builders as they retrieved water from West's well. The carpenters learned that five of the six slaves desired their freedom. Within a few days and with the help of Tabor residents, the runaways had crossed the Nishnabotna River and reached the home of Congregationalist minister and abolitionist George B. Hitchcock in Lewis, from where they quickly moved across Iowa to Illinois, entering Canada at Detroit.

In the years ahead, Jonas Jones would welcome the staunch abolitionist John Brown into his home. Other

Tabor families would hide weapons headed to "bleeding Kansas" for the fight against proslavery Missourians and shelter runaways on the underground railroad.

Tabor—Antislavery Stronghold

Tabor was a thriving Congregational village of settlers hailing mainly from the area of Oberlin, Ohio, which was known for its antislavery stance and its reputed inclusion of blacks and females among the students at Oberlin College.

Maria Cummings was a student at the college when she married farmer George Gaston. Although not raised in Oberlin, he had absorbed the community's principles. To spread their beliefs in the West, the Gastons left Oberlin to work as missionaries among the Pawnee Indians in unorganized Nebraska, until 1847 when they returned. George Gaston's thoughts, however, turned increasingly back to the West. He was determined to create a settlement modeled on the religious and educational principles professed in Oberlin.

In September 1848 the Gastons assembled a few Oberlin families, and headed to southwestern Iowa. George's sister Elvira and her husband, Lester Platt, had already settled at a rural hamlet named Civil Bend.

Opposite: 1855 map of Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas and Nebraska territories, the epicenter of western dissension over slavery. Tabor is not shown; it is midway between Council Bluffs and Nebraska City. Top: John Brown, about 1857.

MAP: UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA. PORTRAIT: JAMES REDPATH, THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN (1860). BROADSIDE: SHSI (DES MOINES). SYMBOL: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Nearby lived Ira D. Blanchard and his wife; earlier they had served at a Baptist mission among the Indians in Kansas.

In the next few years, hordes of mosquitoes, severe malaria fever, and high water forced the Gastons and their group of Ohio Congregationalists to leave the bottomlands for the bluffs to the north, where they established Tabor.

As the leading spirit, George Gaston was the town founder who made things happen and, once an enterprise began, got things done. Together with John Todd, he brought forth a town in stark contrast to most of southwestern Iowa—where the prevailing sentiments were against abolition.

Although Tabor residents were not free of Northern prejudice towards blacks, they visibly opposed slavery in principle and practice. In October 1853 the Congregational church of Tabor formalized its early policies of antislavery and temperance, declaring that slavery should be treated as "any other flagrant sin."

Tabor was one of only a few strongly antislavery communities—mainly Congregational or Quaker—in central and western Iowa. The other antislavery strongholds lay in southeastern Iowa. Almost everywhere else in the state, Iowans expressed mixed, weak, or antagonistic attitudes toward antislavery. However, the antislavery cause was beginning to gain momentum in the early 1850s.

The Compromise of 1850 had brought some relief from rising tensions in the nation. Under the compromise, slavery was outlawed in California; residents in Utah and Nevada, and in the territories carved out of land acquired from Mexico, would vote on whether to allow slavery; and the District of Columbia ended the slave trade (though current slaveholders there were not affected). A stronger, more controversial Fugitive Slave Act, however, now required Northerners to help capture runaways. In 1854, when Congress passed the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act, antislavery feelings in Iowa swelled, and events would soon thrust Tabor into the national spotlight.

The antislavery movement was broadening its base with the renewal of westward settlement. Desires to create a new territory west of the Missouri River were sweeping Missouri and Iowa, partly in hopes of securing a transcontinental railroad route. In December 1853, Senator Augustus C. Dodge from Iowa introduced a bill establishing the territorial government of Nebraska. The bill was referred to the Committee on Territories, which included Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and George W. Jones of Iowa.

Slavery's future was at that moment governed by

the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery above the southern border of Missouri—except in Missouri itself, which became a state in 1821.

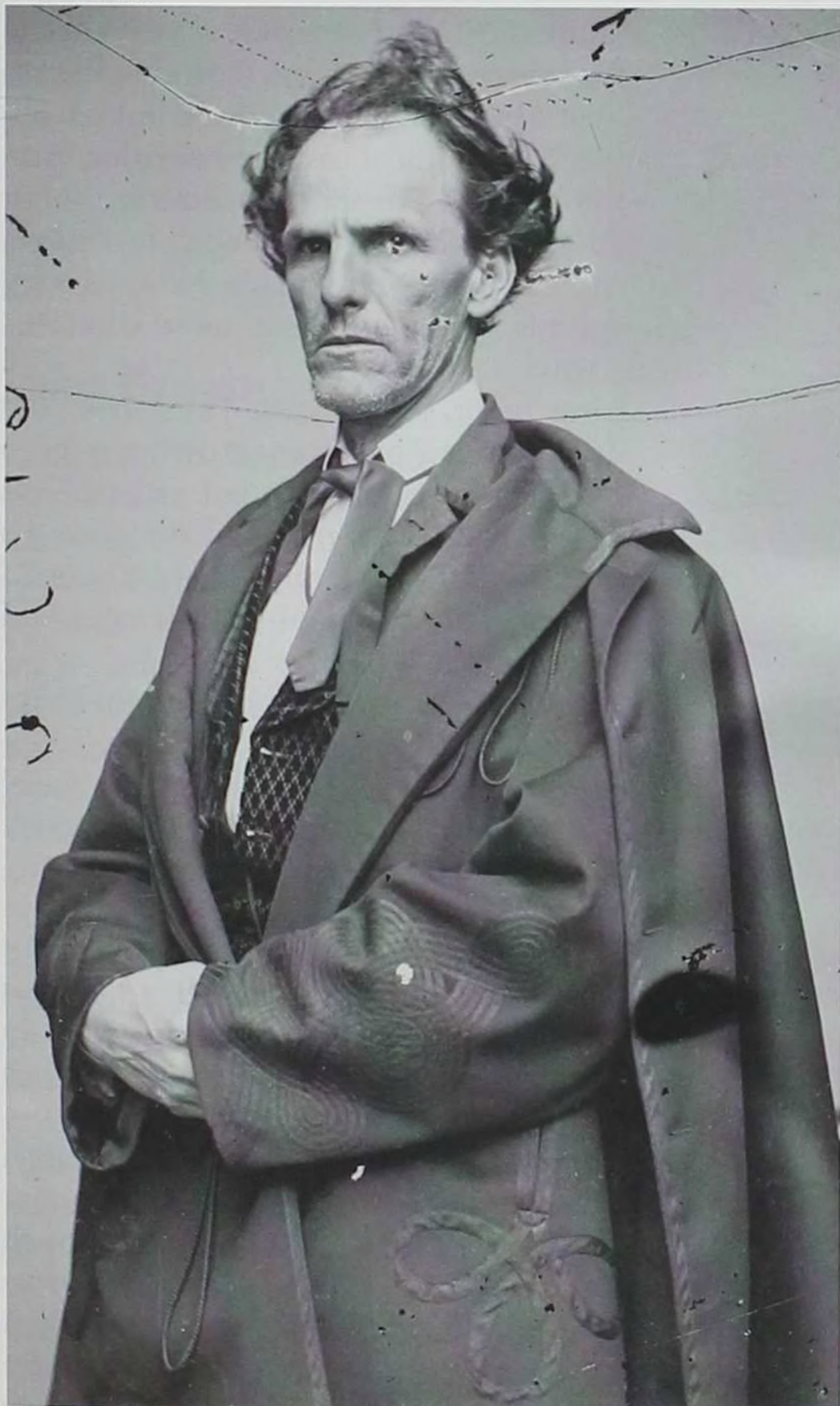
Douglas, as chair of the Senate committee, reported out the bill in late January 1854. It recommended dividing the vast unorganized territory in two and voiding the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The bill would allow popular sovereignty, by which free white men living in Kansas Territory and Nebraska Territory would vote on slavery's status. After months of debate and drafting, the bill was signed into law on May 30, 1854.

Free-State Emigrants to Kansas, 1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act unleashed Southern and Northern acrimony, and partisans on both sides quickly organized. It was assumed that Nebraska Territory would vote against slavery, but in Kansas Territory demographics was destiny. Missourians in particular had a large stake in the outcome. One in eight Missouri families owned slaves—some 90,000 slaves by 1855. If Kansas became antislavery, Missouri would be surrounded by free states on three sides.

Missouri's proximity to Kansas Territory gave proslavery men an initial advantage. Western Missourians poured into eastern Kansas and controlled territorial government elections, often by crossing over to fraudulently vote and then returning to Missouri. Senator David Rice Atchison of Missouri justified their voting practice: "If a set of fanatics and demagogues a thousand miles off [in New England] can afford to advance their money and exert every nerve to abolitionize Kansas and exclude the slaveholder, what is your duty, when you reside within one day's journey of the Territory, and when your peace, quiet, and property depend on your action?" These election tactics in 1854 and 1855 brought about a proslavery territorial legislature and a number of proslavery, anti-black, anti-fugitive slave laws.

Northerners, especially those from New England, were also determined to colonize Kansas with those who would vote against slavery. Supporters of the Free Soil Party and antislavery forces provided capital and arms and organized parties of settlers to move into the territory. The first influx of emigrants came by river and rail to St. Louis or Alton, and then boarded steamboats for a five-day trip upriver on the Missouri to border towns in western Missouri or Kansas. This growing tide of northern migration to Kansas was outpacing emigration from the South despite Missouri's urgent appeals to Southern leaders and the press.



Considered a “quintessential opportunist,” James Lane was a Democrat and a major leader of the free-state movement. He was a fiery orator but not an abolitionist. During the Civil War, he formed the First Kansas Colored Volunteers; as a U.S. senator in 1865, he sided with Andrew Jackson’s veto of the Civil Rights Bill.

This left proslavery Missourians one desperate option, to lay a stranglehold on western Missouri River traffic and turn back free-state settlers. They instituted blockades during the spring and summer of 1856. At steamboat landings at border towns—especially Liberty, Independence, and Weston—armed proslavery bands intercepted steamboats. Boarding parties looked for suspected Northern emigrants, searched their belongings and confiscated arms. Emigrant groups that protested or looked to be from New England faced being turned back. Soon the blockade escalated to include

ferry crossings, to the worry of border-town merchants who relied on local trade.

By July, proslavery efforts had succeeded in blocking Northern emigrants but had angered eastern Missouri businessmen, who had been profiting greatly from Kansas emigration through St. Louis. A *New York Tribune* correspondent wrote, “The only open way [into the territory] is a tedious route through Iowa.”

Free-state forces now had no choice but to create a safe route overland through Iowa. The small Congregationalist town of Tabor was uniquely positioned to serve as the main westernmost outpost for emigrants headed to Kansas.

Jim Lane and the Iowa Route, 1856

James H. Lane, a former Indiana congressman with Mexican War service and an emerging free-state leader, now pushed for the “line of communication with Kansas, via Iowa and Nebraska, which shall be at all times open for passage of emigrants, transmission of supplies &c &c.”

The emergency situation also precipitated an organized Northern effort of relief and reinforcement to the struggling free-state settlers already in Kansas. Delegates from the various Kansas aid organizations convened in Buffalo, New York, in July and created a National Kansas Committee, headquartered in Chicago, to raise funds and coordinate relief efforts through Iowa. In Worcester, Massachusetts, radical Unitarian pastor Thomas Wentworth Higginson had raised \$2,000 from Boston merchants to fund emigrant companies. (Higginson was one of six influential abolitionists in the East who fiercely supported John Brown. A few of the “Secret Six” would come to Iowa.)

Already the Kansas Central Committee of Iowa—formed with the support of Iowa’s antislavery governor James Grimes—had been mapping a 300-mile overland route to the southwestern corner of the state. The route extended from Iowa City (then the westernmost point of the railroad from Chicago) to Sigourney to Oskaloosa to Knoxville to Indianola to Osceola to Quincy to Sidney in Fremont County. When free-state leaders discovered that Sidney was violently proslavery, they shifted the route terminus ten miles north to Tabor.

Jim Lane’s fiery and dramatic oratory on behalf of Kansas relief and an overland route through Iowa attracted huge crowds. At a mass meeting in Chicago and then in major Iowa towns, his speeches swayed Northern sympathies to aid—financially and otherwise—the free-state cause. “There stood Lane,” wrote an onlooker,

"contorting his thin, wiry form, and uttering bitterest denunciations in deep, husky gutturals." He defied "every recognized rule of rhetoric and oratory, at will he made men roar with laughter, or melt into tears, or clinch their teeth in passion."

A correspondent to the *St. Louis Gazette* called Iowa City "the central focus and hot bed of Kansas filibuster," led by Lane, a "fugitive traitor" who is "wild with excitement and exhibits a fury that strongly indicates insanity." As for the "filibusterers" about to leave Iowa City and descend upon Kansas, "quite a number are encamped in the grove east of the city, and tomorrow, it is said, the arrivals will make the number 500 strong." They "take cannon and arms, with munitions of war, and are, in fact, organized into regular military squads of companies."

Emigrants who had been turned back on their steamboat journey up the Missouri were now arriving in Iowa City from the river towns of Davenport and Keokuk. Lane also came to Iowa City, to coordinate 500 emigrants who had just arrived from Chicago with cannons and arms. Across southern Iowa, teams of men began clearing a wagon trail, grading slopes at stream crossings. They blazed trees and installed poles and stone piles for directing the emigrants from one hamlet to another.

The trail was initially dubbed the "northern route" or "Iowa route." Proslavery forces, however, maligned it as "Lane's Army of the North," a label designed to impugn the assembling newcomers not as peaceful settlers but as a disruptive, armed, invading, hostile force. Eventually over the years, the overland route became known historically as the "Lane Trail," in part to acknowledge Jim Lane's early advocacy for it.

Safe Haven in Tabor

The first large emigrant caravan, comprising several smaller companies, left Iowa City for Tabor in early July 1856. The journey across Iowa was far from easy, especially for those unaccustomed to crossing unsettled expanses. "I have traveled the whole breadth of the State of Iowa," a traveler recalled, "partly through a country so sparsely inhabited that we had to sleep two nights in our wagon." When rains moved in, the settlers' wagons bogged down or slowed to a crawl or worse. Emigrants complained of traveling "on foot in the heat of July over the broad Western prairies," while "the wild life which we are compelled to endure" for food "comes rather hard upon some of our party, who have been used to different fare."

Tabor was now but four years old. A year earlier, in May 1855, a new arrival had stepped off the stage in front of Jesse West's hotel and saw nothing but a town "of about a dozen houses, most of them being log huts, while a few were of sod." The most substantial building was a small school that also served as a church, meeting hall, and election polling place. Now, as Kansas-bound emigrants began to arrive, more construction was under way.

Upon reaching Tabor, settlers rested and then continued on to the Missouri River ferry crossing over to Nebraska City, "a sparse and extended village." As caravans proceeded from the ferry and up over the ridge, they halted. Reports had come in of 600 armed Missourians gathering at St. Joseph to intercept and prevent their movement into Kansas.

The flow of emigrant parties also backed up in Tabor after reports that "the entrance to Kansas via Nebraska was barred by a force of 1,500 'border ruffians' and that it was unsafe for small companies to attempt to go through." Emigrants stayed in Tabor, awaiting more arrivals to increase their strength. Free-state supporters brought ammunition and other supplies and helped forward and receive dispatches. The town also gave safe haven to free-state fighters, now actively countering proslavery harassment, fighting fire with fire.

Maria Cummings Gaston later described the effect of migrants on the frontier community. "That summer and autumn our houses, before too full, were much overfilled and our comforts shared with those passing to and from Kansas to secure it for Freedom. When houses would hold no more, woodsheds were temporized for bedrooms, where the sick and dying were cared for. Barns also were fixed for sleeping rooms. Every place a bed could be put or a blanket thrown down was at once so occupied. There were comers and goers all times of the day or night—meals at all hours—many free hotels, perhaps entertaining angels unawares. After battles they were here for rest—before for preparation. General Lane once stayed three weeks secretly while it was reported abroad that he was back in Indiana for recruits and supplies, where came ere long, consisting of all kinds of provisions, Sharps rifles, powder and lead. A cannon packed in corn made its way through the enemy's lines and ammunition of all kinds, in clothing and kitchen furniture, etc. etc. Our cellars contained barrels of powder, and boxes of rifles. Often our chairs, tables, beds, and such places were covered with what weapons everyone carried about him, so that if one needed and got time to rest a little in the day time, we had to remove the Kansas furni-

ture, or rest with loaded revolvers, cartridge boxes, and bowie knives piled around them, and boxes of swords under the bed."

Tabor also provided safe haven for four of the sons of John Brown.

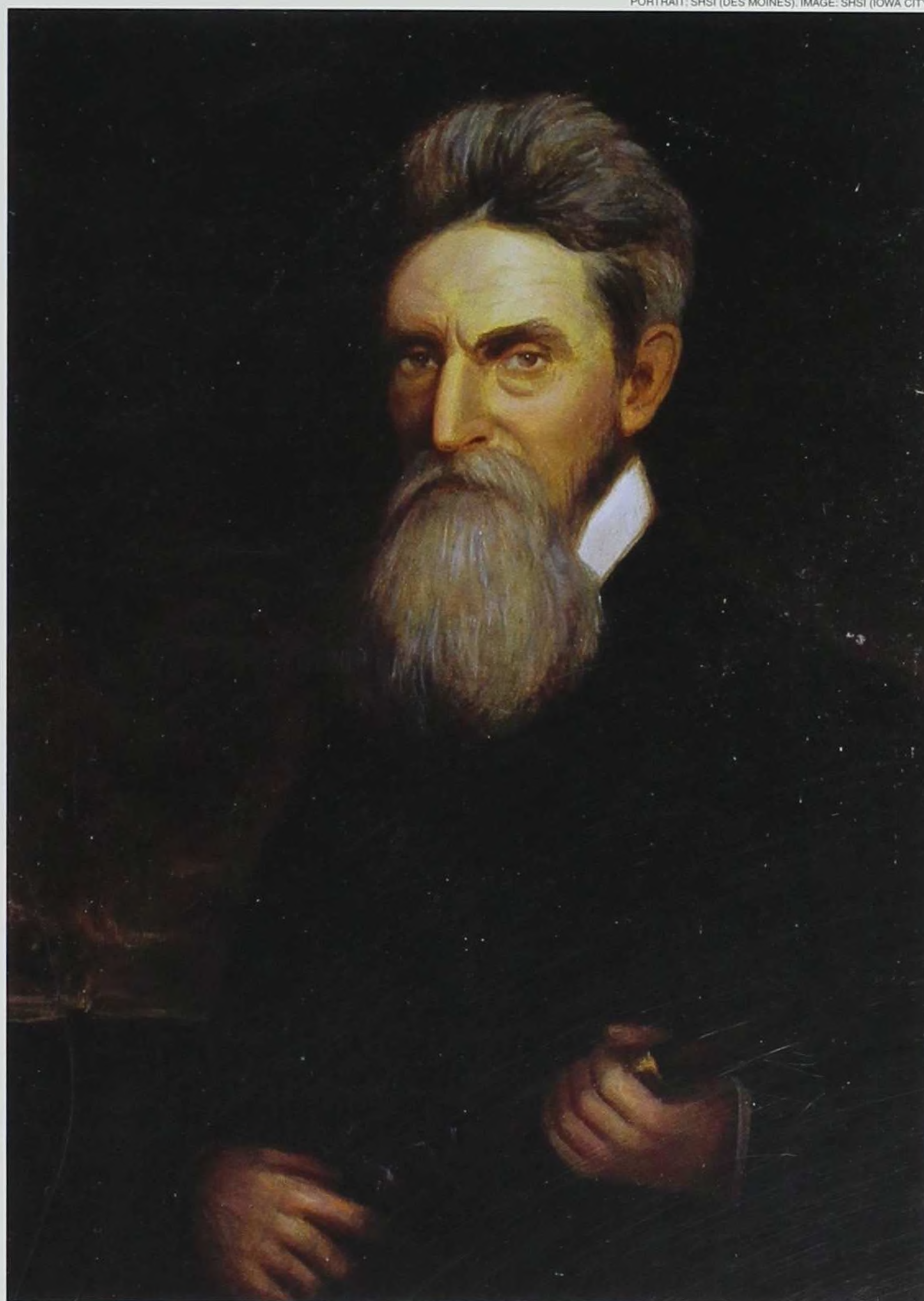
John Brown, 1856

Until 1856, the name of John Brown was unknown to many. But starting that year, his unflinching actions in Kansas Territory would terrify opponents while winning support from antislavery forces. The troubles in Kansas added to his conviction that the institution of slavery would not end without physical attack and war. His actions would culminate in the attack at Harpers Ferry three years later and thrust him permanently into American history.

Born in 1800 in Connecticut, John Brown was raised mostly in Ohio, grew up with a deep hatred for slavery, and failed in most businesses ventures. He became a passionate abolitionist. By the summer of 1855, five of his sons had emigrated to the vicinity of Osawatomie, Kansas, as part of the antislavery movement. Son John Jr. wrote his father: "The friends of freedom are not one fourth of them half armed, and as to Military Organization among them it no where exists in this territory unless they have recently done something in Lawrence."

John Brown decided to join his sons in Kansas Territory, rousing support and collecting weapons on his way west. He arrived in October. Within a month, following the killing of a free-state man near Hickory Grove and a call for men to come to the defense of the free-state stronghold of Lawrence, he had mustered together a company of "Liberty Guards" at Osawatomie prepared to take up arms.

On May 21, 1856, more than 700 proslavery men attacked Lawrence, looting and destroying property.



With a burning building in the background, John Brown clutches a rifle in this portrait by Iowa City artist and photographer Isaac Wetherby. William Maxson, with whom Brown stayed in Springdale, commissioned the painting in 1860.

Brown's anger reached the boiling point. Four days later, Brown, with his sons and others, attacked and brutally murdered five proslavery men in Pottawatomie. While the event sent shock waves across the nation and spread fear among proslavery elements, it also brought respect among those settlers who were tired of their own passivity.

By mid-July, John Brown, four of his sons, and two other men were on the run, making their way north out



"Ruins of the Free State Hotel, Lawrence." The image appeared in Sara T. L. Robinson's book, *Kansas; Its Exterior and Interior Life* (1857), which chronicles the events in Kansas Territory, including the sacking of Lawrence by proslavery forces.

of Kansas. Some were injured, in poor health, and tired of the conflict in Kansas. Meeting up with Jim Lane, Brown and son Frederick turned back. The others continued to Tabor, where they were kindly received.

Convalescing in Tabor and reviving his spirits, Owen Brown wrote his mother in late August: "There is now at this place a company of volunteers from Maine, Massachusetts, & Michigan, about 80 in all. We hear lately that about 3 thousand Missourians have crossed at St Joe & other place & have gone armed into the territory, that Governor Woodson has sent 400 mountainmen on to the frontier to intercept our volunteers & prevent them from carrying in provision & Amunition, which is so much needed now in Kansas. . . . I have gained strength quite fast, & am now determined to go back into the Territory. . . . We hope that men will volunteer, by the thousands from the states, well armed with plenty of money to buy provisions, which are scarce in KT. . . . If any of our folks write to us, or to me, (I assume an other name, (George Lyman) Direct to, George Lyman Tabor Fremont Co Iowa) Care of Jonas Jones Esqr. Mr. Jones will take them out of the office here & send them on by private conveyance."

Three days later, Owen's brother Frederick was killed in an attack by border ruffians at Osawatimie.

Fighting in Kansas again raised emigrants' fears of leaving Tabor. A local call went out for "friends of freedom" to escort the group to Kansas. Many in Tabor volunteered to go. John Todd was proposed as the escort leader. He had just found a pair of spurs when word came that the way was now safe for the emigrants to pass into Kansas.

Tensions had cooled upon arrival of the new territorial governor, John W. Geary. Geary concluded that the best chance for suppressing disorder was to set up a lawful territorial militia, thus excluding outside and unauthorized militias. This forced both Missourians and Jim Lane's forces to pull out of Kansas.

Emigrants in Tabor struck their tents and prepared to head to the ferry. Todd updated his Congregationalist colleague William Salter in Burlington: "The wants of Kansas constitute the absorbing topic of interest here now. . . . The road is said to be now open. Several skirmishes have taken place, & Lane is in command of the territory. Messrs. [Samuel Gridley] Howe, [Thaddeus] Hyatt, [Thomas Wentworth] Higginson &c have been

here, & anything which can be done here to forward the cause of Freedom will be done most cheerfully."

Lane by now had moved his troops to Tabor. John Speer, who had joined the group, described how Lane had stopped the company outside of town, and "admonished the men that in regard for the moral and religious principles of Tabor people, the men of the company were to conduct themselves with utmost decorum." They camped on the public square, drilled daily, and engaged in various sports, but they did not speak profanity or steal chickens.

Another company arrived in Tabor, loaded down with rifles, revolvers, bowie knives, ammunition, and a brass cannon and carriage. Their arrival drew a welcoming dinner from the community.

Rifles in the Parson's Cellar, 1856

The railroad out of Chicago now crossed the Mississippi at Burlington and extended to Mount Pleasant in southeastern Iowa. This shortened the overland trip to Tabor. In the late summer, Shalor W. Eldridge, proprietor of the free-state hotel that had burned down in the sacking of Lawrence in May, was now leaving Mount Pleasant with 200 volunteers organized into artillery and rifle companies and equipped with some 20 wagons of weapons, munitions, tents, and provisions.

Robert Morrow was a lieutenant under Eldridge. Morrow had visited Governor Grimes about the possibility of making state militia arms in Iowa City available for free-state forces. Grimes communicated to Morrow that "if I [Morrow] could get them without compromising him I could do so. I had letters to some good friends of Kansas; they got the keys to the arsenal, and in the night we loaded up three wagons with 200 stands of arms."

When Eldridge's expedition reached Tabor, Todd recalled, "they proceeded directly to the southwest corner of the public square, where they proceeded to pitch their tents. . . . They camped in front of the parson's gate, placing the mounted cannon in the center, and hoisting on it the stars and stripes. The 18 covered wagons were arranged in a circle, around the national banner. Outside the wagons was pitched a circle of tents, and outside the tents campfires were built, and still outside of the fires were placed armed sentinels. . . . On the next day about 200 men drilled on the public square, report of which was carried by the passengers in the stage coach to [St. Joseph, Missouri], only the numbers were multiplied tenfold—the 200 had become 2,000."

Lane and his men were also in Tabor, and Todd remembered that "there was not the best feeling" among the free-state emigrants towards Lane. They had been promised Sharps rifles. Manufactured in the East, the highly accurate breech-loading Sharps rifles intimidated western opponents who had only muskets and shotguns. Free-state forces had been promised these rifles first in Albany, then Cleveland, then Chicago, and finally in Tabor.

"The rifles were not here," Todd recounted, "and could not be furnished. It was then an object to pacify the men, and prevail on them to go forward. For this purpose General Lane mounted the cannon carriage, and calling the men around him, addressed them somewhat as follows: 'Comrades—a good soldier always grumbles. I know you have borne much already, since you left your homes. You have not always been fed on dainties, nor have you slept on down. You have endured with fortitude the perils, inconveniences, and privations of the way as good soldiers. Now you want Sharps rifles. Well, let me tell you, a Sharps rifle is a good weapon to use on an enemy at a distance, but it is good for nothing in a close encounter. If you come into a close fight (and I hope to God you may), a Sharps rifle is worthless. It is far inferior to a weapon with a bayonet. If I had my choice of arms, I would not arm more than one in ten with a Sharps rifle. As the arms you want are not here, I hope you will conclude to go on and see us through.'"

John Brown, then on his way out of Kansas, encountered the Eldridge train headed in. Because Brown and his men had with them an escaped slave, they split up, and narrowly missed federal troops. In Tabor, Brown stayed behind briefly to recuperate from dysentery before going east.

Brown's sons Watson and Salmon Brown reached Tabor in early November in the last caravan of 1856, bringing with them rifles stored in Iowa City. "Two hundred Sharp's rifles, and ammunition were stored in the parson's cellar that winter," Todd recalled, "a cannon was in his barn—besides many boxes of sabers, rifles, muskets, accoutrements, boots and clothing. Geo B. Gaston's accommodations for storage were also all in requisition."

In Tabor, life settled back into a more predictable routine, except for a threatening event in December. On Christmas Day, Martha Todd wrote to her father in Ohio: "Our little town place has been visited again by a slave catcher from Jackson Co. Missouri, and he expresses great fears for our town. We supposed warrants would be obtained to search all our houses, but they have not appeared a second time as yet. The al-

leged slaves, who had escaped from Lexington & Kansas City though Kansas, but lost their way in Nebraska, and fell into two slavery hands, and were taken and lodged in Linden jail. By setting fire to the jail they escaped and finally came here, tho they had been warned of this place, as a place 'where the people get rich by selling slaves to New Orleans.' We hope they are now safely on their way to a land of freedom tho' some may be base enough to betray them in this state.

"We feared not their warrants because of finding [the runaways], but because of some arms, placed here by authority designed for K[ansas]." A bad snowstorm arrived the next day; the slave catchers did not return.

John Brown stayed in the East for several months, raising funds and volunteers for the conflict he expected to resume in Kansas in 1857. He continued to use Tabor as his western headquarters, with Jonas Jones in charge of the supplies.

Delayed and still lacking forces, Brown finally arrived in August 1857. He checked on the 200 rifles stored in Todd's cellar since the winter and found "the arms and ammunition voted me by the Massachusetts State [Kansas] Committee nearly all here and in middling good order—some a little rusted. Have overhauled and cleaned up the worst of them."

Meanwhile, Hugh Forbes, an adventurer and 1848 fighter in Garibaldi's failed Italian Revolution, had come to town, hired by Brown to drill his troops, and the two practiced target shooting and studied Forbes's book *The Patriotic Volunteer*. It was not long before Brown and Forbes began discussing a plan to take possession of the federal arsenal and armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and to arm slaves for an uprising. But key differences in opinion soon led to disagreements. Forbes headed back east; most of Brown's men left Tabor for Nebraska City; and John and Owen Brown went to Lawrence. Brown quietly moved about the territory, recruiting young men who had acquired the taste for battle.

By late November, Brown was breaking down his outpost; Kansas struggles were no longer in view. On December 4, his men loaded wagons and left Tabor. Their intent was to reach Ashtabula, Ohio, where they would train for the next several months.

Winter Quarters in Springdale, 1857/58

Travel across Iowa was slow. Brown and his men camped in the country, avoiding communities. Huddled around fires, they discussed the Virginia plans, slavery, and the Bible. Not until Christmas were they

past Marengo in eastern Iowa. Finally, the group arrived in Springdale, a small Friends community in Cedar County, where they were safe among Brown's Quaker friends.

Brown was nearly out of funds and unable to raise any. Across the nation, the Panic of 1857 had set in and money was becoming scarce. Brown struck a deal with Springdale farmer William Maxson; in exchange for Brown's wagons Maxson would provide room and board for the men. On January 15, 1858, Brown left to meet with supporters in the East. His men trained and drilled in Springdale into the early spring; they became good friends with many of the residents and attracted a few young men to their cause.

In April, Brown and his men headed to Chatham, Canada, to convene with his supporters. Hundreds of fugitive blacks had settled there, and Brown hoped he could recruit some for the Virginia attack.

Within a few weeks, however, he faced another delay. A frustrated Hugh Forbes had written Brown's supporters and antislavery congressmen, demanding money or threatening to publish Brown's plans for Harpers Ferry. At a meeting with key financial backers—Gerrit Smith, Theodore Parker, Samuel Howe, George Stearns, and Frank Sanborn (five of the Secret Six)—the decision was made to postpone the attack for a year. Brown would go back to Kansas so as to discredit any Virginia plans disclosed by Forbes.

Under the name of Shubel Morgan, Brown kept a low profile from June through November 1858. Then, on December 19, began an event that fueled the legend of John Brown in Kansas.

On that evening, Jim Daniels, a mulatto slave of Harvey G. Hicklin's in Vernon County, Missouri, crossed the county line into Kansas. There he spoke with George Gill, one of Brown's men from Iowa, telling him that he and his family were about to be sold and sent to Texas.

Brown mounted a rescue effort the next night. He and ten men crossed into Missouri and rode to the Hicklin farm to set free Jim Daniels, his pregnant wife, and two children. On a neighboring farm they freed five more slaves and took two white prisoners. Meanwhile, eight more of Brown's men under Aaron Stephens went to the farm of David Cruise; Daniels had told them a slave there wanted her freedom. They had just entered Cruise's house when Stephens—thinking Cruise was reaching for a gun—shot him.

The murder of Cruise outraged local residents, and Kansas newspapers were largely hostile. Times were relatively quiet and this was no time to stir up trouble when the free-state cause seemed close to winning.

Some eastern newspapers, however, carried reports in a more glorious light. As Brown hoped would happen later in Virginia, the incident provoked panic near the Missouri border and many sold their slaves.

Brown's party and the 11 fugitives (soon 12 with the birth of a baby) hid out for several weeks before they reached Tabor on February 4, 1859, for rest and recuperation. "I am once more in Iowa through the great mercy of God," he wrote his family. "Those with me & other friends are well . . . the teams unloaded on the public common that is still the particular attraction of Tabor."

On Sunday morning Rev. John Todd was handed a note on his way into church. It read: "John Brown respectfully requests the church at Tabor to offer public thanksgiving to Almighty God in behalf of himself, & company: & of their rescued captives, in particular for his gracious preservation of their lives, & health, & his signal deliverance of all out of the hand of the wicked hitherto. 'Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.' "

Todd knew that Brown's men had taken a life and stolen horses—both major crimes on the frontier. He asked the advice of Rev. H. D. King, with whom he shared the pulpit. King announced a town meeting the next day, where Brown could speak if he wished.

At the meeting, as Brown made his way to the front, he noticed the arrival of a man from St. Joseph, Missouri, who was passing through Tabor on the stage. Knowing him to be a slaveholder, Brown requested that the Missourian be asked to leave. Members at the meeting responded that if Brown had done nothing wrong, then he should not have a problem with the traveler hearing what he said.

"We are not yet among friends," Brown replied and left the meeting.

Maria Gaston later recounted: "Captain Brown was sick at this time also, and not finding the same sympathy as formerly, it almost broke his heart. He thought we had sadly lost principle, not realizing that he was in a school with very different teachers from ours. I shall never forget his disappointment and anguish accompanied by many tears, when his men returned from the meeting expressing disapproval of his course. He said he must trust in the Lord alone and not rely on earthly friends. The block was crushing. He had expected so much, it was hard to be blamed. At other times he was welcomed and had received all he asked for, and he could not understand why we should not take this advanced step with him."

After Brown had left the meeting, the townspeople resolved: "That while we sympathize with the op-

pressed, & will do all that we conscientiously can to help them in their efforts for freedom, nevertheless, we have no Sympathy with those who go to Slave States, to entice away Slaves, & take property or life when necessary to attain that end."

Tabor residents had reason to worry about a proslavery attack if they seemed too hospitable to Brown. In November, two female slaves owned by Stephen F. Nuckolls, town founder of Nebraska City, had escaped across the river with the help of John Williamson, a local mulatto trader.

Williamson took them to Ira Blanchard in Civil Bend, who in turn transported them to Tabor. A widespread search of the area by Nuckolls turned up nothing, but an unruly mob of his friends searched houses in Civil Bend and delivered two beatings. Tabor residents anticipated the same fate.

Amid these local forebodings, John Brown and his group cut short their stay in Tabor.

Brown's Last Trip across Iowa, 1859

On February 17, Brown and his party arrived at the farm of James Jordan. Although born in the South, Jordan had turned against legalized slavery as a young man in Virginia after helping chase down blacks from a neighboring plantation. Now he farmed about six miles west of Des Moines, a small city of 3,700. Brown's party rested overnight in the timber near Jordan's home.

Three days later, they reached Grinnell, a cluster of 90 houses with 500 residents. Under the leadership of Congregational clergyman Josiah B. Grinnell, the new community had gained a reputation as an antislavery stronghold and a safe harbor for runaways. What dissent that existed among this antislavery majority rose over the extent of racial equality desired and the extent of direct action to be taken in opposing slavery. Prominent among the leading antislavery townspeople were settlers from New England and a contingent of Congregationalists from Oberlin.

Josiah Grinnell had just been reading about Brown and the reward for his capture in the *New York Tribune*. He made room in his house for Brown's men. The female fugitives stayed in a back room in the hotel; old furniture was heaped in front of the door. The male fugitives probably stayed in a nearby grove.

On the day Brown departed, lawyer Amos Bixby remarked: "The old hero & his company created quite an excitement in our little town. They stayed over Sunday. We gave them \$25 & provisions enough to last them several days. I mean we the people of Grinnell gave it. . . .

"He thinks of returning to Kansas, but if he does I very much fear he will be taken."

Bixby continued: "The colored people with him are the slaves he liberated by the invasion mentioned. He is a quiet, resolute, keen eyed old man of about sixty years; nothing of the ruffian in appearance, but seems to actuate by high moral and religious principles."

When word got out about the shelter given Brown, Iowa Democratic newspaper editors attacked Josiah Grinnell as a "Negro stealer" who glorified Brown and others who had engaged in "murder and theft."

On February 25, Brown's party arrived in Springdale in eastern Iowa. The Quaker hamlet was familiar ground. Indeed, his men had spent the previous winter there, conducting military drill and participating in community debates. Again they stayed with William Maxson, this time for two weeks.

Although the Springdale Quakers opposed slavery, they were ambivalent about Brown's methods. As one Quaker told him, "Friend, I cannot give thee money to buy powder and lead, but here's twenty dollars towards they expenses."

Because the story of Brown's raid in Missouri, had been well publicized, sentries were posted in case a mob from Iowa City might try to intercept Brown. Iowa City lay only 15 miles away, and attitudes toward abolition in the town of 7,000 were sharply divided.

One day Brown sent a message from Springdale to Jesse Bowen in Iowa City. Bowen was a physician and editor of a temperance newspaper (and later a state senator). As an agent of the National Kansas Committee, he received and transferred arms and ammunition consigned to him by emigrant aid associations, and, on behalf of Brown, had taken delivery of revolvers from Massachusetts. Now Brown asked if he could trust Bowen to dispose of arms remaining in Tabor:

Dr Jesse Bowen

Dear Sir

I was lately at Tabor in this State where there is lying in the care of Jonas Jones Esqr; One Brass field piece fully mounted; & carriage good. Also a quantity of Grape & Round shot: together with part of another Gun carriage of some value. Also some Twenty or over U S Rifles with flint

Springdale, Cedar Co, Iowa, 3 March 1859.

Dr Jesse Bowen

Dear Sir

I was lately at Tabor in this State where there is lying in the care of Jonas Jones Esqr; One Brass field piece fully mounted; & carriage good. Also a quantity of Grape, & Round Shot: together with part of another ^{or given} Gun carriage of some value. Also some Twenty ^{or given} U S Rifles with flint locks. The Rifles are good; & in good order. I have held a claim on these articles since Jan 2 1857 that is both morally, & legally good against any, & all other parties: but I informed Mr. Jones that I would most cheerfully, & even gladly waive it entirely, in your favour. Knowing the treatment you have received. I should think these articles might be so disposed of, as to save you from ultimate loss: but I need not say to you how important is perfect, & secure possession: in such cases: & you are doubtless informed of the disordered condition of the National Kansas Committees. I left with you a little Cannon, & carriage. Could you, or any one induce the inhabitants of your city to make me up something for it, & buy it; either to keep as an old relic; or for the sake of helping me a little? I am certainly quite needy; & have moreover quite a family to look after. There are those who would sooner see me supplied with a good halter, than any thing else for my services. Will you please write me ^{to Jesse Bowen Esqr; in Iowa City} frankly whether you think any thing can be done for me with the gun; or otherwise? My best wishes for yourself & family. Respectfully Your friend John Brown

From Springdale, John Brown wrote to Jesse Bowen, hoping to entrust him with the weapons left in Tabor. Always short of money, Brown also asked if Bowen would buy "a little Cannon, & carriage . . . for the sake of helping me a little."

locks. The Rifles are good; & in good order. I have held a claim on these articles since Jan 2 1857 that is both morally; & legally good against any, & all other parties: but I informed Mr. Jones that I would most cheerfully; & even gladly waive it entirely, in your favour. Knowing the treatment you have received. I should think these articles might be so disposed of; as to save you from ultimate loss: but I need not say to you how important is perfect, & secure possession: in such cases:

& you are doubtless informed of the disordered condition of the National Kansas Committees, matters.

I left with you a little Cannon, & carriage. Could you, or any one induce the inhabitants of your city to make me up something for it; & buy it; either to keep as an old relic; or for the sake of helping me a little? I am certainly quite needy; & have moreover quite a family to look after. There are those who would sooner see me supplied with a good halter than any thing else for my services. Will you please write me frankly to John H. Painter Esqr or by bearer whether you think any thing can be done for me with the gun; or otherwise? My best wishes for yourself & family.

Respectfully Your friend

John Brown

One evening during the two-week stay in Springdale, Brown and a companion quietly entered Iowa City to meet Bowen and another abolitionist, William Penn Clarke, who was a successful attorney and prominent Republican leader. Brown conferred with them regarding railroad car arrangements to take them east.

Word got out about Brown being in town, and soon others were on the lookout for the antislavery "fanatic." Bowen harbored the two men at his house until the early hours of the morning, when S. C. Trowbridge guided them out of town and to Springdale.

Historian Galin Berrier explains that in addition to Brown conferring with Clarke "on how best to transport the fugitive slaves to Chicago, Grinnell himself went to Chicago and persuaded a suspicious John F. Tracy, the general superintendent of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, to place a boxcar at his disposal for \$50."

Clarke arranged with "the station agent at West Liberty to have a boxcar set out in front of Keith's Steam Mill, where Brown and his party had been hidden after coming the ten miles south from Springdale," Berrier continues. "Brown and one of his lieutenants, John Kagi, had dinner at the hotel while waiting for the train to arrive. When it did, a large crowd was present to see them off. Brown apparently rode in the freight car with the fugitives, while Kagi and Clarke rode in a passenger coach."

Berrier adds, "When the train reached Davenport, where U.S. Marshall Laurel Summers had formed a posse to arrest Brown and capture the fugitives, federal officers walked through the passenger cars, but 'no Negroes were found, and no suspicion was aroused by the freight car.' In Chicago, the fugitives were unloaded in secret to avoid embarrassing the railroad, and [in Davenport] William Penn Clarke apologized to the railroad company's president for the deception."

From there the party went on to Detroit, where they crossed by ferry to freedom in Windsor, Ontario.

Harpers Ferry, 1859

Brown now turned to his ultimate goal: attacking Harpers Ferry. He and his men arrived in the area on July 3, 1859, and rented a farm across the river in Maryland. On the night of October 16, he and several of his men attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry; a few stayed behind as a rear guard. Ten men died (including two of Brown's sons), seven were captured at Harpers Ferry, and five escaped.

Tried by the State of Virginia, Brown and several of his followers were found guilty and hanged in early December. By the time of his execution, he had excited widespread sympathy in the North. Some Americans called him a martyr; others, a traitor.

After the execution, a Congressional investigation committee led by Senator James M. Mason of Virginia inquired into the facts and character of the Harpers Ferry attack. The Democratic majority concluded that the attack was an extension of Brown's intentions pursued in Kansas, namely, to "keep the public mind inflamed on the subject of slavery in the country" and "bring about servile insurrection in the slaver States." The minority report judged it "an offshoot from the extensive outrages and lawlessness in Kansas."

In 44 instances of testimony, the report identified Tabor, Iowa, as the place where 200 Sharps rifles and ammunition had been received, stored, and transferred into Brown's hands.

The citizens of this small Iowa town, so close to the Missouri and Kansas borders, had played an enormous role in the tumultuous events leading up to the Civil War. ♦

Lowell Soike is a long-time historian with the historic preservation office of the State Historical Society of Iowa. In recent years he has directed a federal grant-assisted project on antislavery and underground railroad activity in Iowa.

A substantial collection of materials has been compiled for public use; two National Historic Landmark nominations are in progress; and digitizing of some 4,000 Iowa newspaper articles on the slavery issue and some archaeological work at sites have been completed. Historic markers have been placed on a John Brown Freedom Trail relating to his 1859 journey across Iowa with twelve liberated slaves.

Soike is currently writing a book on antislavery and underground railroad activity in Iowa.

One way to glimpse 1850s Iowa is to invoke the power of place. Two houses that represent militant abolitionists are the Todd House in Tabor and the Hitchcock House in Lewis. Both are on the National Register of Historic Places and open to the public.

John Todd

IOWA ABOLITIONIST John Todd had a career as an activist that spanned nearly 60 years. Raised in Pennsylvania, Todd graduated from the most progressive institution in America at that time, Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. At Oberlin, black men, black women, white men, and white women all attended the same classes. "Of all the thousands of Oberlin students," Todd once said, "I never knew one who studied there long, who did

not go out from there a thorough abolitionist." Todd became known as a dynamic Congregationalist preacher.

Once while traveling on a steamboat down the Ohio River, on his way to Iowa, Todd noticed that another passenger was reading the widely circulated proslavery argument by South Carolina clergyman Richard Fuller. Todd asked if he might read it next. The passenger was a proslavery man and questioned him about his beliefs.

Todd answered in no uncertain terms that he was for the abolition of slavery. Other proslavery passengers crowded around him in a most threatening manner and began shouting: "Shoot him. Kill him." Another yelled, "The damned Abolitionist!" I wish I had him! I would swap him off for a dog and then I would shoot the dog!" Todd stood his ground.

In 1850, Todd and his wife, Martha, and their children joined George and Maria Gaston and others who shared their beliefs southwestern Iowa. In 1854, the Todds helped establish the town of Tabor.

In Tabor, abolition was not abstract talk about an Alabama cotton plantation. Slavery was a reality, and fewer than 35 miles away from the Missouri border. Some Missouri slaveholders became so alarmed at the number of slaves escaping into Iowa that they doubled the reward for their capture to \$200 (a minimum yearly wage at that time was \$300.) The Todds played critical roles in helping free-soil immigrants reach Kansas Territory, and in assisting fugitives from slavery.

George Hitchcock

THE SON OF A SHOEMAKER who "was an ardent advocate of learning and religion," George B. Hitchcock was raised and educated in Massachusetts and Illinois. In 1835 he married Caroline Grossman, and in 1841 they moved to eastern Iowa. For a time he labored as a farmer in Scott County, but he soon entered his true calling, the ministry.

His "fields of labor" in Iowa included Oskaloosa, Eddyville, and Lewis. While there are no references to Hitchcock participating in the underground railroad while in Eddyville and Oskaloosa, both locations were situated along known routes. It would be stretching mere coincidence to believe that Hitchcock's and the American Home Missionary Society's presence in these communities were entirely without abolitionist motives and actions.

In Eddyville, Hitchcock founded a Congregational church with its own meeting house, the construction of which, achieved largely by means of his own labor, cost him the loss of an eye. In a few years he decided to "settle in Indiantown in Cass County. This will be a place of considerable importance. . . . All the roads running west take the same route to Kanesville [Council Bluffs]. There is a good opportunity for a settlement, good land, good water power and good rock quarries. There are about 25 families in the settlement." He added, "There is no preaching in any of the

PHOTO BY MIKE WHYE



The Hitchcock House sits on a hill overlooking Lewis and the East Nishnabotna River valley. A National Historic Landmark, the house is open for tours May through September.

settlements, I shall supply them to the extent of my ability."

We need some five or six ministers in Western Iowa and Nebraska," he wrote the American Home Missionary Society in 1855. "This field is becoming more and more important, and will soon need a large reinforcement of ministers to supply the thronging multitude who are pushing forward to these wide-



PHOTO BY MIKE WHYTE

John and Martha Todd's house sheltered visiting ministers, abolitionists such as John Brown, Jim Lane, and Samuel Gridley Howe, and travelers on the underground railroad and the Lane Trail. Today it is the Todd House Museum.

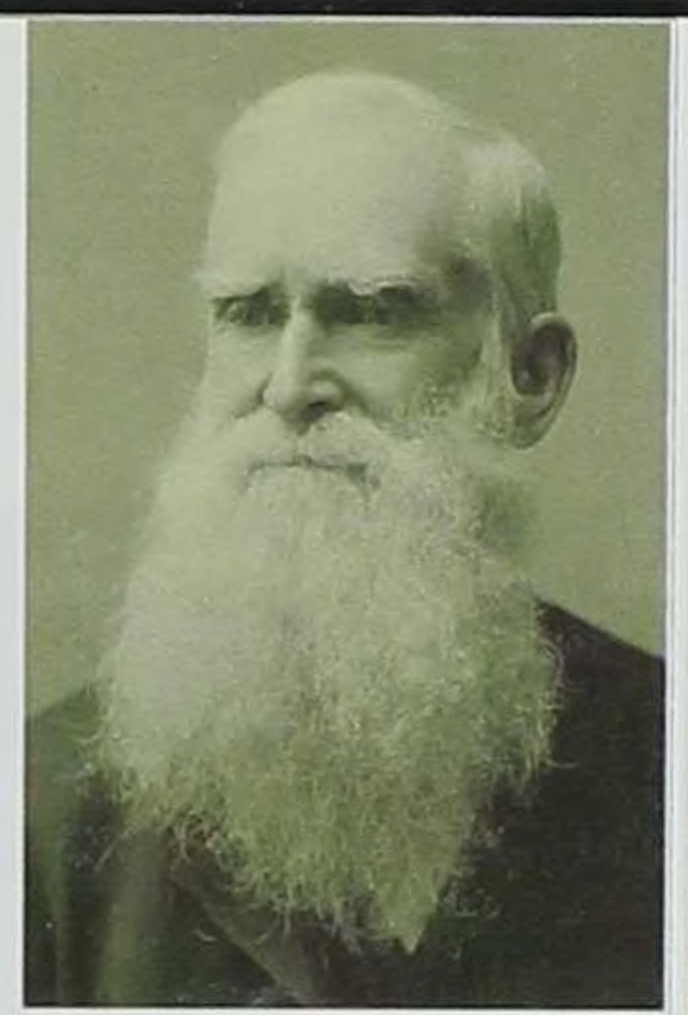
Over time, Todd built his congregation in Tabor to be one of the largest in that part of the state, and he helped to establish Congregational churches in Glenwood and as far away as Sioux City. His revivals in western Iowa assisted his fellow pastors to build their congregations.

During the Civil War, the 45-year-old Todd served in 1864 as a 100-day volunteer chaplain to the 46th Iowa Infantry. He served in Company B, which comprised mostly Grinnell College students and young men from the Tabor area.

After the war, Todd and George Gaston played critical roles in establishing Tabor College, which espoused Oberlin's views on equality and temperance. Continuing their activism, Todd and especially his wife, Martha, sponsored a black student at a Freedmen's Bureau school.

In his later years (right), Todd focused on temperance, having seen the miseries brought on by alcoholism. On January 31, 1894, he was hurrying around Tabor with a petition urging the Iowa legislature to maintain restrictions on alcohol consumption. He climbed a hill outside of town, entered a farmhouse to get a signature, and sat down. The grand old man of the underground railroad let out a gasp and passed on. His work was finally done here on earth. ❖

—by James Patrick Morgans



The author lives in Council Bluffs. He has two books published: John Todd and the Underground Railroad: Biography of an Iowa Abolitionist and The Underground Railroad on the Western Frontier: Escapes from Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and the Territories of Kansas, Nebraska and the Indian Nations, 1840–1865.

spread regions." Although he does not mention slavery or the free-state movement, this is obviously the letter's context.

Upon settling in 1853 near Lewis, Hitchcock built a cabin, where he and Caroline and their five sons lived for three years. The crowded cabin also served as a church and an underground railroad station. In 1856 Hitchcock built a larger house of sandstone from a nearby quarry.

Hitchcock knew well that the Congregationalist mission was to found schools as well as churches. "The course of education is beginning to interest the people," he wrote, "and there is some talk of founding two colleges in the Western part of Iowa, the Methodist and Congregationalist."

For Hitchcock and his fellow missionaries, their "great work" was fighting slavery—and temperance as well. "There is a steady change working in the minds of the people which gives promise of a better state of society," he observed in 1856. "The great moral questions of the day are more prominently before the minds of the people than ever before, and truth is gaining ground as fast, perhaps, as the capacity will permit.

"The temperance question is felt to be one of great importance, and has many ardent advocates. The free state question is the all absorbing subject just now and it is very difficult to interest the people with any other subject."

What is often ignored in the accounts of Hitchcock's life is the role that his wife, Caroline, must have played. She certainly shared the legal danger posed by harboring fugitive slaves as well as providing shelter and sustenance to them.

The role of the Hitchcocks' children is also largely undocu-

mented except for one tragic episode involving their son Leang (named in honor of the first Chinese converted to Congregationalism). In September 1856, Leang and another young man named Chapman from Lewis volunteered to serve as armed escorts for a free-soil emigrant company traveling along the Lane Trail to settle in Kansas. The two young men were on their way to Tabor to meet up with the company. About to cross a creek one morning, Chapman playfully aimed what he thought was an unloaded gun at Leang and pulled the trigger, delivering a fatal shot.

Congregationalist minister Julius Reed visited the Hitchcocks shortly after Leang's death and found the family "in deep affliction." He also recorded in his diary: "Two fugitives from Missouri came on their way eastward."

A biographer later summed up Hitchcock "as a man of fine ability and force of character; with a fund of ideas and suitable language to express them; with dreams and visions which he can interpret and tell how to bring them to pass; with brains to formulate and hands to execute. He could build cabins and meeting houses, even better than he could preach. He could tell things that were to be and how to bring them about. He was a missionary, always a pioneer, always at the front, with the passion and genius for laying foundations."

—This article is based on Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernek, "National Register nomination of the Reverend George B. Hitchcock House"



Charlotta Pyles

by Galin Berrier

Not many of the freedom seekers stayed in Iowa. Among those who settled here were Charlotta and Harry Pyles, with 11 of their 12 children. Their story was told many years later by the daughter of Mary El-

len Pyles, their youngest child.

Harry Pyles, fair-skinned and blue-eyed, was a free man. His wife, Charlotta (*above*) with high cheek bones, copper complexion, and straight black hair—perhaps resembling her Seminole Indian mother—was a slave on the plantation of a Mr. Gordon, near Bardstown, Kentucky. In such marriages, a child's status was determined by that of the mother, so all 12 of their children were also slaves.

When Gordon died in 1853, he willed Charlotta and her children to his daughter with the understanding that, consistent with the principles of their Wesleyan Methodist faith, she would set

them free. But her two brothers, who did not share their sister's religious views or antislavery convictions and were jealous of her inheritance, kidnapped Charlotta's son Benjamin and sold him to a slave trader.

This treachery convinced Gordon's daughter that Charlotta and her other children would be safe only if they were taken from Kentucky to a free state.

With the aid of a white clergyman from Ohio, a Rev. Claycome, Gordon set out in the early fall of 1853 in an old covered wagon drawn by six horses. The party also included, besides Charlotta and Harry Pyles, their 11 remaining children; a small daughter and son belonging to their eldest daughter, Julia; and three small sons of another daughter, Emily. Julia's and Emily's husbands were slaves on other plantations so had to be left behind.

Gordon's party rode to Louisville and then boarded a steamboat for St. Louis. There a white man named Stone offered to guide them north to freedom for \$100. No sooner were they on their way than Stone demanded an additional \$50, threat-

John Ross Miller

by Galin Berrier

Dozens of runaway slaves from Missouri came through Iowa, lived among us only briefly, and then moved on, leaving behind no evidence they had ever been here. Only occasionally do we know that their first names were John and Archie, or Aunt Polka. Names of couples, like John and Mary Walker or Sam and Dorcas Fulcher, are even less likely to be known. So you can imagine my excitement when I came upon

the story of one fugitive slave in Iowa with no fewer than three different names.

John Ross Miller was born a slave in Kentucky and known as "John Graves" in Missouri, where his master, a Mr. Graves, had moved from Kentucky in 1854. In 1861, John and three other young men—Aleck Nichols, Andy Hayes, and Henderson Hays "borrowed" two horses and two mules from the Graves plantation near

Maryville, Missouri, and headed north to Iowa. They traveled at night and hid in the daytime; two days' riding brought them to Winterset in Madison County at about one o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in late October. When some men in town tried to apprehend them, a crowd of sympathizers freed them, gave them something to eat, and sent them off the next evening to Indianola.

John and his companions even-

ening to turn Charlotta and her children over to slave traders if she refused.

Gordon complied, and the party continued north through Missouri. They were stopped frequently, but allowed to proceed each time because of the presence of two white men and a white woman. By the time they reached the Des Moines River and crossed into Iowa at Keokuk, the weather had turned cold, so they decided to settle there. Harry Pyles, who was a carpenter and stone mason as well as a leather worker, built a small brick house for them all on Johnson Street. Their oldest son, Barney, who had done most of the driving on the trip from Kentucky, found work driving a freight wagon overland from Keokuk to Des Moines.

To ease the financial burden of supporting this large household, Charlotta resolved to obtain the freedom of her sons-in-law in Kentucky so they could come to Iowa and help. Word came from Kentucky that the cost would be \$1,500 each. To raise the needed funds, Charlotta went east and made antislavery speeches in Philadelphia. Here she met

prominent antislavery leaders, including Frederick Douglass. In six months she had raised the needed \$3,000 and returned to Iowa and then to Kentucky, where she bought Julia's and Emily's husbands from their owners.

According to Charlotta's granddaughter, in later years her home in Keokuk became an early stop on the underground railroad. "Many a slave, coming from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, found at the gateway into Iowa an enthusiastic member of their own race in the person of Grandma Pyles. She received them into her own home and ... helped them to make their escape to Canada."

Charlotta died in Keokuk in 1880 at the age of 74. Her story demonstrates that most of the initiative and the risk of escaping enslavement were borne by the freedom seekers themselves. They were not simply the passive, helpless recipients of the kindness of strangers. They took their fate in their own hands, and when successful often became "conductors" and "agents" themselves on the underground railroad. ❖

tually made their way to Newton, where they were sheltered for a time at the Wittenberg Manual Arts College north of town, founded by "free Presbyterians" from Ohio and a known stop on the underground railroad in Jasper County. The next day, John hired out to work for a man named Richard Scherer and took the name "John Scherer." Under this name he enlisted in the First Regiment, Iowa Colored Infantry,

known later as the 60th Regiment. U.S. Colored Troops.

When the war was over, John returned to Missouri and brought his parents, Paulice and Clarissa Miller, to live in Newton. Three sisters—Clem, Lettie, and Lizzie Miller—had already been brought there in 1862 by Aleck Nichols. From the war's end until his death, John Graves, alias John Scherer, was known as "John Ross Miller."

John's story reminds us that fugitive slaves were often aided by other African Americans, both free and slave. Only near the end of their ordeals were they assisted by the agents of the underground railroad. ❖

Galin Berrier teaches history at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny. Among his many activities related to the underground railroad, he conducts interactive sessions for school classes for Iowa Public Television over the Iowa Communications Network.



Iowans and John Brown's Attack on Harpers Ferry

by Richard Acton

The zealotry of John Brown will always overshadow the men who followed him. Harpers Ferry is regarded by historians as a landmark on the road to the Civil War and hence the abolition of slavery. Seldom has a handful of men as those led by Brown delivered such a jolt to history. A few young Iowans played a part in that watershed event.

For most of December 1857, Brown had been trekking across Iowa with ten of his men, the nucleus of his invading army as he envisioned it. Some 50 miles short of the Mississippi, they stopped at the Quaker community of Springdale, confident of a sympathetic abolitionist welcome. Brown stayed briefly; the others

boarded until April in the home of William Maxson (*above*) just beyond the village. In those months, friendships developed with some of the Springdale residents, and some adopted Brown's cause.

One was Steward Taylor. Born in Canada, Taylor immigrated to Iowa at age 17. He settled in Springdale, where he repaired wagons. On travels in Missouri and Arkansas, he saw slavery in practice. He had a "wonderful tenacity in all things,



Steward Taylor

especially in regard to his concepts of right," wrote his friend George Gill (a follower of Brown though not to Harpers Ferry).

Taylor was dazzled by Brown's men—"those Glorious fellows," he later called them. By the time Brown returned to Springdale in April 1858, Taylor was committed and left Iowa with him. In Ohio Taylor waited a year and a half for instructions from his charismatic leader. A chronic shortage of money, suspicions of betrayal, and other factors delayed Brown's plans for an attack on the South.

Other Iowans "enlisted" in Brown's tiny army in the spring of 1858. They were George Gill, from nearby West Liberty; and two Quaker brothers from Springdale, Edwin and Barclay Coppoc (or Coppac). Jeremiah Anderson of Des Moines joined subsequently.

Brown's plan had slowly evolved to this: He and his men would attack Harpers Ferry, Virginia. There they would capture the federal armory, arsenal, and rifle works—thus acquiring the weapons necessary for the next phase. Armed, they would rapidly move south as dissident whites and slaves from plantations joined him in a massive insurrection.

Finally, in the late summer of 1859, Brown called Taylor and several others to a farm five miles from Harpers Ferry. They lay low until Brown was ready. More men gathered at the farm in the months ahead. On the night of October 16, Brown was ready to strike. To serve as a rearguard on the farm, he left behind Barclay Coppoc and two others.

Steward Taylor, Edwin Coppoc, and Jeremiah Anderson were among the 18 he led into Harpers Ferry.

Through the night, Brown and his men seized several hostages, one a prominent slaveholder. As word spread of the attack, armed farmers and militia poured into town, and a general battle commenced. Now on the defensive, Brown gathered his men and some of the hostages into the engine house (*right*). Dangerfield Newby, an ex-slave, was the first of Brown's men killed.

The next morning the U.S. Marines, led by Colonel Robert E. Lee, stormed the engine house. Brown had held the federal arsenal for 36 hours. When it was over, Iowans Steward Taylor, Jeremiah Anderson,

and eight others lay dead. Four local men from the town had been killed, including the unarmed mayor. Barclay Coppoc and the other two in the rearguard at the farm escaped to Canada.

John Brown, Edwin Coppoc, and five others were captured by Virginia authorities. They were to be tried for treason to Virginia, murder, and inciting slaves to revolt.

Back in Springdale, Edwin and Barclay Coppoc's mother, Ann Raley, mounted a fierce campaign in defense of Edwin. Her angry and articulate letters to Virginia authorities were picked up by national newspapers. Nevertheless, Edwin Coppoc was hanged with Brown and the others in mid-December.

Barclay Coppoc returned to Springdale the day after his brother's execution.

Ann Raley knew Barclay was being hunted. The governor of Virginia had sent an agent to Iowa to effect the arrest, and extradition papers would soon be sent. Raley picked up her pen again. She ar-



Jeremiah Anderson



Edwin Coppoc



gued that Barclay had neither been in Virginia nor harmed anyone. She blasted Virginia's governor: "You are making radical abolitionists faster than scores of Northern lecturers could do it."

Governor Samuel Kirkwood rejected the first requisition to extradite on the very narrowest of technical grounds. By the time he reluctantly accepted the second, Barclay had given into pressure and left Springdale for Chicago. The Coppoc affair received national attention and fueled Southern thoughts of secession.



Barclay Coppoc

When the Civil War came, 22-year-old Barclay served in a Kansas regiment as a lieutenant and came home to Springdale to enlist recruits. Returning to Missouri, he was on a train that plunged into the river after Confederate guerrillas set the bridge on fire. He died the next day. ❖

Richard Acton writes about Iowa history and divides his time between Cedar Rapids and London, where he serves in the British House of Lords.

This text blends excerpts from two *Palimpsest* articles by Richard Acton: "An Iowan's Death at Harpers Ferry (Winter 1989); and "The Story of Ann Raley: The Mother of the Coppoc Boys" (Spring 1991).

Politics Be Hanged

Editor's note: Many ardent abolitionists also championed temperance. In this account set in Davenport, one cause is sacrificed for the other in order to save Barclay Coppoc. The story is credited to "Mr. James Thompson, a Scotchman by birth and a merchant tailor by trade, and an all around gentleman of the highest type."

Sitting one evening in my shop, then over [a] book store, late in the fall of '59, an acquaintance came in and abruptly asked me if I had heard that [Barclay] Coppac was in town. Now this man knew me for an old Abolitionist, and I knew him for a whole-souled, dyed-in-the-wool old Democrat, but yet we were very good friends for all that; rather fond of a social chat and a social glass. Judge, then, how the cold chills ran down my back, when I say that at that moment Coppac was within forty feet of where we stood, and I knew it! With a government reward for his arrest, and this loyal Democrat on the war-path, hunting up this rumor, [Coppac] might be discovered. Something must be done, and quickly.

After a second's thought, and a turn or two across the floor, I carelessly answered him: "Oh, pshaw! who cares for Coppac; politics be hanged. Let's go out and take a walk." Knowing his weakness for good eating and drinking, we strolled down Second street and into a famous restaurant of those days, where some choice spirits used to meet, and where some choice "spirits" used to vanish, too.

Well, suffice to say that we whiled away that evening without once mentioning Coppac or politics either, until "the wee short hour ..." when each took his respective road home. ...

"[We had] just had plenty," at least he had, to make him forget all about Coppac, the fugitive slave law, or the ten commandments; which was the little game I had been playing for all the evening, and won it, too.

In the meantime Coppac, that very night, or rather morning, this being the second night he had lain concealed in a little room just back of my room, left town in the care of two young men, both Quakers, born in Philadelphia, both abolitionists, and true as steel. One was a nephew of Adams, and a cousin of Coppac, the other a land agent, but at the time kept a confectionary store under Bailey's Hall, Brady street between Third and Fourth. Coppac arrived safely at Springdale (Cedar County) where his widowed mother lived. ...

To only two individuals did I mention the above incident until some years after, and but to a very few since. To my friend whose patriotism was quenched that night, but not in water, I have never lisped a word on the subject. ... Both the persons to whom I did tell it were old conductors on the "underground railroad," and both strict temperance men. But both were pleased at the use the spirits (if bad) were put to that night. One still lives in Davenport. The other has "gone over to the majority."

But it was very amusing to see the twinkle in the eyes of John L. Davies as in his earnest manner with knit brows, clenched fist, and stammering a little on the first syllable, as he always did when he wanted to knock you over with a conviction, he exclaimed: "I d-don't like liquor. I d-don't use the stuff; b-but I would rather like to have done that myself. You d-did perfectly right under the circumstances. G-God bless you, Bishop."

Source: August Richter Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). The text has been broken into additional paragraphs for ease of reading.

In 1959 Jeannette Mather Lord wrote down her childhood memories of an African American who had escaped slavery and later made Springdale, Iowa, his home.

Thomas W. Jenkins

by Jeannette Mather Lord

Uncle Tom [Jenkins] was the only colored person among my friends. To me he stood for the whole oppressed black race who had suffered through the cruelty of the white people. I had to expiate those wrongs. Although I saw Uncle Tom probably every day of my childhood, never did I lose my sense of wonder and awe.

Each year Uncle Tom would come to school with his black and tan terrier, Dinah, to tell us children the story of his life. Each child that day brought special things begged at home for him: a glass of jelly, an apple, a warm muffler, or a gay kerchief. No memory of my childhood is more vivid than that of this kindly old man trying to make this group of primary children understand the suffering of the mind of the slave even when there was no suffering of body. Dinah, looking up in his master's face, would punctuate the tale with whines, for his master was in distress and to Dinah that was beyond canine endurance.

Uncle Tom's first memory was of hiding in the bushes and seeing the foreman flog his father who was tied to a post. Taking refuge with his mother, he begged to know why white people were masters and the blacks were slaves. She hushed his cries and with tragic earnestness tried to drive all hate and thought of revenge out of her son's heart. They were slaves; acceptance of their lot was a necessity; hatred, rebellion, thoughts of revenge only brought more trouble and suffering, not only to themselves but to their loved ones.

"Mammy," he said, "when I get to be a man I'll not be a slave. I'm bound to run away and be a free man."

Sadly his mother answered, "My child, if you have such thoughts as those never let anyone know it."

This was in Culpepper County, Missouri. After being forty years a slave, Uncle Tom escaped. It was

in the fall of the year. He slept in the daytime and traveled at night, following the North Star. Twice he ventured to approach a farmhouse to beg for food. The first time the woman set the dogs on him, and it was difficult to shake them off his trail. The second time the housewife invited him into the kitchen, set a chair for him and went ostensibly for food but in reality to call the men.

Uncle Tom, sensing danger, ran out just as the husband with a gun, accompanied by his son, came around the corner of the house. The man shot several times before Uncle Tom reached the shelter of a cornfield in which he eluded them. After that he kept away from people.

How he found Springdale, I have often wondered. Only when he reached the community where the women wore gray gowns and bonnets and the men broad-brimmed hats did he dare show himself. Rumor, traveling by grapevine in Missouri, had said there would he find safety and be helped on his way.

He arrived late in the year, having had nothing to eat but the raw field corn since leaving his master in Missouri three months before. He had suffered much from the cold. His feet were frozen and in such condition that his boots had to be cut off. Some time was



Thomas W. Jenkins

MATHER COLLECTION, SHS (IOWA CITY)

spent in recuperating. He worked as he could to pay for his board and when fit to travel went on his way to Canada and freedom.

It was after the war that Uncle Tom returned to Springdale to live, buying the house just east of the schoolhouse. Of his family I know nothing except that at intervals a daughter would come to live with him. She so vigorously cleaned house and as vigorously used her tongue that before long Uncle Tom would decide that he was happier by himself and the daughter would leave until next summoned. Except for these visits, Uncle Tom lived alone with his cow, sometimes a calf, his chickens, ducks and Dinah. The house was used in common by all. I cannot say that I ever saw the cow in the house, but I have seen the calf in the kitchen drinking from a dish placed on a chair. In the summer the door stood open and the fowls and animals crossed the threshold at will.

On Sabbath, or First Day, Uncle Tom went to Quaker Meeting. Dinah is the only dog I have seen attend divine worship, but inseparable from his master, he would follow him into the pew and never cause any disturbance beyond the excitement among the children as he and Uncle Tom entered. Being prompt was not one of Uncle Tom's virtues. Just as the minister (for by this time the Friends in Springdale had grown progressive enough to have a minister) reached sixthly, or perhaps lastly, when we children had given up hoping for an end and were sure the clock had stopped, Uncle Tom and Dinah would make their way to the empty pew nearest the door. From our family pew we lost no detail of this entrance. Uncle Tom was always a person of romance. We delighted in his kindly face and picturesque figure in his silver gray suit, bright bandanna, soft broad-brimmed gray hat, showing beneath it a fringe of white hair. He never took off his hat in meeting except during a prayer, not even in the long silence following the sermon.

At the time of the early Friends in England, to remove a hat in the presence of others was an act of servility or, at least, a recognition of inferiority. Believing that all men are equal in the sight of God, the early Friend wore his hat in the presence of all people, even the king and other high officials. He wore it in court and in meeting, but he removed it when he prayed. It was definitely Quakerly for Uncle Tom to wear his hat during the service and symbolic of his recognized equality with his neighbors. Here no one wished Uncle Tom to pay "hat honor."

When my mother had typhoid fever, every morning before breakfast Uncle Tom, having walked a mile and a half to our home, known as Evergreens, would appear at the kitchen door to inquire how the "missus" was. Mother gave orders to the cook to invite him into the kitchen for breakfast, but he refused even a cup of coffee.

On our way to town, we frequently found Uncle Tom out on the "horseblock" watching for us. Would we stop on our return for a basket of fruit, always ripe before ours?

One day he questioned Mother on how to raise ducks. This was a surprising inquiry from one so successful. Sensing his seriousness, Mother told him in great detail her understanding of the problem. He asked many questions. Finally fully satisfied that Mother knew how to care for ducks, he asked permission to present us children with a duck and her newly hatched brood. The ducks thrived and because of their unusually brilliant coloring were our delight.

The years accumulated for Uncle Tom. The time came when he could no longer care for himself. Even now he could not live with his daughter. He sold his tiny place and, with the proceeds and his savings, went to the county farm as a paying guest. He was happy there, living to a ripe old age, full of quiet dignity, a respected and self-supporting member of the community. Once a year he would receive an invitation to visit Uncle William for a week-end to attend again our meeting where he would see all his friends.

In the Springdale Cemetery is his grave with the inscription on the tombstone:

Thomas W. Jenkins

Called as a slave

Richard Lewis

Died Dec. 9, 1902

Aged 83 years old

This excerpt is taken from Jeannette Mather Lord, "John Brown: They Had a Concern," *West Virginia History*, 20:3 (April 1959), 163-83. It appears here with the permission of the West Virginia Archives and History.



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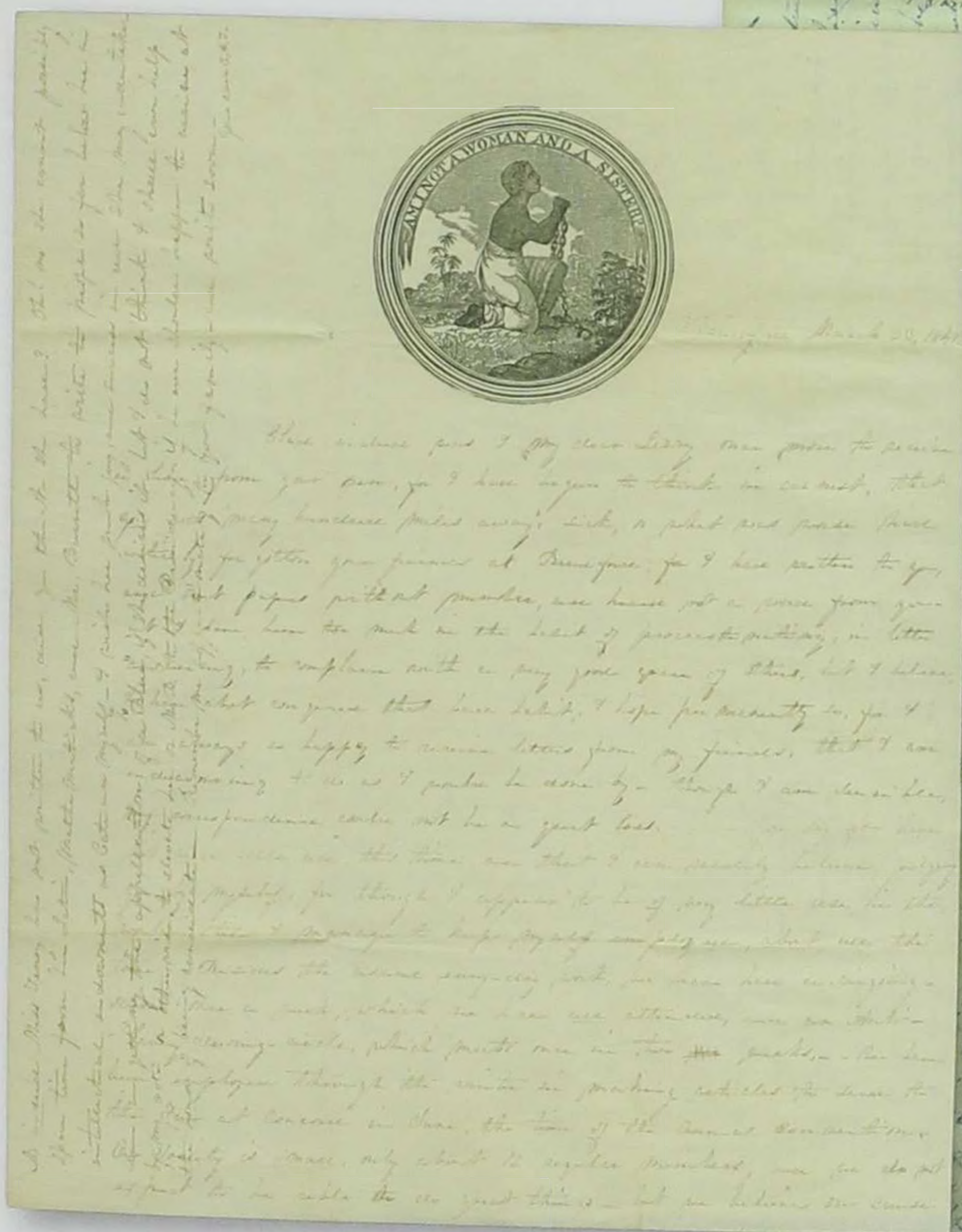
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One in a Million

The letter in the foreground, with the icon of a slave, has more to tell us than that the writer was antislavery. It is also an example of cross-writing, a 19th-century solution to a scarcity of paper and postage rates based on the number of sheets sent.

Letter writers often wrote to the very edges of the page and then sometimes turned the page 90 degrees and started writing again.

Supposedly, the brain could adapt to reading cross-writing, but still, we cannot help but wonder if the recipient eagerly opened such a letter and then fumed, "Cross writing makes cross reading."

At least that's what the author Lewis Carroll believed.

Both letters are from the 1840s and in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

—The editor

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